

Richard C.H. Lenski

**The Eisenach
Gospel Selections**



An Exegetical-Homiletical Treatment

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Alfred Edersheim (1825-1889), was raised Jewish. He studied at the University of Vienna and New College, Edinburgh. After finding faith in the Messiah, he was ordained in the Free Church of Scotland, and later the Church of England. His books continue to be highly influential in bringing to life the background and details of the Old Testament historical accounts. His “Church History” series is especially intended for students, young people, and anyone who desires to deepen their understanding of the Bible.

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THE EISENACH GOSPEL SELECTIONS

An Exegetical-Homiletical Treatment

BY

R. C. H. LENSKI

Third Edition, Carefully Revised,
The Homiletical Sections Rewritten

A SERIES OF TEXTS FOR THE ENTIRE
CHURCH YEAR



1928

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FOREWORD

The author pens these lines with a heart grateful to God for his blessing. It certainly means much that a work like this should have reached its third edition in such a comparatively brief time. May the divine blessing accompany also this new edition, and extend to all who use it in the Master's great service.

The exegetical sections have been carefully revised. The homiletical helps have been recast entirely after the style adopted in the *Eisenach Old Testament Selections* published in 1925. The Greek text used is that of Westcott and Hort, and that of Alexander Souter has been compared. The grammars used are that of Robertson; of Blass, edited by Debrunner, and the translation by Thackeray; also Wiener, and works by Moulton and by Rademacher. It will hardly be necessary to add anything further. Whoever uses this work will see for himself what the author has attempted to do. May his humble efforts continue to prove helpful to all who faithfully use them in the blessed task of preaching the Word.

THE AUTHOR.

Columbus, Ohio, April 11, 1927.

Texts Treated

- 1st Advent = Lk. 1, 68-79
2nd Advent = Luke 17, 20-30
3rd Advent = Matth. 3, 1-11
4th Advent = John 1, 15-18
Christmas = Math. 1, 18-23
Sun. a. Christmas = Luke 2, 25-32
New Year's Day = Luke 4, 16-21
Sun. a. N.Y. = Math. 16, 1-4
Epiphany = Math. 3, 13-17
1. Sun. a. Epiph. = John 1, 34-42
2 Sun. a. Epiph. = John 1, 43-51
3 Sun. a. Epiph. = John 4, 5-14
4 Sun. a. Epiph. = John 4, 31-42
5 Sun. a. Epiph. = Math. 7, 24-29
6 Sun. a. Epiph. = John 5, 39-47
Septuagesima = Luke 10, 38-42
Sexagesima = John 11, 20-27
Quinquagesima = Mark 10, 35-45
Invocavit = Math. 16, 21-26
Reminiscere = Luke 10, 17-20
Oculi = Luke 9, 51-56
Laetare = John 6, 47-57
Judica = John 13, 31-35
Palm Sunday = John 12, 1-8
Good Friday = Luke 23, 39-46
Easter Sunday = Math. 28, 1-10
Quasimodo geniti = John 21, 15-19
Misericordias Domini = John 14, 1-6
Jubilate = John 12, 20-26
Cantate = John 6, 60-69

THE CHRISTMAS CYCLE

(5)

THE CHRISTMAS CYCLE

The First Sunday in Advent to The Sunday After New Year

The first or festival half of the church year is usually divided into three grand sections or cycles, called respectively the Christmas, the Easter, and the Pentecost cycle. Within these three cycles, however, there are two sections, distinct and important enough to stand by themselves, namely the Epiphany texts and those for Lent. Instead, therefore, of breaking up the first half of the church year into only three parts, one of them, that of Pentecost quite unequal in size as compared with the other two, we prefer to make five more nearly equal cycles: Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Each has its appropriate circle of thought, to which each text in the cycle contributes its distinct and necessary share. The five cycles together present, in this festive half of the church year: **The Great Deeds of God for Our Salvation.** — Each of the five cycles is governed by one central or chief text, namely the one for the great festival day in the cycle. Yet there is quite a variety in the arrangement of the different cycles. In the Christmas cycle the chief text is placed near the middle, it is the fifth of ten texts. The Pentecost cycle resembles the Christmas cycle, only it is smaller. In the Epiphany and Easter cycles the chief text is the very first, opening the cycle with a burst of glory which sends its radiance through all the texts that follow. The Lenten cycle is the very reverse. Here the dominating text is the very last one. There is something fine and appropriate in all this. The birth of Christ was indeed heralded in advance, and when

at last it was accomplished a period of waiting ensued until the child should reach manhood. Epiphany (the anointing of Jesus with the Holy Spirit by the Father), like Easter (with its resurrection miracle), came with suddenness and power, two miracles of grace showing forth the glory of our Savior. In the Lenten series we carry out Christ's bidding to the disciples, to go up with him to Jerusalem where all things written concerning him shall be accomplished — step by step we go forward until Calvary and the great deed of Good Friday is reached. Pentecost comes as Jesus had promised in advance, to be followed by the continued work of the Holy Spirit on earth in building the Kingdom of God. And we may add that the great Trinity cycle of twenty-seven texts has for its theme: **The Great Kingdom of God on Earth.**

Turning now to the Christmas cycle proper we have first four texts which lead up to the festival height (the First to the Fourth Sunday in Advent), then the chief festival text itself (Christmas), followed by two others (the day after Christmas and the Sunday after Christmas) which help to bring home to us what the festival presents, and finally three texts (the second text for the Sunday after Christmas, New Year, and the Sunday after New Year), to a certain degree distinct from the Christmas thought, yet illuminated by its light, since the new year, because of Christ's birth, becomes new indeed, a year of Christ.

The text for the First Sunday in Advent is the *Benedictus*, Zacharias' prophetic song of praise, heralding the coming of the Savior. Here the great message of the Old Testament prophets is summarized and brought home to us, for now the day of fulfillment is at hand. Zacharias takes up the old glorious promise, "As he (God) spoke by the mouth of the holy prophets, which have been since the world began"; and he introduces the new-born herald of Christ himself, his

own son John, and describes his work. This text is exceedingly rich. It tells us of *the blessed first advent or coming of Christ*. — In the old gospel series the Second Sunday in Advent sets before us the second coming of Christ. In the Eisenach series we have a similar text, but the emphasis in it is not altogether on the last day and its significance. This text embraces a wider range, beginning with the redemptive work of Christ in “suffering many things,” continuing with “the kingdom of God in us,” and then reaching out to the great day which shall come as the flood came in the days of Noah, and as the rain of fire and brimstone came in the days of Lot. It embraces the entire time between the first and the second coming of Christ, including, therefore, the very time in which we live today. We may say its subject is: *Looking from the first to the second advent or coming of Christ*. — The text for the Third Sunday in Advent, like the one in the old gospel series, shows us John the Baptist, but gives us directly the message which he brings, a message decidedly necessary now that Christ has come, and is about to come again. The subject of this text is: *The great herald of the advent and his call, Prepare!* — Upward, still upward we go in the text for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, but the figure of John the Baptist (who is mentioned again) is now utterly eclipsed by the figure of the Savior himself to whom he points in witness. We are on the very threshold of Christmas, and this text sets before us *the Savior himself, who comes full of truth and grace*. In the most direct way this text brings us the very feature which makes the old gospel text so appropriate, namely the image of Christ himself; but in this text he occupies all our thought, while in the old one John has considerable to say concerning himself.

Luke’s account of the birth of Christ has a glory all its own, as every preacher knows who has repeat-

edly used the text from this evangelist's Gospel at Christmas time; yet the story as Matthew tells it contains those invaluable features which our time needs in the highest degree. Here is first of all the name *Jesus*, and the definition of it in that prophetic name Immanuel. And here is also the blessed doctrine of *the virgin birth of Jesus*. This text is the divine basis for our confession in the Apostolic Creed: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the Virgin Mary." The theme is the great fact of the Incarnation: *Jesus is born — the Savior has come indeed!* — Now follows, for the day after Christmas, the Prologue of John's Gospel, full of the deep things contained in the coming of Jesus as our Savior: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us — that was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world — as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." How shall we formulate what this wonderful text brings us? Here every preacher must feel his own utter weakness. Let us venture to say only this: We have here *the fountain of salvation in the Word made flesh*. — An easier text follows for the Sunday after Christmas. Simeon with the Christ-child in his arms. This, of course, signifies appropriation: *The new-born Jesus your very own*.

In proceeding to the three following texts we must not leave the light of Christmas behind, which would be a decided mistake. There is first of all a second text for the Sunday after Christmas in this series; it may be appropriated for the last evening of the year, for which most of our churches arrange a special service. While this text has a distinct reference to time ("Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light"), it nevertheless shines with Christmas splendor, for it speaks of Christ as the light, and quotes from Isaiah "when he saw his glory." — So also the New Year's text; the Christ of Christ-

mas is in it with all his Christmas gifts, and he it is who with his gifts makes the new year an "acceptable year of the Lord." Farthest away from the festival and the specific Christmas thought is the last text in this cycle, the one for the Sunday after New Year. It deals with the signs of the times. But when we recall that to this very day Christ is the greatest sign of the times, the Christmas note of joy will still sound its sweetness into our hearts as we reach the close of the first great cycle of our texts.

We may sketch the line of thought as follows:

I. Advent. *Rejoice, he comes!*

II. Advent: *Remember, he comes!*

III. Advent: *Prepare!*

IV. Advent: *Behold his grace and truth!*

Christmas: *Wondrously born in Bethlehem.*

Day after Christmas: *Our fountain of grace.*

Sunday after Christmas: *Make him your own!*

Sunday after Christmas, 2nd text: *Your time is short.*

New Year's Day: *The year made new by Christ.*

Sunday after New Year: *Christ, the sign of the times.*

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Luke 1, 68-79

Everything in and about this text makes it a perfect Advent text, especially for the First Sunday in Advent. Its tone is jubilant, like that of the old gospel text for this day, but its contents are altogether different, scarcely admitting a comparison. Here Zacharias, a priest of the old covenant, voices the glorious promises of all the prophets since the world began. He speaks from the intimate and advanced knowledge which the visit of the Virgin Mary to Elizabeth had brought to him, concerning the approaching birth of the Savior (verse 39), and therefore he declares that God *hath* visited his people, *hath* raised up an horn of salvation. To him the advent is already an accomplished fact. This makes his heart overflow with joy and a song of praise, which is certainly the proper note for the opening of every churchly Advent season now. — While the imagery used by Zacharias is taken from the prophetic utterances of the Old Testament, it is already tinged with the rising light of the New Testament. The words of his song are inspired by the Holy Ghost. Redemption, salvation, deliverance, in the full spiritual sense, and the possession of these divine gifts in the knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, in serving God without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life, with our feet guided in the way of peace — this is the heart of the text, unspeakably rich and sweet, literally taking in *all the blessings of the first advent*, setting them before us in heavenly light, putting them into our very hearts, and thus making us sing with joy as Zacharias sang. — The *Benedictus* is found in the Matin service of the church, as the principal response

to the Scripture lessons (*Lutheran Cyclopaedia*, article "Liturgy," p. 282, 2). When it is carried into the pulpit the Matin or morning light of joy must not be left behind; for is not the First Sunday in Advent the morning of the new church year? This morning glow must be in the preacher's heart, for only when inwardly he sings this sweet morning melody of Zacharias, will he kindle in his hearers that fulness of Advent joy which in them also breaks forth in song.

Words of praise like these should have risen to Zacharias' lips when in the temple the angel Gabriel announced the birth of his son. Failing to render due praise then because of unbelief, Zacharias was stricken dumb until the angel's word should be fulfilled. That great moment arrived at last. God lifted the restraint from his tongue — and then, like a pent-up stream, the praise that had accumulated in his heart rushed out in fervent utterance. — Zacharias speaks poetry, a great rhythmic song of praise to God. The beauty of it is in the exceeding richness, pureness, sweep, and loftiness of the religious thought, the clearness and fulness of the Gospel revelation, and the perfection of Old Testament allusion and phraseology employed in giving the great deeds of God expression. Where did this humble old priest, bowed down with years, obtain such glory of thought and utterance? Luke tells us, he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and he prophesied. The song was really far beyond him; it was placed upon his lips by divine revelation and inspiration, as the very flower of all previous prophetic announcement, the sweetest fruit of the old Gospel tree of truth. As such it was intended for all those who were assembled at his home to celebrate the event of the circumcision of his son, to unveil to them the great thoughts and deeds of God. The words of Zacharias were more than a monologue full of rapture, more even than an ordinary psalm. — Εὐλογητός from

εὐλογέω, to speak well of some one, to praise or call one **blessed**. The name **the Lord, the God of Israel** contains a number of rich elements, for κύριος stands for *Yahveh*, and with the following ὁ θεός constitutes a proper name = *Yahveh Elohim*, the one true God who is also the God of the covenant. This covenant relation is brought out in a special way by the added genitive τοῦ Ἰσραήλ. To utter this impressive name before Israelites called to mind all the greatest events of their past history, and all the golden hopes based on these events and the promises connected with them.

Zacharias at once states the reason for calling God blessed — **for**, ὅτι, because —, and this reason is ample indeed. **He hath visited**, ἐπεσκέψατο, literally "looked upon," his people, namely with active concern. Since ἐπισκέπτεσθαι is used almost invariably with a direct object, it is best to supply τὸν λαόν αὐτοῦ from the dative after the verb immediately following: καὶ ἐποίησεν λύτρωσιν τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ. The English is able to imitate the Greek here in omitting the direct object after the first verb: "He hath visited and wrought redemption for his people." God's now visiting his people hardly implies a previous indifference on his part, or that Zacharias and others assumed such an indifference. God waits until the fulness of time comes, and this is far from indifference, and was also well understood by the Israelites, especially such as Zacharias. — Coordinate with the look of concern is the action of God: and wrought redemption for his people. Λύτρωσις, occurs again in Luke 2, 38, "the redemption of Jerusalem"; cf. Ps. 111, 9. Here λύτρωσις is illumined by all that follows. Note v. 77, where the σωτηρία which this λύτρωσις produces is described as occurring ἐν ἀφέσει ἁμαρτιῶν. This kind of "redemption" is not merely national liberation from the oppressive Roman yoke, it is spiritual redemption wrought by the Messiah in the kingdom of God. While

λύτρωσις is used at times in a general way, without reference to the λύτρον or ransom by which it is effected, here where “the remission of sins” is in the context, and where the entire work of the Messiah is described, this general use will not suffice. Here we evidently have the Temple use of the word, as befits the lips of one of God’s Old Testament priests, implying a price laid down and accepted in ransom. We need not trouble to inquire whether Zacharias grasped the fullness of the truth contained in his inspired utterance; it is certain that the Holy Ghost points here to Christ himself as the great Redeemer who gave himself as a ransom for many. — **For his people** goes beyond the individual and embraces Israel as a whole; it is the same as ἡμῖν, “for us,” in verse 69. The circle of thought in Zacharias’ song restricts itself to the people of Israel and the promises made to them, even as Jesus also said when the Syrophenecian woman cried after him: “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” likewise to the woman at Jacob’s well: “For salvation is of the Jews.” Redemption is for the Jews first, but then also for the Gentiles.

V. 69: **And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us.** Here is a new image; compare Ps. 18, 2, “my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.” The “horn” is the instrument of strength in many animals, and is therefore a symbol of power, 1 Kgs. 22, 11. When used in this symbolic way it is always in the singular, suggesting rather the single horn of the mythical unicorn, Ps. 92, 103; Is. 34, 7, than the horns of the buffalo. The character of the horn here mentioned is shown by the genitive σωτηρίας, it is a saving horn, i. e. a strong person to save or rescue, one who saves by might. God raised up this horn for us, made it come forth or appear (ἐγείρειν = to awaken, to raise up), Ps. 132, 17. The Savior was

already conceived in the womb of the Virgin Mary; hence Zacharias uses the aorist tense ἤγειρεν. His very existence, and all his saving activity, is altogether the gift of God. The expression "raised up a horn of salvation," as well as the modifier "in the house of his servant David," shows that Zacharias does not speak of an impersonal power of salvation, but of a definite person, a man of might who saves. Luther: "Thus also our kingdom and King is a horn, and Christ especially is called a horn." He is raised up **in the house of his servant David**, for Mary was a descendant of King David (Ps. 89, 4, the promise made to David), and Jesus was frequently called the son of David, and even called himself so, Matth. 22, 45.

In v. 68-69 Zacharias summarized the promises given by the prophets, and presented the very heart of their gracious messages. Therefore he adds, **As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets**, etc. G. Mayer remarks: "Zacharias believed in verbal inspiration and in Messianic prophecy." His words, spoken by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, are thus the Holy Ghost's own testimony to the fact that the words of the prophets are divine truth, namely God's own utterance — "as *he spake* by the mouth of his holy prophets." Verbal inspiration is this that God "spake by the mouth" of the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, when they made oral utterance, or by their writing when they used that medium. The prophets are called "holy," because they were God's instruments for communicating with his people; their work sanctified them. — **Which have been since the world began** (or "of old," R. V., American Committee), ἀπ' αἰῶνος, is evidently without a restriction. Bengel says, "Already from the beginning there were prophets." Calov, "Already through the mouth of Adam." Peter himself (2 Pet. 2, 5) and Jude 14 number the patriarchs Noah and Enoch among the prophets.

“The whole volume of Scripture did prophesy of him. He was the sum and scope of all their predictions. He was Abraham’s promised Seed, Abraham’s Isaac, Jacob’s Shiloh, Moses’ Great Prophet, Esaias’ Immanuel, Ezekiel’s Shepherd, Daniel’s Holy One, Zechariah’s Branch, Malachi’s Angel; all of them predictions to foretell his coming. He was Abel’s Sacrifice, Noah’s Dove, Abraham’s First fruits, Aaron’s Rod, the Israelites’ Rock, the Patriarchs’ Manna, David’s Tabernacle, Solomon’s Temple; all these prefigured his Incarnation. They were folds and swathing bands of this babe *Jesus*.” Bishop Browning.

The R. V. makes v. 70 parenthetical, so that σωτηρίαν in v. 71 becomes an apposition to κέρας σωτηρίας in 69; another alternative, though less acceptable, is to discard the parenthesis and to read σωτηρίαν as the object of ἐλάλησεν. Better than both is to omit the parenthesis and to read what follows as an appositional elaboration to the double statement introduced by ὅτι in v. 68. — The “horn of salvation” is the mighty Savior himself; and now we hear what his work is, v. 71: **salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us.** The thought of the horn is still retained, for the horn is certainly intended to operate against enemies, to hurl them back, to strike and destroy them, to rescue from their power. The inclination of commentators is strong to look upon these **enemies** as political foes, and to take the “salvation” in the sense of political liberty, at least so as to combine it with the privilege of worshiping God unhampered by heathen interference. But the “enemies” here and in v. 74 are not “the Roman tyranny, or Herod’s usurpation, the galling bondage of the Jewish state,” and something spiritual connected with these enemies (*Lutheran Commentary*, and others), but the very foes against which Christ proved himself such a mighty horn of salvation, namely Satan and

the powers of darkness, “every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow God’s name nor let his Kingdom come.” The Lord rules in the midst of his enemies; he sends his followers among them as sheep among wolves and protects them; he teaches us to lose the fear of men, who are able to kill only the body, to obey God more than men, and to rejoice in the cross of persecution. What a glorious σωτηρία!

In v. 72: **To show mercy towards our fathers**, the word ἔλεος is really “pity,” and must be distinguished from grace; ἔλεος considers the wretched, miserable, deplorable condition of the fathers; and ποιῆσαι ἔλεος = “to perform mercy,” A. V., is an act which shall remove the misery. The infinitive denotes purpose. All the promises of God’s mercy in past ages centered in the one great act of mercy when complete salvation was wrought at last. This reached forward through all the coming ages, as well as back through all past ages, to Abraham and to Adam though dead long since, and of the former it is expressly said, he saw the day of Christ and was glad, John 8, 56. — **And to remember his holy covenant** is an Old Testament phrase which speaks anthropomorphically of God. Μνησθῆναι, however, does not imply that God had for a time forgotten, or failed hitherto to remember, or that the fathers thought so. “To remember” is here not a calling to mind, but rather an action growing out of constant past remembrance, as indicated by the foregoing ποιῆσαι ἔλεος. Hitherto God had remembered by constantly renewing his great promises, now he remembered by completely fulfilling them. — **His holy covenant** = the whole covenant from Abraham’s time to that of Zacharias. Διαθήκη is any disposition that one may make; often by a last will or testament, hence = testament; then, a step farther: covenant; used by the LXX for the Hebrew *berith* (comp.

διατίθημι) ; μμνήσκω governs the genitive. This covenant is "holy" in a special sense, beyond all other godly covenants ever made, for it is God's own, originating in him and maintained by him until its fulfillment; therefore αὐτοῦ, his very own. It is, of course, made with someone, but the position of the person or persons with whom it is made is secondary, God's part is primary, and this to the extent that the covenant is named only after him, "his holy covenant" — without any merit or worthiness on our part. — V. 73: **The oath**, ὄρκον, while an accusative, is an apposition to the genitive διαθήκης, the case being explained by the following relative ὅν, resulting in an inverse attraction for its antecedent, ὄρκον for ὄρκου. In remembering the covenant God could not but remember also the oath he had sworn in connection with it. **He sware it to Abraham**; his, then, let us note once more, was the primary part, Gen. 22, 16-18: "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord. . . . in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Nothing is said of Abraham's also swearing an oath. God's oath also shows the inviolableness of his covenant; on his part, sealed by an oath, it could not possibly be broken. Because the covenant includes Abraham's children, therefore Zacharias puts in the words "our father." It is all one family from Abraham down to Zacharias, and whatever God does he does for all, whether it be the swearing of the promissory oath at the beginning, or the performing of the mercy at the end. A covenant, διαθήκη, was a solemn pact usually bearing some special seal of assurance, and in this case, as a covenant of the very highest importance, it bore as its seal the strongest possible assurance of truth, the oath of God. This oath was a condescension of God to weak and doubting men; it is the utmost God can do to induce faith on our part.

Πρὸς Ἀβραάμ, **unto Abraham**, is stronger than the simple dative.

In v. 74 Zacharias states, not the contents of the oath, but the great purpose for which it was sworn. The infinitive with τοῦ is used frequently in the New Testament, except by Paul, to express purpose; so here: τοῦ δοῦναι = in order to grant unto us. **Without fear**, ἀφόβως, is defined by **being delivered out of the hand of our enemies**. The accusative ὑποθένας is required as modifying the implied subject of the infinitive λατρεύειν, which must be ἡμᾶς. The ἐχθροί here mentioned we have described above. The term used denotes hate, and opposition due to hate. Christ's followers, delivered from sin, death, and the power of the devil, served God without fear, though men often oppressed and persecuted them. Their spiritual deliverance raised them above the fear of men, as we see in the case of Peter and John before the Jewish Council, Acts 4, 13. Compare Rom. 6, 18 and 22. — **Should serve him**, λατρεύειν αὐτῷ, is the object of τοῦ δοῦναι; this is what God granted, and a gracious gift it is indeed; that we, freed from the hand of our enemies (ἐκ χειρὸς a distributive singular), serve him without fear. Λατρεύειν expresses the service which we all owe to God, not the official service of priests and others especially called, which would be λειτουργεῖν (in the case of Zacharias ceremonial service and sacrifice); here, then, all the forms of godliness in thought, word and deed are meant. — V. 75: **In holiness and righteousness** — these two are not to be distinguished after the manner of Meyer and Weiss, so that the former relates to the heart, and the latter to the outward conduct; or, similarly, as Baugher, *Luth. Com.*, has it, "the inward principle and the outward activity of godliness," for both refer to the heart and to the conduct, and the real inward principle of right conduct is faith. Stelhorn refers δσιότης to our conduct

towards God, and δικαιοσύνη to our conduct towards men, but this distinction too does not inhere in the words. Besser's notion that righteousness signifies the perfect righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and holiness our imperfect life of righteousness, is entirely wide of the mark, as the order of the words (holiness first, righteousness second) shows. "Holiness" simply means separation from sin and devotion to God, and "righteousness" devotion to what is right, lawful, and pleasing to God; the two together stand for two sides of one and the same thing, both referring to heart and conduct, both to God and man, and both the fruit of faith, with the difference that the one refers more directly to God, while the other implies the intermediate norms and laws of his will. Harless, on Eph. 4, 24 (*Epheser*, p. 427) combines the two words into one concept: *die heilige Reinheit*, holy purity, and finds that this applies also to Tit. 1, 8 and 1 Tim 2, 8. — **Before him**, before his face, or in his presence, contains the thought of priestly service, for it is the term used of the work of the priests in the Temple, but here it refers to all God's servants in Israel. We have here a veiled reference to the universal priesthood of believers. **All our days** = life-long, uninterrupted.

The first magnificent part of Zacharias' song, pouring out so lavishly all the riches of God's grace, is followed by a brief description of his son's part in the great saving work of God, which, however, rises at once above the little child and his coming precious work and dwells once more upon the great Messianic gift.

V. 76: **Yea and thou**, καὶ σὺ δέ — the καὶ coordinates, δέ is used like the Latin *autem*. He proceeds to say something also concerning his son. Παιδίον, **child**, a vocative, has no possessive pronoun. Zacharias' paternal joy is swallowed up completely in his religious

joy. That this is his own child counts for nothing beside the fact that the child is the forerunner of the Messiah. **Shalt be called the Prophet of the Most High;** this shall be his high and holy office, and προφήτης Ὑψίστου, without the article, is like a set title of office. John was the last, and in this sense the greatest of the prophets, for he immediately preceded the Messiah, and belonged to the new dispensation. "Most High" = Almighty God, as in 32 und 35. — Zacharias shows why (γὰρ) his son shall be called such a prophet, **for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways.** Κύριος, according to the analogy of v. 17, must mean God, the Yahveh of the Old Testament, to whom also Ὑψίστος points; ἐνώπιον, "before the face," as a preposition cannot mean Christ, as though he were the face of God revealed to us, as Baugher assumes. Nevertheless, Luther is practically correct when he pictures John as going before the Messiah, for this was in reality the work he was to do in going before the face of God and making ready his ways. Κύριος cannot mean Christ, because in this entire hymn of Zacharias there is no direct personal name for the Messiah. Here are only descriptive phrases, "horn of salvation," "dayspring from on high," and statements of his work. "Lord" is the same as "Most High," and the latter stands for God. — **To make ready his ways** (compare Matth. 11, 10), ἐτοιμάσαι, infinitive of purpose, a combination of the prophecies Mal. 3, 1 and Is. 40, 3, pictures the coming of some great oriental king, for whom the roads are levelled and smoothed, in order to facilitate his advance. How John was to do this work is at once stated without a figure of speech.

V. 77: He is **to give knowledge of salvation unto his people in the remission of their sins.** Τοῦ δοῦναι (comp. 74 for the same infinitive) expresses purpose and parallels ἐτοιμάσαι as an explanatory ap-

position. The whole 77th verse goes together as one great thought, defining John's work. We must remember that the Jews, in their wordly and political aspirations, had lost the knowledge of salvation, and substituted for it vain dreams of their own. These were the obstacles in the way and had to be removed, in order that Christ with his salvation and blessings might enter. It is the same today, for men still dream of earthly salvation, and make Christ a great social reformer who shall equalize the difference between rich and poor, remove social, economic, moral, political wrongs, while salvation, deliverance from sin, spiritual regeneration and eternal blessedness are left out. — Because John was to be called "the *prophet* of the Most High," his work is described as the giving of the **knowledge of salvation**; for he is not the author of salvation itself, he is only God's instrument in preaching and teaching it to God's people, here the Jews. But this "knowledge of salvation" is not a mere idea, as when we conceive a thing without possessing it. It is the knowledge which includes saving faith, and is held in the heart by faith. — This is made doubly plain by the addition of the words: **in the remission of their sins**. The idea is not that God's people through the prophet John should merely learn to know that salvation consists in the remission of sins, but that they should have the knowledge of salvation in having the remission of their sins. John afterwards "preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins," Mark 1, 4. How this is connected with the Messiah is shown in the next verse. "Ἀφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν, **remission of sins**, of the guilt and punishment of sins, is the central doctrine of the Bible, and the fundamental article in the confession of the Church. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (Jacobs 92, 51) shows how all the work of Christ must be referred to this article: "It is not enough

to believe that Christ was born, suffered, was raised again, unless we add also this article, which is *the final cause of the history*: 'The forgiveness of sins.' To this article the rest must be referred, *viz.*, that, for Christ's sake, and not for the sake of our merits, forgiveness of sins is given us. For what need would there be, that Christ be given for our sins, if for our sins our merits can give satisfaction?" The classic definition of justification, or the forgiveness of sins, in our Confessions is found in the Formula of Concord (Jacobs 571, 9): "A poor sinful man is justified before God, i. e., absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins, and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and adopted into sonship and heirship of eternal life, without any merit or worth of his own, also without all preceding, present or subsequent works, out of pure grace, alone because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Christ, whose obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness." Calov links all the other statements of Zacharias like a chain with the forgiveness of sins: John ministers unto it; his preaching, which works faith, is the means of apprehending it; salvation is the essence of it; the mercy of God is the fountain of it; the dayspring from on high is the meritorious cause of it; illumination and the walking of our feet on the way of peace is the result of it.

V. 78: **Because of the tender mercy of our God** must be connected directly with "the remission of sins." Διά = because, or on account of; σπλάγχνα ἐλέους = bowels of pity or mercy. The Greeks as well as the Jews (comp. the Hebr. *rachamim*) considered the bowels the seat of the emotions and affections; compare Col. 3, 12; we now speak of the heart only, but the ancients included it in the σπλάγχνα as a principal part. Zacharias means to say that the forgiveness of sins

is on account of the tender mercy (margin: heart of mercy) on God's part. He agrees with the publican's cry: God be merciful to me a sinner! — **Whereby the dayspring shall visit us** — ἐν οἷς is instrumental and refers to σπλάγχνα ἐλέους: "through which." The R. V. has the future, ἐπισκέπεται, putting the aorist in the margin. The majority of texts read ἐπισκέπατο: "hath visited. The aorist agrees finely with the previous aorists in v. 68 and 69: "hath visited and hath raised up a horn of salvation." If this horn, the Messiah, was already raised up (compare the words of Elizabeth in v. 43-45), Zacharias could very properly say: "the dayspring from on high *hath visited* us." The following infinitive attends to the futurity of the Messiah's work: ἐπιφᾶναι, "in order to shine," etc., for the salvation of men to the end of time. — **The dayspring from on high**, not merely ἀνατολή, but ἀνατολή ἐξ ὕψους, followed besides by the verb ἐπιφᾶναι, therefore not the "Branch" spoken of in Jer. 23, 5; 33, 15; Zech. 3, 8; 6, 12, which the Septuagint translated ἀνατολή, but analogous to "the light of the Gentiles," Is. 49, 6 (Luke 2, 32), and similar references to the Messiah, Mal. 4, 2; Is. 9, 2; 60, 1. Noesgen thinks "the dayspring from on high" = only the beginning of salvation (impersonal); but Meyer rightly points out the personification of the term by means of the verb ἐπεσκέπατο, "hath visited," comp. v. 68. What a glorious image of the Messiah, especially for the Advent season — the Dayspring from on high, whether we think with Malachi of the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings, rising after the long night of waiting, or of a great star, sending its light of hope radiantly into the night! — V. 79: In the word **to shine** (ἐπιφᾶναι, aorist infinitive of purpose) all the benignant work of Christ is embraced, his love radiating upon us, and all his deeds of love spreading over us. **Upon them that sit in darkness and the shadow**

of death — here the same people are meant as in the next clause, “to guide *our* feet” *etc.*, the Israelites to whom Zacharias himself belonged. As shown above this reference of Zacharias to Israel alone is not intended to be exclusive of the Gentile world, as far as the final extent of the Messianic blessings is concerned. Zacharias’ description is powerful; compare Is. 9, 2. The Israelites in their lost condition are pictured as καθήμενοι, “those sitting,” i. e., in utter helplessness, tired, worn out, giving up the struggle; “in darkness” like a caravan lost in the desert sands, with night settled over it, and nothing left but the expectation of death (Godet); “and the shadow of death,” an intensification of the picture — death standing so close that his shadow falls over those sitting in helplessness. Can a more deplorable and desperate condition be imagined? It exists today, right in the midst of Christendom, in the hearts of all those who have not yet allowed the Dayspring from on high to shine into them. But think how the dread shadows all flee when the Dayspring shines forth! Where men sat wretchedly, they rise to their *feet* joyously; where in the darkness they knew not whither to turn, now they are *guided* aright; where there was nothing but death’s shadow, there is now the bright and shining *way of peace: to guide our feet into the way of peace.* Τοῦ κατευθῆναι like τοῦ δοῦναι in v. 74 and 77: “in order to guide,” with the idea that the guiding is the intended purpose of the shining. Israel had lost the right way, Is. 53, 6; 59, 8-9, and who will count the number of those equally lost today. “The way of peace” is the path which itself is full of true peace, and, of course, leads to peace. On this path we are to walk, as above, in v. 75, all our days. And peace is far more than the *feeling* of calmness and rest, which might be deceptive, it is the *condition* of real harmony and friendship between God and us, established by Christ and made

ours through him. The way of peace is the way of salvation. The first word of Zacharias was "blessed," his last is "peace."

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The simplest type of sermon is the analytical. The preacher takes his text apart, and on each of the parts builds a corresponding part of his sermon. The unity of these parts, put into a summary statement, is his theme. It is, of course, identical with the unity of the text. Proceeding thus with our Advent text we readily discover two main parts: 1) Zacharias praises God for sending his promised redemption, v. 68-75; 2) Zacharias foretells his son's work in proclaiming this redemption, v. 76-79. The theme would thus be: *Zacharias and the Divine Redemption*. The formulation of theme and parts may be varied and improved; the substance remains the same.—But there is a deeper type of analysis. It deals with the thoughts, the main concepts, the vital statements in the text. These are laid out in order, and each is made the basis of a part in the sermon in the same order as presented in the text. A summary statement again furnishes the theme. Here is a sample of this type:

Zacharias' Advent Song:

He sings of *I. Redemption; II. Salvation; III. Victory; IV. Service; V. Peace*.—An applicatory feature may be put into the theme, one connecting the hearers personally with all these Advent blessings: **Let Us Sing With Zacharias This Advent Morn** the song of *I. Redemption; etc.*

The preacher should know about *auxiliary concepts* in formulating themes and parts. Such concepts must match and fit the contents of the text in a natural manner. Often they embody a beautiful figure of speech, and if rich enough may be carried through the parts and the entire sermon. We have already used two such auxiliary concepts in the theme "Zacharias' Advent Song," namely the idea of "Advent," and that of a "song." Take another, that of "blessings":

Our Advent Blessings in Zacharias' Hymn of Praise.

We have

- I. *Redemption.*
- II. *A Horn of Salvation in David's house.*
- III. *The knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins.*
- IV. *A life of holy service in the way of peace.*

A beautiful auxiliary concept is that of "the gates of grace opened anew":

Zacharias Opens the Gates of Grace for Us Anew.

He does it with:

- I. *A song of praise on his lips.*
- II. *The light of the Dayspring from on high in his eyes.*
- III. *The victory of the Horn of Salvation crowning his head.*
- IV. *The remission of sins in his heart.*
- V. *The way of peace beneath his feet.*

There are great possibilities in the employment of auxiliary concepts, limited only by the ability of the preacher in finding and fittingly using them. There is one great danger — an undisciplined imagination which may grab at bizarre figures, rank secular ideas, images that jar and offend biblical taste.

In the last outline presented a transposition was found necessary. We placed "the Horn of Salvation" which is mentioned in v. 69 *after* "the Dayspring from on high" which occurs in v. 78. So also "the remission of sins" in v. 77 is put into the fourth part, while "the Dayspring" in v. 78 is put into the second part. Homiletically this is synthesis, as over against ordinary analysis. Synthesis takes the material which simple analysis draws from the text, and rearranges this material in a new order befitting the theme derived from the text. Synthetic arrangements are free to place what is last in the text, first in the sermon, and vice versa. The pearls strung together in the text are restrung to form a new grouping or pattern, one adapted best to the theme. Synthesis thus affords the preacher great liberty in presenting the thoughts of the text — it opens a vast range of new, interesting, lovely possibilities before him. Here is a real challenge to his homiletical skill.

An outline like the following is entirely objective in form:

Zacharias' Advent Heart.

- I. *Praising God's grace.*
- II. *Rejoicing in Christ's work.*
- III. *Appropriating his gifts.*
- IV. *Entering his service.*

There is the auxiliary concept of the "Advent heart," and this indicates how the subjective element, so vital in every sermon, can be woven into the elaboration. Objective outlines are per-

missible, but not sermons altogether objective. They would leave the hearer cold. So in this outline the heart of Zacharias is to be used as a mirror for our own hearts in praising God, etc. — Here is an outline subjective in form:

Our Continuation of Zacharias' Hymn of Praise.

Let us praise the Lord God of Israel, for

- I. *The words of the prophets are now completely fulfilled.*
- II. *The work of Zacharias' son is now completely done.*
- III. *The Savior himself has finished the work of salvation.*
- IV. *All that remains for us is to appropriate what God has done to glorify his name.*

There is the auxiliary idea of "the continuation of Zacharias' hymn of praise." There is synthesis in the arrangement of the material. Finally, the entire text is put vividly into personal relation with our hearers of today. The outline itself is strongly subjective. — The following is similar:

Salvation, our Advent Song.

- I. *Grounded in the mercy of God.*
- II. *Revealed in the coming of Christ.*
- III. *Imparted by the remission of sins.*
- IV. *Reflected in our service and praise.*

The new feature here is that the entire text is picked up by taking hold of one of its main concepts, namely "salvation." All else in the text is arranged to fall in its proper place under this central concept. It is like lifting a table cloth at one corner — the entire cloth will always come with it. Instead of "salvation" one might use "mercy" in this way, or one of the designations for Christ in the text, or any other vital idea in the text.

Occasionally a line from some well-known hymn may be used as a theme; more rarely lines from a hymn may serve also as formulations for the parts. So we offer this:

**"Strew the Palm, Prepare the Way,
This is High Reception Day!"**

- I. *Bright with the light of grace.*
- II. *Glorious with the coming of Christ.*
- III. *Rich with the gifts of salvation.*
- IV. *Glad with our gratitude and praise.*

The text is so rich in thought and expression that no sermon can possibly dwell on all that is here poured out by Zacharias. That means that the preacher must combine what belongs together and thus gather at least the bulk of this spiritual wealth for his sermon. Synthesis will greatly aid him in securing this result.

“O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright!”

- I. In thee all God's grace.*
- II. In thee all God's promises.*
- III. In thee all our salvation.*
- IV. In thee all our joy and peace.*

The “Morning Star” is Christ.

Since The First Sunday in Advent is the New Year's Day of the Christian Church, we may use this idea:

The New Church Year a Year of Grace.

It proclaims anew:

- I. Our darkness is lightened.*
- II. Our enemies are conquered.*
- III. Our righteousness is wrought.*
- IV. Our peace is assured.*

It will be observed that all these outlines, save the first one, have more than the stereotype two or three parts. Only a narrow homiletical traditionalism will keep the preacher shackled to two or three parts. There is no homiletical, psychological, ecclesiastical, or other law which demands such narrowness. We use variety in the matter of the number of parts, as well as in other things. The fewer parts, the more sub-parts; the more parts, the fewer sub-parts. Even seven parts, properly handled, require only 30 minutes. Beware of homiletical fossilization!

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Luke 17, 20-30

This text spans the entire time from the first to the second coming of Christ. There is the cross — most significant symbol! — at the beginning: “But first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation.” Then, throughout the ages following and until the end arrives, there is the “kingdom of God within you,” the spiritual kingdom which does not come with observation. Finally — and this is set forth with some fulness — there is the great end itself when the Son of man shall be revealed. The excellence of the text is in connecting the end with the beginning and the intervening time. The vision thus opened before us is unspeakably grand and comprehensive. We stand, like Moses, on a Pisgah height and see what lies behind us, and then what stretches in a glorious panorama before us. The text for the First Sunday in Advent bade us look back to the birth of all our spiritual blessings; this text takes us as we stand in our day and age now, and, holding fast to all that has gone before and all that now is for us, bids us look forward to the day that shall come when the Son of man shall accomplish his second advent. The general theme of the text may therefore be expressed in the words: *Looking from the First to the Second Advent.*

It seems probable that Christ spoke these words in “a certain village,” v. 12, on the border-line between Samaria and Galilee. At least we may take it that it was here he encountered the Pharisees with their inquiry. The words to his disciples may have been spoken on the further journey, the end of which was Jerusalem and Christ’s passion. Compare Luke 18, 31 and 35.

The Pharisees, these strict observers of the Law and the rabbinical traditions, are dogging the steps of Jesus. Even here in this unnamed village, as Jesus journeys towards the Holy City, they are at hand, and their presence bodes no good. They put a question to Jesus, inquiring, **when the kingdom of God cometh**. What their motive is in asking this, is not apparent, for Luke is content to state the mere question without explaining any of the circumstances, and the answer of Jesus betrays nothing concerning the questioners beyond their wrong opinions concerning the character of the kingdom and the manner of its coming. Some think that the question has a touch of *ridicule* in it, as if the Pharisees mean to say, You have talked so much about the kingdom, but we have seen nothing of it as yet; when will it come? Others think the question is intended to *tempt* Jesus, after the usual fashion of the Pharisees: he calls himself the Messiah, and claims that his works demonstrate it — when now will he say his kingdom comes? But it is impossible to verify either of these conjectures or any other, for we have no data whatever. The fact of the case is, that Luke ignores the motive and intent of the questioners altogether, mentioning their question only for the sake of the answer Jesus gave, and for the further explanation he added: and we must be content with that. — **He answered them**, as in so many cases, even when faulty and tempting question were asked, because they touched things vital to himself and his work, and to men's souls. Though the questioners may deserve a rebuke instead of an answer, Jesus replies, and with patient, kindly mastery lets the light of truth shine forth. — **The kingdom of God cometh not with observation**. When Jesus uses the term ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, it is not the same as when the Pharisees use it, and the difference must be carefully noted. The Pharisees ask, When does it come? This

betrays their false conception of it, which Jesus corrects by stating how it comes, and making clear at once that it is come already. "The Jews, as is well known, expected a Messiah who would come in all the pomp and gorgeousness of earthly kings and make Israel a nation of wealth and magnificence and power that should be the glory of all lands. What the prophets said of the kingdom of truth and grace and salvation, which he should set up in this world of sin and death, was misinterpreted to mean that the Jews should be a great nation that should rule the world and make all people tributary to its splendor. When the Messiah came, his lowliness of outward circumstances was an offense to them. 'He came unto his own, but his own received him not.'" Loy, *Augsburg Confession*, 829. The coming of such a kingdom would naturally be **with observation**, it would dazzle men's eyes with outward display. The appearance of Jesus harmonizes so little with such a kingdom, that there does seem to be a tinge of ridicule in the question, When will it come? These men naturally have not seen a sign of it, and refuse to accept Jesus as the Messiah. What he means by "the kingdom of God" is finely set forth in Luther's Large Catechism (*Book of Concord*, Jacobs, 455, 51 and 53): "But what is the kingdom of God? Answer: Nothing else than what we learn in the Creed, that God sent his Son Jesus Christ our Lord into the world to redeem and deliver us from the power of the devil, and to bring us to himself; and to govern us as a King of righteousness, life and salvation against sin, death and an evil conscience. And besides he has given us His Holy Ghost, to apply the same to us by his holy Word, and to illuminate and strengthen us by his power in the faith. . . . For God's kingdom comes to us in two ways; first, here temporarily through the Word and faith; secondly, in eternity forever through revelation.

We therefore pray for both, *viz.* that it may come to us who are not yet therein, and to us who have received the same, by daily increase, and hereafter in eternal life. All that is but as much as to say: Dear Father, we pray, give first thy Word that the Gospel be preached effectively throughout the world, and secondly, that it be received in faith, and work and live in us, so that through the Word and the power of the Holy Ghost thy kingdom may prevail among us, and the kingdom of the devil be overcome, that it may have no right or power over us, until at last it shall be utterly destroyed, and sin, death and hell shall be exterminated, that we may live forever in perfect righteousness and blessedness." — To the Pharisees Jesus speaks of his present kingdom, which **cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or, There! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you.** Ἴδού is used as an interjection with the acute accent, instead of the circumflex, which it would have as a form of the verb, imperative middle. Μετὰ παρατηρήσεως = with watching, *adspectabili modo* (Grimm). The verb παρατηρεῖν and the noun παρατήρησις are used at times in an evil sense, *insidiosa observatio*, but very frequently also in a general sense, for instance when a physician watches the symptoms of a patient. Jesus himself explains this phrase by the words which immediately follow: "No one shall say, Behold, here! or, There!" (near, or far away). The presence and power of Christ's kingdom in the world shall indeed manifest itself in various ways; it shall be like a leaven, yet also like the spreading mustard plant. But in its nature it is a *spiritual* kingdom, not of this world, and its presence is not marked by the external show and pageantry of earthly kingdoms. Therefore the world and worldly men do not even see it, and do not point to it saying, Lo, here, or, There! They ignore it. To them it is a hallucination and dream of men, and

they think they must concern themselves with weightier matters, the "real" things of business, politics, art, etc. Romanists, however, "have endeavored and still endeavor to realize the Jewish vision by setting up a papal kingdom of this world whose pomp and power shall exceed all kingdoms in greatness and glory and to which all nations and peoples shall be subject. And among those who refuse subjection to the Antichrist of Rome the dream has not entirely vanished." Loy, *Augsb. Conf.*, 830. Romanizing tendencies among Protestants endeavor to make the church an outward polity, and chiliasts dream of an outward reign of Christ at last, here on earth with his saints, for a thousand years. **For lo**, — and this is a different lo from the first, it ushers in a highly important fact as proof (γάρο) for the previous statement — **the kingdom of God** — its mention here for the third time lends the sentence a certain solemnity — **is within you**. Commentators divide on the interpretation of ἐντὸς ὑμῶν, some translate *in animis vestris*, others *intra vos*, and the R. V. offers in the margin "in the midst of you." The difficulty is that Jesus is speaking to the Pharisees, in whose hearts the kingdom certainly was not, for Jesus himself says of them, "Ye are of your father the devil." This leads Meyer, Zahn, and others to reject "within you" and to translate "in the midst of you." The trouble is, this translation leaves the answer of Jesus lame; the very point of his reply is bent and broken. "Not with observation" — "for in the midst of you," is not a clear and clean contrast, since a thing may well be in your midst and be altogether visible and subject to observation. The γάρο demands a convincing reason why the kingdom does not come "with observation," and "in the midst of you" is not such a reason, whereas "within you" is; for the things that are within you are not subject to general observation. Moreover, Jesus says that his

kingdom cannot be located here or there outwardly, after the manner of kingdoms that come by observation; and we cannot think that in the same breath he himself locates it right here in the midst of the Pharisees. Jesus is not locating his kingdom at all, which disposes of Meyer's and Zahn's objection, that Jesus cannot ascribe his kingdom to the Pharisees. He is not ascribing it to anyone in particular, he is simply describing the character of it, and *the character of it* is "within you," ἐντὸς ὑμῶν. Stelhorn is therefore entirely right when he paraphrases and explains the words of Jesus as follows: "He briefly replied that his kingdom was by no means of such a character that its coming could be observed by the eyes of the body, or that a definite locality could be assigned to it, since it is of a spiritual nature, changing *the heart* and making it the holy and happy abode of God." *Commentary*, I, 239.

V. 22. Luke mention **his disciples** in a way which shows that these words were addressed only to them, and not to the Pharisees; either these had left, or Jesus and his disciples had gone on. The lesson the Pharisees need is that the kingdom is within, a truly spiritual thing; the lesson the disciples need is that the kingdom within shall shine forth gloriously in the day of Jesus Christ. **The days will come**, plural, many of them, from time to time. Jesus does not say what shall happen on these days; he lets us infer that from the effect these days will have upon the disciples — **when, amid tribulation and persecution, ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man**, to refresh and gladden your hearts with its sight. This cannot well signify a day like those in the past when Jesus in lowliness walked familiarly with his disciples on earth (Besser), but must mean a day of that great period to come when Christ shall reign in glory, triumphing over his foes, and crowning all his dis-

ciples; "a manifestation of his omnipotence and majesty, though for ever so short a time" (Stellhorn). This interpretation accords also with ἰδεῖν, "to see," and with the denial of this desire, **and ye shall not see it**; for here we walk by faith, and not by sight (note above: "with observation"). — **Son of man** (used over eighty times in the Scriptures, mostly by Jesus himself) means literally in the Aramaic in which it was spoken "a man," thus naming him according to his human nature; at the same time, however, it always refers to the prophecy concerning the Messiah, Dan. 7, 13: "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven," etc., and is therefore equal to Messiah. This passage, however, gives us the answer to the question which commentators generally have raised: Why did Jesus call himself so constantly "the Son of Man?" There is more in the name than merely a reference to Christ's human nature and to his Messianic office. "One *like* the Son of Man" means One who is really more than man, though in the form of man. Nebe (*Evangelische Perikopen*, I, p. 151 etc., and *Leidensgeschichte*, I, p. 5) brings out the true meaning when he defines "Son of Man" as λόγος ἑνσαρκος; Christ is *the Son of God in the form of Man*; as such he is the Messiah. He is more than *homo κατ' ἔξοχὴν*, an interpretation made popular by Schleiermacher. How can it be said of the ideal man that he is lord of the Sabbath (Matth. 12, 8 etc.), or that he has power to forgive sins (Matth. 9, 6)? Hofmann's idea that the omission of the article before ἀνθρώπου shows Christ to be the one toward whom from the creation of the first man the whole race tended, i. e. the crown of the race, is also unsatisfactory, since Paul when he compares Adam and Christ does not call the latter the "Son of Man," but "the second Adam." The old church (Eusebius, Origen, Augustine, etc.) has interpreted "Son of Man" "the

Word made flesh," and as the counterpart of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. Christ distinguished two modes of his existence, the one before he became man, the other when he had assumed our nature; thus ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου = he who became man = the Son of God who assumed our human flesh and blood.

V. 23: **And they** — who? Their own words tell us, as well as Christ's warning against them — false prophets, false Christs. They **shall say** (ἐροῦσιν, from ἐρω, fut. to the 2nd aorist εἶπον) **to you, Lo, there! Lo, here!** Compare Matthew 24, 24, etc. The spiritual coming of Christ and his kingdom of grace into the hearts of men will not attract the eyes of worldly-minded men nor cause them to cry out, Lo, here! or, There! But it will be different as regards his second visible and glorious coming; some, disregarding his own plain prophecies and warnings, will raise the cry, Lo, there! Lo, here! demonstrating their own folly and falseness. The exclamations "Lo, there! Lo, here!" admit of a wide range. Some will imagine they see plain indications and signs of Christ's immediate coming, as the Flagellantes in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; as even Bengel, otherwise a fine Lutheran theologian, who figured out the return of Christ for the summer of 1836 and caused many devout people to leave their homes in order to meet the Lord in the east; and others with all manner of fanciful ideas. Some again will represent themselves to be Christ, incarnations or manifestations of Christ, or forerunners of his great return, gathering about them thousands of deluded followers; to this class belonged Dowie with his shattered Zion, and others of earlier days. — Against them all Christ's word is very explicit, **go not away, nor follow after them**; do not leave home, duty, work, faith, the church, do not become a follower of them, chasing after them (διώκω = to pursue). The aorist imperative is stronger and more

peremptory than the present. For many this word of Jesus has been spoken in vain; it should not be for us. — V. 24: Jesus gives us the great reason for his command and warning (γάρο): his coming, when it occurs, will be magnificently and instantaneously visible to all the world. **For as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of the one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall the Son of man be in his day.** “Out of the one part,” ἐκ τῆς, supply χάραξ. Some authorities omit “in his day.” Not the mere suddenness, or the unexpected flashing of the lightning, or the brightness of its dazzling light, is the point of comparison, but the universal and instantaneous visibility of it when it flashes across the sky; so shall the Son of man be at his second coming. Nor need the shape of the earth or its physical extent cause us one instant of doubt, for the world itself shall be changed, sun, moon, and stars be moved from their places; and grand as the simile of the lightning is, it is only a faint illustration of what Christ’s appearance in his day shall be, who is greater than heaven and earth and the whole universe of created things, the glory of whose countenance shall penetrate everywhere.

V. 25. What a contrast: heavenly glory and majesty — suffering, rejection, death! Jesus frequently linked the two together. Πρῶτον, **first**, refers to time — Jesus shall not appear in glory until after he has passed through his passion. This cuts off and destroys all the vain Jewish dreams of a dazzling earthly Messianic realm. **Must**, δεῖ (followed by αὐτὸν παθεῖν, an accusative with the infinitive), is used to express every kind of necessity; here, however, as the entire Gospel shows us, the necessity is in no sense fatalistic, but the expression of the gracious will of God for our salvation. It is the δεῖ of love, of voluntary sacrifice, of blessed, saving purpose, and thus one of

the most comforting words of Scripture. Compare the same word in the first saying of Jesus, Luke 2, 49, ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου δεῖ εἶναί με. — **Suffer many things**, a comprehensive summary of all the suffering inflicted upon Jesus. Who will count, measure, and weigh what lies in the one word πολλά? We should not say that Jesus knew only from the Old Testament prophecies, and not by virtue of his omniscience, what his suffering in detail was to be. When at times he recounts the separate features of his passion, he frequently does it with a vividness and explicitness far beyond the old prophecies, naming directly some of the terrible indignities, and especially also the exact mode of his death (crucifixion). Jesus never estimated these sufferings as in any way less than they afterwards proved to be. — He here mentions one feature of them especially **and be rejected of this generation**, ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι, to be rejected, discarded, cast out, after due examination; compare δοκιμάζω. His entire passion was such a rejection; this appears already in the conspiracy of the Jewish leaders, then in their sentence of death when they tried him, in their delivering him to Pilate, in their cry that they had no king but Cæsar, and finally in the death of Jesus on the cross. Godet thinks this rejection on the part of the Jews will end with the final conversion of the nation, Luke 13, 35; but he misinterprets the passage (see the exposition of the last verse of the text for the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, Matth. 23, 34-39). **This generation** is used in the same general sense as in John's passage (1, 11), "He came unto his own, and *his own* received him not." The nation as such rejected Jesus, but this does not exclude the fact that a remnant believed and accepted him.

V. 26. The two historical illustrations which Jesus adduces are so effective, because they are not only the standard types of judgment in the Old Testa-

ment (brought forward again in the New in 1 Pet. 3, 20; 2, 5-9, and Jude 7), but also truly depict the character of those on whom the judgment falls, and, because of this their character, the suddenness, the unexpectedness, and the completeness of the judgment for them. Jesus plainly treats the flood and the destruction of Sodom as historical facts, and at the same time by his description of these events shows that he accepts without question every word of the Old Testament record as entirely true. — **In the days of the Son of man** — the plural is properly used instead of the singular, because a period is meant, corresponding to **the days of Noah**, namely the 120 years of grace vouchsafed to Noah's generation. In v. 29 the reference is not to the days in which the people of Sodom lived carelessly and securely, but to the one day when the rain of fire and brimstone from heaven descended, and this is a type of "the day that the Son of man is revealed." — **They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage** ($\gamma α μ ῖ ζ ω$ = to be married, by parents, the imperfect tenses indicate repeated action); and this was all, there was nothing higher. It is a masterly description of that blind, secure, unbelieving, ungodly generation in Noah's day, whose successors are with us now, and shall fill the world when the great end comes. Such a man was Dives in the parable, clothed in purple and fine linen and faring sumptuously every day. To eat, drink, marry, and be given in marriage is not wrong in itself, but to make life nothing more than eating, etc., to forget the soul, God, salvation, worship, service of God, eternity, this is not only wrong and sin, but the most fatal sin of all. The Scriptures tell us that the people in the days of Noah were exceedingly wicked, likewise that the sin of Sodom cried to heaven; but Jesus does not mention this excessive wickedness, he is content to describe the soil from which it naturally

grew, and will always grow, namely hearts devoid of God and godliness, sunken in earthly, temporal, transient things. — **Until the day that Noah entered into the ark**, which he did at God's bidding, the time of grace for the ungodly race having reached its end. Ἄχρι ἧς ἡμέρας = ἄχρι τῆς ἡμέρας (ἐν) ἧ, the noun being drawn into the relative clause, the relative pronoun usurping the place of the article. The word for the ark, ὁ κιβωτός, is suggestive, as it is used in Heb. 9, 4 for the ark of the covenant, and in Rev. 11, 19 for the ark in the heavenly sanctuary; the word itself means a wooden chest. — **And the flood came, and destroyed them all**, may be taken as coordinate with "they ate" etc., or with "Noah entered"; we prefer the latter. Κατακλισμός connotes utter destruction, as we see from the English derivative: cataclysm. Καὶ ἀπώλεσεν πάντας — majestic in its simplicity — not even a modifying word, the aorist here for the historical fact, like the preceding ἦλθεν. **All**, πάντας — nothing can be more complete. In this final sentence the verbs are put first for emphasis, thus: And there *came* the flood, and *destroyed* all. — V. 28: **Likewise** places the second illustration alongside the first; they are a pair, parallel, the one intensifies the other, for all the essential features are the same — the hearts sunken in earthly, sensual things, the fatal blindness and false security, the swiftness and completeness of the doom. **They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded** — the last four verbs vary from the description of Noah's time, but they mention actions of the same general kind, indicating that *all* such occupations are meant as the round of lives spurning God and salvation. Note the imperfect tense in them all: this they *kept* doing, this — and nothing more. — V. 29: **But in the day that Lot went out from Sodom**, even as Noah following God's bidding, the time of grace being ended at last. In both Noah

and Lot we have preachers of righteousness (2 Pet. 2, 5 and 7) sent to warn those wicked generations. As long as they are warning, grace may still be had; when God takes them away, doom descends. — **It rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all.** “All,” πάντα, or ἅπαντας the same completeness as in the previous instance, the first by water, these by fire. “Of the catastrophe which destroyed the city and the district of Sodom we can hardly hope ever to form a satisfactory conception. Not only does the narrative of Gen. 19 expressly state that the cities were miraculously destroyed, but all the references to the event in subsequent writers in the Old and New Testament bear witness to the same fact. But what secondary agencies, besides fire, were employed in the accomplishment of the punishment, cannot be safely determined in the almost total absence of exact scientific description of the natural features of the ground round the lake. It is possible that when the ground has been thoroughly examined by competent observers, something may be discovered which may throw light on the narrative. Until then, it is useless, however tempting, to speculate. But even this is almost too much to hope for; because . . . there is no warrant for imagining that the catastrophe was a geological one, and in any other case all traces of action must at this distance of time have vanished.” Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*, 3069. What the once beautiful country is like this day we read in Deut. 29, 23: “Brimstone, and salt, and burning . . . not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein”; also in Is. 13, 20: “Never to be inhabited, nor dwelt in from generation to generation; where neither Arab should pitch tent, nor shepherd make fold”; and Jer. 49, 18: “No man abiding there, nor son of man dwelling in it”; Ps. 107, 34: “A fruitful land turned into saltness”; Amos 4, 11: Overthrown and burnt.

There is not a particle of evidence that Sodom and the other four destroyed cities, or the sites on which they stood, have sunken into the Dead Sea, and it is an old legend, and only a legend, that beneath the waters of the sea traces of these cities could be seen. We cannot agree with Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, 293, that the shores of the Dead Sea are covered with a white crust of salt, and that there are no shells as along the Sea of Galilee. When we visited the locality we found a gravel shore and picked up many shells. The water is briny and has the taste of chemicals. One can wade and bathe along the north shore. This Sea is 1300 feet below the sea level. The whole area is devoid of verdure, but we found no constant haze. We did see shallows, from which the natives allowed the waters to evaporate in order to obtain the white salt. The destroyed cities probably stood at the lower end of the Sea. — **After the same manner**, as concerns the condition of men's hearts, and the sudden, unexpected descent of judgment, and its completeness for the wicked. **Shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed** — the last day of the world. Ἀποκαλύπτεται, present tense, as if it were at this very moment, so certain, so vivid; compare 1 Cor. 1, 7; 2 Thess. 1, 7; 1 Pet. 1, 7 for the use of ἀποκάλυψις. — Nothing is said concerning the fate of the godly "in the day of the Son of man"; it is sufficiently indicated in the escape of Noah and of Lot.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT.

It is a false notion, a dream of many, that the culture of the human race will finally prevail and introduce us to the golden age, when such things as war and religious persecution shall be impossible. The Word of God offers a different prediction concerning the course of history. Who among us has not felt dimly in spite of all cultural progress, yea, on account of this very progress, that perhaps we are approaching wars such as the world hitherto has never seen, and fanatical persecutions compared with which all previous ones are mere child's play? Chris-

tianity will indeed proceed victoriously to the ends of the earth, and the Lord has himself told us that the Gospel shall be preached as a testimony to all nations, and then the end shall come. But on the other hand, in Christendom itself a final terrible conflict will ensure, a battle between truth and falsehood, between light and darkness, between Christ and Anti-Christ, and therefore the cross and persecution, even unto blood, await the believers as the end approaches, and there will be tribulation such as has never been before. (Adapted from Pank).—

Color in theme and parts is obtained by using terms of speech found in the text, so that when theme and parts are stated they at once remind us of the text. Color is always highly desirable. It individualizes and beautifies at the same time. When rightly used it shows that the preacher has really penetrated into his text. One of the serious homiletical faults is abstraction, or generalization. This erases all color as well as all distinctive features offered in the text, and hands out, instead, the commonplaces manufactured in the preacher's own mind. Learn even to think, not merely to speak, in the concrete, and avoid the abstract and general. Then you will have color, and much more besides. It seems that all college students love the abstract; and for some even a sound seminary course is not quite enough to raise them above the pale, cold abstract, to the rich and varied concrete, and to the warm, lovely, distinctive color filling the text. It seems that some men can dip their brushes into texts full of the very richest colors, and yet transfer to the canvas of their sermons nothing but dull and muddy gray. They may paint homiletical barns and sheds; they cannot paint homiletical pictures fit for the inside of a church that is only moderately decorated.

Here is a theme with color:

The Kingdom of God is Within You.

- I. *It comes not with observation*—it is spiritual.
- II. *In it ye must suffer many things*—it is marked by tribulation.
- III. *It cannot be understood by those who care only to eat, drink, and marry*—it is not fleshly.
- IV. *Yet in the end it shall shine like lightning from one end of heaven to the other*—its hidden glory shall be revealed at last.

Theme as well as parts are drawn from statements in the text itself.— Here is another:

The Question, When the Kingdom of God Should Come.

- I. *It is already within us* — let that be our Advent praise.
- II. *Though it bids us suffer many things* — which is our Advent mark of distinction.
- III. *Yet like Noah and Lot we shall finally escape* — and this is our Advent hope.

The color is less pronounced in Sommer's outline:

**"Awake! Sons of the Kingdom,
The King is Drawing Nigh!"**

- I. *Invisibly, yet establishing his kingdom.*
- II. *Disregarded, yet ever ruling in might.*
- III. *Expected by few, yet in the end revealed in glory.*

The plain substance of the text may furnish us a good theme, one, too, which will enable us to use plenty of text color in the elaboration:

Between the Two Great Advents.

- I. *Behind us the cross.*
 - a) The atoning sacrifice of Christ.
 - b) The beginnings of the spiritual kingdom of Christ.
- II. *About us the kingdom.*
 - a) Invisible, yet mighty and growing from age to age, little thought of by the world, yet the one vital and all-important thing in every age and for every man.
 - b) Antagonized by false kingdoms and by the defection of many.
 - c) Adorned by tribulation, the mark of every true citizen of the kingdom.
 - d) Surrounded by increasing worldliness and earthly-mindedness, as in the days of Noah and Lot.
- III. *Before us the glory of the end.*
 - a) The coming of the Son of man, suddenly visible, like the lightning's flash.
 - b) The catastrophe of judgment for all ungodly men.

- c) The eternal deliverance for all believers, as when Noah and Lot were saved.— Be ready!

We will add one more, which puts the application to ourselves in the forefront.

He has come.

Remember, He Comes Again!

That means for us now:

- I. *Be not offended*—now “not with observation.”
- II. *Be not misled*—“See here; or See there.”
- III. *Be not disheartened*—“ye shall not see it,” v. 22.
- IV. *Be not swept away*—“as in the day of Noah
. . . in the days of Lot.”

In the elaboration build up each part first, and only when the climax of each part is reached, state the sum of that part, but state it so that everybody will know what you are doing.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

Matthew 3, 1-11

Like the old gospels lesson for this day our text sets before us the figure of St. John; and we may say that the resemblance embraces another feature, for this text, like the old one, gives us a problem to solve concerning which commentators are divided. In the old text it was the question whether John doubted when he sent his disciples with an inquiry to Jesus; in this text it is the question concerning the character and efficacy of John's baptism and its relation to that of Christ. But the text otherwise furnishes such abundant material that the special problem it contains sinks into the background for the preacher. The chief figure in the text is John the Baptist with his call μετανοείτε. The two previous texts have told us of the two comings of Christ; this text bids us prepare. — Here the greatest of Advent preachers makes us his hearers and drives home in our hearts the call to repent. This is the distinctive feature of the text, giving it special fitness for this Sunday, and lending it an excellence all its own. Let it be well noted that of all the preparations made for the coming festival, for him of whom the past two Sundays told us he has come and he shall come, repentance is the most vital and necessary; for unless we repent and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, the Christ-child cannot enter our hearts, and the ax of judgment must descend upon us.

V. 1. **In those days** marks a general period of time; following the last verse of the previous chapter, where the residence of Jesus in the town of Nazareth is mentioned, the phrase is equal to: when Jesus still

lived in Nazareth. Matthew does not record the exact dates of the events in his Gospel; Luke tells us John came in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, thus about 29 years after the birth of Jesus. The historical or narrative present tense is used, **cometh**, παραγίνεται = makes his appearance, *tritt auf*. John lived secluded before this time, now he steps forth into public activity, and this not of his own choice, but at God's bidding, Luke 3, 2; John 1, 33; comp. Matth. 21, 25. — **John the Baptist** is evidently known to the first readers of Matthew's Gospel; John signifies *Jehovah has been gracious*, and he is named the Baptist because of his distinctive work, even Josephus designating him "John called the Baptizer." — The general statements: **In the wilderness of Judea**, "in all the country about Jordan," apply to the whole southern valley of the Jordan. St. John, however, with greater precision adds "in Bethabara beyond Jordan." Bethabara = "house of a ford or passage," and must have been considerably north of Jericho, within 30 miles of Cana of Galilee (comp. John 1, 43 and John 2). The most probable site is the northern ford, near Succoth, the same by which Jacob had crossed from Mahanaim. This "wilderness" is the most marked in the whole country, and never has been inhabited, except for the purpose of ascetic seclusion, as by the Essenes, and the hermits of later times. This "wilderness" accorded with the work of John. It was a picture of the spiritual state of the nation he had come to call to repentance. It called to mind the desert-wanderings of Israel for forty years, when their unbelief had shut them out of the land of promise for so long a time. — John cometh **preaching**, κηρύσσων, calling aloud as a herald, which — though in itself of neutral meaning (comp. 1 Pet. 3, 19) — is one of the standard New Testament terms for the preaching of the Gospel (κηρύξατε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, Mark 16, 15). John

had an immediate call to preach, as Luke 3, 2 informs us: "the word of God came" unto him, as to other prophets and messengers of God. Moreover, John was born a member of the Jewish tribe to whom the priestly functions belonged, and no Jew therefore questioned his authority to assume priestly functions, to teach and to perform religious rites.

V. 2. Matthew summarizes the preaching of the Baptist, **Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** Μετανοείτε is one of the most important words in the entire New Testament. Μετανοέω means originally: to perceive or understand afterwards, i. e. too late; then: to change one's mind; and thus: to repent. But it must be remembered that throughout the New Testament and in all Christian usage, from the very start, it has a depth of meaning far beyond what secular writers gave it. It signifies a religious change of heart, one for the better, away from sin and guilt, unto cleansing and forgiveness. Its synonym in general meaning is ἐπιστρέφειν, (to turn, to be converted). It is entirely a mistake to assume that in the mouth of John μετανοείτε means less than in the later preaching of the apostles, that with John it does not include faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah. John 1, 8 tells us of John, "The same came for a witness of the Light, that all men through him might *believe*"; Luke 3, 18 explicitly describes his preaching as εὐαγγελίζεσθαι; and the fruits of repentance which John demands, such as only *faith* in the Redeemer and the forgiveness of sins are able to produce. John does not belong, as some suppose, to the Old Testament prophets; for the Scriptures themselves, Mark 1, 1 etc., count his work as belonging to the ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ." Our Confessions repeatedly describe and explain the work of John in preaching repentance: "John is named a preacher of repentance, but 'for the remission of sins,' i. e. John

was to accuse all, and prove that they were sinners, that they might know what they were before God, and might acknowledge that they were lost men, and might thus be prepared for the Lord, to receive grace, and to expect and accept from him the remission of sins." *Smalcald Articles*, Jacobs 324, 5. These Articles call him "the fiery angel, St. John, the true preacher of repentance," 327, 30. The word repentance is sometimes used in a narrow sense to signify only *contrition*, "to truly acknowledge sins, from the heart to regret them, and to abstain therefrom" (Mark 1, 15; Acts 20, 21; Luke 24, 46-47); but where this narrow sense is not indicated the word stands for both *contrition and faith*, or "the entire conversion of man," as in our text; Luke 13, 5; 15, 7. *Formula of Concord*, Jacobs 590, 7 etc. "We say that *contrition* is the true terror of conscience, which feels that God is angry with sin, and which grieves that it has sinned . . . We therefore add as the second part of repentance, *Of faith in Christ*, that in these terrors the Gospel concerning Christ ought to be set forth to conscience, in which Gospel the remission of sins is freely promised concerning Christ. Therefore, they ought to believe that for Christ's sake sins are freely remitted to them." Apology, J. 181, 29 and 35. True *μετάνοια* is wrought by the Law and the Gospel.

John states as the reason (*γάρο*) for his call to repentance, **for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**. Men ought to repent at all times, but the special nearness of God's grace in any manner is always a special reason why without any further delay this repentance should follow; and no greater nearness of grace can be imagined than the one heralded here by the Baptist. Compare on "the kingdom" the previous text, v. 20 and 21. "The kingdom of heaven" is really the same as "the kingdom of God"; Matthew has the former expression at least 32 times. The plural, *τῶν οὐρανῶν*,

is used like the Hebrew *schamajim*, comp. the Septuagint; it signifies the heavens as composed of many parts and containing many things. The very name indicates that "the kingdom of the heavens" is not a kingdom of this world, John 18, 36; but the one spoken of in Daniel 2, 44, which "the God of heaven shall set up, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." In Dan. 7, 14 we are told that it is given to "one like the Son of man," "that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." The kingdom of heaven must accordingly be thought of as coming from God in heaven, having heavenly character, heavenly powers, heavenly gifts. In the mouth of John the kingdom of heaven meant nothing political or merely national; we never meet a hint, even on the part of his enemies, that his preaching produced any political disturbance among the Jews. John's announcement of the kingdom of heaven did not fan into a blaze the Jewish hopes of a Messianic kingdom of earth. — The important statement which John makes is that the kingdom **is at hand**, ἤγγικεν from ἐγγίζω), has come near, and so now is near, a common significance of the perfect tense. The kingdom of heaven centers in the King from heaven; where he is — and only where he is, namely by faith in the hearts of believers — there is the kingdom, on this earth. Not only was Jesus approaching and near at hand, but by the revelation of himself as the Messiah, and by the completion of his redemptive work, he would stand forth as the King of salvation from heaven and enter by faith into the hearts of many. The nearness of the kingdom signifies the close proximity of Christ, his work, and the church. The γὰρ

then is justified in the highest degree; with this kingdom near, all they who had lived in sin, self-righteousness, or false security had reason to awake and make ready by true repentance, if they expected to enter and receive the blessings of the kingdom. One commentator ascribes "erroneous views" concerning the establishment of the kingdom to John, in that he supposed it would be set up by the immediate coming of the judgment. He really makes John a false prophet and assumes that they who obeyed his call were misled. But the "erroneous views" are only in the mind of this commentator. John's message throughout was "the word of God," Luke 3, 2.

V. 3. **For** introduces the reason for John's preaching, and at the same time, by directing attention to his appearance, the reason for the statement that the kingdom is at hand. As the advance herald he must preach thus and call men to repent; and as the advance herald, promised by Isaiah, his very presence and activity show that the King and the kingdom have come near. The coming of the Messiah, preceded by one crying in the wilderness and bidding men prepare, was foretold by Isaiah over 700 years before the event, chapter 40, 3-5. Jesus says: "This is he *of whom it is written*, Behold," etc. The restoration of their home-land to the Jews after the Babylonish captivity was only a minor part of God's grace toward them, the fullest measure of that grace did not appear until the Messiah came, and with that Isaiah comforted his people long before the great day arrived. — **The voice**; Jesus is called the Word. The idea is that John's entire activity is like a voice calling or shouting in the wilderness; John lends himself entirely to God as a voice whereby the people may be made to hear the call to prepare. All his desire and effort is to be such a voice — nothing more. Thus every preacher of the Gospel should be a voice, a voice of God. — **Make**

ye ready the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. The imagery is that of an oriental king with his retinue, for whom the roads are levelled and prepared, in order that he may reach his destination without difficulty. John was to call the Jews thus to prepare the way for the entrance of the Messiah into their hearts. "Such preparation is spiritual, it consists in the deep conviction and confession that you are unfit, a sinner, poor, damned and miserable with all the works you are able to do." Luther. Of ourselves, and by our own powers, we would never be able to make ready the way, nor is this the idea of Isaiah or of John; the power to perform this necessary work John offered in his preaching and his baptism. Comp. the author's *Eisenach Old Test. Selections*, p. 67 etc.

V. 4. John's appearance was in itself a mighty sermon. It was a call to all those who made food and drink, house and raiment their chief concern in life, to turn from such vanity and provide higher things. He was a living illustration of how little man needs here below, something we are ever prone to forget. And in drawing people out into the wilderness after him John made them share a bit of his own austere life. Men left their mansions, their offices, their shops, their usual round of life and sought for a time at least to think of something else. We are too much the slaves of our everyday labors and lives, many forgetting altogether that which is of supreme importance for all days and for eternity itself. In making this application from John's appearance it is not necessary to overdraw, as some artists do who represent the Baptist with a camel's skin girt about him; the fact is that he had an ἔνδυμα, a garment, woven, like the garments of the very poor, out of camel's hair, and was coarse and rough. Compare 2 Kgs. 1, 8, Elijah. The poor in the East still eat locusts, after removing the wings and

legs, and boiling or roasting them with salt. Palestine was famed for its wild bees and honey, which must have been the μέλι ἄγριον here meant.

V. 5. Matthew gives us a simple description of the profound impression produced by the appearance and preaching of John. Jerusalem, the proud capital of the nation, is mentioned first; the very center of Jewish life was stirred. No wonder the rest followed, from the country of Judea and all about Jordan. "On the banks of the rushing stream the multitudes gathered — the priests and scribes from Jerusalem, down the pass of Adummim; the publicans from Jericho on the south, and the Lake of Gennesaret on the north; the soldiers on their way from Damascus to Petra, through the Ghor Jordan gorge, in the war with the Arab chief Hareth; the peasants from Galilee, with ONE from Nazareth, through the opening of the plain of Esdraelon. The tall 'reeds' or canes in the jungle waved, 'shaken by the wind'; the pebbles of the bare clay hills lay around, to which the Baptist pointed as capable of being transformed into 'the children of Abraham'; at their feet rushed the refreshing stream of the never-failing river. There began that sacred rite, which has since spread throughout the world," namely Baptism.

V. 6. **And they were baptized of him in the river Jordan,** ἐβαπτίζοντο ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ. Stanley imagines this to have been "plunges beneath the water," i. e. immersions. Meyer does the same, as many others, though strange to say, he adduces no exegetical, but only a fanciful reason for his notion, namely that, because the μετάνοια included the *entire* man, the *entire* man had to be immersed in the Baptism; this logic is beyond us. Zahn very wisely admits that, while the passive ἐβαπτίζοντο as well as the active form in v. 11 make John the agent, nothing is indicated as to the mode of the act ascribed to him; still, when

Zahn tries to imagine what this mode might have been, he thinks of a *Vollbad*, a complete bath — and one is left to wonder why? *The Lutheran Commentary*, Schaeffer, concludes: “As the Scriptures never say that John immersed any person, it is probable that he baptized according to the mode which is observed when Christian Baptism is rightly administered, by sprinkling or pouring (aspersion or affusion). This mode was doubtless employed in reference to certain purificatory rites enjoined by the law and performed by sprinkling (see Lev. 14, 7 and 27; Num. 8, 7; 19, 13; Heb. 9, 13).” The lexicons all agree that βαπτίζω signifies to dip, to dip under or immerse, to wash, to wet, to cleanse or purify; if the original etymological meaning was to dip under, this became so modified in later use that merely to say βαπτίζω, without adding something explanatory, did not and could not convey the sense: I immerse. The word itself in its New Testament use is so broad, that it is out of the question to restrict it to one mode of applying water, it embraces different modes. Krauth (*Conservative Reformation*, p. 535), in speaking of Luther, explains this as follows: “That while Luther believed, in common with many philologists, that the etymological force of *baptismos* and *baptisma* is ‘immersion,’ its actual force in Biblical use is ‘washing,’ without reference to mode.” He continues: “The primitive mode of washing, in nations of warm or temperate countries, is usually by immersion. Hence the words in many languages for the two ideas of dipping and washing come to be synonyms — and as the word washing ceases to designate mode, and is equally applied, whether the water be poured, sprinkled, or plunged in, so does the word which, etymologically, meant to dip. It follows the mutation of its practical equivalent, and comes to mean washing, without reference to mode.” The contention of some Baptists that βαπτίζω signifies

only to "immerse" is altogether groundless. The connection of the word with "the river Jordan" (ἐβαπτίζοντο ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ποταμῷ) has led commentators quite generally to conclude that John must have baptized by immersion. His baptizing at Ænon, because there was much water there (John 3, 23) has been taken as a corroboration. As regard Ænon, which signifies "springs," there is still doubt as to its location (Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Hackett), and therefore the question as to whether the "many waters" were of a kind to admit of immersing multitudes, or only of supplying them with the necessary water for drinking, cannot be positively settled. Seiss and Gerfen urge the latter (for drinking). It is also pointed out that the New Testament nowhere uses a term or description for John's Baptism (or for Christ's) which *must* be understood *only* of immersion; that the vast number baptized by John (at least several hundred thousand in the space of about one year) excludes the idea of them being immersed; and that nowhere we find a hint as to any person preparing himself for Baptism by laying aside or arranging any part of his clothing, etc. To this is added the fact that all the pictorial representations we have of baptism, from the very earliest times on, never show immersion, but always some other mode. Comp. as decisive on this point *Baptism and Christian Archæology*, Clement F. Rogers, M. A. Oxford, Clarendon Press. Accordingly, the conclusion is drawn that John did not immerse, but employed some mode like those used in the purificatory rites so well known to the Jews. For us that is altogether enough. Compare on the Baptism of Christ by John, Epiphany, Matth. 3, 15; on Christ's institution, Matth. 28, 19, Trinity. The readiness with which the multitudes submitted to John's Baptism is explained first by the fact that purificatory rites by the application of water were not new or strange to

the Jews (compare, besides the references above, Ex. 19, 10; Lev. 15; 16, 26 and 28; 17, 15; 22, 4 and 6; Deut. 23, 10); and secondly, by the expectation that the Messiah, when he appeared, would employ some such purifying rite. Thus some supposed John himself to be the Messiah (Luke 3, 15); and when he denied it, they were prompt to enquire, "Why, then, baptizest thou?"

Lutheran theologians divide somewhat on the question as to *the nature and efficacy of John's Baptism*. Some hold that it was little more than a symbol, others that it conveyed the forgiveness of sin and was thus essentially of the same nature and efficacy as Christian Baptism. John "preached" (and what he preached he, of course, practiced) "the Baptism of repentance unto remission of sins," Mark 1, 4; Luke 3, 3, which cannot mean (Meyer) future forgiveness, but as surely as the repentance led to the Baptism, a forgiveness then and there. The similar phrase, to be baptized for the remission of sins, Acts 2, 38, certainly denoted forgiveness bestowed by Baptism. When Jesus speaks of Baptism to Nicodemus, the reference cannot be to the sacrament to be instituted after Christ's resurrection, but must be to John's Baptism, from which follows that this Baptism had the Holy Ghost in it and the power of regeneration, for of these things Jesus speaks to Nicodemus. We do not know that any of the apostles of Christ received any Baptism but that of John, yet Peter, who was thus baptized, declares that Baptism "saves," 1 Pet. 3, 21. Acts 19, 1-7 reports that certain believers who had received John's Baptism were baptized again by Paul, but there were other cases, the apostle themselves as already stated, who were not baptized a second time; therefore the repetition of the Baptism, when for any reason it was deemed necessary, is not an invalidation of John's Baptism. The Baptism of John ended with John and

with the preliminary Baptism of Jesus' disciples; it was superseded by the Baptism instituted by Christ. John's Baptism rested on a revelation less clear and complete than that of Christ; it was like the dawn compared to the full light of midday. In general it was on a level with John's preaching and work, while the Baptism of Christ was on a level with his work when that was completed at last. John's Baptism made followers of the Christ to come, Christ's Baptism followers of the Christ who had come. John's Baptism bestowed the forgiveness of sins which was to be acquired by Christ; Christ's Baptism, the forgiveness which Christ had acquired. John's Baptism was for Israel alone; Christ's for all nations. In this way the one superseded the other, while the first made ready for the second. The distinction of the Lutheran Cyclopaedia that John's Baptism was a washing of *repentance*, Christian Baptism, however, a washing of *regeneration* is fallacious, for where true repentance is found regeneration is also found and not merely a *promised* forgiveness, as the Cyclopaedia claims, but a forgiveness really *bestowed*. — **Confessing their sins**, namely in true repentance. This confession was connected with the Baptism, and was a condition of it, for the Pharisees and Sadducees were not baptized; ἐξομολογούμενοι, present participle, expresses time simultaneous with the main verb ἐβαπτίζοντο: were being baptized confessing (or while confessing) their sins. The confession was made in order, by means of the Baptism, to obtain the forgiveness of sin and the assurance of such forgiveness. It is not necessary to suppose that John had a fixed formula, or proceeded in one fixed manner.

V. 7. **The Pharisees** pretended to a high degree of holiness, for they observed not only the requirements of the Mosaic laws, but also the rabbinical traditions and regulations which were built like a

hedge around the Law. Christ reveals them to us as thorough hypocrites. **The Sadducees** rejected the rabbinical traditions, also the doctrine of the resurrection, of the angels and spirits, of immortality and judgment to come; they were free-thinkers with a corresponding laxness in morality, included many of the rich and influential men of the Jews, ordinarily opposed the Pharisees, but occasionally, when their interests coincided, joined hands with them. Throughout the Gospel there is never any doubt when men of these Jewish sects appear on the scene, and so John also had no difficulty in recognizing those who came to him. Compare Josephus, *Antiquities*, 18, 1, 2-4. — Ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα, **to his baptism** (R. V., American Committee: "for baptism") = they came with the multitudes, certainly not with the determination in advance not to be baptized of John. This developed later, when they had seen and heard the Baptist (Luke 7, 30); the trouble was that they refused to repent, as we are plainly told in Matth. 21, 32. It seems that John so carried the people, even those of the capital, with him, that even the Pharisees and Sadducees were at first willing outwardly to follow the current; then too they may have feared to lose their influence by holding aloof; they certainly also shared the general expectation of the coming Messiah. They balked, however, at John's call to repentance and change of heart, this they felt was an insult to them and they rejected it. John makes no distinction between them, and Matthew also, by omitting the Greek article before Sadducees, πολλοὺς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων, treats them all as one general class. Moreover, it must be observed that according to Luke 3, 7 there were others besides the Pharisees and Sadducees who remained unrepentant, for the Baptist's severe words were addressed "to the multitudes." Many came ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα, but by no means all of them when they arrived gladly

accepted it. — **He said unto them** — certainly a dramatic scene at the river-side! **Ye offspring of vipers**, this instead of their self-chosen proud title “children of Abraham.” “Offspring” is the translation of the plural γεννήματα, since “offsprings” would not sound well in English. The ἔχιδνα, viper, is a small, poisonous serpent; such a one fastened its deadly fangs in Paul’s hand in Melita, Acts 28, 3. John does not say, ye vipers, but, ye offspring of vipers, for others preceded them, and they had inherited their poisonous qualities. What the quality was for which John called them vipers is quite plain, their deadly hypocrisy, their base treachery, and the fatal deceptions which they practiced and in which they lived (Matth. 12, 2 and 24; 15, 2; 16, 1; 22, 15). Their original progenitor Christ himself named, when he called them “the children of the wicked one,” Matth. 13, 38; comp. John 8, 44; Acts 13, 10. — **Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?** — ὑποδείκνυμι = to show underhand, or secretly, and with the infinitive following, stating what they were warned to do. The word indicates that perhaps someone had deceptively whispered to them how they might escape the coming wrath. John plainly implies that they had not come of their own accord, from an earnest desire of their own for salvation. He does not say that they actually will not escape the wrath to come, in fact, he tells them what to do, in order really to escape it, v. 8. But this very evidently involves that something more must move them than the suggestion which prompted their coming at first. “The **wrath** of God is not an oriental figure of speech, but a reality, mentioned over 300 times in the Old Testament. It is the necessary reaction of God’s holiness and righteousness to sin as the persistent rejection of his love. It is active not only in the future, but frequently even now, although restrained by God’s longsuffering.” Zeller — **The**

wrath to come is a pregnant expression for the manifestation of this wrath, which shall appear in the judgment, as John himself describes it in v. 10 and 12. The connection of wrath, punishment, and judgment with the coming of the Messiah may be seen in Zeph. 1, 15 (*dies irae, dies illa*); 2, 2; Mal. 3, 2 etc., v. 18; 4, 1 and 5. When the Jews thought this "wrath" would be turned upon the Gentiles alone, in particular upon their Roman oppressors, they were sadly mistaken. — **To flee**, φυγεῖν, from this wrath is to make an endeavor to escape the coming judgment and punishment; the word, however, does not say that the flight would be successful, but is in keeping with ὑπέδειξεν. John would say, Who suggested to you this scheme to get away from the wrath of God — confessing your sins only with the lips and submitting outwardly to Baptism?

V. 8: **Bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance.** Matthew speaks only of John's dealing with the Pharisees and Sadducees, and certainly his severe strictures apply most directly to them; but they applied also to others, and John included also these, as we see from Luke 3, 7. By no means did John shut the door of salvation against the Pharisees and Sadducees, his very call to them, to bring forth fruit worthy of repentance is an invitation and bidding to repent and be saved; his entire address to them has that purpose. — **Therefore**, οὖν, since the way you have come hither shows that you lack the chief thing, and since nothing else and nothing less will avail you anything, if you really desire to escape the wrath to come, bring forth, not a mere show of repentance, but a true repentance which is indicated by **fruit worthy of repentance**. John does not demand something new and different of the Pharisees and Sadducees, he merely insists that his original demand shall be carried out without any deception, hypocrisy, or evasion. Real repentance always shows itself in fruit worthy

of repentance. What is called "fruit" here is termed "works meet for repentance" in Acts 26, 20. Luke 3, 8, uses the plural, καρπὸς ἁγίου, dividing what may be viewed as a whole into its component parts, i. e., the various acts which show a changed heart. Repentance here cannot itself be the fruit, since this would require the article with καρπὸν, and would not agree with Luke 3, 8 and Acts 26, 20. Examples of this fruit John himself describes, Luke 3, 11-14. In the word "fruit" the organic connection between the repentance — which here would be the tree — and the resultant fruit is expressed; the word "worthy," ἅγιος, of proper weight, describes the fruit demanded as sufficient to show that repentance is actually present. There is a superficial repentance which bears a fruit different from that demanded by John, namely a passing regret, which many sinners manifest by a few tears, a passing emotion, a sigh, an excuse or two, a wish that they were different, a resolve to change by their own efforts, a brief outer betterment of life, and the like. John demands the repentance which is a true conversion, the changed life attesting that it has taken place. An outer decorum of life is not enough. "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." Jer. 31, 18. — V. 9. **And think not to say within yourselves** (as in Ps. 10, 6; 14, 1), **We have Abraham to our father**. The aorist subjunctive is used in negative commands, not the imperative; hence μὴ δόξητε; comp. the previous text, Luke 17, 23. "The Jews supposed that, independently of their own personal faith and obedience, their mere descent from Abraham after the flesh imparted his righteousness to them, and entitled them alone to the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, to the exclusion of the entire Gentile world." *Luth. Com.* The rich man in hell also had Abraham for his "father," and heard from him the word "son," but it

availed him nothing. In the Greek the word "father" is emphatically put first. — **For I say unto you,** — a true prophet's saying, in contradiction of any saying of their imagination or suggestion of men — **That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.** Δύναται stands first. "God cares nothing that you boast proudly of the Law, the Temple, the fathers, etc. His will is that you fear him, believe his promise, obey and receive him whom he has promised you and now sends you. If not, he will reject and destroy you with all your glory, with which in preference to all nations he himself has enriched and adorned you. He will know how to raise up another people in your stead." Luther. The stones in the wilderness had no value, but God had power to turn them into true τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. Moses and the prophets had warned the Jews abundantly as to what their fate would be if they forsook the Lord. Compare Lev. 26. God did raise up the Gentiles to fill the place left vacant by the false children of Abraham. Rom. 11; Gal. 3, 7 and 14.

V. 10. How true the words of John were was shown after the brief space of 40 years, when the ax of judgment descended upon Jerusalem. Jesus repeated the warnings of John, in the parable of the barren fig tree; in the call to "walk while ye have the light," John 12, 35; etc.; comp. Is. 55, 6; Mal. 4, 5. John uses the plural "trees"; while this indicates many, it does not include all — a remnant shall escape. — **Unto the root,** not only the twigs or branches — the judgment shall be complete. — **Every tree** (πάν without the article following = every), with no exception, for the judgment of God is absolutely impartial, nor can he be in any way deceived or bribed. — **Good fruit,** as the product of genuine repentance; and ποιοῦν, pres. tense, bearing and continuing to bear, to the end. But no corrupt tree can of itself bring forth

“good fruit,” the tree itself must be changed, which is done by the *μετάνοια*. The nearness of judgment, pictured in the ax at the root of the trees, is further brought out by the prompt result when the good fruit is not found: **is hewn down and cast into the fire**, *βάλλεται* pres. tense — vivid, as if happening now; *εἰς πῦρ* put forward for emphasis. The Scriptures frequently speak of the fire of judgment, Malachi 4, 1: “The day cometh, that shall burn as an oven”; Jesus says the branches cut from the vine are burned, John 15, 6. All the judgments of God are like fire, but especially the final one; for the wicked shall go “into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched,” Mark. 9, 43, “into everlasting fire,” “into hell fire,” Matth. 18, 8-9. Sadducees of all ages have made sport of it, only preparing themselves the more for it and hastening its coming for themselves.

In v. 11 John directs his hearers to the Messiah, **he that cometh**, *ὁ ἐρχόμενος* (Matth. 11, 3; Luke 7, 19) being a well-understood designation for him, derived from Old Testament statements, for instance, Gen. 49, 10, “until Shiloh come.” The words read as if John had previously already referred to this Coming One. In doing this he opposes any idea among his hearers that he himself perhaps is the Messiah (John 1, 26-27) by drawing a comparison between himself and the Messiah, and in this bringing out the great distinctive work which shall infallibly mark the Messiah as such, namely his baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire. This purpose of John’s comparison must not be lost sight of. It is brought out very clearly in Luke 3, 15, etc.: “And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water,” etc., as in our text. — John is only a servant of the great coming Messiah, all he can do is

to **baptize with water**, for compared with the Messiah himself he is so small that he must confess, **whose shoes I am not worthy to bear**. This was the task of the meanest slave for his master. John is not exaggerating in the least; his is no false humility, for the Messiah is the Son of God. But have we preachers of the Gospel the same humility in our hearts — or rather the same conception of our Lord and Christ? — John's humble phrase describing his part in the preparation for the Coming One, "I baptize with water," ἐγὼ βαπτίζω ἐν ὕδατι, has often been abused, as though this designated so-called "*water-baptism*," an empty water-ceremony. The statement concerning Christ, that he would baptize with the Holy Ghost, has been used to imply that John's baptism was without the Holy Ghost. Some have even supposed that John is contrasting Christ's Baptism with his own, and that the difference is as between the Holy Ghost and water. — All such ideas are seen to be incorrect when the purpose of John's words is kept in view, to direct men's hearts to the true Messiah, who is **mightier than I**, and whose might shall be demonstrated in that **he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire**. Christ himself, as also his apostles, state plainly what John's words signify; one is surprised that any commentator should pass over or reject this explanation. Acts 1, 5 Jesus tells his disciples: 'For John truly baptized with water; but *ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost and not many days hence*,' namely on the day of Pentecost. Again in v. 8: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" etc. When Peter reports how while he was preaching to Cornelius the Holy Ghost fell upon these Gentile hearers, "as on us at the beginning," namely Pentecost, he adds: "Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be bap-

tized with the Holy Ghost." Acts 11, 16. This wondrous Baptism with the Holy Ghost was the great and final mark of the Messiah; no human being was able even to be instrumental in pouring out the Holy Ghost — none but the Son himself could send the Comforter; and even he could not, until he had gone to the Father (John 16, 7), i. e., until his redemptive work was finished. To John this Mightier One was miraculously pointed out, and strange to say, he who was to show his might by baptizing with the Holy Ghost was pointed out by being himself baptized with the Holy Ghost (John 1, 33) descending upon him "in a bodily shape like a dove." To claim that, because Jesus baptized so wondrously by sending the Comforter on the day of Pentecost, John's baptism was devoid of the Holy Ghost, is drawing a false conclusion. As the Holy Ghost was active in all the Old Testament times, so also he worked in John's Baptism and in the preaching of the Gospel generally until the day of Pentecost, from which day on his presence, power and gift flow out in unrestrained measure. The idea, that even Christian Baptism now is only a sign and ceremony, a *water-baptism* without the gift of the Spirit, and therefore of little importance, and that the only Baptism that counts now is the "Baptism of the Holy Ghost" (in conversion, or in a sudden seizure with power from on high some time after conversion, producing total sanctification), is a grave error which slights the very means of grace through which the Holy Ghost now comes upon us in baptizing us, and puts in place of it emotions, imaginings and dreams of men. — **And fire** — observe that the *ἐν* before "fire" is missing, *ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρὶ*; the two words Spirit and fire are treated as one concept. Many commentators, even when they admit this, still separate the Spirit and fire; they refer the Spirit to the Messiah's work of grace, and fire to his work of

judgment, and this because the word "fire" in v. 10 and in v. 12 is connected with judgment. Against this, besides the significant omission of the ἐν before "fire," it must be said that John does speak of two works, grace and judgment, but in different clauses (read v. 11 and 12), and doing that, it would be very strange for him to mingle the two works, after one preposition, in the very first clause. Nor is fire always a symbol of judgment and destruction, witness the refiner's fire, Mal. 3, 2-3, and fire as an image of purification in Zech. 13, 9; Is. 6, 6-7; 1 Pet. 1, 7; and the "spirit of burning" taking away filth, in Is. 4, 4. On the day of Pentecost the presence of the Holy Ghost manifested itself in cloven tongues of fire, thus connecting the fire directly with the promised Baptism of the Spirit; nor is judgment ever elsewhere pictured as a baptism with fire. Christian hymnology has steadily connected fire with the Spirit in a beneficent sense:

"Come as the fire, and purge our hearts,
Like sacrificial flame." — *Reede*.

"Come, Holy Spirit, from above,
With thy celestial fire;
Come, and with flames of zeal and love
Our hearts and tongues inspire." — *Cotterill*.

"And each believing soul inspire
With thine own pure and holy fire." — *Luther*.

The preposition ἐν in the phrase ἐν ὕδατι must be translated exactly as in the following one, ἐν πνεύματι, namely "with." The idea of being baptized "in the essence of the Holy Spirit" is an unthinkable thing; interpretations of this kind are likely to result when one is too certain that John baptized by immersion and by immersion alone.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

There is little difficulty in presenting the heart of this text to our hearers when we bear in mind that this text is intended to focus our attention upon John the Baptist and his Advent call: Prepare! Using simple analysis combined with a touch of personal application, we may outline:

We Among the Hearers of the Great Advent Preacher in the Desert.

The introduction may invite the hearers to join in spirit the multitudes streaming out into the desert, breaking away from their old occupations and associations, for once making their soul's interest supreme. In a natural way the text will offer us these sermon parts:

- I. *His very appearance is a mighty sermon for us.*
- II. *Much more the call that falls from his lips.*
- III. *And by no means least, the action of the multitude and of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

The applicatory feature is less prominent in the effort by Johann Rump:

Christ's Great Advent Preacher Still Does His Work.

- I. *The Advent preacher and his appearance.*
- II. *The Advent congregation and its composition.*
- III. *The Advent sermon and its effect.*

A colorful theme lies on the very surface of the text:

Repent, For the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand.

- I. *The Kingdom requires repentance.*
 1. It is a kingdom full of forgiveness of sin — only they who sincerely lament their sins are able to enter.
 2. It is a kingdom of the Redeemer — only they who accept his redemption are able to enter.
 3. It is a kingdom of the Spirit — only they who let him change their hearts are able to enter.
- II. *Repentance fits for the kingdom.*
 1. It gives up self-deception and self-righteousness,

2. It lays all its sin and guilt at the feet of the Redeemer.
3. It escapes the ax of divine judgment.
4. It leads into a new life.

Ruehling has a fine auxiliary concept in the idea of a great "confessional" service. It can be used in simple fashion as follows:

The Great Confessional Service Beside the Jordan's Banks.

- I. The sinners; II. The confessor; III. The repentance;*
- IV. The absolution.*

Show in part four who is included, and who is excluded from this absolution. And be very sure to state fully what this absolution really is and actually does.

A doctrinal turn may be given to the sermon in the following way:

True Repentance, As John the Baptist Preached It.

- I. Contrition; II. Faith; III. Newness of Life.*

Doctrine is divine truth. It consists of spiritual realities. In this case the realities are subjective, namely actual effects wrought in our hearts and lives by divine grace. Other doctrines deal with objective spiritual realities or facts. Doctrinal sermons are full of spiritual meat when the preacher clearly and fully presents the realities involved. They are highly personal when the preacher shows how each reality concerns you and me in the most intimate way. They are very interesting when the story part of the text is adequately used in bringing out the realities concerned. Take "contrition" as presented in our text: here are contrite people, truly sorry for their sins, confessing them, anxious to be rid of them; here, too, were sinners far from contrite, boastful of their descent from Abraham and their outward position in the church, self-righteous, refusing to kneel beside confessing sinners. We have the same two classes today. — Let us add one more suggestion:

Are You Ready for the Kingdom of Heaven?

- I. To enter the narrow portal of repentance?*
- II. To live under the scepter of the blessed King?*

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

John 1, 15-18

The First Sunday in Advent opens up for us the gates of grace anew; the Second points afar to the day of judgment; the Third issues again the call to prepare; and the Fourth shows us the gracious image of the Savior himself. The text for this day is the conclusion of the wonderful Prologue of the fourth Gospel. There is no mistaking its import, it strikes the grand note of grace in sounding the Christmas peal, grace as it came by the only begotten Son. The great festival is now so near that this Sunday has been called its door-keeper. In fact it already opens the portal and lets some of the glory stream forth. It is worth while to note that the two texts between which the Christmas text itself is placed are two sections of John's Prologue, John 1, 15-18 for the Fourth Advent, and John 1, 1-14 for the day after Christmas. On this lofty height — and none rises beyond it in the Scriptures — the Christmas text is placed, and rightly, for the miracle of all the ages is the Incarnation of the only begotten Son of God. In treating our text this relation to the two coming texts must be borne in mind; its purpose is rightly apprehended when we behold in it *the Son of God as the fountain of grace*.

V. 15. The evangelist was once a disciple of John the Baptist, and no doubt was present at the very time when the testimony of John concerning Christ was uttered. He himself gives us the story of it in v. 30, and tells us that John uttered part of it already the day before in his statements to the commission sent from Jerusalem to interrogate him. In our text,

the great utterance of John is used to corroborate the words of the evangelist himself, when he writes: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." The Baptist's testimony supports directly the two statements: "the Word became flesh," and: "glory as of the only begotten from the Father." On these the "grace and truth" rest. And the Baptist's testimony is unimpeachable, for v. 6 recounts that he was "sent from God"; he spoke by revelation and inspiration. A witness like this counts for all the ages. — **John beareth witness of him.** The evangelist simply says "John," which was also his own name, signifying *the favor of God*. He has already referred to John and will presently say more about him, although from the other Gospels his readers already know about John, the great herald of Christ. "Beareth witness," μαρτυρεῖ, is in the present tense, vividly recalling John's words, which are also quoted directly. The word κέκραγεν, from κράζω, is the perfect tense, but with the sense of the present, though not thus elsewhere in the New Testament; it denotes a loud, solemn, official announcement: **and crieth, saying.** John's own voice has been hushed in death these many years, but what he said stands for all ages; "has authority and value for all time," Stelhorn. — Now follow his exact words: **This is he of whom I said, He that cometh after me is become before me: for he was before me.** John himself here states that he uttered this testimony at an earlier period; when Christ came and began his work he repeated it. "I have said this already before his (Christ's) Baptism, and now I repeat it before the multitude." Grotius. John's words consist of three clauses. "He that cometh after me — is become before me — for he was before me." The first two contain a paradox; they are intended to be enigmatical, to

raise the question, How can one who comes behind John have become before him? The solution is given in the final clause (ὅτι, for): "He was before me" (prior to me). The paradox in the first two clauses can best be understood by examining the key contained in the third. — **Before me**, *πρωτός μου ἦν* (not *ἔστιν*) = he was sooner, earlier than I; it declares the pre-existence of Christ (so all the older exegetes, also Meyer), and necessarily involves his infinite superiority over John and all men. It establishes the evangelist's own word that Christ is "the only begotten from the Father." The interpretation "he is more than I," fails to do justice to ἦν, and seems too indefinite. The objection has been raised that the knowledge of the pre-existence of Christ was beyond the Baptist, and the explanation has been offered that the evangelist put his own ideas into this testimony of John. To some men it seems a small matter to make the evangelist a liar. How false this view is is shown by the strangeness of the utterance itself, by the weight the evangelist puts upon it here and in v. 30, by the manner in which he quotes it, and especially also by the established fact that even the prophets, Is. 9, 6; Micah 5, 2; Mal. 3, 1; Dan. 7, 13 etc., well understood what John expresses, to say nothing of the special revelation which God vouchsafed to him. — The pre-existence, then, of Christ makes plain, how **he that cometh after me is become before me**. The riddle is this: How can one who comes *ὀπίσω μου*, become *ἔμπροσθέν μου*? — how can my successor become my predecessor (Hengstenberg)? — how can one who comes behind me have precedence of me? The word *ἐρχόμενος* refers to the Messianic coming of Christ, it is the standing term for it. Jesus was born later than John ("became flesh"), and he also assumed his office after John assumed his; yet he preceded John in every respect, not merely in the Old Testament

revelations of grace (Lange, Keil, Stelhorn), to which no reference is made here or in the context, but in a higher sense, indicated by the evangelist's words when he combines γέγονεν with ἦν ("is become before me: for he *was* before me"), to which also his other words point, "the only begotten from the Father," and in the first verse, "in the beginning *was* the Word"; see also v. 2 and 3. John's paradox thus deals with the great mystery of the Incarnation, which is the theme of the entire Prologue. Unbelief tries to solve the paradox by making Jesus a man like other men, only greater as a Teacher and an ideal man. This falsifies the text. John, the evangelist, and all Scripture show us the eternal Son of God who became flesh, dwelt among us, and made us behold his glory of saving grace and truth. Christ's relation to the Father goes back to all eternity; that of John, the prophets, the apostles afterwards, and of all men of God, begins in time.

V. 16. The old church made v. 16 a part of the Baptist's statement; "we all" was then understood as the prophets and the Baptist together. But ἡμεῖς πάντες refers back too plainly to v. 14: ἐν ἡμῖν, and ἐθεασάμεθα. This, then, is the continuation of the evangelist's own testimony. In a way the Baptist's word is self-sufficient and final, needing nothing to prove or establish it, for it is the voice of God. Still it is corroborated by the blessed experience of those who have come into saving contact with him of whom the Baptist testified. This is the sense of ὅτι, "because," for which Zahn prefers καί, but without sufficient textual authority. The evangelist's testimony is highly personal; compare 1 Jno. 1, 1-4, the Eisenach epistle for the day. The addition of πάντες to ἡμεῖς must not make us think that the evangelist is here speaking of all Christians in general; "all" is in contrast to the simple witness of the Baptist. V. 16 continues the thought

of v. 14: those who "beheld" the glory of the Only Begotten, "full of grace and truth," are now shown to be partakers in particular of this grace. It is only an application when now we say that Christians in general have beheld and still behold the glory of the Only Begotten as it shines in his Word, and thus receive of the same grace and truth in richest measure.

— **Of his fulness** = that of which Christ is full. No modifier is attached; none is needed, for his fulness has already been mentioned, "full of grace and truth." Πλήρης, v. 14, is the same as τὸ πλήρωμα αὐτοῦ in 16. Paul speaks of it, Col. 1, 19: "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." It is the "riches" which the Lamb is worthy to receive, Rev. 5, 12; "the unsearchable riches of Christ," which Paul was counted worthy to preach to the Gentiles, Eph. 3, 8, "the riches of his grace," Eph. 1, 7. Luther pictures and illustrates Christ's fulness in a masterly way, showing how it never decreases: "This spring is inexhaustible, it is full of grace and truth from God, it never loses anything, no matter how much we draw, but remains an infinite fountain of all grace and truth; the more you draw from it, the more abundantly it gives of the water that springs into eternal life. Just as the sun is not darkened by the whole world enjoying its light, and could indeed light up ten worlds; just as 100,000 lights might be lit from one light and not detract from it; just as a learned man is able to make a thousand others learned, and the more he gives, the more he has — so is Christ our Lord, an infinite source of all grace so that if the whole world would draw enough grace and truth from it to make the world all angels, yet it would not lose a drop; the fountain always runs over, full of grace." In a way it can be said that all mankind has received from the fulness of Christ, for the redemption of Christ includes our whole race, and in Christ all men, whether they know it or

not, have a gracious God. But already in the beginning there were some who "received him not," v. 12. "His fulness" is enough for all men and intended for all men, but only the believers have taken of it; they, therefore, are the ones whose experience without exception corroborates John's testimony that Jesus is the Son of God, our Savior. — **Received**, ἐλάβομεν; no object is mentioned. This word is contrasted with "his fulness." "We have nothing — Christ has the inexhaustible abundance; he is the Giver — "we" are the recipients, and that is all they were and could be. It is the same today; whoever has grace and truth unto salvation has received it from Christ. The verb λαμβάνω has an active sense — take; but it is used throughout, whenever our relation to Christ, to God, or the Spirit of God is mentioned, without a hint of meritorious activity on our part. See v. 12. God's gift, offer, call, etc., always come first and make possible our receiving. So we take as a poor, helpless patient takes the medicine raised to his lips by the physician; as the blind mendicant takes the coin dropped in his hand by the charitable giver; as the eye takes in the sun-beam falling from on high, or the ear the sound that strikes it; yea, as the dead Lazarus takes the life conveyed to him by the word of him who is the resurrection and the life. This is especially true of our first taking, or receiving, from Christ. But even when the gift and grace of Christ has filled us with faith, so that we ourselves come to him for replenishment and beg for his saving gifts, this very energy and activity of coming and seeking is a gift of his to us, so that Paul's word is true in its fullest sense: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" 1 Cor. 4, 7. And John the Baptist himself said, "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." John 3, 27. —

And grace for grace. *Kaí* is used in the sense of namely. "Grace," *χάρις*, is one of the cardinal words of Scripture. It signifies the favor of God; it is his love toward those who are unworthy of it. The word stands first for what is in the heart of God himself, and then for every act and gift of God proceeding from this favor in his heart. Grace is the love of God toward us poor sinners in Christ Jesus our Savior. It is the effective manifestation of his undeserved love toward sinful men, offering to all the salvation obtained by Christ, working faith to accept it, justifying us without any merit of our own, sanctifying and glorifying us. Grace is the chief characteristic of the entire Gospel of Christ, of the entire Christian religion. Grace is the mystery, unknown to the world, revealed in Jesus Christ. It is the opposite of human merit. "This also is one of the golden texts in St. John. He who knows not, and appropriates not Jesus Christ, is and remains a child of wrath and damnation, let him be called, or be, what he will. If he is to come to grace, it must be through Christ alone, who alone can make our poverty rich through his abundance, drive out our sin by his righteousness, swallow our death by his life, make us who are children of wrath, full of sins, hypocrisy, lies, and falseness, children of grace and truth." Luther. "Grace is a treasure to which none other can be compared. Carry together all the treasures of earth, and all together they will not balance what lies in the one word grace. Grace is the blood-red mark which cancels the handwriting against us; the star of hope which sends its rays into this earth-life darkened by sin; the ladder which leads us upward; the immovable pillar which shall stand though hills and mountains pass away, and shall support the covenant of peace; the staff to which we can cling in our weakness; the guide who leads us safely through sorrow and death into the open portals of eternal

blessedness." Schoener. All I desire for the rest of my life is nothing but grace, and ever again more grace. — "Grace for grace" is not that of the New Testament for the Old; not ordinary grace followed by charismatic grace; not one individual gift of grace followed by another — but grace in the fulness of its meaning, renewing, increasing, piling itself up. "Grace ever new, and ever greater," Stellhorn. "The grace received is an assurance of more grace to be received," Besser. It is like a stream flowing constantly; every day, every hour its banks are full, ever fresh volumes coming down from above, so that there is never in our hearts any longing for grace which is not filled to the uttermost by the full flow of grace. "Justification, peace with God, consolation, joy, enlightenment, love, hope, etc., etc., see for instance Rom. 5; Gal. 5, 22; Eph. 5, 9." Meyer. "From him (Christ) comes everything that brings us comfort, strength, joy and peace. Are there sinners here? Certainly, many. But here too is the malefactor's grace for the sinner's heart, and it cleanses and saves. Are there sorrowing, heavy hearts here? Lay down your bundle of cares, take instead grace for grace. Are there poor people here? Here is he who by his poverty makes us rich. Nothing but his grace makes us rich amid all outward poverty, consoles us amid all sadness, strengthens us in all our weakness, gives us the power of life and the fulness of life." Schoener. This word grace for grace gives us a glimpse of what is meant by "his fulness," and casts a wonderful light upon the receiving predicated of us all. Besser points to the beyond where this receiving shall continue, when some rule over five cities, others over ten. Grace for grace is according to that blessed rule of God's kingdom: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance." Matth. 13, 12.

V. 17. To enhance our conception of grace the

evangelist combines it with truth, and then compares both with the law. **For**, ὅτι, explains. There is a three-fold antithesis in the double statement of v. 17 — a very masterpiece of expression and thought: 1) the law — grace and truth; 2) was given — came; 3) Moses — Jesus Christ. — **The law**, ὁ νόμος, definite, the moral and ceremonial law, as Israel had it on the tables of stone, and in its elaborate worship, and its civil and social regulations. “The law” was no mean treasure; Israel was greatly blessed in possessing it. Yet it was not “the fulness” from which one could receive grace for grace. The law was only preparatory. It revealed the holy will of God, and thus man’s exceeding sinfulness, and the depth of our lost condition. At the same time it was full of types and figures of deliverance and release from sin, and it even mediated a release based on the great atonement to come; but, of course, everything depended on that future perfect atonement. The law itself contained no availing atonement, it could only point forward, awaken the longing for it, picture and foreshadow it in advance, and like a schoolmaster lead up to it. *Lex iram parans et umbram habens*, Bengel. The law was much, but more had to follow, even to make the law what it was. — It **was given**, ἐδόθη, God gave it, and it came wholly as a gift, although remnants and traces of the holy will of God were still found in human hearts. The Israelites esteemed the law as a divine gift. It “was given” expresses exactly the historical manner of its bestowal. It was not a human development, an outgrowth of the religious genius of the people of Israel, or a product of its great leader, or of a number of its leaders (Moses and the prophets). This speculative notion of modern skeptical students of history our evangelist flatly contradicts. No human wisdom, genius, or development could have produced “the law,” the wonderful system God gave to Israel,

Every feature of it, which pointed ahead into the far future to the coming Messiah and his redemptive work, was beyond human calculation. — It was given **by Moses**, he was the human agent or instrument God used, hence *διὰ* with the genitive. We know how God gave him the two tables of stone, how he made the tabernacle, and all it contained, after the pattern he viewed on the mount, and how in the entire establishment of the worship under the law he was directed by God. Moses himself was subject to the law, taught by it, blessed by it, as were the people to whom he ministered. — **Grace and truth**, the same that are spoken of in v. 14, hence the article: ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια: *im bestimmten und solennen Sinne der Erloesung, die Heilsgnade, d. i. die Gnade des Vaters im Sohne*; a pair, yet most intimately linked together. “Grace” is the fulness of divine favor, already described in the previous verse; and combined with this favor also all that it wrought in and through Jesus Christ for us lost and unworthy sinners. “Truth” is the fulness of divine revelation, likewise in and through Jesus Christ. Truth, like grace, is objective, “the absolute revelation, as grace represents the absolute redemption; truth over against all darkening and misrepresentation, but also in antithesis to everything that is vain, unreal, passing; while life and light brought by the incarnate Word are substantial realities abiding forever.” Spaeth, *Luth. Com.* Grace and truth belong together and cannot be separated; grace is proclaimed to us by truth, and truth is the doctrine and revelation of grace. — **Came**, ἐγένετο, is again a true statement of the historic fact. Grace and truth were not given like the law through some human agent or instrument; they came, embodied in Jesus Christ. Jesus was not another servant, like Moses; God did not merely tell us of grace and truth through Jesus Christ. Jesus himself was grace and truth; his own person and work

are the substance of grace and truth. The Lord who passed before Moses, "abundant in goodness and truth," Ex. 34, 6, whom the Psalmist praised, "The Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations," Ps. 100, 5, he it is "who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. 1, 30, in the incarnate Son, Christ Jesus. For grace and truth came, as Meyer notes, not absolutely, as though now for the first time they existed, but relatively, as far as men on earth were concerned, as far as the actual redemptive work of Christ now exhibited them, after long existing in the thought of God and extended to men by promise. — **By Jesus Christ** — and not till now does John in his Prologue mention the historic name of the Redeemer, the name that is above every name. What a glory is shed over it in all that John has said before! It is like the Sun rising in the east and lighting up all the earth with its diffused light as films of cloud still spread before it, and then suddenly it breaks through and we see the great majestic ball of light itself. Here *διὰ* again, as in the case of the law, Jesus and Moses are paralleled — and yet how much mightier is this *διὰ* than that which introduced only a human mediator and instrument.

It is best to connect v. 18, not with the Prologue in general, as if the evangelist were stating how he comes to know all he here says, but with the words immediately preceding. We have here the explanation why Jesus could do infinitely more than Moses, or any human creature. **No man**, not even Moses. "Jesus knows what is true, for he comes from the Father; there is no other Doctor, master, or preacher, save the one Doctor Christ, who is within the Godhead; who else could reveal it to us?" Luther. — **Hath seen** — *ὁράω* signifies direct vision, far more than the visions of the prophets, or even of Moses. For though it is

said Ex. 33, 11, the Lord spake unto Moses "face to face," we are soon told, v. 20, "Thou canst not see my face." "Face to face" = "mouth to mouth," Num. 12, 8, and does not mean that Moses *saw* the face of God; God communicated with Moses in the most direct way, but he never appeared to Moses *in solida sua gloria* (Calov); in the directness of the divine communication to him Moses excelled all others, save Christ who alone has seen God, yea, "is in the bosom of the Father." Luther says the Lord showed Moses his back and mantle; "thus Moses saw the mercy of God from behind, as in the divine Word." Cf. *Eisenach O. T. Selection*, 366 etc. — **God** means his being. In the sentence this word stands first: *God* no man hath seen ever — no matter whom or what else he hath seen. Nature speaks of God; in the work the hand and thought, the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator appear. The prophets of old speak of God; God gave them the word of revelation, and they proclaimed his mercy and grace, his truth, his holiness and righteousness. The evangelists and apostles speak of God, even as John does in this very text; Christ uses them as his mouth-pieces. But of all these men not one has ever beheld God directly; his infinite being is too great. There has also been a vast amount of speculation about God, some of it with an imposing wealth of philosophical learning, but all of it absolutely inferior to the revelation vouchsafed by God himself, and the greater part of it full of error and delusion. In the negative statement that no man hath seen God at any time, the positive statement is implied, the only begotten Son hath seen him. — On the question as to the correct reading, whether: **the only begotten Son**, as the R. V. prefers, or: *God only begotten*, which the R. V. places in the margin, and others in the text, see Keil: *Ev. d. Joh.*, who tries to uphold the former, and Zahn: *Ev. d. Joh.*, who in

his exposition and in an elaborate *Excurs* reviews the textual authorities for the three readings that have been found: 1) μονογενής θεός, nearly always without the article; 2) ὁ μονογενής υἱός; 3) ὁ μονογενής without a noun. While we must reject Zahn's interpretation that μονογενής refers only to the virgin birth, his array of proof on the reading of the text itself is quite convincing; the evidence for μονογενής θεός is so strong, that Keil's objection cannot be upheld. Zahn thinks there is a *contradictio in adjecto* in this designation for the Son; his mistake is that he refers "only begotten" to the wonderful conception in the womb of Mary, which, indeed, would raise the question: How could θεός be μονογενής in this sense? But it is not the miracle and mystery of the Incarnation which is presented by this designation, but the greater mystery of the *generatio aeterna*, the metaphysical relation of the Father to his Son. Compare Hoenecke, *Dogmatik*, II, 178-181. The latter is μονογενής apart from the Incarnation or any revelation. The objections raised against this significance of the term are futile. The chief one is that St. John is speaking of the revealed Savior, and hence says nothing of the relation of the divine persons. The truth is that he is revealing to us who Jesus Christ really was: the Logos, true God, *begotten* of the Father from eternity. This we must know in order properly to understand and value what he has done. To add the article and read ὁ μονογενής θεός would very likely lead to false notions, for instance that there are several θεοί; ὁ must be omitted. With no article for either word the qualities indicated by μονογενής and θεός are in the writer's thought: One who is *God only begotten*. Thus St. John shows who Jesus Christ really is. All others, as Luther says, are the many begotten, he alone is the only begotten. We are οἱ ἐκ θεοῦ ἐγεννήθησαν, born of God, John 1, 13; he is μονογενής θεός, God only begotten.

— Something dependent on Christ being “God only begotten” is expressed in the clause, **who is in the bosom of the Father.** Luther pictures this in a human way, by saying that he lay “in the arms of the Father”; and this for practical purpose is the best kind of an interpretation. To be in the bosom of the Father is used in contrast with the words “hath seen God at any time.” The Son has not only seen the Father, has not only stood afar and gazed directly upon him — a thing impossible to any man —, he is in the bosom of the Father. G. Mayer notes four interpretations of this clause: 1) it expresses the pre-existence of Christ; 2) he was in the bosom of the Father during his earthly life; 3) he was there since his exaltation. This is Meyer’s and Zahn’s view, against which Philippi rightly urges that it fails to explain the very point at issue with the evangelist, namely why Christ *before* his exaltation was able perfectly to declare God to us. 4) A designation for the absolute communion between Christ and God; and G. Mayer adopts this view. We agree, but note that this is the communion of God *only begotten* (the Son) with the Father, and thus includes not only the communion during Christ’s earthly sojourn, but also the communion through all eternity. “Which is in the bosom,” ὁ ὢν, the present tense used without reference to time; Luther: is — ever and ever is. “In the bosom,” εἰς τὸν κόλπον, practically in the sense of ἐν, and without the idea of motion on account of ὢν; see Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Test. in the light of Hist. Research*, on the identity of εἰς and ἐν, p. 536; 586; also 593 etc. Εἰς, like ἐν, here signifies communion, but nothing that indicates movement, and hardly identical with πρὸς τὸν θεόν in v. 1. When man is spoken of, we read that *God* no man hath seen; when the Son of God, “God *only begotten*,” is spoken of, we read that he is in the bosom of the *Father*. The idea

is not, to define by the word "Father" the character or scope of what Christ has revealed to us; that was done in the words "grace and truth." The evangelist simply keeps true to his designation of Christ as the Only Begotten; being himself the second person of the Godhead, and as such in divine communion with the first person, he can declare God to us as no other. The revelation brought us by Christ is the ultimate climax of all possible revelation. There is no revelation for us beyond this. Heb. 1, 1-3. — **He hath declared him** — "he," with great emphasis; ἐξηγήσατο, an impressive word, not used otherwise by the evangelist, going far beyond what any man could do, even assuming that it were possible for him to see God. The Son is the great exegete; the absolute interpreter of God. There is no object in the Greek; Tholuck supplies "it"; Meyer, the contents of what the Son beheld in the bosom of the Father (which is better); the two English versions supply "him" (which is best).

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Though the text is short, its riches actually embarrass the preacher. Yet he cannot get at this wealth properly by ordinary analysis, namely by merely cutting the text into two or into three pieces. Slicing up the text will hardly produce a symmetrical pattern in the way of an outline. A better way is to begin with an analysis of the contents of the text and then proceed to a regrouping of the material thus obtained. This is synthesis. There is 1) the Baptist's paradox and its solution — Christ's pre-existence; 2) there is grace heaped on grace — and our reception of it (by faith); 3) there is truth paired with grace, and these two compared with the law — Moses mediating the latter, Christ the two former; 4) there is the Only Begotten, who alone has seen the Father, and who declared and revealed him. How can we crystallize this material, so that it will form a unit with natural parts? The purpose of this text for the present Sunday may help us. We are to see today *the glorious Savior* whose birth we are about to celebrate. Very well; then we must first of all lift out and combine what is said here of the Savior: v. 15, his pre-existence, and v. 18, his divinity as the

Only Begotten — in other words, what is said in the text about *his supreme person*. That leaves what the text tells us about his grace and truth, the comparison with the law, and his revealing the Father. We may sum this up as *his supreme gifts*. Thus an outline already begins to form itself. Let us put it into shape:

The True Glory of the Savior Whose Birth We Are About to Celebrate.

I. He is the Only Begotten Son of God.

- 1) Look at the divine testimony: on his pre-existence; on his Sonship (Father—Only Begotten); on his heavenly state (in the Father's bosom—seeing God).
- 2) Consider what this testimony reveals: regarding his ability to reveal God to us; regarding his ability to save us. Infinitely above any power of man, even a Moses.
- 3) Receive this blessed testimony: by faith, like the Baptist and the evangelist.

II. He is the Everlasting Fountain of Grace.

- 1) The truth and revelation back of this grace.
- 2) The fulness of this grace itself (for guilty sinners forgiveness, life, and salvation).
- 3) The reception of this grace and truth by faith—(the two Johns—"all we," v. 16).

This sermon is a good sample of homiletical *appropriation* as distinguished from homiletical *application*. It is built on this pattern: Here is Christ—receive and believe! Amen! Application has a different pattern: As he (they)—so we; or: As he—so not we. Just as some preachers know nothing about synthetic outlines, so also they know nothing about appropriation. They operate on the lower levels, and never rise to the higher. Therefore a text like the present one distresses them, and their efforts are according. Any text which presents Christ, grace, forgiveness or other vital elements of the Gospel calls imperatively for homiletical appropriation, and to force homiletical application upon it is a homiletical crime. In the present text the formula of application can be used in regard to the two Johns: as they believed—so let us believe. Since, however, this deals with believing (receiving), it amounts to appropriation and is substantially identical with it. By all means cultivate

appropriation. It is the very heart of Gospel preaching. Almost all preachers have too little of it.

The two concepts of grace and truth stand out so prominently in the text that we may use them as the sermon pillars, combining both of them with Christ.

Of His Fulness We Have Received and Must Ever Receive.

I. Truth.

- 1) Beyond human powers and faculties.
- 2) Revealed in Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son.
- 3) Full of eternal light and life for us.

II. Grace.

- 1) Foreshadowed by the law.
- 2) Revealed in Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son.
- 3) Full of pardon and peace for us.

We add two outlines, each presenting first the divine Savior, secondly his saving gifts; the latter is by Johann Rump:

The Christmas Gift Which God Prepared For Us.

- I. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.*
- II. Grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ.*

Let Us Listen to Christ's Herald Once More, as He Tells Us About the Savior Himself!

- I. What we are to think of him.*
- II. What we are to receive from him.*

CHRISTMAS

Matthew 1, 18-23

Our Christmas text is not a description of the birth of Christ, but of the genesis (γένεσις) of Christ. What is quietly assumed in the old gospel text taken from Luke, is here positively set forth by Matthew. Luke describes the announcement to the Virgin Mary of Jesus' conception and birth, 1, 26-38 (note especially v. 35). This revelation and the miraculous fact it makes known dare not be overlooked when we preach on the old gospel text; but in the text from Matthew it all stands out prominently and demands adequate treatment. We, of course, would never consent to be without the beautiful text from Luke. It has many features especially attractive for the preacher when he tells the glorious Christmas story from the pulpit. In some respects this old text is more beautiful than the new one from Matthew. Yet this new text has a value all its own, in that it brings us one of the great *sedes doctrinæ* for the universal confession of the church as expressed in the Apostolic Creed: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." In furnishing us the foundation especially for the first of these two confessional statements, it meets the needs of our times as hardly any other Christmas text can meet them. The virgin birth of Jesus and all it implies has been denied with excessive boldness in our age, sometimes even in so-called Christian pulpits; others, affected by this denial, have grown uncertain in the faith that Jesus was indeed conceived by the Holy Ghost, and have tried to alter the sense of this statement while still maintaining that he is the Son of God. We need not say that all true Chris-

tian faith must rise in its might against such denials and the doubtful ideas engendered by them. It must do this at all times, and must do it in a special way at Christmas time. — We all understand that the Christmas sermon is not the place for polemics. The entire festival overflows with heavenly joy, yet this is the joy that is born from the miraculous Christmas fact, that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. The sermon, then, must be a joyous, confident, triumphant confession of the virgin birth of the Savior. It should not give prominence to the false and often blatant claims of unbelief, but it should rise in triumph, upborne by the invincible Word of God, with its full, clear testimony of divine truth, above all such claims and all their fruit of doubt. — Let us also observe that this Christmas text follows hard upon the grand text for the Fourth Sunday in Advent, which proclaims Jesus as the “Only Begotten from the Father,” “God Only Begotten, which is in the bosom of the Father,” full of grace and truth. Our Christmas text makes clear how Jesus, the Son of God, became man. It is the climax of the foregoing text, and even the text following, for the day after Christmas, can go no higher, but only re-echo and apply what the great festival text brings. — As a sample of the horrible perversions perpetrated on our text we refer to E. Quandt in Rathmann, *Botschaft des Heils*, who cuts out everything in the text save the names “Jesus” and “Immanuel,” and preaches only on these — and that at Christmas.

V. 18. **Now**, δέ, is transitional or continuative, adding something new: in the next place; it is not adversative. Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek N. T. in the Light of Hist. Research*, 1184. — At the very head of our text stands the blessed name **Jesus Christ**; at its end, Immanuel, God with us. The Greek article, τοῦ Χριστοῦ, indicates that he has already been men-

tioned, namely in the two preceding verses. His name is now put forward in a marked and emphatic way, for he is the theme of Matthew's entire book, and of him this first narrative section treats. Textually we are sure only of the designation "Christ" in this verse; there are strong indications that "Jesus" is a later addition, either in the form "Jesus Christ," or "Christ Jesus." Matthew's pen records the name of Christ in the sense of Messiah, the Anointed One, a designation expressive of all the hope of old Israel in the past, and of all the joy of the new Israel in the present, now that the hope is fulfilled to the uttermost. The reading: "Jesus Christ," or: "Christ Jesus" repeats the full name of v. 1, comp. v. 16. For the preacher all that is here necessary is that he lay strong emphasis on Jesus as the promised Messiah now come into the world. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel," Luke 24, 21, and that trust was not in vain, as the two Emmaus disciples, who doubtingly expressed it, soon discovered. — **The birth** of Christ is Matthew's subject, ἡ γένεσις, really the origin, the generation (see v. 1). The word is highly significant in that it already marks the entrance of Christ into the world as something far different from ordinary births. In a brief manner this has already been touched in v. 16, where the long line of fathers, begetting sons is suddenly broken, and a woman is introduced, "Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (ἐξ ἧς ἐγεννήθη). — Still more significant is οὕτως ἦν, **was on this wise**, which introduces the whole miraculous story now to be set forth. There never was another birth or generation "on this wise"; the origin of Adam was wonderful, that of the second Adam still more so. Οὕτως shows that Matthew intends to describe *the manner* of Christ's genesis, *the fact* is taken for granted.

Μνηστευθείσης τῆς μητρὸς αὐτοῦ Μαρίας τῷ Ἰωσήφ is a genitive absolute; the aorist passive participle refers to a historical fact preceding what the main verb states. The Jewish betrothal was a solemn promise before witnesses (Ez. 16, 8; Mal. 2, 14), embodying the essentials of the marriage vow — no other vow following, — and in later times ratified in writing. By virtue of the betrothal the bridegroom and bride became husband and wife, as is also shown in the next verse, where Joseph is called Mary's husband, and in v. 20, where she is called his wife (compare Deut. 22, 24). The Lutheran Commentary speaks of the *future* husband and *future* wife. This is really incorrect; the betrothal was the marriage tie itself, and the words "husband" and "wife" must be taken literally as they stand. A shorter or longer period elapsed between the betrothal and the bringing home of the bride to her husband's house. No religious ceremony and no vows of any kind accompanied this home-bringing, although it was made a festive occasion with a procession and a feast following. These Jewish customs were not enjoined as laws by God, and however socially and morally binding upon the Jews while in vogue, cannot be laid down as laws for the Christian dispensation among Gentile nations, or at the present time. This has been done, however, and is still done, often producing false and dangerous situations and burdening unenlightened consciences. — We have no indications as to the time when Joseph and Mary were betrothed. The latter is significantly called **his mother Mary** — this was her blessed distinction. Elisabeth called her "the mother of my Lord," Luke 1, 43. — **Before they came together**, i. e. before the husband brought home his wife. Πρὶν ἢ has the infinitive, the main verb being affirmative. This expression is not identical with the one in v. 25, "and knew her not," it simple refers to the usual home-

bringing which followed the Jewish espousal. Zahn thinks *συνελθεῖν* = *coire*; the fact is that it would include this in every ordinary case, as the home-bringing was always for the consummation of the marriage. It is for this reason that Matthew wrote: *πρὶν ἢ συνελθεῖν* — **She was found**, *εὑρέθη*, aorist, = an actual fact, and this became apparent; the fact itself is expressed in the words *ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα*, **with child**. We are not told that Joseph alone made the discovery, although the entire narrative, as well as that of Luke, mentions no other person. It is evident from the evangelist's statement that Mary had hitherto revealed nothing to Joseph of the angel message sent to her and of her submission to the will of God. The angel had directed her, to her relative Elisabeth in the hill country, and she had gone to commune with this friend, but as far as Joseph was concerned, having no intimation as to what God's will might be, she left all in God's hands. This was an act of absolute reliance upon God, the more admirable the more we realize her situation as it actually must have been. An espoused woman, if found unfaithful, was punishable with death, Deut. 22, 23-24. Mary had absolutely no means of proving her spotlessness to Joseph or any other person in Nazareth. Misgivings and doubts of various kinds, we may well assume, assailed her. Her one refuge was to place herself altogether in the hands of God. And this was well. — **By the Holy Ghost** is the addition of the evangelist who here thinks of the readers of his account, and at once sheds the full light of divine truth upon the fact which he records. Not for one instant are we left in doubt; every unworthy thought is completely forestalled.

V. 18. Joseph is called Mary's **husband**, *ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς*, because the betrothal really made him such; there is no prolepsis here. — He is called a **righteous** man, because he devoutly and earnestly observed the

law. He was one of the class to which Zacharias and Elisabeth belonged, "righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless"; also Simeon, who was "righteous and devout." The word here has reference to the heart as well as to the conduct, as this very narrative shows. The participle ὢν is durative: he was and continued to be δίκαιος, and this is mentioned here to explain his action under the trying circumstances confronting him, he could not ignore the matter, being a man who thought and acted rightly and fairly. — **And not willing to make her a public example** — θέλων, likewise durative, simultaneous with ἐβουλήθη; this explains further the resolve he reached in the matter. Here we see the other side of the man, the love in his heart for Mary, which had not died when her apparent unfaithfulness appeared. Two courses were open to Joseph, one was to follow the law in charging the unfaithful betrothed wife with adultery, thus making her a public example, exposing her to public shame, δειγματίσαι, and to the penalty of the law, which was stoning, Deut. 22, 23, although we are unable to say whether this was still in force at this time. The other course was to make use of the lax divorce laws of the Jews, and, without any charge of crime, simply to dismiss her, giving her a letter of divorcement, stating the cause for her dismissal in some veiled way, or stating no special cause whatever. — This second course Joseph **was minded** (ἐβουλήθη, aorist, a definite decision) to pursue, namely **to put her away privily**, ἀπολῦσαι, used of the dissolution of marriage, Matth. 5, 31 etc.; 19, 3-9; Mark 10, 2-12. Meyer thinks that dismissal by a letter of divorce is meant by the term "to make her a public example," and that "to put her away privily" signifies to separate from her quietly without a bill of divorcement, by a mere secret agreement, which, however, as Meyer himself admits, would

not comport with the law. He bases his assumption on the word *λάθρα*, privily, claiming, that a letter of divorcement would be *φανερῶς*, publicly. This claim, however, cannot be substantiated, as appears from Christ's later references to the lax divorce practices of the Jews, Matth. 5, 31-32; 19, 3-9. No doubt there were many divorced wives among the Jews, and a number of them must have remarried. As compared with a public accusation before the Jewish authorities charging a crime, a bill of divorcement quietly executed was certainly putting her away *λάθρα*; and this would not disturb the standing of Joseph as a "righteous man," who certainly in a case like this would not do an unrighteous act, one contrary to the law. Two verbs are used in this verse *θέλω* and *βούλομαι*. There is little difference between them.

Joseph **thought on these things**; he was deeply stirred by them, his heart and mind were strongly affected. The word *ταῦτα* refers to the whole case before him, the condition of his espoused wife, whose entire character and life, as far as he knew her, was a contradiction of the unfaithfulness which to him seemed the only possible explanation of that condition — as well as the "righteous" course for him to pursue under these circumstances. At the proper moment God himself intervenes. His hand is made visible to us in the early story of Jesus in a most remarkable way. As he guided the events pertaining to his Son, so he guides all things still for his sons, so that all must work for good to them. The angels of heaven are his servants and messengers, and it has been well said that we think of them too little amid the changing circumstances of our lives, and constantly look for natural laws and natural causes where God's help is often extended through supernatural hands. — **Behold** *ἰδοὺ*, interjection — a remarkable, noteworthy thing occurs at this critical moment, when Joseph is on the

point of carrying his decision into action; behold the gracious guidance of God, behold his watchful care, behold the wondrous way in which he works, behold the certainty with which he reaches the necessary result! — **An angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream.** In the Old Testament the angel of the Lord is the Son himself, here “an angel” (no Greek article) is one of the heavenly spirits “that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.” Besser thinks this angel was Gabriel, the *Mighty One of God, or Hero of God*, “to whom especially it was given to be an assistant to the saving God-power of the Gospel.” — **In a dream** (κατ’ ὄναρ, the noun found only in the nominative and accusative) he **appeared** to Joseph, for the time of the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy had come, “your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions,” 2, 28. Heaven had approached earth, therefore angels drew nigh and the veil that hid their presence was pierced now and again. There is no reason to assume that this appearance of an angel was any different from the one described in Matthew 2, 13, where evidently the vision came by night while Joseph was asleep. We may well imagine Joseph lying upon his couch, thinking on these things, while sleep for a time fled his eyes, until at last he sank into unconsciousness. Then, wondrously, there came a dream — the radiant form of the heavenly messenger (ἄγγελος) speaking God’s own word to him. In regard to this dream, as well as others like it, we must hold fast to its exceptional character. Matthew writes, the angel **appeared to him.** The appearance being real, this dream had in it what other dreams, no matter how vivid and striking, never have, namely the convincing proof of the reality of what transpired in the dream, We do not trouble ourselves as to the sources from which Matthew drew his information regarding this

dream of Joseph. He who sent the angel to Joseph had means to record the facts as they actually occurred, without admixture of human imaginings.

The angel addresses **Joseph** by name, and adds significantly, **thou son of David**, υἱός, nominative, usual in such additions to a vocative. Joseph was indeed a descendant of the royal house of David, as well as Mary his espoused wife. This fact is here made the basis of an appeal to him, to show himself on this most important occasion a true son of David, a man with the Messianic faith of David, since the promise to David was now in course of actual fulfillment. "Thou son of David" — a prince — and princely things were now expected of him, to be a protector to the very Prince of heaven itself. Men love great names, but they often lack the qualifications expressed or implied in them. We too are called "a royal priesthood," etc., but how much real royalty of faith and character, how much real priestliness of love and service is there in us? Let the great names God gives us move us to great things in the strength which he adds. — **Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife**, μή φοβηθῆς, the aorist subjunctive in prohibitions, as in the classics. The fears and misgivings of Joseph are removed, for they had no foundation in reality. Joseph would in no way compromise himself, condone a crime, risk his happiness, or do anything doubtful or hurtful, in taking Mary unto himself; on the contrary, he would do God's will, serve God's Son, shield and protect the mother of his Lord, receive a thousand blessings himself and show himself a true prince of David's faithful line. Where God himself by his Word bids us go forward there nothing but blessings await us, and there is no cause for fear. Παραλαβεῖν has the same general sense as συνελθεῖν in v. 18, the former assumes the activity of Joseph alone, the latter of both Joseph and Mary. Mary is here called Joseph's

wife by the angel, exactly as the evangelist calls Joseph her husband in v. 19. Both terms define the true position of Joseph and Mary, they were husband and wife; that which made them such was the betrothal; the coming together, the husband's taking the wife unto himself, followed as a matter of course, just as now, after the marriage vows are assumed, the husband takes the wife unto himself. "It is an honor for the wedded state that our Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son, was not born of a simple unmarried maid, but of Mary who was espoused as a true wife to Joseph her husband." Luther. — An important, and all-sufficient **for**, γὰρ, follows. **That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.** This angelic statement is the clearest kind of foundation for the sentence in the Apostolic Creed: "Conceived by the Holy Ghost"; and in the Nicene Creed: "And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and was made man"; likewise in the Augsburg Confession, III: "The Son of God took unto him man's nature, in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, so that there are two natures, the divine and the human, inseparably joined together in unity of person; one Christ, true God and true man: who was born of the Virgin Mary"; and in the Smalcald Articles, J. 311: "That the Son became man thus: that he was conceived, without the cooperation of man, by the Holy Ghost, and was born of the pure, holy Virgin Mary" (the Latin here adding *semper virgine*). The neuter passive participle γεννηθέν is made a substantive by means of the article τό, no sex being predicated of the unborn child in this first mention. Πνεῦμα ἅγιον needs no article, because it is a proper noun and denotes a person, in the phrase **of the Holy Ghost.** The full revelation of the Holy Ghost, as Christ afterwards gave it, still lay in the future when the angel spoke, yet this messenger came from heaven and in his words there is a full utterance

of the truth. Moreover, the Jews knew the Holy Trinity, and even the Baptist speaks of the Holy Ghost counting this knowledge as entirely familiar to his Jewish hearers. So here also there is no difficulty for Joseph as if he knew nothing of the Holy Ghost. The ineffable mystery of the Incarnation is here expressed by the angel in the words best fitted for the purpose; the mystery itself human thought will never be able to fathom. The fears of Joseph were blown away, a holy awe filled his soul as he contemplated, on awakening, what God had done. Our Confessions draw an important conclusion from this word of the angel, which is already expressed in the designation we bestow upon the mother of Jesus when we name her the *Virgin* Mary: "The blessed Virgin bore not a mere man, but such a man as is truly the Son of the Most High God, as the angel testifies; who showed his divine majesty even in his mother's womb, that he was born of a virgin, with her virginity uninjured. Therefore she is truly the mother of God, and nevertheless truly remained a virgin." *Book of Concord*, J. 628, 24; also 518, 12. — **And she shall bring forth a son.** Bengel remarks: "Not, *to thee*, as the angel said to Zacharias, Luke 1, 13," comp. Gen. 17, 19, in announcing the birth of John. The statement is categorical, also the one following, its positiveness leaves no room for doubt. We have here the heart of our Christmas text — "she shall bring forth a son," τέξεται, from τίξτω. While the words do not announce the birth as actually having occurred, as does the angel message to the shepherds in Luke's Gospel, the effect is the same, and the sermon must so transmit it. — **And thou shalt call his name Jesus.** Here Joseph is instated as the foster-father of the unborn child. What was already included in the bidding to take Mary unto himself, is made more clear by these words. The choice of the child's name, however, is not left to

Joseph, for he is under a higher Father, who attends to this exceedingly important task himself. God chose the name of the incarnate Son — **Jesus** = *Jehovah is helper*, or *Jehovah saves* (Joshua, Ex. 24, 13; *Jeshua*; the older form *Jehoshua*; Neh. 7, 7). The name is descriptive, embracing the entire saving work of God's Son, and because of the divine character of this work, it describes by implication also the person of the Son. — We are not left to infer this ourselves, the angel himself states it in so many words: **for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.** *Αὐτός* stands first — *he*, he alone! **His people**, *λαὸς αὐτοῦ* = the people of Israel, as in the text for the First Sunday in Advent, Luke 1, 68 and 77, but without the thought of restricting salvation to the Jews. Jesus himself explains his mission when he said he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel — to perform his saving work only in their midst, but nevermore, to restrict the effect of that work to their midst. Mary's son is *Jesus* for all the world, and Christmas must bring this message. — He **shall save from their sins** — *spiritual* salvation, or rescue, *σώσει* (comp. *σωτηρία* and *σότης*), not political, social, economical, etc., however much all departments of human life and activity are affected by the salvation which touches not the outer circle, or some segment, of human existence, but its very heart and center. "The world has kings and emperors, father and mother, physicians, etc., but they are all poor saviors compared with him who saves his people from their sins. Whoever then receives this Savior and would have him his Jesus or Savior, he must consider him a Savior, not chiefly for this life, but for everlasting life, who desires to deliver from sin and death. It is true indeed, when men cannot or will not help in bodily distress, the Lord Jesus comes and helps his own. But this is not his special and chief office. His special office is that he

will deliver us from sins, eternal death, and the devil's kingdom, whereunto all sinners also need him." Luther. To save us from sins is to take us out of their power, so that they shall never harm us. Jesus has destroyed the destructive power of all sin by his complete atonement, and in this sense all men are already saved; but the atonement must be appropriated by each sinner in true faith, in order that each one may have and enjoy the salvation from sin, and in this sense many are still unsaved, and salvation in Jesus' name must be proclaimed to them. "Jesus was what he was called. He was so already in the constitution of his person. God and man were here — and are now — mysteriously united in this one Jesus, so that he had every qualification for saving people from their sins. He was God and could atone for all; he was man and stood under the law, under which we were, and was thus enabled to bear its penalties and fulfil its requirements. And this the blessed God-Man was pleased to do: establishing the truth of his name in fact as he was constituted to do it in his wonderful person." Loy, *Sermons on the Gospel*, p. 87.

V. 22. **All this** includes every fact and detail just recorded by Matthew in describing "the birth of Jesus Christ." — **That it might be fulfilled** (ἵνα) indicates the divine intention, and is not indetical with the phrase "then was, or is, fulfilled." Matth. 2, 17 etc. Matthew frequently uses the phrase here employed in introducing Old Testament prophecies. He means in every case to substantiate the veracity of God, and to reveal the wonderful greatness, power, wisdom, and mercy of God who stands behind both the prophecy itself and its eventual fulfillment. The verb *πληρωθῆναι* pictures the promise or prophecy as an empty vessel which is filled by the final occurrence of what was foretold. Note the change in the prepositions, "spoken **by**, ὑπό, the Lord **through**, διά, the prophet." God him-

self is the speaker; the prophet, the human mouth-piece for his utterance. This casts a clear light upon the marvels of divine prophecy, and the fact and mystery of Inspiration. God sees the end from the beginning, and none of his predictions can fail, nor can any fault occur in them or in the words which God uses in telling of them. Matthew, having in mind Jewish readers, for whom his Gospel was especially written, does not need to mention the name of the prophet; they know both the prophet and the words quoted, which are bound to affect their hearts deeply. — The passage introduced is found Is. 7, 14, with the slight change that, instead of the *virgin* shall call his name, Matthew writes, *they* shall call his name. King Ahaz of Judah turned from Jehova and sought his help from the hands of the heathen king of Assyria. In endeavoring to move him from this disastrous course Isaiah pronounced the Messianic prophecy which Matthew here introduces. — **Behold** — all ages may well do so, for this is a miracle infinitely great and blessed. — **The virgin** (not “a virgin,” as the A. V. wrongly translates), the one mentioned also in Micah 5, 3; “it is the virgin, whom the Spirit of prophecy reveals to the prophet, and who, although he cannot name her, stands before his soul as one chosen for extraordinary things. How exalted she appears to him is indicated by her giving the name to her son, and this the name Immanuel.” Delitzsch. This expositor comments finely on the entire passage, *Commentar*, 1866, p 133. The sign of the virgin bearing a son to be called Immanuel meant for Ahaz, who had turned from Jehovah, that no helper would arise from the perverted house of David as it was then represented in the wicked king, that these wicked generations should perish, and that finally from an unnamed virgin the great Helper would be born. — The extraordinary thing about him is that his name

shall be called **Immanuel**. Delitzsch continues: "He is God in bodily presentation, therefore a miracle in the form of a super-human person. We would not dare to say this, because it transcends the Old Testament plane of knowledge, but the prophet himself says so, Is. 9, 6; 10, 21; his statement is as clear as possible, we dare not darken it in the interest of a preconceived construction of history. The Incarnation is indeed a veiled mystery in the Old Testament, but the veil is not so dense that it admits of no rays striking through. A ray of this kind cast by the Spirit of prophecy into the spirit of the prophet, is this prophecy concerning Immanuel. But if the Messiah is Immanuel in the sense that, as the prophet explicitly says, he is himself *El* (God), then his birth also must be a miraculous one; the prophet indeed does not say that 'the virgin' who had not known a man would bear a son without this, so that the son would be born, not out of the house of David, but as a gift of heaven into it; but this 'virgin' was and remained a riddle in the Old Testament, mightily stirring up the inquiry and search (1 Pet. 1, 10-12), and awaiting a solution in historic fulfillment." Isaiah sees first the Messiah to be born, Is. 7, 14; then the Messiah actually born, Is. 9, 6; finally his beneficent reign Is. 11. — Matthew himself adds the translation of **Immanuel** — **God with us**. Because he is "God with us," therefore he is Jesus for us. The seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham, the heir of David's throne, the son of the virgin, he is "God with us." And with this blessed name our precious Christmas gospel ends.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

For the great Christian festivals preach homiletical appropriation! Make it your absolute rule. For our present text this means: do not let Joseph or Mary get in front of Jesus! We are celebrating Jesus' birthday, not Joseph's, not Mary's. Certain Greeks in Jerusalem once begged Philip: "Sir, we

would see Jesus," John 12, 22. Today it is the preacher's one great business to show his hearers Jesus. Do not offer us "lessons" or applications from the acts of Joseph and Mary. There are thousands of other opportunities for application. Christmas is one of the great times for appropriation.

Here is a thought for incidental use: There is an angel in this gospel lesson, as there are many in the lesson from Luke. It is impossible to keep the angels out of the Christmas story. If we would know the heavenly Savior indeed and learn the way of salvation which he has prepared for us, we must make the angels of God our companions and learn to dwell with them and rejoice in their ministrations.

The following is a simple, yet effective presentation:

The Birth of Jesus Immanuel.

- I. The prophet of God foretells it.*
- II. The power of God brings it to pass.*
- III. The angel of God sets forth its blessedness.*

Wiener has a similar outline:

Christ Jesus Immanuel.

- I. Born of the Virgin Mary, yet the Son of God.*
- II. Born in the greatest lowliness, yet glorified by the angel of God.*
- III. Born in a remote corner of the earth, yet the fulfiller of God's promises for all the world.*

There is fine color in the theme:

"Thou Shalt Call His Name Jesus!"

for this is a quotation from the text itself. It asks us to dwell on the Blessed Name:

- I. The Name of a divine person.*
- II. The Name of divine origin.*
- III. The Name revealing a divine work.*

To be sure, Joseph and Mary are to be brought into the sermon. Preaching appropriation does not in the least bar them out. But theirs is a side position entirely. Here is a sample:

How God Revealed the Blessed Christmas Mystery to Joseph of Nazareth.

He showed him by an angel messenger

- I. *The mystery of Christ's divine origin.*
- II. *The mystery of Christ's divine person.*
- III. *The mystery of Christ's divine work.*

Joseph is part of the frame, no more; he is not the portrait. The revelation made to Joseph is, of course, made through him to us. — The following is similar:

The Christmas Light in Joseph's Heart.

- I. *Shed abroad by a divine revelation.*
- II. *Revealing a heavenly mystery.*
- III. *Awakening an endless joy.*

The mention of "Joseph's heart" is for the purpose of making the sermon personal. As we speak of his heart we think of our own. Again, Joseph is only in the frame, he is not the portrait.

In making either the name "Jesus," or the name "Immanuel" the pivot of the sermon, this should be done so as to swing the entire text on that pivot. Never cut these names out of the text in order to preach independently on them. Here is an illustration:

"God With Us."

- I. *Immanuel sent by the Father.*
- II. *Immanuel born through the power of the Holy Ghost.*
- III. *Immanuel making us one with the Father, the Holy Ghost, and himself.*

We have already had another illustration under the theme, "Christ Jesus Immanuel." We add:

Immanuel, Our Great Christmas Treasure.

- I. *See how God gave it to us.*
- II. *Behold and marvel at its value.*

The essential thing in a festival sermon is to present the *objective* deed and fact celebrated in the festival. And this should be done without any "ifs" or "buts." Also without polemics. On Christmas, for instance, we certainly do not intend to *prove* the Virgin birth, or even to *defend* its historical reality. Our hearts are too joyous, our feelings too festive. At

some other time we may reckon in the pulpit with the robbers of our Christmas faith; just now we are busy *glorifying* God for his unspeakable gift to us. If any mention is made of the opponents of our faith, let it be only in passing. — While the sermon must be objective, let us remember there are two ways of preaching objectively: one is the cold, distant, formal, even dry way, like showing a far-away mountain peak to which we can never hope to climb; the other is a warm, intimate, vital, we may say personal, way, like unwrapping and showing some beautiful piece of jewelry, which we have been commissioned to bring to a friend. There will be exclamations of joy, but they will all be produced by the priceless gift itself. And that is the secret of the uplift and the exalted tone that goes with a real festival sermon. It is and must be as genuine as the gift we bring. The hearer must go away from that sermon as one who exults over the precious gift he has just received. No preacher who does not himself fully realize this joy in himself can counterfeit it or pretend it in his sermon. So we may preach with Lindemann:

The Glory of God Revealed in the Birth of Christ

- I. *The glory of his love*, in giving us Jesus the Savior; Immanuel, God with us.
- II. *The glory of his wisdom*, in giving us the Savior conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of a human mother (only a true man, wholly free from sin, joining in himself both the human and divine nature, could work out our ^{own} salvation).
- III. *The glory of his truth*, in fulfilling his promises; in giving us together with his Son, whom he spared not, all things.

Note—The text for the Day after Christmas, John 1-14, has been omitted.

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

Luke 2, 25-32

Simeon with the holy child in his arms, beyond a doubt, signifies *appropriation* — “*mine* eyes have seen thy salvation.” But this is not all. The appropriation set so beautifully before us in aged Simeon embracing the infant Christ, is an illustration of what God intends for all men. This text stands for *universal appropriation* — “salvation prepared before the face of *all people*; a light to lighten the *Gentiles*, and the glory of thy people *Israel*.” A grand text with its tender personal note! — Christmas always fills the children with happiness, and the old in spirit become children again and join with the little ones. But here is a Christmas text for old people especially — behold, how an old man celebrates the Savior’s birth in ancient Jerusalem. And the year is growing old too. But Christ makes every old heart, even as another year grows old, young again, young with faith, joy, and a hope that fadeth not away. — Simeon’s words, as he held the Babe in his arms, have been called his swan’s song. They are inspired words, placed by the Holy Spirit upon his aged lips and then recorded by the inspired evangelist. The Greek and the Roman Catholic churches, as well as our Lutheran Church, have embodied the *Nunc dimittis* in their liturgies. It is our song of praise and gratitude on receiving the precious body and blood of our Lord in the Holy Supper. That sacred feeling of solemnity, which always fills the souls of communicants when they have worthily received the Sacrament, should touch the preacher’s heart when he takes up this text in his pulpit, and should transfer itself, as he unfolds its

contents to his hearers, upon their souls also. The gates of heaven were open for Simeon when he held the holy Child in his arms, the angels were singing in heavenly choirs, the music was in his old heart, the music that is sweeter than earth, and his lips overflowed with it. So must the portals above open as this text sounds in our ears, so must the singing stir us and fill us:

“O Lord, now let thy servant
Depart in peace, I pray,
Since I have seen my Savior,
And have beheld this day.”

V. 25. An unexpected, a notable thing is ushered in by the exclamation, **And behold**. Mary and Joseph had come to the Temple for a double purpose, to bring the offering required by the law at the close of the 40 days of the purification of the mother, either a lamb, or if poor a dove, for a burnt-offering, and a dove for a sin-offering, (Lev. 12, 2 etc.) ; and to present the child Jesus as the firstborn of Mary, according to the law, to the Lord and redeem him by the payment of five shekels (Ex. 13, 2; Num. 8, 16; 18, 15). Joseph as the husband of Mary and the legal father of Jesus properly does his share in attending to the requirements of the law. It was while this was going forward that the important occurrence took place which Luke here records. — **There was a man**, ἀνθρωπος — just as John 1, 6 we are told of the Baptist, “a man” — nothing great and wonderful, no high office, lofty standing, remarkable power, or anything of the kind — just “a man.” It is all a fancy then when he is pictured as the President of the Sanhedrim in the year 13, as a son of Hillel and the father of Gamaliel. These adornments are disfigurements of Luke’s simple truthful account. Simeon did not stand high, even if he lived in Jerusalem, like Anna, but was one of that small

circle referred to in v. 38, "looking for the redemption of Jerusalem." He was one of the "still people in the land," one of the true Israelites, whose hopes for the Messiah were spiritual, not carnal like those of the Jews generally, and who had retained true spiritual faith in their hearts where empty formalism had over-run almost all others. — But while Simeon lacked worldly distinction and position, he had the distinction which is recognized in the kingdom of God; this man **whose name was Simeon** — common enough, signifying "hearing"; the Lord has heard, Gen. 29, 33 — **was righteous and devout.** "Righteous," δίκαιος, must not be restricted to the conduct alone, i. e., to the careful observance of all that the law required in outward obedience; it also includes the condition of the heart necessary for such observance, in order to make it acceptable to the Lord. So Zacharias was "righteous before God," i. e., acceptable to him. Compare Gen. 7, 1, Noah — "thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation"; Gen. 17, 1, Abraham. That this righteousness includes the heart we see in the case of Solomon, 1 Kgs. 9, 4, where the keeping of the statutes and judgments is connected with "integrity of heart," and "uprightness." Compare Hezekiah, 2 Kgs. 20, 3; Job 1, 1; Phil. 3, 6. ("Righteous") describes Simeon's whole life, character, and heart; he was a true son of Israel. Luke alone uses the word "devout," εὐλαβής, conscientious, "God-fearing," Luther. Combined with δίκαιος it completes the picture, drawing especial attention to his heart and conscience. In the case of Zacharias this was done by adding to "righteous" the words "before God." So Paul says of himself, Acts 23, 1, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day"; Acts 24, 16, "to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men." What a fine thing to have the Spirit of God say about a man — "he was righteous and

devout” Stoecker remarks: “He was not only *churchly*, as we are wont to say, meaning that he attended the services and sacrifice, diligently observed the Sabbaths and the festivals days — no, he was a righteous man in all his walk. And this is saying a great deal, when we consider, how difficult it is in the many tasks of life to fulfill all righteousness. One is a member in the household and must fulfill all his duties toward his own and approve himself faithful. One is a subject under an earthly government, and there too he must do his duty in all humility and with glad obedience. One belongs to the kingdom of God, and in all love and devotion must sacrifice, help, work and build together with others. To be righteous in all these respects is so great a thing that few will have the courage to claim it of themselves.” (*Den Armen, etc.*, p. 44.)

The most significant thing said of Simeon is in the words, **looking for the consolation of Israel**. Simeon had the true Messianic hope in his heart. It is called consolation,” παράκλησις from παρακαλεῖν, to call to one’s aid. The Messiah would bring the consolation, coming to the aid of Israel, which is thus pictured as being in distress. The Holy Ghost is called the Paraclete, but Jesus significantly called him “another comforter,” since Christ himself was the first Comforter, who brought to Israel παράκλησιν. Is. 40, 1: “Comfort, comfort ye my people, saith your God.” It is wrong to read into this “consolation” anything political, for the text does not indicate it. Nor should we restrict the consolation to “Israel” in the Jewish narrowness which excluded the other nations. The expression is here used in the sense of Jesus’ words to the woman at the well, “salvation is of the Jews.” The whole description shows us in Simeon one of those precious and rare characters whose heart was open to the influence of the Holy Ghost and the Word of

promise, and who apprehended the spiritual character of that promise. — This is made especially clear by the statement: **and the Holy Spirit was upon him**, πνεῦμα ἄγιον, as throughout the Gospels, the third person of the Godhead; no article, used like a proper noun. “Upon him” indicates the Spirit’s presence and influence directed upon him, not as regards the righteousness and conscientiousness in him, but as regards the special grace vouchsafed to him and described in what follows. The prophets spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, 2 Pet. 1, 20, and in like manner the Holy Ghost was upon Simeon.

V. 26. The verb it **had been revealed**, ἦν κερσηματισμένον, circumscribed pluperfect, signifies that an answer had been returned unto him to his earnest longing and request. What his request had been we are told only by implication; the answer received indicates it, namely that he might with his own eyes see the Messiah ere he died. This desire was in the heart of every true Israelite, and it expressed itself, no doubt, in many an earnest prayer. Kings and prophets desired to see what the disciples of Jesus afterwards saw, but did not get to see it, Luke 10, 24. Luthey points out how Simeon’s prayer may have come to be uttered: “The Holy Ghost touched his heart, no doubt by means of the Word of God, which he read in the prophecy of the holy patriarch Jacob, Gen. 49, 10, that the sceptre should not depart from Judah until Shiloh come,” and in Daniel’s reckoning concerning the seventy-two weeks, from all of which he could conclude, that the time must be near for Christ to be born.” This makes the request the more reasonable, having such a foundation in the Word of God. — He received an answer, but we are left uninformed as to the manner in which it came to him; we are only told that it came **by the Holy Ghost**. “Was a special revelation vouchsafed to him? Or had he read his answer by the

assistance of the Holy Spirit from the Scriptures? Or did it become clear to him in consequence of his intimate communion by faith with God, that he would yet see the Savior? This is hard to decide." Stoecker. Luther remarks that this revelation did not indicate the day or the hour, but only the fact, just as we today do not know at what exact hour the last day will come. To imagine a vision, a dream, a message by an angel, is without the slightest hint in the text itself. The Holy Spirit found the right means. — The answer Simeon had from God was a special grace vouchsafed unto him; it was: **that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.** The impersonal ἦν κεχωρηματισμένον is followed by the infinitive μὴ ἰδεῖν, with the implied subject αὐτόν. Luke alone uses the classic idiom πρὶν with the subjunctive or optative after negative sentences; here the subjunctive ἴδῃ is retained, according to the usual rule of indirect discourse. Robertson, p. 977. To "see death" is evidently simply to depart out of this earthly life, and not the seeing which Jesus mentions John 8, 51, where instead of ἰδεῖν a different verb is used. Compare Heb. 11, 5; Ps. 89, 48. To **see** the Lord's Christ — again ἰδεῖν — is actual sight with the natural eyes. — And the Savior is significantly called **the Lord's Christ, the Anointed of Jehovah.** Peter afterwards called him "the Christ of God," Luke 9, 20. The designation ὁ χριστός indicates the office, to which the anointing set apart and consecrated the person. Here the word is a prolepsis, for the Savior received his anointing when about thirty years old. For a fuller explanation of the word Christ see the text for the Fifth Sunday after Trinity, Luke 9, 20. The genitive κυρίου is without the article, because it is a name = Jehovah, and indicates the origin of the Christ = whom God sends. Luther makes the application to our prayers for Christ's second coming, "that he may come, help and comfort us, and usher

in the last day, so that we may be delivered from the power of the devil and from the persecution of the truth." A still wider application may be made to all times of distress, in which like Simeon we ought to search the Scriptures with great diligence and longing, and devote ourselves to earnest prayer, that the time of refreshment from the Lord may come, and we may rejoice in his deliverance as Simeon rejoiced. But there are too many like the majority of the Jews, out of touch with the Word and Spirit of God, far from close communion with him, and thus left to their own poor devices.

V. 27. **And he came in the Spirit**, ἐν τῷ πνεύματι, with the Greek article to indicate, not Simeon's spirit, but the Holy Spirit just mentioned in v. 25. Commentators generally understand this to mean that the Holy Spirit spoke in Simeon's heart, impelling him to go to the Temple at this special time. Whether the first assurance that he would see before his death the Lord's Christ, was given him in the same manner, simply by the Spirit speaking in his heart, cannot be determined. In thinking of ourselves, we must always remember that there is (a grave danger connected with the following of voices speaking in the heart;) the devil has deluded many by such means and led them into error, sin, and even great crime. We must constantly try the spirits whether they be of God. In the case of Simeon the test was simple. The Spirit of God ever directs to the Temple of God, to the worship of God, to the blessings God there distributes. Sommer says, the devil leads to the pinnacle of the Temple, or to his chapel besides the Temple, not into the sacred precincts of the Temple. Luther takes it that Simeon knew, when thus he went to the Temple, that at this time he would see the Christ. It may have been, although the words "in the spirit" do not directly say that much. The Spirit of God frequently stirs our

hearts and moves us to do this or that which is the will of God, and we yield to his inward persuasion, but we do not realize in each case what great blessings he thus means to bestow upon us, until after the event, when his great purpose becomes plain to us and our hearts turn to him in thankfulness. Many a blessing is lost to us because we heed not the holy promptings of the Spirit. Simeon responded readily — for it was a usual thing with him, — old though he was and infirm as old people are, to go to the house of the Lord. An application is easily made here. Do not say, I do not feel like going to church today; that feeling is not from God's Spirit, but from the spirit of evil. If the old should respond quickly in answer to God's promptings, in spite of weakness and infirmity, how much more the young with their ready strength. — **Into the temple**, the court of the women, for both Mary and Anna, the prophetess, are present at what transpires. — The text reads as if Simeon was in the Temple when Joseph and Mary entered. They are called the **parents**, οἱ γονεῖς, and the argument has been based on this word, that Joseph was the real father of Jesus, but only unbelief will seek such props. Luke's intention is not at all to elucidate the true fatherhood of Jesus, but to describe the event which here took place; the fatherhood of this wonderful child has been fully and clearly set forth in an earlier section, and it is simply folly for Meyer to assume that Luke copied that account and this one from two different sources, leaving the contradictory statements stand as they were. That is not only a denial of divine Inspiration, but also a denial of Luke's good sense. Joseph faithfully acted a father's part toward the child Jesus, and did this so well that he was popularly supposed to be the real father. Joseph and Mary were silent about the mystery of Jesus' birth, and rightly so.

Luke describes what occurred in a beautiful way,

so that we can actually picture the scene. **When the parents brought in the child Jesus, that they might do concerning him after the custom of the law, then he, καὶ αὐτός,** he also on his part, **received him into his arms.** Ἐν τῷ εἰσαγαγεῖν, the aorist infinitive is used as a substantive: at the bringing in; τοῦ ποιῆσαι expresses purpose: in order to do. It isn't that Simeon comes upon the group when the priest receives the doves for the sacrifice and the five shekels as the redemption money, and then recognizes the child. As the parents bring him, so Luke says, he also on his part took him into his arms; Simeon's act is placed alongside of that of the parents in bringing the child. We may picture the scene then as taking place before a priest came near. While it occurred in the public Temple court, not many saw or heard — we read only of Simeon and Anna. No priest is near to ask an explanation — they who form the sacred little circle all understand sufficiently. Ἐδέξατο εἰς τὰς ἀγκάλας, as if he stood with outstretched arms and so **received him** as Joseph and Mary came walking up. How did Simeon know that this was he, the long expected Messiah? Lange speaks of the "lofty form of Mary," but we know that there was absolutely no outward mark to attract attention to this child above any others that were carried into the Temple. There were undoubtedly many with more display of wealth, culture, power, and other signs of earthly greatness. Joseph and Mary were poor, and it required no experienced eye to detect it. And the child itself, a little over a month old now, could in no way have appeared exceptional even to one who scrutinized closely. Luke does not say (how) Simeon singled out the holy Babe, he only says that he did it, in a simple and direct way. The inference is plain, Simeon was so under the influence of the Holy Spirit in this the greatest hour of his life, that he recognized the child at once for what it really

was. We see this divine influence working in him when he opens his lips and utters his inspired "Swan's song," and then adds the words of prophecy concerning what this child should be in the days to come, and what should happen to Mary his mother. Just as the Holy Ghost thus controlled his thought and utterance, so likewise he controlled his vision and powers of perception. It is, of course, all a mystery, as is the other wondrous working of the Spirit. Simeon himself could probably not have explained it if he had tried. — This picture of the aged Simeon with the Christ-child in his arms has always attracted Christian hearts — how could it do otherwise? Here the old covenant and the new met; hope and fulfillment were brought together in one heavenly moment. His own indeed received him not, and yet "his own" in a higher sense did receive him, for he was not to come and remain unreceived altogether. Though high priest and priest in the very Temple of God knew not that the chief glory of the Temple had come bodily into it, yet priestly hearts were there to render the Lord of the Temple the service he delighted in; they wore no priestly robes, but were clothed in the beauty of faith and holiness. Old age and the babe Christ, patriarch and the newborn child — the threshold of vanishing earthly life, and the Prince of life eternal opening the portals where no decline or shadow of death shall ever enter. — **And blessed God, and said,** first on his own behalf, secondly on behalf of the whole world. This blessing is true praise, mingled with profoundest gratitude. They are Simeon's own words, yet uttered completely under the influence of the Holy Spirit who filled his heart with light and joy.

Simeon's Song, v. 29. The punctuation of the R. V. indicates three strains each of two lines, but the sense of the words points rather to two strains, each of three lines. The first three lines are marked by

the *personal* reference to Simeon, even in the third line "mine" eyes; and the last three lines are marked by the *universality* of Salvation in Christ. — **Now** means blessed moment when Simeon embraced the child Jesus. It is the climax of his life here on *earth* — there is nothing higher, sweeter, or more blessed that he can reach. Too many commentators overlook that ἀπολύεις is confined to this νῦν. — Simeon describes the blessedness of that supreme moment: **Now lettest thou thy servant depart, O Lord . . . in peace.** The word for servant, δοῦλος, really "bond-servant" or "slave" corresponds to the word "Lord," δεσπότης, really "supreme Master"; and the verb fits these two, ἀπολύειν, to release, set free, and thus dismiss, *gehen heissen*. When Zahn and others investigate ἀπολύειν alone, as used for to let die, passive to die, etc., they overlook the exact meaning of δοῦλος and δεσπότης, which here certainly determine the meaning of ἀπολύειν. Is there an image in these words? There would hardly be such a close correspondence between them, if there were not. The supreme Master releases his bondservant now, at last — this is what Simeon says. The difficulty is with the application of the slave idea to Simeon's life. We can say indeed that every true Israelite felt himself a δοῦλος of Jehovah, but that does not explain the dismissal, the release, and that now, of which Simeon speaks. Simeon says that now he is set free as it were, set free **in peace**, with a heart satisfied and completely at rest. His bondage is ended — not his service, as the thought is usually twisted; in order to make it signify the end of his life. Let us note that Luke nowhere tells us how old Simeon was, he only calls him an ἄνθρωπος, while he gives us not only the exact age of Anna, but even says she was "of a great age," advanced in many days. The statement that Simeon should not see death before he had seen the Christ has led interpreters to assume a great

age for him and his departure from life soon after his meeting with the child Jesus. But Luke's failure to mention either his exact age or the fact that, like Anna, he was quite old, ought to make us cautious. It is possible that, like Anna, he still lived for some time after this event and joined her in telling others of the newborn Christ. These considerations all point to the conclusion that the bondage from which Simeon was dismissed "now" does not signify his release from earthly life, but his release from the hardship of waiting for the coming of the Messiah. In his waiting, longing, and hoping he was like a slave anxious for the moment when his liberation should be announced; that announcement came when he actually beheld the Lord's Christ. — It was promised to him before, for he says that he is released **according to thy word**; that sweet word of promise had made his bondage more easy to bear. Now, however, that the great moment is come he feels free, gloriously free, for the rest of his earthly days, be they few or many, and forever free. His supreme Master's salvation, which has now come, has set him forever free. Elliot and Godet have something of this thought when they sketch a watchman set to wait for sunrise, or to announce the rising of a great star, and released from this task, when the luminary at last appears. The application of Simeon's words to a faithful Christian's release from his earthly life is not lost by our interpretation, it is rather strengthened; for what Simeon's waiting for the Lord's Christ was (a bondage), the whole earthly life of the Christian is, a waiting for the time when finally he shall likewise with his own eyes behold the Lord's Christ, in the glory of heaven. It is, of course, only an application, a comparison, and no more. — V. 30. **For mine eyes have seen thy salvation**, or more exactly, since the word is not ἡ σωτηρία, but the neuter of the adjective form σωτήριος, "that

which brings salvation." Simeon's eyes saw the child Jesus, but by the revelation of the Spirit he saw more than a simple child like other children, he saw *that* child "which would grow, become a man, proclaim the truth, die for mankind and redeem the world." Stoecker. In the child's presence at that very instant, as Simeon said, one could truly see τὸ σωτήριόν σου. The first steps in bringing that salvation had already been taken.

V. 31. Thus far Simeon thought only of himself, his own former position, his own release, his own peace. But the word "salvation" opens a world-wide vista before him. No longer does he think merely of himself, for this salvation is one **which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples.** "Hast prepared" = hast set in readiness — includes both the special thought, care and effort of God, as well as the blessed result attained and now remaining. "Before the face" — right before the eyes, so as to be seen. But the most remarkable word here is: **of all peoples,** πάντων τῶν λαῶν. This is *universal* salvation indeed! In a way this word is even stronger than that of the angel who spoke to the shepherds on the fields of Bethlehem, for he said, "joy which shall be παντὶ τῷ λαῷ," and this λαός would naturally be understood by a Jew to signify his own nation = which shall be to all the nation. But Simeon uses the plural, which can in no way be restricted to the Jewish nation. — Nor are we left in the least doubt as to whether the salvation is really meant for "all peoples." The expression "hast prepared before the face" implies that, for it could not have been prepared as a mere show for them to marvel at and yet not partake of. — Simeon divides οἱ λαοί in the fashion customary with the Jews, into **Gentiles,** ἔθνη, and **thy people,** λαός σου, giving this its honor-name **Israel.** The salvation prepared by God is for both, and as such *equally* for both. Yet there

is a difference between them as is indicated already by the use of the two names; the Gentiles are not called God's people. They have lived far from the true God, in the night of heathen darkness. For them therefore God's salvation is a **light**, v. 32. But has not God's people had the light? Yes, but there is something in this salvation exceeding all the light Israel ever had, it is for the chosen people **the glory**. In calling Christ, or the salvation of Christ, "a light" Simeon re-echoed all the clear utterances of Isaiah, 9, 2; 42, 6; 49, 6; 60, 1-3. The Gentile nations were indeed in darkness. Salvation comes to them as the **light for revelation**, showing what the light shall do, namely reveal, unveil, make plain what all the darkness hid from them before, namely the grace of God and the way of deliverance from sin and death. The words εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἔθνῶν are rendered in the margin "for the unveiling of the Gentiles." The genitive ἔθνῶν may be either subjective or objective; we prefer the former, namely the revelation which the Gentiles possess, which in substance amounts to the regular text of the R. V. "revelation to the Gentiles." — This view is strengthened by the genitive connected with δόξαν — λαοῦ σου Ἰσραήλ. "For the people of Israel the 'salvation' is 'glory,' because the people of God attain in the appearance and work of the Messiah that glory which distinguishes them above all nations, as being set apart to be the source and possessor of salvation." Some here throw in a little chiliastic color, like Godet — after Christ shall have converted the Gentiles he will glorify his people Israel, namely by the final conversion of the Jews. There is no such "after" or succession here, the φῶς and the δόξα are simultaneous. Then too Simeon says nothing of a glorification of Israel either taking place at that time or at a later time. He says that his eyes have seen God's salvation and this salvation which he thus sees he calls the glory

of Israel. Whether Israel accepts it or not, God's salvation in Christ is Israel's glory, for to the end of the world Christ's own word must stand: "Salvation is of the Jews," John 4, 22. On the question of the final conversion of the Jewish nation see the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, Matth. 23, 38. A former Prime Minister of England, Disraeli, a Jew, says: "The pupil of Moses may ask himself whether all the princes of David have done so much for the Jews as that Prince who was crucified on Calvary. Had it not been for him, the Jews would have been comparatively unknown, or known only as a high oriental caste which had lost its country. Has not he made their history the most famous history of the world? Has he not hung up their laws in every temple? Has not he avenged the victims of Titus, and conquered the Cæsars? What successes did they anticipate from their Messiah? The wildest dreams of the Rabbis have been far exceeded. Has not Jesus conquered Europe, and changed its name into Christendom? All countries that refuse the cross wither, while the whole of the new world is devoted to the Semitic principle and its most glorious offspring, the Jewish faith" — hardly the *Jewish* faith, but the faith of the Christ rejected by the Jews, even by a Disraeli who cannot help seeing some of the glory-rays (the more outward ones) emanating from the salvation in Jesus. — Noesgen assumes that the Magi from the East came to Bethlehem before the child Jesus was brought to the Temple; we prefer the chronology of Robinson, which makes that event follow the visit of the holy family to Jerusalem. — The last note in the three specific Christmas texts of this cycle is the note of world-wide missions, for Jew and Gentile alike.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

In order to compose a real introduction to a sermon, one must know where to start and whither to go. The introduction is a straight line of thought between these two points. First, get *the starting point*. In order to do that place yourself as a hearer in the pew and make yourself listen attentively to the reading of the text. The impression properly made on you by the text as thus you hear it read to you, is your real starting point. We may also say it is the dominant thought naturally awakened in the hearer's mind. Sometimes it is an important question raised in the hearer by the text. Begin at this starting point. Logically, psychologically, and in the very nature of what you are attempting to do in a sermon, this is *the place* at which to begin. Now face straight and true for your theme, which is the goal for your introduction. Naturally the distance will not be long. — 1) It is a mistake to start away from the real starting point. That is one reason why some introductions are labored and long. If you do start a bit away from the starting point, get to that point as fast as you can, and do not fail to do so. 2) It is a mistake to wander away from the straight line leading to the theme. It is like a man losing his way; no man knows where he will get to. This too makes for undue length. 3) It is a mistake not to connect simply and naturally with your theme. If you have to make a final desperate jump in thought to get to your theme, your introduction is wrong. — The introduction is a beautiful porch designed to fit exactly the sermon house you have sketched out in your outline.

We add the following. Read the text properly. It is the most important thing you do in the pulpit. Put no long prayer between the text and the sermon, as this is bound to erase any impression the text makes on your hearers. Wait till your audience is completely settled in the pews before you start the sermon. Wait even a little longer, till every eye is turned toward you and every ear listens. Then begin. Strike the right note in the very first sentence. In fact the first few sentences must hit true, have full weight of thought, and justify the attention you have drawn from your audience. Attention and interest lost in the start is very hard to regain. To be hesitant in the start, to grope and feel your way, to stumble and speak disconnectedly, is to score failure where success is vital.

Take the present text. An impressive reading of it puts into the hearts and minds of your hearers the picture of old Simeon holding the Christ-child in his arms while his lips utter the grandest praise and thanksgiving. That picture is your

starting point for the introduction. Suppose you have made your theme: **How an Old Man Celebrates Christmas**, then your introduction may run as follows: The story of what venerable old Simeon did when the Christ-child was brought into the Temple at Jerusalem, comes to all of us with the most tender appeal. We generally think of Christmas as a children's festival. And indeed we want all our little ones to gather about the manger in Bethlehem and sing their lovely Christmas songs. But all of us, even the grey-haired, bent with age, turn young again at Christmas time, and join in the happy singing of our little ones. The more we have felt the burdens and trials of life, the nearer we have come to the day when we shall be called to meet our Savior above, the fuller and deeper should be our appreciation of what the child Jesus was and what he came to bring us all. The feelings that Simeon had when he saw the holy Child in the Temple should fill our hearts; and the expression he gave to his feelings when he took the holy Child in his arms ought to find a perfect echo in our own hearts. Let venerable old Simeon show us once more,

How an Old Man Celebrates Christmas.

He celebrates it just like Simeon: *I. With holy desire. II. With lofty joy. III. With fervent praise. IV. With world-wide love. V. With blessed peace.* This introduction is a mere illustration, not a model. Make yours a lot better, but do it on the same principle. In the outline Simeon is made a pattern for us showing us how to receive Christ. The parts are obtained by analyzing the inner contents of the text. — Here is another illustration: It is because the Christ-child is in the story of Simeon that this story attracts us all. It is because Simeon received the Christ-child not only into his arms, but the salvation this child brought right into his heart, that we are more than attracted, that we are actually captivated by this story. Let us yield our hearts to it, for

The Story of Simeon Would Make the Christ-Child Ours.

It tells us I. Of *the Holy Ghost*, who still brings the Christ-child to us; II. Of *the salvation* God has prepared for us in the Christ-child; III. Of *the joyful faith* by which the Christ-child is made ours; IV. Of *the peace and praise* that always show the Christ-child is actually ours. — Here we may ask, whether the parts should always be announced in the sermon right after the statement of the theme. Yes, when the announcement tends to stimulate the hearer's interest in what is coming. No, when, as in the last sample, the entire contents of the sermon are already

summarized in the parts; announce each part as you reach it, or build up each part and announce its summary at the climax of the part, or toward the end of the part. Be flexible in the matter, and not bound by a wooden rule. Variety is better than stereotype form. Always to state the parts after the theme is to set up an arbitrary rule. All arbitrary rules are unhomiletical. A word about *not* stating the parts at all: do *not* state the parts (or the theme, for that matter, either!) if you do *not* want your hearers to know exactly what you are talking about, if you want to leave them in the dark, and to guess at what you really mean. — It will be easy to introduce the theme:

Simeon: Constant Christmas.

- I. *Through life and death.*
- II. *From nation to nation and age to age.*

The theme is split on the word "constant," and the text shows two domains in which the constant effect of Christmas is to show itself.

Have Your Eyes Seen God's Salvation This Christmas-tide?

- I. *They have, if you were enlightened by the Spirit through the Word.*
- II. *They have, if you have pressed the Savior to your heart in faith.*
- III. *They have, if you are now trying to make others share in his salvation.*

Once in a while, instead of actually dividing the text itself, or the inner substance of it, a good sermon division may be obtained by looking at the entire text from various angles. The preacher turns different lights upon it. In doing so certain features of the text are emphasized in each view of the text, yet without actually dividing the text or its specific contents. This is what G. Mayer does:

Simeon's Song of Praise.

- I. *The last psalm of the old covenant.*
- II. *A cradle-song for the Christ-child.*
- III. *A swan's song for a dying believer.*
- IV. *The missionary hymn of Christendom.*

Following closely upon the festival, our text may be used as showing the effects which the festival ought to produce in us. The figure of "fruit" is natural and appropriate:

Simeon Shows Us the Best Christmas Fruit.

The faith that 1) receives; 2) trusts; 3) praises; 4) serves; 5) spreads the Gospel; 6) departs in peace,

NEW YEAR'S DAY

Luke 4, 16-21

The beauty of this text for the opening of the new year becomes apparent when we recall the Jewish year of the Jubilee, which came every fiftieth year, when slaves were set free, debts cancelled, lands restored, and joy was spread abroad generally. Christ makes the new year a Year of Jubilee for us, preaching good tidings to the poor, release to the captives, sight to the blind, liberty to the bruised. Behold, he makes all things new! Without him there is no true *new* year, no "acceptable year of the Lord." But with him, the year of Jubilee never ends, it simply merges into eternal blessedness. Our text thus carries the Christmas thought and the Christmas joy into this festival. That is its object, and for this reason it ends with the 21st verse. It purposely omits the unbelieving and wicked action of the inhabitants of Nazareth. The dominant note of this text is joy. Langsdorff indeed asks whether this Scripture is really fulfilled in our midst, and wants us to search our hearts in true repentance. While homiletically not incorrect, the text itself — apart from any special necessity among the hearers — states positively that where Christ and his blessed word is, there this Scripture *is* indeed fulfilled, even if many do not believe, as in Nazareth men did not believe. And this is the joy of it — Christ actually brings the acceptable year of the Lord, the blessed Christian year of Jubilee, and all they who receive him and his gracious deliverance celebrate the new year of grace and continue to celebrate it until for them it turns into a year of glory.

The first visit of Jesus to Galilee after assuming his ministry is signalized by the miracle at Cana. Be-

tween this and the second visit, when he came also to Nazareth, there lay a period of time sufficient for him to become well known throughout the country, especially also in Galilee, where he was now "glorified of all," Luke 4, 15. He had driven the traders out of the Temple in the Holy City, he had gathered disciples and baptized, he had made an impression also in Samaria at Shechem or Neapolis, and he had passed through a considerable part of Galilee. See Robinson, *Harmony of the Gospels*. After this he also came to his home of many years, the little town of Nazareth.

V. 16. Jesus **came to Nazareth** in the course of his preaching from place to place in Galilee. Of all the places he entered, this little town where he had lived so long and grown from childhood into manhood must have been especially dear to him. Here he had dwelt with his earthly parents and other relatives (Matth. 13, 55); here, no doubt, he had helped to bury his foster-father Joseph; here he had assumed the care of his mother Mary and labored for their support with his own hands; here he had associated with men generally in the ordinary affairs of life, and this for many years; here he had made ready in silence and waiting for the great work he was now engaged in. But all that lay hidden while he had dwelt familiarly so long in Nazareth, now stood revealed before the eyes of men. He was indeed the same he had always been, and yet to men not the same, for now the Spirit of the Lord was upon him to preach good tidings to the poor. — **Where he had been brought up**, literally means nourished and fed, and refers to his physical development in his human home. The expression ἦν τεθραμμένος (from τέρω) does not refer to what we usually call home-training, education and the formation of character by means of such training. In Nazareth Jesus "had been brought up," reared from childhood to manhood — the town, had been, in this

sense, his home. Attention is here drawn to the fact because of what follows. — **And he entered into the synagogue on the sabbath day.** This was the regular Jewish place of worship in Nazareth, called συναγωγή, “the gathering.” Jesus taught extensively in the synagogues of the Jews, and wrought some of his most notable miracles in them. But of them all this synagogue at Nazareth has a peculiar interest for us, for here Jesus attended from boyhood on up. Sabbath after Sabbath he sat in his place and listened to the Word read and to the preaching and admonition such as it was, and took part in the worship according to the customs then in vogue. Now this notable Sabbath day had arrived, full of great significance for himself and for all who dwelt in Nazareth. “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.” We may well suppose that the synagogue was filled to utmost capacity this Sabbath day; and yet for all there were so many, they failed to appreciate this most blessed occasion, priceless with its opportunities for salvation. How many times has it been just so with the ἐκκλησία, the gathering or congregation of Christian worshippers. — **As his custom was** — a very significant remark. In a little town like Nazareth there were no Rabbis of great learning, and the worship must usually have been poor as far as instructive and edifying remarks were concerned. Yet Jesus, in whom dwelt such wealth of truth and wisdom, never absented himself from the service. What an example for us today, when the slightest fault is made an excuse for remaining away, and when the service may be all one can ask in regard to edifying and instructive elements, and the fulness of Gospel truth; yet, in spite of it all, men remain away. A blessed custom, to attend the Christian assembly for worship Sunday after Sunday! Some may make it a mere custom indeed, and turn even a good thing into evil. — **And**

stood up to read. Edersheim assumes that Jesus had been invited and appointed by the ruler of the synagogue to take this part of the service, and that he had also conducted the earlier part of the service, including the prayer. The text is silent on this. Farrar describes the service, "not unlike our own," as follows: "After the prayers two lessons were always read, one from the Law called *parashah*, and one from the Prophets called *haphtarah*; and as there were no ordained ministers to conduct the services — for the office of priests and Levites at Jerusalem was wholly different — these lessons might not only be read by any competent person who received permission from the *rôsh hak-kenéseth*, but he was even at liberty to add his own *midrash*, or comment." Farrar, *Life of Christ*, 118-119. During the reading both the reader and the hearers stood; when it was ended all sat down, and any comment was spoken while the speaker was seated. We do not hear that Jesus took such a part in the Jewish service before he entered upon his ministry, although he was competent beyond all comparison with the men who thus read and spoke while Jesus still lived in the town. This was the first time he occupied so honorable a place in his home synagogue.

V. 17. Farrar sketches what now follows: "The reading of the *parashah*, or lesson from the Pentateuch, was apparently over when Jesus ascended the steps of the *bîma*. Recognizing his claim to perform the honorable function of a *maphtîr* or reader, the *chazzân* (clerk) drew aside the silk curtain of the painted ark which contained the sacred manuscripts, and handed him the *megillah* or roll of the Prophet Isaiah, which contained the *haphtarah* of the day. Our Lord unrolled the volume, and found the well-known passage in Isaiah 61. The whole congregation stood up to listen to him. The length of the *haphtarah* might be from three to twenty-one verses; but Jesus only read

the first part of the second, stopping short, in a spirit of tenderness, before the stern expression, "The day of vengeance of our God," so that the gracious words, "The acceptable year of the Lord," might rest last upon their ears and form the text of his discourse. He then rolled up the *megillah*, handed it back to the *chazzân*, and, as was customary among the Jews, sat down to deliver his sermon." This included as was customary a translation of the Hebrew selection into the Aramaic vernacular. In reading the *parashah* each verse as read was translated, but of the *haphtarah* the reader might take three verses, though no more. The selection of Jesus embraced one long verse only. Βύβλος is the Egyptian papyrus plant, from which we have βίβλος and the diminutive βιβλίον = that made of the plant, paper, **book**, or writing. Here the writing was in the form of a roll, and some texts read ἀναπτύξας, having unrolled, from ἀναπτύσσω, instead of ἀνοίξας, having opened; compare πτύξας from πτυσσω, having rolled up, "closed," v. 20. The choice of the prophet to be read on this Sabbath lay with the synagogue authorities who followed a certain order. **Isaiah** was thus duly placed in Jesus' hands, Isaiah, the evangelist among the prophets. In later times there were fixed selections for every Sabbath day, but these were not in vogue in the time of Jesus. The selection was left with the reader. — Jesus **found the place where it was written**, Is. 61, 1-2, yet the word εὑρεν leaves us in doubt whether Jesus sought this place, or whether without seeking, it turned up as he unrolled the scroll. The passage, like hundreds of others, must have been perfectly familiar to the mind of Jesus, for he lived in the Word of God. G. Mayer adds the caution that we must not conclude, because Jesus preached *ex tempore*, we preachers ought to do likewise now, for we have neither the powers that Jesus had, nor the preparation that lay behind his preaching. And Besser

warns us against the practice of seeking divine direction by opening our Bibles at random and laying our finger haphazardly upon some passage, and then looking upon this as a divine direction.

V. 18. Luke gives the passage as found in the Septuagint with the change of *κηρύξαι* in verse 19 instead of *καλέσαι*. *Τυφλοῖς ἀνάβλεψιν* is retained from the Septuagint, although an inexact rendering of the Hebrew; *ιάσασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τὴν καρδίαν*, omitted by Westcott and Hort, is in the Septuagint. The words, *ἀποστεῖλαι τεθραυσμένους ἐν ἀφέσει*, however, are in the nature of a comment (*midrash*) from Is. 58, 6, for which reason it is best to assume that here Luke gives not so much the actual *haphtarah* which Jesus read, but the words of Isaiah which Jesus chose as the text to speak on. He inserted the line he deemed necessary, from another chapter of the prophet. The prophet's words here quoted are evidently recorded with direct reference to what immediately follows, when Jesus says, "Today hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears," and the word "today" and "in your ears" make necessary the omission of the prophet's words regarding the judgment, "and the day of vengeance of our God," Is. 61, 2, on which Jesus did not wish to speak here. — Jesus refers these words of Isaiah directly to himself, as spoken by the prophet of old concerning the Messiah's person and work. — **The Spirit of the Lord**, *πνεῦμα*, needs no article; it is the name of the third person of the Godhead. **Upon me**, the accusative denoting direction, is explained by the words immediately following, **because he anointed me**. "Because," *οὗ ἐνεκεν*, is translated in the margin of the R. V. with "wherefore." This gives the sense that the Spirit was already upon Jesus, and for this reason the Spirit anointed him. We prefer the sense expressed by "because," in the sense of *ὅτι*, *διότι*, *propterea quod* = the Spirit is upon him be-

cause the Spirit **anointed him**, i. e. after the Baptism at the river Jordan, Luke 3, 22; John 1, 32. The latter passage tells us that the Spirit "abode upon him," and Luke 4, 14 reminds us that at this very time when Jesus preached in Galilee, he did this "in the power of the Spirit." The analogy of John 20, 22, and the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost prompts us to restrict the anointing mentioned here by the prophet to the visible descent of the Spirit upon Jesus at the river Jordan, disregarding the conception by the Holy Ghost and the power of the Spirit thus in Jesus from his birth on. The very first words of Isaiah's prophecy proclaim Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. The anointing is here set forth as an act of the Spirit of the Lord; the Spirit is the active agent and the medium in one, and we may recall that the works of the divine persons *ad extra* are inclusive, i. e. are to be attributed to all the persons, not exclusively to one or the other alone. Thus the Father anoints the Son, and the Spirit is likewise said to anoint him. It is the same with the action of sending the Savior to proclaim release, etc. Note also ἐχρίσεν, Hebr. *maschach*, the ceremonial word for the application of oil in some rite, hence χριστός, one thus anointed; not ἀλείφω, to oil. — **To preach good tidings to the poor** — two blessed words in the Greek: εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς. He who himself is the Word is sent to preach good tidings. Here is nothing but sweetness, as Besser remarks. The word εὐαγγελίζω, εὐαγγέλιον, as the Formula of Concord in its fifth article shows, is used in a wider and in a narrower sense, to include the entire preaching of Christ and of the apostles (*generalis definitio*), or to include only the message of grace and salvation as distinct from the Law. The Confession takes our text in the sense of this latter definition, for it says of Luke 4, 18, "The Gospel proclaims the forgiveness of sins, not to coarse

and secure hearts, but to the bruised and penitent." Jacobs, 590, 9. The whole context corroborates this. Our Confessions are full of fine definitions of the Gospel. "The Gospel is such a preaching," says Luther, quoted in the F. C., "as shows and gives nothing else than grace and forgiveness in Christ." 590, 6. "The peculiar office of the Gospel" is said to be "preaching the forgiveness of sins in the whole world." 330. The finest possible summary of the "good tidings" Jesus himself has given in his talk with Nicodemus, John 3, 16. — **To the poor**, πτωχοῖς, beggarly ones, people altogether destitute. They are the same as those mentioned in the Sermon on the Mount, "the poor in spirit," Matth. 5, 3. The Gospel was ordered preached to the whole world by Christ himself. We might indeed say "the poor" here = "all nations," "every creature," the whole world. But the distinction must ever be observed that the Gospel in the strict sense of the word is for terrified consciences, not for men secure in their sins and wickedness. "The poor in spirit are those who, whether rich or poor in temporal things, are conscious of their poverty in regard to that righteousness and true holiness with which man was endowed when God created him in his own image and which is required of him to fulfill his mission." Loy, *Sermon on the Mount*, 26. What it means to preach the Gospel "to the poor" Jesus showed us when he ate with publicans and sinners. This blessed work was one of the distinct marks of his Messianic mission.

Just what the good tidings were which Jesus was sent to preach Isaiah does not say in the sentence itself. We can imagine what would be good tidings for the spiritually poor. The prophet however brings forward a wealth of imagery to show us whom he means by "the poor," and what preaching the Gospel to them in the full sense of the word is. **He hath**

sent me, namely the Spirit, as an ambassador, with a glorious message. Jesus afterward says to his apostles, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." John 20, 21. The perfect tense is used = hath sent me, and I am here on my mission. — **To proclaim**, as a herald — it is the regular word for preaching, and shows how the εὐαγγελίσασθαι is to be executed, namely by a public, official proclamation. — **Release to the captives, etc.** There is no essential difference between the captives, the blind, and the bruised, nor between the blessings proclaimed to them. There is no special order in the arrangement of captives, blind and bruised. We can say only this much that the prophet takes up these striking images to illustrate the sad spiritual condition of those whom the Messiah shall help. What a miserable thing is a **captive**, fettered and bound, locked in behind iron bars and massive door, beyond hope of ever breaking through! Such captives are we in our sins and in our whole lost condition. Every sin with its guilt and condemnation is a fetter, a dungeon from which we are powerless to escape. The chain may be invisible, the prison may be intangible — they hold us none the less securely. We cannot escape, however much we may sigh and groan and long for release. Here comes Christ, and he proclaims: Ye are released! The Greek word is especially precious, because it is the one regularly used for "forgiveness," ἄφεσις, release from guilt and punishment. And let us note well that when the Messiah proclaims release, it is no empty message, but the authoritative word which unlocks all prisons and strikes off all chains. It is as if in some penitentiary there lay a poor guilty captive without hope or help, and suddenly there should come a messenger from the governor reading to him and the prison warden the order of pardon — the doors open, he is at once conducted out to liberty. — **And**

recovering of sight to the blind. Jesus healed many blind, and we know how they acted in their joy. Remember Bartimæus, also the man that was born blind: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see," John 9, 25. Blindness is here taken as a result of sin, analogous to captivity. The blind are they that are shut out from light and all the blessings of the light. They grope about in darkness, they stumble and fall, they cannot find the way. This blindness is like that of the bodily eyes, when a man well knows there is such a thing as sight, that others have seeing eyes, and when he longs also to be able to see, but hopelessly as far as he himself is concerned. This is covertly expressed in the word **recovering of sight**, ἀνάβλεψις, obtaining sight again. Those interpretations which take blindness here to be that condition which knows absolutely nothing of God, "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart, who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness," Eph. 4, 18-19 — overlook the fact that to such the Law must first be applied, and not until it has done its work can the Gospel come in. Here, however, we have only this work of the Gospel described. Hence these blind are such as have been brought to a sense of their blindness by the work of the Law ("By the Law is the *knowledge* of sin," Rom. 3, 20). To them Christ is sent to proclaim **recovering of sight**, for Christ is "the light of the world," "the true light that lighteth every man," "the dayspring from on high," "the Sun of righteousness." This recovering of sight = faith — when all at once the heart sees, really sees, the grace of God, the atoning blood of Christ, the pardon from sin, the sure hope of heaven in the Savior's wounds. O what blessed ἀνάβλεψις! All bodily sight is nothing

in comparison with it. — **To set at liberty them that are bruised** (Is. 58, 6). Another fearful picture of sin's work is given when the poor sinners are set before us as τεθραυσμένοι, those that have been shattered, crushed, beaten and bruised, and are now in that condition (perfect tense). These may well be taken to be slaves, like the poor Hebrews under Pharaoh in Egypt, hammered into submission against their will, and no hope nor help in sight for them. So sin tyrannizes the sinner. What a fearful thing is a bruised conscience. Mind and body held fast by the tyrant, and no deliverer near. — **To set at liberty** is given as the translation of ἀποστείλαι ἐν ἀφέσει = to send away in release. The last is again that precious word which the Scriptures use for forgiveness = release from guilt and punishment. No more blows and bruises, no more wounds and crushing pains, but release from it all, a new Master, gracious and kind, a new station, not slaves, but sons, a new balm to heal the hurts — this is "to be set at liberty" by the Messiah. And here again we are dealing not with hardened slaves who have settled down after a manner content with their slavery, dreaming themselves free, boasting like the Pharisees of their station and liberty, but with such upon whom the Law has begun to work effectively, who are ready therefore for the Gospel, and when it comes accept it in faith. Rom. 7, 24-25.

V. 19. **To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord**, "the Lord's year of acceptance and favor." The reference here is to the Jewish year of jubilee, a faint image, but a beautiful one, of the time when the Messiah should reign, Lev. 25, 10. The proclamation is an authoritative and effective one, it actually ushers in the year. "Year," ἐνιαυτός = a definite circle of time, embracing a series of events which distinguish it; a cycle or period. "Acceptable" to the Lord, pleasing to him, so as he would have it — and this is the

climax of the picture, for when all things please the Lord, all things are well for us. "They who hear and believe the Gospel, have, praise God, a Jubilee-year every hour of their lives; the time in which the Gospel proceeds in purity is the real, rich, acceptable Jubilee-year." Luther. Jesus sketched it, much like Isaiah, when he told the messengers John the Baptist sent to him, to tell John again what they saw and heard. All the days and years of your life spent without Christ and faith in him are days and years of poverty, captivity, blindness and bruises; the moment faith fills your heart all is changed. Though sin remain and many a trial, yet riches have begun, release, recovery of sight, healing and freedom from tyranny, and God is pleased with you. — Jesus stops with the acceptable year of the Lord, for he was not then sent to judge the world, but to save the world; "the day of vengeance" will follow in due time for all who refuse to receive the Messiah and the blessings which he brings. — The A. V. has an additional descriptive clause, omitted by the R. V., at the head of the trio explained above: "he hath sent me *to heal the brokenhearted*, to preach deliverance," etc. In preaching this may either be omitted, or since it occurs in Isaiah, it may be worked in without further question. The brokenhearted = τοὺς συντετριμμένους τὴν καρδίαν = those who have been crushed or ground together as to their hearts (adverbial accusative). It is a strong expression, designating a fatal hurt. It is figurative and stands for all the heartaches which sin causes, the "terrors of conscience," the misery which knows no alleviation. The Law especially causes this brokenheartedness to be felt. Thus Luther in the monastery cried in vain: "My sins, my sins!" Such broken hearts Christ alone is able to heal, with the precious balm of the Gospel.

The description in v. 20 is as vivid as if an eye-

witness were picturing the scene. Jesus made no strange move of any kind. The scroll was not usually retained by the speaker while he added his comment. It was carefully and reverently put back into its receptacle. The clerk took it from the reader's hand and put it away. There must have been a dignity and power in the whole appearance of Jesus, in the sound of his voice, in every inflection and gesture, riveting the attention of the people in the synagogue upon him. Indeed, the hour and scene was one far above what any one in Nazareth realized. The Word himself had read the Word to them, and the Word himself would now expound the Word to them. Chemnitz says: "Although preaching is common to all the servants of the Word, yet Isaiah especially ascribes it to Christ, because in him, by him, and for his sake there shall be preached the grace of God, forgiveness of sins, salvation and eternal life. He himself revealed from the bosom of the Father the mystery of the Gospel, and to his voice all other preachers of the Gospel are forever bound." — **And he began to say**, a solemn, significant form of expression; it shows the greatness of what now occurred. This was the beginning — and the rest was all in the same strain: **Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.** It is at once the introduction and the theme; Jesus enters without delay *in mediam rem*. "Today" is put forward emphatically. Would that Nazareth had known, at least in this her day, the things which belonged to her peace, but, alas, like Jerusalem, they were hid from her eyes. Luke 19, 42. For Nazareth Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled in that day when the Messiah himself stood in the synagogue and did what the prophet had foretold. — **In your ears** refers to the preaching and proclamation which the prophet said the Messiah was to execute. But alas, that most precious work of all is least esteemed by so many even today. What mockery

has been made of "the foolishness of preaching," and yet in it lies salvation for all who rightly hear and believe. Who of us would not like at least now to read Christ's gracious sermon in Nazareth? But what we really need we have in that one sentence which distills all the quintessence of his Gospel words into so brief a form. The Messiah was there, salvation was there, the heavenly kingdom was there. What need to say more for us who could not be there, but have instead the whole New Testament? Let us know rather that our day of grace and salvation is today, as we too hear the Word speaking in the Word, and let us believe with all our hearts and go on rejoicing in the acceptable year of the Lord.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Anything in the line of paradoxes is good for outline purposes, except of course strained and forced contrasts, or such as are not easily cleared up. A paradox stimulates interest even when mild, and this is always good. When the solution is offered, it satisfies, and that, too, is good. — We all love things that are new. The Lord has even promised to make earth and heaven and all things new at last; and we long for the day to come. So often, to get the new we must discard the old. That is when the old is bad, and the new good; or when the old is inferior, and the new superior. There is, however, a newness of another kind — the older it gets the newer it becomes, the farther back it reaches the more excellent it seems at the present moment. This is the newness we must get hold of this New Year's Day. It appeared in Nazareth long, long ago, when the Lord came back to his old home city, went again to the old synagogue where he had sat so often with Joseph, opened the old scroll of Holy Writ, read the old, old prophecy of Isaiah — and then so wonderfully revealed all the newness to his hearers. Let us learn the New Year's secret of

The Old That Makes All Things New.

- I. *It is the old grace of God that shines with newness in Christ Jesus.*
- II. *It is the old Word of God that comes with constant newness of power.*

- III. *It is the old faith in God that fills us with the newness of deliverance.*
- IV. *It is the old life with God that leads us into the newness of joys forever.'*

New Year's Day stresses the idea of the "day," which matches Christ's word in the text: "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." So our theme is reached:

The New Year's Call from Nazareth: Today, Today!

- I. *Today Christ still comes to you. (Who knows whether you will greet another New Year's Day?)*
- II. *Today the Gospel still sounds for you. (Who knows how long you will yet hear it?)*
- III. *Today God's grace still works for you. (Who knows, if you secretly resist it now, whether it will ever succeed in delivering and helping you?)*

There is an expression in the text which will captivate many preachers. Let us use it: — Happy New Year! Happy New Year! is the universal greeting today. Often enough it is meant superficially, only of earthly pleasantness and happiness for the coming year. Jesus would put into this greeting the fulness of meaning which alone can make the year truly happy for us. This year must by his grace become the acceptable year of the Lord for us.

A Happy New Year Indeed: The Acceptable Year of the Lord.

The year will please the Lord and shine with true happiness for us, if this year is

- I. *Marked by our acceptance of his saving gifts.*
- II. *Filled with our gratitude and praise for his saving gifts.*

The scene portrayed in our text may be utilized dramatically by placing ourselves today into that ancient synagogues among the hearers of Jesus. Surely we all would like to have been there.

A New Year's Service in Nazareth.

- I. *The Savior was there* — picture him with all that he had done thus far, and was yet to do according to Isaiah's prophecy, and what this means for us this New Year's Day.

- II. *The Gospel was there* — in the summary of Isaiah, and in the preaching of Jesus; bring out its main features, enlightenment, freedom, healing, riches, and what this means for us this New Year's Day.
- III. *Poor sinners were there* — the people of Nazareth, sinners all; show what that means as regards us, namely how we are in the same class with them.
- IV. *Faith and joy should have been there* — but were not; what a mistake if we go from this service without faith and joy.

The entire sermon may center in the word "new," since this is a "new" year, and the body of the text describes this newness so fully. Let the theme be:

New — In Christ!

I. *The newness.*

1. Not what the world may call new — new success — new health — new inventions — new pleasures — new sensations — etc.
2. But what Christ calls and himself makes new:
 - a) See the man on the road to Jericho with shattered limbs, robbed, half dead, nothing but a groan in his heart — then see him after that, whole and sound, happy and strong and wealthy again. That is new. But mark it well, that man is you!
 - b) See poor Joseph in the pit, then sold to the Ishmaelites, crying his poor heart out — then see him later in Pharaoh's chariot, with golden chain, etc. That is new. But look close — his form and feature, they look like you!
 - c) See poor Samson blind at the Philistines' wheel, what a sad, sad figure. Think what he would have been if Christ could have touched his sightless sockets. How he would have sung, leaped and danced like Bar-timæus on the road to Jericho. —

But is this not your image and picture?

- d) See the Hebrews in the brick-yards, under the lash of the Egyptian drivers. — See them again, every man under his own vine and fig tree in Canaan. That is new. But is this not your history?
3. And this is the sum of it all: Gospel for the poor — the acceptable year of the Lord through grace in Jesus Christ.

II. The new way to this newness.

1. You cannot realize it by efforts of your own, resolutions, reforms, new methods and human helps.
2. It is brought to you by him who makes all things new; by the Christ, by the Gospel, by the Spirit of God.
3. You must accept it — know and feel what you are, lost and doomed in sin — embracing the proffered Christ and his salvation by faith — keeping and growing in faith, until all the fulness of joy is your very own experience. That is new — new, in Christ.

THE SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR

Matthew 16, 1-4

This is the end of the Christmas cycle. We have now come down from the great festive height, we are on the plains once more, yet our eyes look back constantly; there on the golden height they still see "the sign spoken against," Luke 2, 34, not indeed in this text a babe any more, but a man with his divine work all done, and God's wondrous seal of approbation set upon it (the resurrection from the dead). This is the sign of signs for all time. A thousand things grow clear in its light — now we can judge the follies and errors of men often growing to enormous proportions, but also the forward and upward movements in the kingdom of God on earth. All other signs grow clear and give forth their true meaning in the light of this sign. And yet many disregard it, discard and reject it, seek other signs and remain in blindness until the end.

V. 1. Jesus had just returned from the Decapolis and reached by boat "the borders of Magdala." He had withdrawn from the work in the populous centers of Galilee and wrought now in the more distant places where the enmity of the Jews could not reach him, on the borders of Tyre and Sidon, then in the region of the Ten Cities, and finally in the most northern part, the region of Cæsarea Philippi. On this occasion "it is probable that he purposely avoided sailing to Bethsaida or Capernaum, which are a little north of Magdala, and which had become the headquarters of the hostile Pharisees. But it seems that these personages had kept a lookout for his arrival. As though they had been watching from the tower of Magdala for

the sail of his returning vessel, barely had he set foot on shore than they came forth to meet him. Nor were they alone: this time they were accompanied — ill-omened conjunction! — by their rivals and enemies, the Sadducees, that skeptical sect, half-religious, half-political, to which at this time belonged the two High Priests, as well as the members of the reigning family. Every section of the ruling classes — the Pharisees, formidable from their religious weight among the people; the Sadducees, few in number, but powerful from wealth and position; the Herodians, representing the influence of the Romans, and of their nominees the tetrarchs: the scribes and lawyers, bringing to bear the authority of their orthodoxy and their learning — were all united against him in one firm phalanx of conspiracy and opposition, and were determined above all things to hinder his preaching, and to alienate from him, as far as was practicable, the affections of the people among whom most of his mighty works were done." Farrar, *Life of Christ*, 262. Bengel notes that the common people were attached to the Pharisees, and the aristocracy to the Sadducees, just as today the crowd is inclined to superstition, the learned to atheism. Jewish haughtiness and wordly-mindedness were one in their antagonism to Christ. Note the repetition **Pharisees and Sadducees** in v. 1, 6, 11, twice in 12, and the culmination of this hostility announced in v. 21. — **Tempting him**, *πειράζοντες*, shows their secret intent and forms a contrast to the next word "asked him." These enemies come with a fair outward face, but their hearts are bent on evil. They test or try Jesus, but not with sincerity and honesty of heart, only with wicked intent, in order to discredit him and to be able to denounce him. The question arises whether this temptation had a tempting influence upon Jesus himself. The text itself indicates nothing, but Scripture otherwise leads us to conclude

that here, in a way, we have a repetition of the devil's cunning suggestion for Jesus to win his way by astounding displays, like leaping down from the pinnacle of the Temple, and for him to turn from the appointed road of suffering and death, as when Peter tried to dissuade him from that path. But however cunningly suggestive to Jesus, he always saw through the treachery of the temptation and vigorously repelled it. Those temptations undoubtedly are the most dangerous in which a noble purpose and aim is held out to us, while at the same time we are asked to try to realize it by using means either inherently wrong or contrary to those divinely ordained and sanctioned. — The Pharisees and Sadducees **asked him**, it seems much like the scribes and Pharisees did on a previous occasion, Matth. 12, 38; they get their schemes all ready, and then mask their evil intention behind a fair outward demeanor. It is always the way with hypocrites, and Jesus invariably unmasks them. — **To shew them a sign from heaven** is the substance of their request. We have explained σημεῖον in the text for the Sunday after Christmas, John 12, 37. Here the sign is to demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah beyond a doubt. The intimation is that all the previous signs wrought by Jesus, however much they tend to show that Jesus is the Messiah, are not conclusive. In what respect they are lacking in the opinion of the Pharisees and Sadducees is indicated by the word "from heaven." All the signs of Jesus were wrought on earth, among men, healing, casting out demons, raising the dead, etc. There is lacking a sign from heaven, ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, from the skies or from the heavenly bodies. There had been such signs, they suggest by this request, as when Joshua caused the sun to stand still, when Isaiah caused the sun's shadow to recede a certain number of degrees, when Elijah caused fire to fall from heaven upon the sacrifice

on Mt. Carmel, when God sent manna in the wilderness, bread from heaven. "If he were indeed the Messiah, why should he not give them bread from heaven as Moses had done? where were Samuels' thunder, and Elijah's flame? why should not the sun be darkened, and the moon turned into blood, and the stars of heaven be shaken? why should not some fiery pillar glide before them to victory, or the burst of some stormy *Bath Kol* ratify his words?" Farrar. All things were indeed given by the Father into Jesus' hands, nor were the powers of the visible heaven or the invisible glories of that higher heaven excluded. But it is evident that where the signs wrought by Jesus on earth failed to produce true faith, all other signs, even those from heaven, if such had been produced, were bound to fail likewise. If bread like manna had covered the earth, would that have proved that Jesus was more than Moses? If the sun had stood still or gone back on its course, would that have demonstrated that Jesus was more than Joshua or Isaiah? With the most stupendous sign from heaven was the base Jewish slander made impossible that such a sign was wrought by the devil's power? Did Pharaoh believe for all the signs wrought in his land? Does not Jesus tell us of Abraham's answer to the rich man in hell, that even if one arose from the dead his brothers, who will not believe Moses and the prophets, will not believe such a sign either? Voltaire cast off the mask when he frankly declared: "Even if a miracle should be wrought in the open market-place before a thousand sober witnesses, I would rather mistrust my senses than admit a miracle." Unbelief always finds a way to evade the truth, no matter what its credentials may be; if it can do no more it will at least, like these Jews, demand another sign to prove the truth and meaning of the greatest sign already wrought. All this applies to those men of to-day who read the Scriptures and are

not satisfied, but would like to see with their own eyes signs like those set down in the sacred record.

V. 2, etc. The note in the R. V. of the New Testament draws attention to the fact that this part of Christ's answer is not found in many of the codices and other authorities. The critical question involved we pass by the more readily, as Jesus did use this argument beyond a doubt on another occasion, see Luke 12, 56, where also he used the epithet "ye hypocrites," which evidently was transferred from there into Matthew's narrative (see A. V.). — The natural phenomena of the weather-signs are those of Palestine. When in the evening the sky shows red, the wind has driven the clouds and vapors to the west over the Mediterranean Sea, and this naturally indicates that the following day will be fair, as rain and vapor in that country come largely from the west. The reverse is true when the redness shows in the morning as the sun sends his rays over the eastern horizon; then the prediction is rain or foul weather, because the wind during the night has carried the vapors and clouds from the Sea across the land. What applies to Palestine, of course, does not apply to other lands where sea and dry land occupy other relative positions, producing different weather indications. But almost everywhere we have expert weather students, who know all the signs — even if these do fail in dry weather, or in wet weather, as the case may be. Ὅψιας (supply ὥρας) γενομένης, gen. abs., a late hour having arrived = when it is evening; εὐδία, is "fair weather," and its opposite χειμών, storm, foul, rainy weather; στυγνάζων, pres. part., to be ugly, dark, "lowring." — **Ye know to discern the face of the heavens.** Bengel: "The *expression* of the heaven, not the *face*; the expression of a man alters, but not his face." "To discern," διακρίνειν, to distinguish with good judgment, so as to perceive and understand the difference. Jesus

purposely uses the example concerning "the face of the heaven" in his answering argument, because these Jews had demanded a sign from heaven. Speak about signs from heaven, he would say, the only signs from heaven you can read aright are the weather-signs. There is a touch of sad irony in Jesus' words. — At the same time, however, the illustration thus brought in implies or suggests a metaphor; for Jesus puts the two in opposition: Ye know to discern the face of the heaven; **but ye cannot discern the signs of the times.** The suggested metaphor is that the signs of the times are plain on the face of the heaven in a spiritual sense. They had eyes only for the natural heaven, they had no eyes to see this other heaven full of far more significant signs than any that could possibly be wrought in the natural sky or upon the heavenly bodies. Τὰ σημεῖα τῶν καιρῶν = the signs which mark and characterize definite points of time; καιρός is qualitative, χρόνος quantitative, mere extent. The expression is a general one. All times have their signs, and so also that great and wonderful time in which Jesus and his opponents lived. The signs of those times were not only the wonderful works of Jesus, but his whole appearance and all that pointed to him, the coming and the message of John the Baptist, the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies by the appearance and work of John and of Jesus, the expectations of the Messiah which stirred the whole nation, Matth. 11, 12. These were signs, symbolized by the sky when it was red at sunset; they showed **fair weather**, εὐδία. But alas, there were also other signs, and these manifested themselves more and more — the blindness of these enemies of Jesus which would not yield to the light; the obstinacy of this unbelief which would not give way before the strongest proof of his divinity and saving power; the hardness of heart, combined with the basest hypoc-

ris, which cared not to what length it went and what means it used. And these signs, symbolized by the sky when it was red and grew redder and darker in the morning hours, plainly indicated **foul weather today**, σήμερον χειμών, today storm. It is the same in our time. Man indeed has become expert in meteorology, the study of weather indications; likewise the business outlook is carefully scrutinized, and political predictions are heeded by every careful statesman. But what of the signs infinitely more important, the spiritual signs of the times? Thousands never know there are such signs, or they behold them and their meaning is blank to them—the spread of missions all over the world, door after door opening to the messengers of the Gospel; the spread of the Bible, entering language after language, lying ready for every man's hand; the works of mercy and charity, the renewal of true faith in unexpected quarters, the testimony of martyrs sealing their faith with blood (China, Armenia, Russia in the great war). On the other hand, the rise of the infernal powers darkening the horizon; the increase of lawlessness, crime, and suicide; the spread of a Christless religion at altars behind oath-bound doors; the open attacks upon the Bible, the Gospel, Christ, and the church; the rise of deceivers leading thousands astray; the social unrest, as class rises against class in the industrial and political world. What lies behind all these signs which so many see not, or heed not, and will not take to heart in their true significance?

V. 4. **Generation** = the one then living, with which Jesus was then dealing. He calls it γενεά πονηρά, an **evil generation**, doing evil, thus referring to its actions (κακός points more to the condition and general character). He adds **adulterous**, μοιχαλίσ, to show their unfaithfulness to God. Their covenant with him is like a marriage tie, hence unfaithfulness

to him is equal to adultery. It is both unnatural, abominable, and criminal in the highest degree. Thus James (4, 4) exclaims: "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?" Compare Rev. 2, 20. Besser points out that in thus being flagrantly evil and adulterous they themselves were a sign of the times. — **Seeketh after a sign**, namely such a sign as shall satisfy an evil and adulterous generation, not satisfied with the signs of God. — **And there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of Jonah.** The word **sign** is significantly and emphatically repeated. Matth. 12, 40 makes it plain that Jesus here means his own resurrection from the dead: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." This word previously spoken Jesus here recalls and presses home upon his hearers. It implies plainly that Jesus did not consider the experience of the prophet Jonah in the belly of the sea monster a myth, but here declared it to be truth. He shows us that it was far more than a wonderful thing occurring to a disobedient prophet of old, that in fact it was a prophetic occurrence, a true sign, signifying what should occur to the Messiah when now he would be dead and buried and lie in the grave for three days. **The sign of Jonah** is the Christ himself, dead and buried, and risen on the third day. Besser adds: "and the Church in its constitution on earth as founded on this preaching"; but the text restricts us to Christ alone. The sign is not that Christ should be in the grave, but that he should be in the grave three days, and that then he should come forth. — Jesus says the sign **shall be given**, δοθήσεται. To the Jews Christ did not show himself, yet they too had the evidence of his resurrection before them in the testimony of the disciples. The resurrection was

the highest possible proof of the Messiahship of Jesus. This too they rejected and remained obdurate as before, sealing their doom. Therein, as quoted by Bes-ser, closes his sermon on the "Sign of the Times" with the prayer: "O Lord, thou hast set up a sign for all ages; a sign often indeed spoken against, often veiled by the dust which unbelief stirs up; but a sign which by its own power strikes down opposition and emerges more shining from such darkening; a sign that comforts and rejoices, that sanctifies and strengthens; a sign that brightens this life, and sends its rays far into the life to come; a sign about which all thine own shall assemble — this sign is the cross! To this sign will we constantly look, in order to judge by it the signs of the times! beneath this sign we will fight against all unbelief and all sin, against inward and outward corruption; in this sign we shall conquer. Amen." **And he left them and departed** — *justa severitas*, Bengel. His ministry to them was ended. When Jesus departs Satan remains. "Leaving them he went away," a fearful doubling of fateful words. What a warning to us. But those who believe in his name he will never leave, he will be with them even unto the end of the world. Every sign shall tell of his presence, his power, his grace, his gifts, his final deliverance.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

God's Sign-Language

1. *The all-important sign given once for all.* 1. Christ did many signs of grace, yet men demanded something more. — 2. The ultimate sign, the resurrection of Christ; greater than signs in heavenly bodies, because in a spiritual world, involving the kingdom of heaven and salvation for men. — 3. The double significance of the greatest sign: grace, for all our foes are overcome and God is reconciled. The sign for all

time. — Judgment, for all foes, the battle settled once for all, and Christ the eternal victor.

- II. *The great procession of signs constantly repeated.*
 1. This is pictured by the reference of Christ to the weather signs in Palestine, and we must understand them in the light of his resurrection. — 2. The signs of grace — describe them (missions; freedom of the Gospel in our land, freest since the Reformation; preservation of the pure Gospel in our church; etc. — 3. The signs of judgment — describe them (great calamities — mention some of the greatest in our times — signs in the heavens, etc. Spiritual signs: Rome not dead; the Christless religion of secrecy; religious deceivers in many places; worldliness, coldness, etc.) Discern the signs of the times!

See the Signs Written on the Portal of the New Year

- I. *The sign of Jonah.*
 II. *The additional signs of the times.*
 III. *The sign of judgment when Christ leaves those who will not believe.*

The Trouble is Not With the Signs, But With Men's Eyes

- I. *There is the greatest sign of all ages, but men do not see and read it aright.*
 II. *There are other signs in the world in every age, but men disregard and misinterpret them.*
 III. *There are the evil signs in men's own hearts, but they do not look even at these.*

THE EPIPHANY CYCLE

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THE EPIPHANY CYCLE

The Epiphany Festival to the Sixth Sunday After Epiphany

The Epiphany cycle contains seven texts, and the very first one, for the Epiphany festival itself, dominates all the rest. We find exactly the same arrangement in the Easter cycle. The Epiphany festival is one of the most ancient festivals in the Christian church, dating back to the second century. Epiphany is from ἐπιφάνεια (sc. ἰερά), compare Titus 2, 11: "for the grace of God hath *appeared*"; and Titus 3, 4: "the kindness of God our Savior, and his love toward man, *appeared*." The word signifies *appearance*. The Epiphany festival originated in the Eastern church, and opened the cycle of festivals, although it referred not to the birth, but to the Baptism of Jesus. The idea was that Jesus was manifested as the Savior, not so much when he was born, as when he assumed his holy office and received the anointing from the Father. When in the fourth century the Epiphany festival was transferred also to the Western church, its significance was restricted to the manifestation of Jesus to the Gentiles. The Western festival text was the story of the Magi worshipping the new-born King of the Jews. This made the day the festival of the Three Kings and brought in the missionary idea, so that some of our churches still treat the Epiphany festival as a missionary festival and gather their missionary offerings especially on this day. The Eisenach gospel selections go back to the original idea of the Epiphany festival and give us once more the most ancient text for the day. This is certainly commendable, since it is almost impossible to make the Epiphany festival a

general mission festival for the church, occurring as it does in midwinter. Our mission festivals are celebrated later in the year. If the original idea of Epiphany, namely "appearance," "manifestation," is held fast, we secure a true progress of thought; the Christmas cycle brings us the birth of Jesus—the Epiphany cycle brings us *his appearance as the Savior indeed*. This is the general theme of the cycle.

In the text for the Epiphany festival we have *Jesus appearing as the Messiah*. This is the great thought that illuminates also the following texts, especially the first four. The emphasis in these texts would be misplaced if we were to dwell too much upon the reception of Jesus on the part of those who became his followers, and were to neglect the revelation and manifestation of Jesus himself in all these texts. This is the primary element, the other is secondary and altogether dependent on the primary. In all the six texts for the Sundays after Epiphany we have, in one striking manner after another, Jesus appearing as the Savior. A view of the texts will show this. In the first the Baptist points to Jesus and calls him *the Lamb of God*; the faith of Andrew answers to that when he confesses him as the Messiah. The second text shows us Jesus so revealing himself to Nathanael that he sees in him at once *the Son of God, the King of Israel*, and Jesus himself amplifies that vision by the promise that in him Nathanael and others shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. The third text presents Jesus as the *Giver of living water* to the woman at Jacob's well; we hear nothing in the text itself concerning the faith of this woman, and this indicates that the text is intended to focus our eyes chiefly upon this revelation of Jesus and his saving grace. The fourth text still keeps to this great thought of revelation. A whole town comes indeed to believe

in him, and Jesus himself points to the fields white already to harvest; still he is himself the center of it all, for the text culminates in the great confession, "This is indeed *the Christ, the Savior of the world.*" The last two texts serve to round out the cycle by introducing two pertinent and important thoughts. In the first of these texts, for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany, we see *the consequences of accepting or rejecting the words of Jesus* (by which he reveals himself), but the last two verses of this text still carry forward the original Epiphany idea — Jesus teaches "as one having authority," in marked distinction from all other teachers. The last text in the cycle, for the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany, deals with *the reason why so many reject Jesus*, namely unbelief; but even here Jesus reveals himself as the One who gives life, who comes in his Father's name, and of whom Moses himself wrote.

In the different texts there are auxiliary elements of great importance homiletically. The texts run in pairs, the first two, the second two, and the third two evidently belonging together. In the first two we see Jesus dealing with men already somewhat prepared for his reception; in the second two we find him attracting the Samaritans, first a sinful woman, next an entire town. In these two pairs of texts the mission element is especially rich, in fact, the last text would make a fine mission text at any time. The two final texts of this cycle are no longer narratives, but the closing sections of discourses of Jesus. They are intended to press home all that the other texts have brought. It is not very often that the church year affords us opportunity to preach on all these after-Epiphany texts, since the Epiphany circle is decreased as the Trinity circle is increased. We would suggest that whenever this shortening of the Epiphany line occurs, that the preacher use if possible at least one

text from each of the three pairs of texts offered, for instance the text for the First, the Fourth, and the Fifth Sundays after Epiphany. Thus while some of the fulness and richness of the cycle would be lost, nevertheless its main thought would be made available for our hearers. The cycle as such, making Jesus the cynosure of our hearts, outlines as follows:

1. Epiphany: Jesus revealed from heaven as the divine Messiah.
2. The 1st after E.: Jesus, the Lamb of God.
3. The 2nd after E.: Jesus, the King of Israel.
4. The 3rd after E.: Jesus, the Giver of living water.
5. The 4th after Ep.: Jesus, the Savior of the world.
6. The 5th after E.: Jesus, whose person and word decide our eternal weal or woe.
7. The 6th after E.: Jesus, whose person and word can be rejected only by the most unreasonable unbelief.

Other distinctive features are these: in the second text the beautiful confession of Andrew, We have found the Messiah; and the promise that the Lamb will make a Rock out of Simon. In the third, the beautiful character of Nathanael, a man without duplicity, and the gradation: Philip calling the Savior Jesus of Nazareth, Joseph's son; Nathanael calling him, The Son of God, the King of Israel; Jesus promising the vision of the open heaven. In the fourth text: Jesus reaching out to save a single sinful soul, an unknown woman; his missionary skill; his wonderful description of the Gospel. In the fifth text: the vision of the mission-harvest in the world, and the first preliminary ingathering in Samaria. In the sixth text: the view of human life, building either on the ever-

lasting Rock of ages, or on the treacherous sand of human wisdom. In the last text: the arraignment of unbelief terribly complete, for it fails to see Christ in the Scriptures, loves not God, willingly follows deceivers who come in their own name, prefers the honor of men to that of God, accused and condemned already by the very thing in which it trusts.

THE EPIPHANY FESTIVAL

Matthew 3, 13-17

The chief thing in this text is the assumption by Jesus of his high and holy office and work as the Savior of the world, and his wonderful anointing with the Spirit in preparation for his work. From the silence of his past quiet life in Nazareth he steps forth before the eyes of men, and is at once made manifest by a marvelous divine act as the very Son of God and the true Messiah. The great purpose of this text is to present Christ, in fact, to present him as *Christ*, the Anointed, to *reveal him anew in his Savior glory* before the eyes and hearts of men. The three persons of the Godhead here combine in making this revelation, and in preaching on it the effect of the sermon should be such as John the evangelist expressed in the words, "And we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." John 1, 14. It is the preacher's prerogative to let the light of this glory fill his own heart first, and this so completely that every sentence he utters before his hearers may send the heavenly radiance as from the very face of Jesus into their hearts also. — Disquisitions on our Baptism, on the relation of Christ's Baptism to ours, on the duties and blessings of our Baptism, are out of order in connection with this text for the Epiphany festival, although Pank and Wunderlich for instance devote half of their sermons to such elaborations. It is enough when brief mention of our Baptism is made, as for instance this is done in our Confessions, and this only by way of application. Christ, and Christ alone, must be the center and substance of the whole sermon, from which nothing should be allowed to detract.

V. 13. The word **then** points to the activity of John the Baptist as described by Matthew in the previous part of this chapter. In the midst of this activity Jesus appears, having come **from Galilee to the Jordan**. The text states only the fact of Jesus' coming thus, and adds the purpose, **unto John, to be baptized of him**, τοῦ βαπτισθῆναι, purpose. We would like to know much more — all the thoughts of Jesus that led to his resolution to go and be baptized of John. We know there was nothing superficial or accidental about it. Christ's Messianic calling was clear to him already at the age of twelve years; how much clearer must it have been to him now? We can also safely say that as he understood his own great mission he, of course, understood also the mission of John the Baptist. With all this clear to him, he knew when to set out for the Jordan and ask to be baptized of him. Matthew does not record the request Jesus made of John, but it is plainly implied.

V. 14. The word διακώλυω is not found otherwise in the New Testament, it is a choice term, expressing the earnest objection John offered to the idea that Jesus should be baptized; the imperfect tense, διεκώλυεν = "was hindering," or "tried to hinder" (imperfect *de conatu*), shows that John reluctantly held back and did not baptize Jesus until his scruples were overcome. John's words make the situation clear. It is the exact opposite of that furnished by the coming of the Pharisees and Sadducees to John's Baptism. These he warned and called mightily to repentance, pointing them to the judgment about to descend. In the presence of Jesus he who towered so mightily over the base Pharisees and Sadducees himself sinks down in humility. Of those men John demanded a true confession of sin and even the proper fruit to prove the confession true, before Jesus he himself confesses his sins and acknowledges that Jesus needs no such con-

fession on his part. — **I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?** These words plainly state that John knew much about Jesus. He himself tells us indeed, and this repeatedly, "I knew him not," John 1, 31 and 33; but this means that he had not at first the divine assurance that Jesus was the Messiah, it does not exclude that on other grounds he considered him the Messiah nevertheless. God promised John to reveal the Messiah to him in a special manner, and until this revelation took place, however John might himself feel sure about the person whom it would designate, he could not with absolute and divine certainty say, This is he. John was the kinsman of Jesus. It is altogether likely that he had heard from his parents the wonderful story of Jesus' conception and birth and the subsequent events. The lives of the two, however, flowed widely apart: John spent his early years at Juttah, in the far south of the land of Judah, not far from Hebron, while Jesus grew up in the carpenter's shop in Galilee. We do not know that the two ever came together until they met here at the river Jordan. The more remarkable is the answer and action of John in making a complete exception of Jesus. Luther: "This sounds as if John had recognized Christ before he baptized him. But John, the evangelist, writes the contrary in chapter 1, 30-33, that John did not know Christ. Answer: He did not know him before the Baptism, but he had the presentiment that it was he, that this was no common man, that there was something higher behind him; for even in his mother's womb he scented him, when Mary came to Elisabeth, Luke 1, 41. He thinks it is he, but he is not certain of it. Christ did not appear to him like other people, something stronger proceeded from him than from other men, he scented the Spirit, for power and strength proceeded from him." This, in fact, is the remarkable thing about John's action

here and his reply. He puts himself far beneath Jesus; by saying that Jesus needs not to be baptized of him, he virtually says that Jesus is no sinner, for this Baptism was for sinners only; by saying too that he himself needed to be baptized of Jesus, he confesses his sinfulness, places himself together in one class, not with the sinless Jesus, but with the sinful multitudes; by acknowledging the right of Jesus to baptize, yea, to baptize even him whom God had commissioned and sent to baptize the Jewish people as he now did, John places Jesus, not only on a plane with himself, a prophet divinely sent, but above himself, one higher and with a higher office. In this comparison which John makes between himself and Jesus the Epiphany glory already shines forth.

V. 15 contains the first words of Jesus preserved to us, excepting only those spoken to his mother in the Temple at Jerusalem, when he was twelve years old. A serene, certain, comprehensive mastery pervades these words. The purpose and will of Jesus is carried out; John, sent to lead the people as the first great prophet of the New Testament, is now himself led. In fact, this shows that he was a prophet indeed, for he recognized and obeyed his heavenly Master, when that Master came to him. **Suffer it now** (or, Suffer me now — according as ye supply in English, where the Greek ἄφες, from ἀφιέναι, *geschehen lassen*, has and needs no object). The majesty of this word is understood when we note that by it Jesus fully concurs in what John has just said concerning their relative purity and greatness. The sense is, It is even as you say, John; yet permit now what I request. The **now** implies that at another time, instead of John assuming a superior position, the inferior one shall indeed be his, and Jesus shall be lifted up where he truly belongs. Another thing lies in this ἄφες ἄρτι: the Baptism of Jesus is not such that Jesus could say,

I *have need* to be baptized of thee, as John says this concerning himself. Jesus says, Permit it now. The exceptional character of the Baptism thus requested is plainly implied. And so the word **now** refers to this moment when Jesus is about to assume his office. There is sufficient reason for this Baptism now, there would be none at another time in the life and work of Jesus. — This sense of the word “suffer it now” is corroborated by the reason which Jesus adduces for his Baptism now: **for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.** Where John had said: “I have need,” Jesus says: “It becometh,” *πρέπον ἐστίν*, neut. part. from *πρέπω*: it is something that looks well, fit, worthy, proper. There was no real *need*, as in the case of a poor sinner who needs Baptism to wash away his sins. (Observe that the author’s estimate of the power of John’s Baptism, as given in the text for the Third Sunday in Advent, Matthew 3, 1-11, especially verse 6 — which see — is here corroborated). There was only *something becoming*, appropriate, in Jesus’ Baptism. The little word *πρέπον ἐστίν* shows that Jesus’ Baptism had an entirely different inner purpose than that of all the others baptized by John, or of John’s own Baptism, if there had been one to administer it unto him. What this purpose was we begin to see when we consider that although Jesus did not *need* the Baptism, he nevertheless asked for it. If he being sinless needed not the sacrament that washed sinners, why did he ask it? Could he not have gone on in his sinlessness as heretofore and remained thus to the end? He certainly could have. The fact that Jesus nevertheless asks for the Baptism and says it is proper for him to receive it, and for John to administer it (*πρέπον ἐστίν ἡμῖν* — it becometh *us*), indicates that Jesus thinks not of himself as apart from sinful men and concerned only about himself, but as concerned with men, as sent to assume the great office and work of

saving them. Simply as a perfectly holy person it would not have become Jesus to ask, or John to grant to him, Baptism; but as the holy person sent to save us unholy ones, now that the great work was to be begun, it indeed became Jesus and John to have this Baptism.

But what made it so becoming and proper, so fitting and appropriate? The answer lies in the words **thus to fulfil all righteousness**. Only we must not overlook the plural, it becometh **us** to do this. Jesus combines himself with John, and for both of them he says it is proper that they thus, οὕτως, fulfil all righteousness. Jesus is not speaking of the fulfillment of the moral law, or of the Jewish ceremonial law. In putting himself together with John in this matter of the Baptism he is thinking of their respective offices. John was the forerunner of Jesus, Jesus was the promised Messiah. Now Jesus was about to begin his great work, even as John had been preaching. It was proper that both should observe and carry out everything that was required of them in these official positions of theirs. Convenit, *mihi* principaliter: *tibi*, ministerialiter. Bengel. As such a requirement the Baptism is treated. It could be that only as the initiation of Jesus into his holy office as our Redeemer and Mediator. Some commentators view it as a piece of righteousness insofar as it simply indicated the willing obedience of Jesus. God having ordained John's Baptism and calling on men to be baptized, and Jesus (though really not needing the Baptism) also obediently submitting to it. But this does not satisfy us. The order to baptize men is not a law the fulfillment of which produces righteousness. John's call to be baptized was a Gospel call, not a demand, but an offer and gift of grace. When Jesus, now as he comes to assume his holy office, does this by undergoing Baptism at John's hands, he is not obeying a requirement use-

less in his case, which in fact was not a legal requirement at all, nor is he accepting an offer and gift from God, for in his sinlessness he needed not the forgiveness offered in Baptism, but he is choosing the right way to enter his office and this he does with a fine sense of what is becoming, and with a true understanding of what is right for him (and for John) at this important moment of his life, when now the great task is to be undertaken for which he was born into the world, before God and men: he the sinless one, the very Son of God, here chooses to put himself alongside all the sinful ones for whom this sacrament of John was ordained, and thus he signifies that he is now ready to take their load upon himself, the load no man could bear alone without perishing forever, and bear it for them. It was both proper and right that Jesus should of himself come and as it were offer himself for the great mediatorial office, not wait until he would be called, or it would be laid upon him by another; for this office, especially insofar as it included the sacrifice on the cross, had to be voluntarily assumed. Note that John shortly after the Baptism calls Jesus *the Lamb of God*, referring to sacrifice. Jesus afterwards also calls his suffering a Baptism. Luke 12, 50; etc. These are rays which illuminate the character of this act when Jesus was baptized of John. And John willingly yielded to Jesus in this matter, who certainly understood best what was becoming and right for both in their respective positions. Therefore also the Father in heaven declared himself well pleased. However far we extend this good pleasure — and indeed it must go back to the very beginning of Jesus' life, — it evidently refers in a direct way to the act of Jesus, when *in seeking and obtaining John's Baptism he actually offered himself for the great office as sinbearer of the world*. So he fulfilled all righteousness, i. e. all that was right for him, the

Messiah, and so John fulfilled his part in it in laving him with the sacred water. — There is another view of the significance and purpose of Christ's Baptism. Luther presents it; see Erlangen edition of his works, vol. 19, 2, 482, etc.; 20, 457; etc. Luther here speaks of Christ *as our substitute*, loaded with the sin of the world burying it in the waters of Jordan. In following Luther here some even go so far as to state that what Christ obtained for us in his Baptism is now conveyed to us by the means of grace — as though salvation were already fully obtained for us by Christ's Baptism in the Jordan. Luther's view strains the words of the text by attempting to give the same significance to Christ's Baptism as to that of the sinners who flocked to the Jordan, these coming with their own sins, Christ coming with the sins of others, and a removal of the sins taking place for both. The words, "Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness," do not say all this. What they contain we have stated above. Among the secondary purposes of Jesus' Baptism is the sanctification of our present Baptism: "Almighty, eternal God, who . . . by the Baptism of thy dear child, our Lord Jesus Christ, hast sanctified and ordained the Jordan and all waters as a blessed flood and washing away of sins: we pray thee, etc." *Die symbolischen Buecher*, Mueller, 770, 14. — **And he suffereth him** — that is all; no description of the mode, no details of any kind as regards the baptismal act; even the verb for the baptismal act is not used by Matthew (Luke uses "having been baptized"; Mark writes, "and was baptized of John in the Jordan"). How much we would give if we only had an exact inspired description of what lies hidden in the three little words, τότε ἀφίησιν αὐτόν. The Holy Spirit certainly had his object in withholding such a description from us. If the mode of Baptism had been such a vital thing as all immersionists insist, then we may

certainly conclude that the Holy Spirit would have described this mode to us with great clearness and exactness; but we see that he did nothing of the kind. For an account of John's Baptism in general see the Third Sunday in Advent, Matth. 3, 6; for Christ's institution of Baptism see Trinity Sunday, Matth. 28, 19. We are not told that there were any witnesses of the great occurrence and of what followed, but we would not like to assume that there were none.

V. 16. **And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water.** The aorist participle connected with an aorist main verb ordinarily denotes action preceding that of the main verb; so here: βαπτισθεὶς ἀνέβη: "when he was baptized, he went up." The Baptism was finished; then Jesus went up. While the aorist participle may at times express action simultaneous with the main verb, this is shut out completely here by the meaning of the verbs themselves and by the modifiers: he went up εὐθύς, "immediately," and ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕδατος, "from, or away from the water." It is impossible to make Matthew say that in the act of Baptism Jesus came up from under the water. What he does say is that when the Baptism was finished, whatever may have been the mode of administration, Jesus without delay walked up from the water of the river, so that his anointing with the Holy Spirit did not take place, as many artists have pictured it, while he was being baptized or while he stood in the water, but on the bank of the river, probably a little distance from the water. There is no implication in any of the words that Jesus was under the water. — The wealth of new light which has come to us on New Testament Greek during the last decades robs all immersionists of their supposed support in the preposition εἰς, which they try to read in the sense of "into." In Mark 1, 5 we have: καὶ ἐβαπτίζοντο ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ; in v. 9: καὶ ἐβαπτίσθη εἰς τὸν Ἰορδάνην. Here

εἰς and ἐν are identical, Blass, Debrunner, *Grammatik d. neutest. Griechisch*, who lists other examples. Robertson, lists still more. The truth is that Greek started with only ἐν; later is used εἰς for verbs of motion; then (New Testament) εἰς began to spread to static verbs and verbs of being, and never stopped until in modern Greek εἰς alone remains, and ἐν has disappeared completely. So in Matth. 28, 19, βαπτίζοντες εἰς τὸ ὄνομα, and Rom. 6, 3 etc., εἰς Χριστόν and εἰς θάνατον, we have the notion of sphere, "in," not motion, "into": "in the name" (in union with it), not "into the name, the death," etc. Thus the last vestige of proof for immersion disappears from the New Testament.

Straightway . . . and lo! This reads as if there was an intention in it all; Jesus proceeds from the Baptism to the anointing. In the Baptism Jesus gives himself to the work of sin-bearing, in the anointing and the voice from heaven the Father accepts him for the work. The two acts then constitute a grand whole. They belong together and must not be separated, yet they are truly distinct and must not be mingled and confounded. Some are inclined to do this when they speak of the Spirit's descent upon Jesus as though this was a feature of the Baptism, which it was not. The application of this to our Baptism, namely that through Baptism and in it the Holy Spirit comes to us with his regenerating grace, is incorrect. He indeed does so come, but upon Jesus he came not in and through Baptism, but after the Baptism, as we are explicitly told, when Jesus was baptized, he immediately went from the water, and *then* the Spirit descended upon him. — **The heavens were opened,** ἠνεῴχθησαν, from ἀνοίγω. We take these words exactly as they stand. They describe neither a vision, nor something that occurred only in the mind of Jesus, but an actual fact, that the heavens were really opened. The ideas that the heavens suddenly grew brighter

above Jesus, or that a thunder-storm occurred with lightning flashes, are simply rationalistic follies. Ezekiel saw the heavens opened (Ez. 1, 1); Stephen likewise (Acts 7, 56); compare also Rev. 4, 1; Is. 64, 1. "Heaven opens itself, which hitherto was closed, and becomes now at Christ's Baptism a door and window, so that one can see into it; and henceforth there is no difference any more between God and us; for God the Father himself is present and says, This is my beloved Son, etc." Luther. — **Unto him**, which, as Bengel says, is more than above him, refers to Jesus. Meyer is correct when he connects the opening of the heavens with the descent of the Spirit. The visible heavens were opened for the Spirit to descend upon the baptized Savior, not to establish a new mysterious intercourse between the heavenly world and Jesus. They did not remain open. We are not told here what became visible when the heavens were opened, as we are told in the case of Ezekiel and Stephen. But we may well say that heavenly glory was visible, and that John (and any others present) who saw the Spirit's descent, therefore also saw the opening in the sky above and the glory visible there, from which the Spirit came down. This certainly means much to us, as Luther indicates in the words quoted from him, but it all refers to Jesus primarily, it reveals his Savior glory, and so, and only so, it has its glorious, comforting meaning for us.

And he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him. The subject of εἶδεν, he saw, is the same as that of ἀνέβη, namely Jesus. John likewise saw the Spirit descend, John 1, 32-33, in fact, his seeing this was the divinely appointed proof for him that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Ἐπ' αὐτόν, in place of ἑαυτόν, the reflex pronoun, is frequently used when the subject of the verb is meant. "The Spirit of God," πνεῦμα θεοῦ, here without the Greek

article, indicates a name, i. e. the third person of the Godhead. — **As a dove** is explained more fully by Luke's words, "*in a bodily form, as a dove.*" This compels us to get away from all figurative interpretations of the occurrence, such as the swiftness, the gentleness and quietness of motion, the purity of appearance, the brooding restfulness, etc., of the Spirit. An actual bodily form descended out of the opened heavens upon Jesus; he beheld it, and John beheld it, and this bodily form was "as a dove." We are not told that it *was* a dove, it was *as* a dove. That it was not a dove, a mere dove, is plain from the word "as," ὡσεὶ. Who will deny that its appearance, its descent upon the Savior, its coming upon him, and its abiding upon him (John 1, 32), was full of heavenly radiance, beauty, and glory — a dove, and yet not a dove, but God's Spirit himself in such a wonderful form. Why, we may ask, did he choose this form "as a dove"? Luther's is the best answer: "God the Holy Spirit comes in a friendly form, as an innocent dove, which of all birds is the most friendly and has no wrath and bitterness in it; as a sign that he would not be angry with us, but desires to help us through Christ, that we may become godly and be saved." Generally purity, innocence, and meekness are symbolized by the dove, but here the best explanation of the form of the dove is the graciousness of God's Spirit.

Christ's anointing with the Spirit is foretold in Ps. 45, 8: "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness." Peter, Acts 10, 38, tells us, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." As the prophets in former times received some of the gifts of the Spirit, Jesus, lifted far above them all, received the Spirit wholly. What this means we see when Jesus is led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, Matth. 4, 1, and when he returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee

to teach there in his wonderful way and work miracles. Besser asks why Jesus thus received the Spirit when as the eternal Word he had the Spirit from eternity, and when he was conceived by the Spirit in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary. He makes the fine answer that Jesus possessed the Spirit in a twofold manner, for himself from eternity, and in his office for us. "For us he received the Spirit, when he was baptized; as the head of his Church he received him in blessing for his members." Luther adds: "Here he begins rightly to be Christ," namely the Anointed One. Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit according to his human nature. Thus he became the Messiah, the Anointed One, invested with the Messianic office by the Father himself. This office included that he become our Prophet, our High Priest, and our King. By requesting the Baptism of John, Jesus offered himself for this office, and by the anointing of the Father he was received into this office and endued with all that was necessary to execute it successfully.

And lo! — another wonderful occurrence. **A voice out of the heavens, saying** — the opened heavens are meant; whose voice is not said, the words it utters show that. This voice is as real as the bodily form of the Spirit and the actual opening of the heavens. John the Baptist does indeed say nothing about hearing this voice; when afterwards he states how he knows that Jesus is the Messiah, John 1, 29-34, he speaks only of the visible descent of the Spirit upon Jesus; yet at the end of his statement he uses the very words uttered by this voice from heaven, namely "this is the Son of God." We accordingly take it that the voice was entirely audible, and that its utterance was entirely understood by those who stood by, especially by Jesus and by John himself. On two other occasions a voice from heaven testified concerning the Son, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Luke 9, 35, and while

Jesus was in the Temple, John 12, 28. In both instances this was also the Father's voice. — **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.** Mark and Luke give the words as directly addressed to Jesus, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." This latter was the form, no doubt, in which the words were actually uttered; Matthew gives them in a form which refers to us, for while the words were meant for Jesus they are also meant for others, and for them their meaning is even as Matthew formulates it. — **This** refers to the Christ, the God-man, as he then stood on the Jordan's banks; **in whom**, points back both to οὗτος and to ὁ υἱὸς μου. That Jesus whom John, and others, saw standing before them, the heavenly voice declares to be the beloved Son of God himself, in whom the Father in heaven is well pleased. Εὐδόκησα is the aorist = I did find delight. Let it be noted that this delight rests on him who is the beloved Son, on Jesus, the Son of human flesh. The Father has taken pleasure in him (aorist), and it is easy to see why, because he assumed our flesh to become our Savior, and because he proceeded in coming to John's Baptism to assume in willing obedience the great work of redemption. The Father puts his divine approval upon all this. Of course, it implies a like approval of all that the Incarnate Son will do in his holy office until he finishes the glorious task. Luther strikes the center of this ἀγαπητός and εὐδόκησα when he brings out the contrast, that God could not accept all the services, priests, and sacrifices of the Jewish church and say in the full sense of the words, I am well pleased with them, i. e. I will accept them and for the sake of them be merciful, be reconciled. None of them all could render full satisfaction so that God could be well pleased. But Jesus can and does please, satisfy, reconcile God, Jesus alone. So everything we do is here excluded and cast aside, and what Jesus does, that

alone stands in the sight of God. And we — we are accepted in the Beloved, Eph. 1, 6; in his dear Son we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, Col. 1, 13. In this way, Luther says, the Father makes Jesus our great Mediator, our only Priest, our only Prophet, our only King.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

A text like this one requires that the preacher know a good deal beyond what he will actually use in his sermon. He will not be a safe preacher unless he has such complete knowledge. That is why the exegesis deals at length with some points in the text which are not set forth at length in the sermon. In various ways, often in little touches, or in the way of treatment, full knowledge will clarify and true up a sermon, while inadequate knowledge will betray itself by faulty statement, plain mistakes, and treatment more or less out of line. Outlines in point are all those which try to ring in our Christian Baptism as a counterpart to Christ's supremely exceptional Baptism; also those which seek to get through this text by means of homiletical application while it really calls for something far superior, namely homiletical appropriation. — One may easily connect the great idea of the festival with the substance of the text:

The Epiphany on the Jordan's Banks.

- I. In the act of Jesus coming to John's Baptism.*
- II. In the descent of the Spirit upon Jesus.*
- III. In the proclamation of the Father concerning Jesus.*

The introduction might use Luther's conception of the Epiphany festival: "Here Christ begins rightly to be Christ. Therefore, since a festival of Christ's revelation (Epiphany) is celebrated, why not take this revelation, where God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost so mightily reveal themselves? These are the proper holy three kings, all found together when Jesus was baptized." — Another outline of this type is the following:

Jesus Revealed as the True Savior.

- I. When John baptized him in Jordan.*
 1. Not as a sinner.
 2. But as our sinless Brother, come to assume our burden of sin for us.

3. And as our great Representative, omitting nothing that belongs to his holy office and work.
- II. *When the Father in heaven anointed him with the Holy Spirit.*
1. Inaugurating him into his office: him, the Son; in whom he delighted; to whom he gave the divine approval; and all this in a wondrous way.
 2. Making him the Christ indeed: giving him all the power of the Spirit; enduing him with all that his great office and work made necessary; assuring his absolute success; and all this again in the most wonderful way.

Presentations like these two simply unveil Christ to us in what took place at the river Jordan. That means that we receive him as he is here shown to us, believe and trust in him as our Savior, and rejoice in him as he is made known to us. This is true homiletical appropriation. There are no "lessons," and the formula: as he — so we, is out of place. — However, the appropriate idea may be woven into the outline from the start. This is done in the following:

Our Salvation Assured in the Epiphany of Jesus as Our Savior.

- I. *He offers himself to work it out.*
- II. *The Father himself ordains him to work it out.*
- III. *The Holy Spirit himself bestows all his power upon him to work it out.*
- IV. *All that is left for us is to make this salvation ours by faith.*

Here is another with the appropriate feature:

Our Epiphany Joy, as We See the Heavens Open Above Jesus.

- I. *It centers in Jesus Christ.*
 1. The God-man;
 2. Who willingly undertakes our salvation;
 3. Who alone has power to redeem us indeed.
- II. *It embraces the Father and the Spirit.*
 1. The Father sent, now ordains his Son, and declares his delight in him and his work.

2. The Spirit bestows himself upon the Son, and lends all his power to the Son's work.

Conclusion: Can there be greater joy?

Sketch John's life and work, which still means so much to all of us. This leads easily to:

Epiphany, the Greatest Day in the Life of John and a Most Blessed Day for Us.

- I. *John's work was crowned, the Savior was come indeed.*
- II. *Our joy is magnified, the Savior's work begins.*

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

John 1, 35-42.

Many of the usual Epiphany texts present miracles of Jesus in order to show us his Savior-glory. This is not done in the Eisenach series. The idea in the selection of these texts is a deeper one. They aim to give us such views of Jesus himself as will reveal to us his glory as the Christ, the only Savior of men, and then they urge us to accept him as such, to believe in him and follow him. So this text begins and sets before us *the blessed Lamb of God as our Messiah and Savior*. We see the first disciples coming to him, drawn by a heavenly power greater than ever was or could be the power of John the Baptist, and henceforth following him in true faith. *A missionary element* also makes its appearance in this text and is intensified in various ways in the three following texts. This fits beautifully into the Epiphany idea as unfolded in all these texts. We who see the Savior-glory of Jesus and let its light fill our hearts with radiance from on high cannot lock up within us the blessedness we have found, we must tell others, we must spread the glad tidings and call our friends, yea all men, to come and share our treasure and joy.

In the first chapter of his Gospel John the Evangelist describes three great days of John the Baptist for us. The first was when John made solemn answer to the deputation sent from the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem to ask whether he were not the Christ. The second was when he pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world, and declared how he had received this blessed knowledge in a most wonderful way. The third was when he re-

peated the testimony that Jesus is the Lamb of God, and induced the first disciples to attach themselves to Jesus. The account of what thus took place on the third day is our text.

V. 35. **On the morrow** refers back to the previous day and what took place then. All through this narrative the evangelist is very exact as to time, actions and minor incidents, so that it is evident to the thoughtful reader, an eye-witness is writing here. **Again . . . John was standing**, — and the evangelist writes as if he still beheld him as on that memorable day. The place is not particularly mentioned here; it is no doubt Bethany (the correct reading, not Bethabarah) beyond Jordan, as we are told in v. 28. Who all were present with John when he testified so fully concerning Jesus on the previous day we are left to surmise; probably quite a number of people were near, at least some of John's disciples. — Now, however, we are told that **two of his disciples** were standing together with John. One of these disciples is named in the narrative, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother; the other is not named, being the evangelist John himself, who throughout his Gospel refrains from naming himself. John the Baptist had other disciples, even some who remained with him after Jesus drew away those mentioned in the Gospel story. But only these two, John and Andrew, are present on this occasion. Both Peter and James were elsewhere. — **And he looked upon Jesus as he walked.** Sommer thinks that περιπατεῖν signifies a walking as of one in his calling, and refers to John 7, 1; 10, 23; 11, 9 und 54. It is indeed certain that Jesus had assumed his office and begun his work, but in this simple account of an eye-witness full of accurate observation the figurative use of περιπατεῖν would be unaccountable. Nothing indicates here where Jesus came from or what object he had in walking as he did. From what follows we

learn only that he was going to the place where he now lodged, and even this is not described in any way. The forty days of fasting and temptation in the wilderness are past; Jesus has returned, on the previous day he came again to John, on this day John beholds him walking a short distance away. — V. 36. John **looked upon** Jesus walking, and the participle ἐμβλέψας means that he looked attentively, looked him in the face. His eyes rested thoughtfully upon the Savior. Compare the same word in Mark 10, 21, Jesus looking upon the rich young ruler; also v. 27; 14, 67; Luke 20, 17; 22, 61, Jesus looked upon Peter. It was a look that included comprehension and understanding. — **Saith**, the present tense, makes the following utterance of John vivid, as if in writing it down many years after he still heard the voice of his former master. — **Behold, the Lamb of God!** This is an abbreviation of the word spoken the day before, to which was added the full statement how John knew by revelation that Jesus was the Messiah. Though abbreviated here, that fuller statement is meant to be recalled, and all that John had added to it at the time. This repetition of John's statement is full of emphasis; the wonderful truth that Jesus is truly the Lamb of God is so important that it must be duly impressed, and in thus impressing it there lies a call to follow this Lamb of God. If on the previous day, when John first declared Jesus to be the Lamb of God, these two disciples had not felt that call in all its power, we know that now they did, for now they left John and followed Jesus. Ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ — the article conveys the thought that this is the particular Lamb of God, the Lamb in an eminent sense of the word. Comp. A: V., "Art thou that prophet?" v. 21 ὁ προφήτης; also Rom. 15, 12; Rev. 5, 5. Meyer insists on the genitive, τοῦ θεοῦ, as a true possessive: the Lamb which belongs to God, i. e. which God ordained as a sacrifice for himself. This is better

than to make the genitive say: the Lamb which comes from God, or which God presented to the world. — Jesus was indeed *God's own Lamb*. — The word **Lamb** connotes sacrifice. The word is used here with all that fulness of meaning conveyed by Is. 53. And Meyer draws attention to the fact that the prophetic, and not the legal view of the Lamb governs here. “Christ was indeed, as also the Baptist here prophetically recognizes him, the antitype of the Old Testament sacrifices; as such he had to be presented in the form of some sacrificial animal, and in this, not the Law, but the Prophets were the determining factor, they who beheld him in his gentleness and meekness and pictured him as a sacrificial *Lamb*, thus furnishing the form which became solemnly fixed in the Christian conception; for which reason also the apostolic church could see in him the Christian Passover, although legally the Paschal lamb, though a sin-offering, differed from the ordinary sin-offerings.” Trench has the same idea when in his sermon on John 1, 29, he writes: “It has been sometimes asked and debated, to which of the lambs of sacrifice, ordained in the Old Testament, did the Baptist here refer; with which did he liken that immaculate Lamb, who, being without spot and stain, should take away our spots and stains, and bear the collective sin of the world. Did St. John allude to the daily lamb of morning and evening sacrifice? or was it to the lamb of the passover, commemorating the old deliverance from Egypt? or was it to some other of the many lambs which were prescribed in the law of Moses, as a portion of the ritual of sacrifice appointed there? The question is surely a superfluous one. The reference is not special, but comprehensive. It is to none of these in particular, being indeed to them all. They severally set forth in type and in figure some part of that which he fulfilled in substance and in life; in him, not now a lamb of men, but the Lamb of God,

being at length fulfilled to the uttermost the significant word of Abraham, 'God will provide himself a lamb.' " *Westminster and other Sermons*, p. 122. Three things lie in the word "Lamb" for John's Jewish hearers, namely the conceptions of sinlessness, of suffering, and of redemptive work.

The fact that John's second word concerning Christ as the Lamb is only a repetition and an emphatic reminder of his first word, makes it necessary that we bring in here that most important addition "*which taketh away the sin of the world.*" Homiletically we must have these words when we preach on v. 35. The translation of the R. V. and its marginal reading put before us the question as to the significance of ὁ αἴρων, which can be translated either "beareth the sin," or "taketh away." The word itself is not decisive in this place, but its use in other passages furnishes sufficient evidence that the latter is the meaning intended here. The LXX use φέρειν for "to bear" the sin. John 11, 48 αἴρειν is used by Caiaphas when he fears the Romans will "take away" both his place and nation; John 15, 2, the unfruitful branch is taken away; John 17, 15, Jesus prays not that the Father shall "take away" the disciples out of the world; John 19, 31, the Jews pray Pilate that the crucified bodies be taken away, also v. 38; comp. 1 John 3, 5, where "to take away sins" comports best with the statement in 1 John 1, 7, that the blood of Jesus Christ "cleanseth us" (καθαρίζει) from all sin. The present is used, αἴρων. Luthardt thinks this points to the calling of the Lamb; Meyer, that John prophetically beholds the atoning act of the Lamb, to which Luthardt objects because the present tense does not stand for the future. Others say this tense is used because the Lamb had already entered upon his path of suffering, or because in his Baptism he had already assumed the sin of the world. In simply reading the words as they stand, ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ

ὁ αἰῶν, that which lies in the word Lamb is definitely stated in the word "taketh away"; it is, as Stelhorn puts it, his office. In taking the word in this sense we need not exclude the thought of the supreme atoning act, for in this the very idea of a sacrificial lamb culminates; nor need we exclude the other thought that the assumption of the world's sin had already taken place, for if Jesus *is* the Lamb at the moment John sees him and so names him, it can hardly be supposed that John means he *is* that now because the sin is to be laid on him in the future. The singular, τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, is used in the sense of mass, all sins as one great body; *una pestis, quae omnes corripuit*, Bengel. It is indeed a stupendous thought, "the sin of the world." A single sin is enough to cause a man's eternal damnation; what then when all the sins of all the world are concentrated in their deadly, damnatory power. Nor would we here put the *guilt* of sin for the sin itself, for the guilt inheres in the sin, and the very sin in itself with all that inheres in it, is part of it, and is produced by it, actually lay upon Jesus and was "taken away" by him. A more concentrated thought is secured when sin and guilt are thus left together in one. It is indeed remarkable that John here uses τοῦ κόσμου, instead of a word that would refer only to the Jewish people. John's word reminds us of what Simeon had said, when he explicitly mentioned the Gentiles; it is likewise an echo of the angel's announcement to the shepherds. Mayer rightly says, when John at Jesus' Baptism was divinely assured of his Messiahship, he possessed a far deeper knowledge of Christ as the Savior, on the basis of the Old Testament, than many modern theologians seem to have in spite of all the light of the New Testament. The entire thought of Christ as the Lamb, as the One taking away the sins of the world, as John here puts it forth, does not come from John's lips, and for his disciples who heard him, like something

novel, unheard-of, but as something, however great and wonderful, yet to a large degree familiar, fitting and proper, and therefore willingly accepted. The designation could be all this only through the word of the prophets of old and the centuries of sacrifices by which God had trained his people. The designation "Lamb of God" therefore does not repel John's disciples, but attracts them and moves them to follow this Lamb. We have in this passage one of the clearest and most precious Bible proofs for the universality of Christ's atonement and redemption. It is used as such in our Catechism to show that Christ redeemed "all lost and condemned men, hence also me" (note this significant deduction!). It is used in a number of very precious hymns, those ancient ones, "Lamb of God, O Jesus," or, "O Christ, thou Lamb of God" (the *Agnus Dei*), embodied also in the Communion Service, and "Lamb of God, without blemish"; the passion hymn, "A Lamb bears all the guilt away," and the two hymns on justification, "Lamb of God, we fall before Thee," and, "Not all the blood of beasts," in which occur the verses,

"But Christ, the heavenly Lamb,
Takes all our sins away;
A sacrifice of nobler name
And richer blood than they. . . .

Believing, we rejoice
To see the curse remove,
We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,
And sing his bleeding love."

Besides these hymns there are endless references to the Lamb, often combined with this name of Christ as used in Revelation, 5, 6; 13, 8; 12, 11; 22, 1. Luther draws out the comfort of our passage: "Do you hear it well, there is no lack in the Lamb, it bears all the sins of the world from the beginning; hence it must

bear your sins also and offer grace to you. Sin has but two places where it may be; either it may be with you, so that it lies upon your neck, or upon Christ, the Lamb of God. If now it lies on your back, you are lost; if, however, it lies upon Christ, you are free, and will be saved; take now whichever you prefer."

V. 37. **The two disciples** were those attached to John, and from all we know of them they were among his very best pupils, as also their action now shows. — They **heard him speak**, the words of John not being addressed to anyone in particular. It almost seems as if these two men were the only ones present with John at the moment, or at least as if they were the only ones of John's disciples present. When the evangelist, who beyond all doubt was one of the two, years after penned this account and wrote "the two disciples heard him speak," it must have been as if the sound of those words of the Baptist was still in his ears. What a blessed moment that was when the evangelist heard those words and heard them so that he was moved by them to act. Here we see what the Word does when it is rightly heard, when it really reaches the heart. It moves men, it is quick and powerful, it is indeed the power of God unto salvation. No need to talk of our own sin-tainted human, natural powers when the Word is present with its divinely effective power. I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in God or come to him, but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel. — **And they followed Jesus** — from John to Jesus; from the lesser, not to the greater, but to the Greatest; from the herald to the King himself. The word ἠκολούθησαν here, of course, means simply that they started to walk after Jesus, yet this outward action ushered in all that came after in their lives. It is often so still. We go to the place where the Gospel is preached, we go to some teacher or pastor, we choose some godly

school of learning, and we are hardly conscious ourselves at the time of all that is involved in our act, but God who leads us on the paths of righteousness for his name's sake knows, for he sees the end from the beginning. We are in the way of eternal blessings even when we outwardly go where Jesus is and where his blessed truth will shine upon us. — V. 38: **And Jesus turned, and beheld them following.** John could never forget it, that first moment when Christ's eyes rested particularly upon him. It was like the stopping of Jesus under the sycamore tree up which Zacchæus had climbed. Here we catch the first glimpse of that Savior-love which always reaches out to save and bless the sinner. — **And saith unto them** — the present tense, λέγει, just as when John "saith," v. 35. The evangelist seems to hear the words again as he writes them down. **What seek ye?** Jesus is first to speak, opening the way to them who might have been too timid to stop and address him themselves. τί ζητεῖτε; It is evident that they are seeking him, but **what** are they seeking in him? It is a master-question, penetrating their inmost souls; it compels them to look searchingly at their secret desires and yearnings, at what is actuating them now in leaving John and following Jesus; it calls upon them to get into the clear about what is greatest and most blessed for any human soul. Calov writes: "We are accustomed to seek what we have lost, or what otherwise is beneficial and desirable for us: but what was there more desirable, more longed-for during forty centuries past on the part of so many illustrious men, the patriarchs, judges, kings, prophets, and all the saints of the Old Testament, than this Lamb of God which John's testimony on the heights between the Old and the New Testament declared to be present at last?" And ever as men come after Jesus now the same question falls from the Savior's lips like a ray of light on their faces, What

seek ye? For many are not seeking what they should, and are seeking what they should not. An old account tells us that St. Bernard was in the habit of constantly warning himself by the solemn query, "Bernarde, ad quid venisti?" "Bernard, for what purpose art thou here?" Farrar adds: "Self-examination could assume no more searching form." Let us who preach the Gospel face the question of Jesus, in order that we may cast out all self-seeking, all seeking of ease in Zion, all wordly ambition even in churchly things, all unworthy aims, and rise to the height of our calling both as believers and as called servants of the Lord; and let us then also confront our hearers with this question, that they may find in Jesus that which he came to bring. — **And they said unto him, Rabbi, where abidest thou?** The Hebrew word *rab* = one who is great; "rabbi," my lord. It was the usual title for the Jewish teachers, and therefore the evangelist, who here sets down the actual word with which he and his companion first addressed Jesus, adds the translation of it for his Greek readers who were not conversant with the Hebrew — **Master** (margin: *Teacher*). They had just heard him called "the Lamb of God," but they do not venture on such a title themselves. It had its illuminating effect on them, yet they have not yet grasped it with their hearts so as to make it wholly or naturally their own. They are mere beginners, mere pupils, and their address "Rabbi" involuntarily indicates that. Their reply is a question, simple enough, yet exceedingly significant too, "Where abidest thou?" Why do they ask this? Evidently in order to meet Jesus privately and to tell him the thoughts of their hearts. His abiding-place is to be their confessional, as Besser says. Did they mean to come at once, or, having learned where Jesus lodged at this time, to come to him later on? We cannot tell. — V. 39. Jesus invites them at once, puts himself

and the place where he dwelt at once at their service. There is something generous, exceedingly kind and satisfying in this readiness. The Savior evidently reads the hearts of these two men at a glance, just as he afterwards read the heart of Nathanael. When was he ever unready and unwilling to satisfy hearts that truly sought his blessings? — **Come, and ye shall see.** It was certainly more than the two had expected. They would have been happy if Jesus had said, Come tomorrow, or the next day, and see me. But now he opens his door and heart to them all in an instant. Kings and the great men of the earth hedge themselves about with ceremony and servants, so that it is difficult to reach them and get speech with them; one must make special arrangements in order to secure an audience at all. Not so Jesus, the great King of kings; nothing is easier than to reach him and get audience at once. The words are exceedingly simple, “Come, and ye shall see” — just a kind invitation, and a little promise attached; but what a significance lies in these simple words! — **Come!** — how often it called men to Jesus; from sin, from the world, from darkness, from misery, from damnation — to salvation. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden! Here the invitation was to come to where Jesus abode; not only to see the place, but to see how blessed was the place where Jesus dwelt, and how blessed it was to dwell with him. The 46th Psalm tells us where Jesus still dwells, “the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High,” the Church; and David joyfully exclaims that he shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Ps. 23). — **They came therefore and saw where he abode; and they abode with him that day.** These three words really express the whole Christian life: to come — to see — to abide with Christ. The call and invitation of Jesus was accepted by the two disciples; the promise of Jesus that they

should see, was fulfilled; yea, it was richly fulfilled, as the prolonged stay of the disciples with Jesus eloquently testifies. What was it that they saw? Only the temporary shelter of Jesus — “one of the *succôth*, or booths, covered at the top with the striped *abba*, which is in the East an article of ordinary wear, and with their wattled sides interwoven with green branches of the terebinth or palm, which must have given the only shelter possible to the hundreds who flocked to John’s Baptism” (Farrar) — was this all? The evangelist’s answer has already been given in v. 14: “We beheld his glory . . . full of grace and truth,” and this beholding began here. These two disciples sitting for hours with Jesus — Farrar thinks that they even remained with him for the night — saw and heard what kings and prophets had vainly desired to see, what was granted so freely and richly to all those to whom Jesus spoke during his ministry, and what we are still granted to see in the blessed pages of the New Testament, where the word and doctrine of Jesus meets our eyes. — **It was about the tenth hour.** John mentions the very hour, so indelibly was this visit with Jesus, with all its details, impressed upon his memory. This tenth hour is not the hour of his conversion, but the great hour in his life when his eyes actually beheld in Jesus the Messiah. What point of time does the evangelist mean by the **tenth hour**? It is easier to ask, than to answer, the question. The most learned commentators have repeatedly made futile efforts to solve the problem as to just how John calculates his hours. See, besides our present passage, John 4, 6; 4, 52; 11, 9; 19, 14. The problem here presented has not yet been solved. When Nebe assumes an ancient copyist’s error, and when Zahn and others read Mark 15, 25 as an error, we know that these attempts are desperate and no solution at all. It is also hard to believe as some suggest, that John

used the Roman mode of counting the hours at one time, and the Jewish at another. So we let the problem stand unsolved for the present. In our passage the matter does not seem vital. John 19, 14, compared with Mark 15, 25, is far more serious. The Jewish reckoning would make the "tenth hour" four in the afternoon, rather late for the statement: "and abode with him that day"; the Roman mode gives us ten in the morning, tallying better with the idea of an all day stay.

V. 40. Not until this point does the evangelist mention a name, and here only the one; we know that his own name is the other, which with a refined delicacy and sensitive modesty he withholds from his entire Gospel, and he does the same with that of his brother James and other relatives, including Jesus' mother. But **Andrew** certainly deserves mention here, for he is the first disciple to bring another to Christ. John intends that this honor shall be fully accorded to him. In telling us who Andrew was the evangelist uses the brother's full name **Simon Peter**, adding at once that second appellation, the first bestowal of which he then describes. As John loves to withhold his own name, so he delights in putting forward the names of others. The dual is absent in the Greek of the N. T., hence: ἐκ τῶν δύο. — V. 41. **He findeth**, εὐρίσκει — twice finding is mentioned in this verse, and twice again in v. 43 and 45. So the man in the field "found" the treasure, so the merchant-man "found" the pearl of great price. All our seeking, even when we do seek, could never produce the treasure or the pearl. At best our seeking is like blind groping which would be useless if God in his mercy did not lay the great treasure so near us, direct our groping hands and blind eyes right to it, until touching it at last, lo, we have found! Andrew's finding of his brother is that of missionary zeal and love in seeking,

and it is a standing example of how we ought to find our relatives and lead them to Christ. Let us note the fact that in the very beginning there was a communion of saints in the following of Jesus; first two, whose faith is so blended together in the moment of its origin that we cannot say which was first, that of John, or that of Andrew. And no sooner are there two than the number doubles, and the two are increased to four. — Andrew findeth **first his own brother Simon**. Westcott and Hort, also Alex. Souter, have *πρῶτον* in their Greek texts but nearly all others prefer and have *πρῶτος*, which also gives a finer meaning, an adjective instead of an adverb: He, as the first one, findeth his own brother. Something is implied, namely that John himself was the second to find also his own brother, namely James. The thing is delicately touched in that little word *πρῶτος*. Both Simon and James must have been close at hand, so that they were found without delay, the same evening of that memorable day. — There is a joy and a blessed assurance in Andrew's words: **We have found the Messiah**, *εὐρήκαμεν τὸν Μεσσίαν*. He finds it but natural to say **we**, not I. He feels joined to John in thus finding; the finding by both assures each one the more that he is not mistaken in his finding; then, too, the confession and assurance "*we* have found" makes a deeper impression upon Simon. — John says the **Messiah**, again the very word Andrew uttered, although for his Greek readers, not conversant with the Hebrew term, he feels constrained to translate it by the name **Christ** (margin, *Anointed*). The same thing is done with *Κηφᾶς* and *Πέτρος* (margin, *Rock* or *Stone*). In the one word "Messiah" Andrew expresses all his hopes of the coming Savior, as he had drawn them from the Old Testament promises, stimulated them through the Baptism and preaching of the Baptist, and now for the first time satisfied them in the actual contact with the

blessed Savior himself. This evidently does not mean that Andrew's knowledge of the Messiah was complete, or that his faith was developed to the fullest extent; there was very much to learn, faith had to pass through its long period of training and trial. But Andrew believed, he had the right beginnings, the true light was in his heart and his eyes beheld its radiance. This lies in his joyful announcement, "We have found the Messiah!"

V. 42. **He brought him to Jesus**, that very evening, for John mentions time very carefully in this chapter, and "on the morrow" does not occur until v. 43. What a blessed service one brother here renders another. So Peter was the third disciple to come to Jesus, not the first, preceded even by his own brother. In the words, "brought him to Jesus," lies an introduction to Jesus, Andrew telling the Master this was his brother Simon, Barjonah, and here lies also a hint, in John's beautiful way, that Simon was brought spiritually to Jesus, brought to him in such a way as to believe in him. — **Jesus looked upon him**, ἐμβλέψας αὐτῷ, the same word as in v. 35 when John looked upon Jesus; an earnest, penetrating, significant look is meant. The eyes, the facial expression, the entire countenance, the voice, the whole bearing and appearance of Jesus must have had a strong effect upon these ardent men who had been the Baptist's disciples. Some writers, therefore, try at this point to draw a picture of the earthly appearance of the Savior. Behind the veil of his flesh there stood the glorious soul of the Messiah, the divine personality of the Son of God. Spiritual hearts perceived it and yielded to its gracious influence. — As Jesus was first to speak to John and Andrew, so he is first to speak to Peter. Jesus gives him a new name, so at once he accepts this fisherman as his disciple. There is no question about it at all, Simon simply **shall be called** Cephas,

i. e. in belonging henceforth to Jesus, in following him, and in receiving into his soul all that Jesus would put there. What a great thing for Simon thus at the very first to be re-named by Christ; how often in the days to come did the memory of this evening hour return to his mind! All that lies in the word **Cephas** or *Peter*, all the newness, the power, the blessing in Simon's future life, is the gift of Christ. It required a great deal to make this disciple a rock indeed, even some of the stern rebukes of Christ, some severe censures, that look of pity and compassion when Simon denied the suffering Christ, the Savior's own sacrifice as the Lamb of God, the reinstatement on the shores of the Sea of Galilee by the risen Christ, and finally the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Cephas = all this grace as one comprehensive promise. What a wonderful thing thus to be received by Christ! He now receives men in like manner; his eyes see from the beginning what he will make out of each one of us who comes to him.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Two valuable sermon thoughts, the first from Trench. God has often been accused of injustice in punishing the innocent instead of the guilty, but this injustice results only when the question concerning God's act is put in the wrong way. It is not: "How can it be righteous to lay on one man the penalties of others?" but: "How can it be righteous for one man to take upon himself the penalties of others?" "How many an act of heroic self-sacrifice, which it would be most unrighteous for others to demand from, or to force on, one reluctant, which indeed would cease to be heroism or sacrifice at all, unless wholly self-imposed, is yet most glorious when one has freely offered himself thereto; is only *not* righteous, because it is so much better than righteous, because it moves in that higher region where law is no more known, but only known no more because it has been transfigured into love." — The Lamb of God = the Lamb with which God is well pleased. And here again the question is not, "Could God have pleasure in the sufferings of the innocent and the holy, and that innocent and holy his own

Son?" but: "Should not God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ have pleasure in the faith, the love, the obedience of his Son as manifested in that Son's perfect pattern of self-forgetting, self-offering love?" See the author's *His Footsteps*, p. 344.

Simple analysis gives us the following outline:

Behold the Lamb of God!

- I. God hath provided it.*
- II. It has borne the world's sin.*
- III. Our hearts must trust in it.*
- IV. We must lead others unto it.*

This outline is more objective than subjective, although the latter element is also taken care of. Yet the central thought may be subjective, only now we use considerable synthesis:

The First Great Recognition of the Savior After His Baptism.

- I. He was seen as what he really was.*
 - a) The Lamb of God, etc. 1) Not merely that he was wise, good, mighty, etc. 2) The point of sin and sacrifice. 3) For all the world. 4) The sin taken away. 5) How vital all this is for us our hymns, etc. show.
 - b) The Messiah or Christ. 1) His anointing recognized. 2) His office likewise. 3) The connection of both with our salvation. 4) How vital all this is for us we see in all the Gospel, which centers in Jesus as the Christ.
- II. It was God who made men see him thus.*
 - a) By divine revelation (Baptist).
 - b) By preaching (the Baptist's, Christ's, and that of the first two disciples).
 - c) By the true result of revelation and preaching, namely faith wrought thereby.

The three great central thoughts of the text are presented in the following (inner analysis):

How the Epiphany Light Spreads.

- I. It shines out through the Gospel.*
- II. It enters the heart by faith.*
- III. It radiates again in missionary zeal.*

A subjective companion outline utilizes 3 of the main expressions in the text:

The Epiphany in Your Breast.

- I. *Behold!* — a heavenly ray falls from above.
- II. *They came and saw,* — a heavenly glow fills the soul.
- III. *We have found the Christ!* — a shining light beams forth.

Mayer suggests the following:

The Way of Salvation With the Epiphany Light Upon It.

1. Come (ἦλθον). — 2) Find (εὐρήκαμεν). —
3. Abide (ἔμειναν).

Homilies are infrequent. For one thing they are difficult to do well, and not many texts yield easily to this style of treatment. In a homily the main points in a text are allowed to pass before the hearers in the order in which the text presents them, and each point is unfolded freely according to its natural importance. The theme merely binds them together. There is no splitting of the theme into parts, merely a summarizing of the line of text thoughts. Sommer has this sample:

How Christ Reveals His Savior-Glory.

1. By the word of his witnesses, for these point to him.
2. By his own invitation, for this invites to come and see.
3. By filling our hearts with happiness, for to be with him is blessedness.
5. By the glory of his promise, for this assures us of a blessed future.

Preach the Lamb, and not too much John and Andrew and Peter.

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

John 1, 43-51

As in the two previous texts Christ is set before us in his Epiphany glory, so also in this text. As in the last text Christ is accepted by those who behold his Epiphany glory, so also in this text. In fact, as far as the essential lines are concerned, this is a companion text to the foregoing one. Its general theme is the same, and there is a sameness about the main features of the narrative, first Philip, then Nathanael, attaching himself to Christ. But with all the sameness in the groundwork of the text, there is a great difference in the setting, an individuality in every feature and detail, giving the text a richness and a beauty all its own. Let us remember that *Christ* is to be shown all through the Epiphany season, and that not in his works, but, by means of these Eisenach texts, in his own person as our blessed Savior. His own glory as the Christ is to shine out of these texts into our hearts. And so we shall find indeed that it is ever the same glory in substance, yet imaged in every text in a peculiar way, with a light of its own. Here the Christ stands before us as *the Son of God, the King of Israel, in whom we shall see the very heavens opened*. Little is found in the previous text concerning the men who accepted Jesus; here, however, we catch a fuller glimpse of one of the beginners in discipleship, the heart and character of Nathanael. We see too how the Epiphany light increases from dawn to fullest daylight, for Philip speaks only of Joseph's son, Nathanael of God's Son, and Jesus himself of the opened heavens and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man. Yes, it is the same blessed Christ in whom

our hearts delight, whom we cannot weary of seeing, and yet the light in which he appears here is new, having attractiveness all its own.

V. 43. Four men came to rejoice in the Savior-glory of Christ the first day, two more follow now. Commentators generally say that when Jesus called on Philip to follow him, that Philip must have come in contact with Jesus before this call was issued. Strictly speaking this is not correct, for the whole previous story as John tells it leads to the conclusion that he and Andrew were the very first ones who came directly in contact with Jesus. But there are plain indications that John and Andrew, who first visited Jesus, reported what they had found not only to Peter and James, their own brothers, but also to Philip. He too, it seems, belonged to the small circle of the Baptist's disciples, in fact, he was from the same town as they were, all five having come together from Galilee to Bethany beyond Jordan, all five having attached themselves to the Baptist. So when John and Andrew found the Christ in Jesus, Philip was told as well as Peter and James, which is plainly indicated by the peculiar reply Philip makes to Nathanael when he tells him in the very words Jesus used toward those first two disciples, "Come and see." Why Philip did not go together with Peter and James to Jesus that very first evening we do not know. It is possible that he heard the great news at a late hour when the two pairs of brothers came away from Jesus. In this case all four must have told him their impressions. — **On the morrow**, τῆ ἐπαύριον, sc. ἡμέρα, dative of time, the fourth day after the one on which the delegation from Jerusalem came to the Baptist, John 1, 19, the next after the coming of the first disciples of the Baptist to Jesus. — **Jesus was minded to go forth into Galilee**, the coming scene of his Messianic activity, the land looked down upon by Judean Jews, for it was less given to

Jewish bigotry and narrowness. Matthew applies to this going of Jesus into Galilee the prophecy, "The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Matth. 4, 15-16. — **And he findeth Philip.** What may have looked like accident was in reality gracious providence. Some find Jesus, others are found of him. Most likely the other four disciples were with Jesus, now that he was preparing to leave for Galilee, and at this moment Philip was found. At least they were present when Nathanael was brought a little later to Jesus by Philip. The plural, "*ye* shall see the heavens opened" leads us to think so. — **And Jesus saith unto him, Follow me.** This is so much like other calls of Jesus, that we must class it with them as a call to discipleship. Philip had followed the Baptist, that following was to be crowned by following him of whom the Baptist had been preaching so mightily and to whom he had pointed. Following here included attachment to Jesus' person in the capacity of a devoted pupil and learner. We are not told what Philip answered, but his hearty assent is fully implied by all that follows in the narrative. — **Now Philip was from Bethsaida of the city of Andrew and Peter.** Bethsaida = "house of fish," a city of Galilee, west of and close to the Sea of Tiberias, near Capernaum and Chorazin. While the evangelist states that this was the home of Andrew and Peter, he says nothing about its being also his own home and that of his brother. All five of these men, including Philip, were from the same neighborhood. Together they had gone to the Baptist, and together they now go back with Jesus. It is supposed that **Philip** was named after the tetrarch Philip, the custom of so naming children after great persons being

as prevalent then as now. He would then be at this time less than thirty years old. In the lists of the apostles Philip occupies the fifth place, and is joined with Bartholomew and Thomas. Tradition says that he afterwards labored in Scythia and Phrygia and died very old in Hieropolis.

In v. 45 we have again a blessed finding, and for the third time the word is placed emphatically first in the sentence. **Nathanael** = Theodore = God-given; taken to be identical with Bartholomew, which is merely a patronymic; his home was Cana in Galilee, whither Jesus was now going. The legend that he acted as the conductor of the bride at the wedding in Cana is without the least foundation and altogether improbable. What connection Nathanael had with Philip (or the other four disciples) we do not know, as no hint is given us. It is but natural to suppose that this too was one of the Baptist's pupils and thus associated with those who had already found the Christ. It can hardly be that Jesus had already started on his journey; for the evangelist writes ἠθέλησεν ἐξελθεῖν, "he *was minded* to go forth," which signifies that there was time for Philip to find Nathanael and bring him to Jesus. We prefer this view to the one which makes Jesus start on his journey and then provides for a meeting of Philip with Nathanael. — The statement with which Philip addresses his friend is peculiar and significant, **We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.** Here is the **we** that rejoices in the communion and fellowship of faith; it is uttered in order to impress Nathaniel the more — all these associates of his in following John the Baptist have now found the Savior himself. To say that Philip should have turned it around, saying instead of "we have found," "we have been found," is simply substituting one proper expression for an-

other; for both are true, and it simply depends on what thought one desires to express. There is certainly no trace of synergism, no claim of credit for himself, in the statement that "we (he does not even say I) have found" Jesus. — Philip uses a long circumscription for the word Messiah, **him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.** He means exactly what Andrew said to Simon, "the Messiah." Jesus himself declared that Moses wrote of him, John 5, 46; Luke 24, 27. In regard to this last passage it is certainly remarkable that while Philip here, at the very beginning, is so sure Moses and the prophets wrote of Jesus, yet after the resurrection Jesus still has to expound to the two Emmaus disciples in all the Scriptures, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, the things concerning himself. Moses transmitted the promises made to the patriarchs; he promised to Israel the great Prophet like himself, Deut. 18, 15-18; he gave Israel the Law, which with its promise to all who keep it can mean only Christ, for none other has been able to keep it, and with its curse upon all who transgress it likewise points to Christ who would bear this curse for us, for none other could bear it. And the prophets were the expounders of the Law, who made it their special duty not only to drive home the requirements and threats of the Law in the hearts of the people, but also to hold out to them the glorious and comforting hope of the Deliverer to come. The Baptist continued this work in his own mighty and effective way, and we have here men trained in the Baptist's school who naturally reveal their training. — Philip undoubtedly was right when he assumed that the picture of the Messiah could be found only in the Law and the prophets. It is there still, but the nation of the Jews has persistently refused to see it and to recognize in the lineaments there so distinctly traced the one whom Philip named, **Jesus of Nazareth, the**

son of Joseph. When Philip designated Jesus as τὸν ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ he hardly meant to say that Jesus was born in Nazareth. Having lived in the town so long, naturally when any one wanted to say from what place Jesus came, he would say ἀπὸ Ναζαρέτ. As far as the wondrous conception of Jesus and the actual place of his birth is concerned Philip is hardly reflecting on these at this early moment of his discipleship, nor did Jesus himself hasten to reveal these things so soon to his disciples, choosing rather that they should discover in him for themselves the Son of God, and then learn that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of a virgin. It is the same with the appellation υἱὸς τοῦ Ἰωσήφ. Joseph was undoubtedly dead at this time, and probably for a number of years already, since we hear nothing at all concerning him after that memorable visit to Jerusalem when Jesus spoke so plainly of his real Father and that Father's business. Yet the fact is that Jesus actually was "the Son of Joseph," namely legally; else how could his name occur in the human genealogy of Jesus? Of course, there was far more to the story of Christ's origin, parts that neither Philip nor the others included in his "we" then knew or could know; yet it would not be entirely correct to say, with Calvin for instance, that Philip here utters an error, yea, two of them. These were not errors, they were actual facts, only there were yet other facts; and as always, when finally all the facts are together, the last shed a new light on those which came to us first, so also in this case with the birthplace and birth of Jesus. — V. 46. Nathanael's reply, **Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?** has bothered the commentators a good deal. Τὶ ἀγαθόν = something good, here referring to the Messiah himself, the very greatest good thing. Nathanael is hardly thinking of the smallness of Nazareth. We know nothing of any evil reports concerning Nazareth, and simply to surmise them

here is gratuitous (against Zahn); the later unbelief of the inhabitants of the place was of the same kind as met Jesus in many other places, notably also in the very capital of Judea. The idea that Nathanael refers slightly to Nazareth because it was a town in the "Galilee of the Gentiles," a country despised on this account by the men of Judea, is also not expressed in Nathanael's words, for this would require a mention of Galilee, or some reference to Gentiles. The best explanation of Nathanael's doubting remark is that he knew nothing of any mention of Nazareth with regard to the Messiah in the Law of Moses or in the prophetic promises to which Philip had referred. For a good explanation of Matth. 2, 23, "He shall be called a Nazarene," see Fausset, *Bible Cyclopaedia*, article Nazarene, p. 496, 3, where all the points of this designation are treated. — Philip makes the finest kind of answer to Nathanael, one that recalls the word of Jesus himself to John and Andrew, **Come and see**. Bengel calls this *optimum remedium contra opiniones praeconceptas*, the best remedy against preconceived opinions. The answer was probably far better than Philip himself knew, for the only way to learn aright who Jesus is, is to come and see (experience). It was the way Jesus led all his disciples, and they came and saw and were satisfied to the uttermost.

V. 47. "But Jesus knew all men, and he needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man." John 2, 25, R. V. Jesus **saith of him**, means that he did not address Nathanael, but spoke to the others about him, the five who were already attached to him. Nathanael's reply shows that the words of Jesus were spoken so that Nathanael also heard them. What is the judgment of Jesus about me? one involuntarily asks, what does he see when he looks into my heart? Let the preacher put the question first to himself before he

puts it to his hearers. Besser reminds us that there were not very many glad moments in Christ's life, but this surely was one; others where when the Canaanitish woman cried to him for help, when the centurion's humble and implicit faith shone out so clearly, when the sinful woman in Simon's house wept over his feet, when Zacchæus' house was made a temple of salvation, and when the malefactor turned repentant to his King. "They are not all Israel, which are of Israel," Rom. 9, 6, but Nathanael was one. The word of Jesus concerning him was absolutely free from flattery. It is an expression of the Savior's joy at sight of this future disciple coming to him, at the same time it is a provocation for Nathanael to ask the question he did ask, which led to that wonderful reply of Jesus. — **Behold, an Israelite indeed!** — ἀληθῶς = in truth. Zahn draws the adverb to the name, so that John could also have written ἀληθινός, one who is what the name signifies; to which Keil objects, making the adverb modify the entire statement, which is best: Truly (this is) an Israelite, etc. Israel himself died with the words on his lips, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord," Gen. 49, 18, and this waiting in faith for the fulfillment of God's great promise marked the true Israelite. — But Jesus specifies more closely: **in whom is no guile**, δόλος, cunning, deception, as when one uses bait to catch fish, or some cunning means to get the better of another. Nathanael was without duplicity, he was thoroughly sincere. David calls such a man blessed, Ps. 32, 1-2. Most men lack complete sincerity of heart. They profess love for Christ, yet secretly love the world and the flesh; they promise faithfulness, yet do not mean it fully in their hearts. Their hearts have more than one fold. They will stoop to base means in order to gain their objects. There are glaring examples of the double life which, finally exposed, shock men; but there are others more

frequent, yet equally bad when it comes to spiritual things. Too many men, when earthly advantages are at stake, compromise with truth and the interest of their souls. We see this δόλος even in preachers of the Gospel and whole bodies of the church; it is this fault which has led to many divisions in the church. Paul was a man like Nathanael in many respects, Acts 24, 14. So were the rest of the men who were now with Jesus, but the sincerity of Nathanael must have been especially marked. The great blessing attaching to this quality of the heart is that it renders the acceptance of the saving truth as it is in Jesus especially easy and rapid; and of this we have an example in Nathanael. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Matth. 5, 8. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light." John 3, 21. It seems that this very first word of Jesus concerning Nathanael in a subtle way already touched the secret to which Christ's statement about the fig tree referred more positively.

V. 48. Nathanael is evidently surprised at Christ's estimate of his heart and the peculiar reference it contained, for he asks, **Whence knowest thou me?** The implication is that this is the first time Nathanael met Jesus. Philip, too, had no opportunity before this moment to tell Jesus about Nathanael. By this question he virtually admits that Jesus did know him, and it seemed, even something very intimate about him.—The answer of Jesus goes far beyond anything Nathanael expected. **Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.** "Lord, thou hast searched me and known me," Ps. 139. Who would not wish that the evangelist had told us more fully what actually happened under the fig tree when Nathanael was there before Philip found him? There is something apparently disproportionate between these simple words of Jesus, and the instantaneous, magnificent confession of Nathanael; only we

know that the disproportion did not really exist. We must say then that here we have a case like that of the woman at Jacob's well, only we know just what Jesus did refer to when he touched the center of her life; in the case of Nathanael the thing is hidden from us. Another case is that of the paralytic let down through the roof, whom Jesus first absolved before he healed him, knowing at a glance that his worst ailment was spiritual. Such a case of penetrating, all-comprehending insight we have here. Jesus does not say ἔγνων σε, but εἶδόν σε, I perceived, I noticed, I observed thee. The very attitude of Nathanael under the fig tree seems to be referred to here. As far as the fig tree itself and Nathanael's being under it is concerned there is nothing so unusual, since it was the custom of pious Jews — a custom approved by the Talmud — to study their office of daily prayer under a fig tree. Even here, away from Cana his home, while lodging in some temporary place, Nathanael, no doubt, had his place for retirement, namely the shade of this fig tree. The unusual thing is in what transpired in Nathanael's heart under the fig tree just before Philip met him. For lack of a better supposition we may accept that of Farrar, seeing that we will always be inclined to fill in this gap in John's narrative. He pictures to us an hour of exaltation for Nathanael, "when the soul seems to rise upon the eagle-wings of hope and prayer into the heaven of heavens," "a crisis of emotion . . . as he sat and prayed and mused in silence under the fig tree." We may well accept a picture like this, for evidently Jesus struck home with his words, not merely in the intellect of Nathanael by a proof of his omniscience, but in his very heart, showing Nathanael that his inmost soul was bare to the eyes of Jesus. So the Son of God, the King of Israel, still sees every one of us, but not only when our hearts are lifted up to him in an exaltation of faith,

joy, and hope, or when some great resolve rises in our bosoms, but also when we grow cold, when we inwardly give way to the flesh, to selfish promptings, to wordly ambitions, to sinful gratifications, and the like. He knows indeed what is in man, and needs not that any should tell him.

V. 49. The sincerity of Nathanael at once responds to Jesus' word, as when a perfect bell is struck just right by the hammer and gives forth its beautiful sound, **Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art King of Israel.** So speaks the Israelite indeed, and his words are truer than he himself knows. "Rabbi" is the same here as on the lips of John and Andrew in the previous text, v. 38. Jesus has won another disciple, i. e. pupil. The Second Psalm gives us the Old Testament basis of Nathanael's designation of Jesus as "the Son of God, King of Israel." Here "the Israelite indeed" recognizes his spiritual King. So Thomas afterward exclaimed, "My Lord and my God," and we know how the disciples allowed Peter to voice their impressions and confessions of Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God." No doubt, even in Nathanael's heart there arose clouds in the days that followed, darkening the clear vision of Jesus he had at the very beginning of his discipleship; but ever the light conquered, and the clouds disappeared. It is no small proof of the divinity of Christ when men like Nathanael not only felt impelled to call him God's Son, Israel's King, but having done that remained true to their confession and felt in no way, as their daily familiar contact with Jesus proceeded, that he was after all less than that. Let us remember how the true Jews hated all idolatry and rather died a martyr's death than to consent to the common deification of Roman emperors as the heathen people about them freely practiced it. Through the veil of Christ's flesh

his true glory shone out, and they that had eyes to see beheld it, and their souls were satisfied. For us the Christ stands glorious as the Son of God, King of Israel, in his Word; and as we now behold him with the eyes of faith our hearts fall prostrate before him and adore him. And this is one great part of the Epiphany vision.

V. 50. **Jesus answered and said unto him** — and these are indeed the words of the Son of God, King of Israel — **Because I said unto thee, I saw thee underneath the fig tree, believest thou?** Usually πιστεύεις is taken as in this translation to be a question in an affirmative sense; it may be taken just as well as a declaration, “thou believest.” In either case Jesus acknowledges the faith of Nathanael, and for this reason holds out greater promise to him. The final word of Jesus is ushered in by the double ἀμήν which John alone has preserved for us in recording the most important sayings of Christ, and this in twenty-five instances. **Amen, amen** is a double seal of verity; **I say unto you** is the declaration of divine authority. Together there can be, from the lips of Jesus, no stronger affirmation. He is the Amen himself, Rev. 3, 14, the true and faithful witness, in whose mouth there is no guile. But here he suddenly introduces the plural, “unto you,” ὑμῖν. It must be so, for this promise extends far beyond Nathanael, it takes in every one of the five others present, John and Andrew, Peter and James, and Philip. The word “hereafter,” ἀπάρτι, has been dropped from the best Greek texts, which, however, does not materially change the sense of Christ’s promise. — **Ye shall see the heaven opened.** The seeing that is meant here is like that of Nathanael when he saw in the humble form of Jesus the Son of God, King of Israel; Christ called it faith. The heaven actually opened

above Jesus after his Baptism; that opening closed. But while the sky above the Savior remained unbroken there was in reality no bar betwixt him and his heavenly Father, such as there is between us and him because of our sins. And this the disciples were to see. They saw it indeed in a thousand ways, in every turn of Christ's life, when he prayed, when he taught, when he healed and helped, when he bore and suffered, when he was transfigured and when the voice from heaven spoke a second and a third time, when he told of his passion and resurrection, and when all this was accomplished even unto the end. Of course, it all required the eyes of faith, and sometimes these were dim, but Jesus ever tried to give them light. Thus was Jacob's vision, Gen. 28, 12, made real beyond anything that Jacob himself could have imagined. — Nor must we turn **the angels of God** into "representatives of the powers of the Spirit," for they are real angels, not always visible to the natural eye, but seen by faith, even as the "heirs of salvation" now know that even they are ministered unto by these ministering spirits. As in the vision of Jacob so these angels are shown first **ascending** and then **descending**, and it is wrong to reverse these two, even if only in the way they are explained. For the wonderful thing about it is that with Christ here on earth, as he was then, heaven itself was here among men and the very angels of God dwelt here among us with Christ, and though they ascended on heavenly errands to the Father and that other world which the Scriptures always place above us, yet they returned again and descended, for he to whom they were attached dwelt in human form below. — But the very finest touch of all is the very last word, the angels ascending and descending **upon the Son of Man**. It is the finest, for what is to a certain degree indicated in the words "Ye shall see"

— namely that all this concerned the disciples themselves, — that comes out completely in the name which Jesus here gives himself, “the Son of Man.” For the explanation of the significant term itself see Luke 17, 22 in the text for the Second Sunday in Advent. It is equal to Messiah. Instead of trying to separate and make “Son of God” express the relation of Jesus to God, “King of Israel” express his relation to Israel, and “Son of Man” express his relation to mankind, as Godet does, all these designations really flow together, and the peculiar feature of the last is that it points so clearly to the Incarnation, by which the Son of God became the Son of Man, our Savior and our Brother, another Adam and the Spiritual Head of our race. Does he seem so high above us and far away as the Son of God, so restricted to one nation as the King of Israel, he is ours and belongs to all of us as the Son of Man, who entered our flesh, took our burden upon himself and in and through whom heaven is ever open for us. Even on his throne of glory now he is still the Son of Man; even now he has the very nature — our own — which joined him to us, which bore our sins upon the cross, which arose triumphant and glorious from death and the grave. And thus we have again an Epiphany vision of his Savior-glory which should ever fill our hearts with deepest satisfaction, and with joy and hope.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

When Christ appears among other personages in a text there is great danger that the preacher may let these others take up the room in his sermon and crowd out Christ, at least to a great extent. That is because so many like to work homiletical application, and either cannot handle homiletical appropriation or have little liking for it. Let us make this our rule: Christ always first! So much should he be first that often we pass by any other persons in the text altogether. So we place these outlines in the front rank:

What Do You See in Jesus as the Epiphany Light Falls Over Him?

- I. *Only a dim vision — Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph?*
- II. *Or the fuller glory — The Son of God, the King of Israel?*
- III. *Or complete revelation — the Son of man in the opened heaven?*

The Epiphany Sun Rises in the First Disciples' Hearts.

- I. *The dawn — Philip's word.*
- II. *The first bright beams — Nathanael's word.*
- III. *The full noonday — Christ's own word.*

The Epiphany Light of the Son of God, King of Israel.

- I. *See how it shines forth from Christ.*
- II. *See how it falls into men's hearts by faith.*
- III. *See how it increases for those who continue in faith.*

The heavens opened for Jesus at his Baptism and here they are opened for us.

Our Epiphany Joy as We See Heaven Opened Above Us.

- I. *It centers in Christ.*
- II. *It embraces our salvation.*

Of course, there is room in these outlines to make mention of Philip, Nathanael, and the other four disciples selected by Jesus; but as the outlines stand these men will not get into Christ's way or hide him from us to any degree.

We have our doubts about an outline like Koegel's, master preacher though he was: *Nathanael an Example for Men*: 1) In the secret things of life; 2) In the communion with friends; 3) In taking a public stand. It is too much Nathanael, while Christ is standing by and kept waiting — in vain. Even Philip is left out.

If Nathanael is to be made a feature in the sermon, then let us use him as a humble means for glorifying Christ:

When the Epiphany Light Fell Into Nathanael's Soul.

1. *It came in Philip's joyful testimony.* Philip had found the Savior. He truly describes him: "He of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." But

he mentions only his human name, and his earthly home, "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."

2. *It was met by open doubt.* Nathanael knew of no promise connected with Nazareth, and did not at once let the Epiphany light in. Two kinds of doubt: honest doubt due to ignorance (Nathanael's); dishonest doubt due to an evil heart (Caiaphas, Pharisees, Sadducees). Watch your hearts when the Epiphany testimony shines upon them.
3. *It came again through Jesus' own declarations.* He revealed his omniscience to Nathanael. Only this one divine attribute, but one should be enough. How fully Jesus' Word now reveals himself to us! Yet how much unbelief, or just littleness of faith, or even only sham faith!
4. *It was met once by instant faith.* And that faith at once confessed itself. Note the sincerity and the fervor. No Methodistic "testimony." A deep inner conviction embracing Christ as God's Son and the King of Israel.
5. *It shone forth in the greatest of all promises.* The open heaven in all that Nathanael saw in Jesus after this, especially at last in the cross and the exaltation. The open heaven in the Gospel today, where Jesus still walks, where his cross and glory shines, where his grace works. When death comes to you may the heavens be opened for you, as when Stephen fell asleep.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

John 4, 5-14

The wonderful finding described in the last two texts still continues in this one, and in the next, for here Jesus finds a sinful Samaritan woman, and she finds her Savior. The progress from the former two texts to this one is that while they focus all our thought on the blessed person of the Savior, here the central gift which makes him so blessed is set before us, but not apart from his person, but combined most intimately with it. Christ is *the Giver of living water*. This presentation of Christ is the more striking since it is made unto an unknown, sinful woman of the despised race of the Samaritans. Jesus stoops to pick up this soul out of the dust in a strange land. Observe the missionary element in the text. But do not overlook the application that every preacher, as he here dispenses Christ's living water, should make to himself, inquiring as to his own thirst for this water, and as to the well of water that should be springing up in his own heart unto eternal life.

"The cool morning blew from the sea through the land. The sky was fair and almost cloudless. The meadows and fields near the southern border of Samaria were beautiful with young verdure. It was a lovely morning which thus dawned upon Judea. Jesus, together with the disciples who had attached themselves to him, prepared for a journey; he was minded to use this day in order to get as far as possible upon his way through Samaria. His destination was Galilee which lay beyond. Our Lord did not always choose this road through the beautiful territory of Samaria when he journeyed between Galilee and

Jerusalem; oftentimes he too took the road ever preferred by the Jews, which by a wide detour beyond the Jordan avoided the hated land of Samaria. . . . Until noon-day the little band continued its traveling afoot. The higher the sun rose, the hotter grew its rays. Thirsty and dusty the Lord finally arrived with his companions at the village of Sychar. Not far from the road, which led up to the town, there was a deep well, the ancient well-known Jacob's well. Here in the shade of the trees which spread their branches over the well, on the low wall which surrounded its opening, there was a quiet, cool resting place. Tired from the journey the Lord sat down to rest here. After a brief pause the disciples went on to purchase food in the village and to bring it hither to the Lord." Lenski, *Biblische Frauenbilder*, p. 230-231. Something like this the scene that is pictured for us in the opening verses of our text must have been.

V. 5. **So** = accordingly, οὕτως, since he was passing through Samaria in going to Galilee. He came **to**, εἰς, the city, not actually entering it at first. Sychar is visible from the well, and the tomb of Joseph is a third of a mile away. The remark about the burial place of Joseph is made by the evangelist, not in order to fix more closely the locality, but to enrich the references to past history following in the narrative. Compare Gen. 33, 18, etc.; 49, 22; Josh. 24, 32. Too many commentators and others identify Sychar with Nablus, which is too far from the well and not visible from it, and to which the evangelist's phrase "*called Sychar*" would hardly fit, as this points to a small place not well-known. — The **well** is here called πηγή = spring, meaning evidently the spring of water at the bottom of the deep shaft which Jacob had dug. The site of this wonderful well is beyond doubt today. It is 105 feet deep, and about seven in diameter. A church is erected over it now, and while one would

prefer to have it restored to resemble as much as possible the condition in which Jesus found it, one is glad at least that it is properly taken care of. When the author visited the place in the summer of 1925 a neat windlass was used to draw up the water in a metal bucket. Then a plate with a number of candles was lowered illuminating the entire shaft down to the water, which welled up like a strong spring. The water is clean and wholesome, and our entire party drank of it. When Jesus rested at the well, some kind of wall was probably built around the opening. Now the top is a rectangular stone with an opening about two feet wide. Sychar lies on the opposite hillside; only a few houses now. Gerizim and Ebal are not far away.

V. 6: **Being wearied with the journey** vividly shows us his true human nature. **Sat thus by the well**, οὕτως, as he was and without any preparation, not "thus" in the sense of wearied, which would merely repeat the thought of the former phrase, and at least have οὕτως before ἐκαθέζετο. The word is a touch revealing the eyewitness who saw the Savior sink upon his seat as soon as he reached the place. Note the imperfect in ἐκαθέζετο, the Savior continued to sit and rest. — **It was about the sixth hour**, near noon, taking it that John reckons here after the Jewish fashion; see John 1, 39, in the text for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. The Roman reckoning, beginning the hours at midnight, would make the time six in the morning; there is no reason to think that Jesus had made a night journey in this instance. The evangelist marks the hour because it was the one in which Jesus began his work among the Samaritans, and this impressed it deeply upon his mind. So he had fixed in his memory the hour when he himself had found the Savior, John 1, 40.

V. 7. The woman's nationality is explicitly stated.

Samaria (ἐκ Σαμαρίας; v. 9: Σαμαρεῖτις) signifies the country, not the city (Sebaste). The question arises: How came this woman to draw water at this hour? We are not told and cannot make a positive statement. One commentator simply takes for granted that she had been working in the fields, passed near the well on her homeward way, and thus stopped to refresh herself. He forgets that she had a waterpot, which indicates that she came to fetch water for her home. If an explanation is made we prefer one which is suggested at least by something in the text, not simply carried bodily into the narrative. The unusual hour for getting water — near noon instead of evening, — especially her coming to the well alone to fetch water, may be placed in connection with her character as living even now in open and flagrant adultery, after a checkered career with five different husbands. The woman was a social outcast, and this looks more like the true reason for her coming to the well now and alone. — The more must we marvel at the condescension of Jesus who stoops to ask a favor of such a woman, and this with a love in his heart longing to save her miserable soul. The woman would not have spoken to the Jewish stranger at the well, but he speaks to her, **Give me to drink**. Here doth the Fountain ask for water, and he who bids all that thirst come to him himself asks to have his thirst quenched. It is certainly a deviation from the true sense of Scripture when Hengstenberg and some others make the words of Jesus mean, Give me *spiritual* refreshment (namely through your conversion). Whatever love was in the Savior's heart, his simple request here means exactly what the words signify. He was thirsty, his body longed for drink, and he requested a drink from this woman. That is all. — V. 8. The evangelist is even at pains to show how a sort of necessity moved Jesus to ask the *woman*

for a drink, **for his disciples were gone away into the city to buy food.** There was no one there to serve Jesus now, he was alone. In later times the traditions of the Jews forbade the buying and eating of Samaritan food; this rule evidently was not in force yet. Luthardt supposes that Jesus was not left entirely alone on this occasion, since all the disciples were not needed for buying food; he thinks John was present. But Meyer scores this supposition as simply carried into the narrative in order to find one to report what occurred. The text settles the case beyond reasonable doubt, *his disciples* were gone away — that, without a qualifying hint anywhere, means all of them.

V. 9. The simple request of Jesus was denied; nor do we read in the whole narrative that the Savior's thirst was quenched. We may well presume that Jesus made his request when the woman had drawn the water, hardly before that. Goebel thinks this lies in ἔρχεται ἀνελῆσαι ὕδωρ, but ἔρχεται describes her coming, and the aorist infinitive states nothing but simple action. It is the situation itself that makes it probable that she filled the waterpot and then afterwards in her excitement forgot to take it along. How did the woman at once recognize the Jew in Jesus? Most likely by his speech; there seems to be no other mark. Meyer finds "a smart feminine caprice of national feeling" in her words; Luthardt, "something intended to tantalize." Others, an exaggeration of ill-will, and still others, an inkling of the superiority of Jesus over ordinary men. But the words of the woman are quite simple and self-explanatory. She puts them in the form of a question because she is surprised. The request then was utterly unexpected, and the reason why it was unexpected lies in the way she puts the Samaritan and Jew over against each other. She does not say that the Samaritan is against the Jew, which, of course, was also true, but that the Jew is against the Samaritan, so much

so that he ordinarily despised even the slightest service at the hands of one of this hated nationality.— Having in mind his Gentile readers the evangelist adds the explanatory remark that the Jews **have no dealings**, οὐ συνχρῶνται, no ordinary social intercourse, with the Samaritans. Some codices omit this clause, the verb of which is indeed singular in the New Test., but it certainly states a fact and, aside from textual authority, is in line with other explanations interspersed in the Gospel of John. We prefer to let it stand. In explanation of it we add the following summary: The Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity had rightly denied any participation in the rebuilding of the Temple and in the public worship to the Samaritans, these being a mixture of the remnants of former Israelites and of Gentiles (8 Kings 17, 24-41) and having also a mixed religion then, and even after renouncing idolatry acknowledging only the five books of Moses as the Word of God (Ez. 4, 1 etc.), a bitter enmity existed between the Samaritans and the Jews. When we visited Nablus in 1925 they numbered only seven great families with 174 persons. We met the high priest Isaac Ben Omran, and saw some of their revered copies of the Samaritan Pentateuch. They are badly divided; the representatives of three factions were required to unlock, each with his own key, the door of their sanctuary where the manuscripts are kept. Their number of women has dwindled, so that each newborn girl is at once betrothed. Their neighbors in Nablus refuse to give them girls in marriage. A printed slip is handed to tourists, begging them for support of their high priest, synagogue, and school for children. The author read the petition to his party when visiting the place.— Racial, social, religious and personal antipathy has often acted like a bar to human kindness and helpfulness, which it never should. Jesus was superior to

these things. It has been said of his request for a drink from this woman, that this was the first step toward breaking down the wall of division between Jew and Samaritan. So he has broken many another barrier down. We recall the grateful leper who, being wondrously healed, returned to give thanks unto his Jewish benefactors — and he was a Samaritan. In the parable of the good Samaritan we see a picture of one more ready to do a kindness to a Jew than this woman was. One of the hardest things for our wicked hearts to learn is that we must love even our enemies if we would have the spirit of Christ in our hearts.

V. 10. The absolute mastery of Christ's reply is apparent even to the casual reader. In a wonderfully effective manner Jesus uses the very refusal of the woman to give him a drink in his effort to give her the spiritual drink she needed. There is also a covert rebuke for her ungracious refusal to extend so slight a favor to him, in that Jesus, modestly speaking of himself in the third person, assures her he would have given her a far greater boon if he had been asked by her. But the real object of Jesus is to take hold of this woman's soul. His body is famishing for water, but her soul is famishing also — and she does not even know it — for living water; his body can wait, if it must, but this woman's soul must get what it needs if it can possibly be done. This is the main thought in Jesus' reply. — **If thou knewest** — what sad, what deadly ignorance! There is the pity of heavenly love in Jesus' words. So he spoke with tears in his voice concerning Jerusalem, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Luke 19, 41, etc. The two cases, however, are not parallel, for Jerusalem rejected the knowledge so long and so lovingly offered to her, while this woman was now first receiving the offer of

that knowledge. Alas, that we do not know, but are by nature and by our own folly and foolish training blind, ignorant, and alienated! But doubly must we cry alas, when this blindness becomes wilful, persistent, intensified into a hatred of the light, thus plunging us into destruction. — Bengel is right when he makes **the gift of God**, τὴν δωρεάν τοῦ θεοῦ = *aqua viva*, “living water.” It is the gift of **God**, and this reveals all the greatness and the blessedness of it; it flows from God, he is the source and fountain of it, and he bestows the gift. — **And who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink**, connects Jesus with this gift as the agent and channel through which it is obtained. This can be no ordinary person, such as the woman had known heretofore, not even some holy priest or teacher in Samaria, or in Jerusalem. For he who is so significantly spoken of here, **he would have given thee living water**, namely this very gift of God. Jesus does not directly say who he is. The woman might conclude, as she did, that Jesus was a great prophet, a man sent of God to be a human mediator in the bestowal of the gift of God. But the words of Jesus may imply — and we know that they indeed do — that he is himself the author and giver of this gift of living water, i. e. God himself. Jesus purposely veils his glory, lest the rush of light be too great for this woman whom he is gently leading to see. — **If thou knewest**, εἰ ἤδεις, pluperf. in form, but imperf. in meaning; the condition is conceived as not being fulfilled: If thou knewest (i. e. now), but thou dost not. **Thou wouldst have asked**, σὺ ἂν ἤτησας (also καὶ ἔδωκεν ἄν), is an apodosis in regular form referring to past time, also not fulfilled: Thou wouldst have asked, but thou didst not. But so much the greater is the condescension, patience, and love which in spite of all ignorance and non-asking still makes the offer. — For it is nothing less than that when Jesus says,

He would have given thee. And yet the offer, made in this way, includes the sorrowful thought, that it finds itself neither understood nor accepted. How often has the same thing occurred, both while Jesus labored on earth, and afterwards when his apostles carried forward his work. The offer thus still goes out, men still fail to ask and to receive, Christ still longs to give, and the pity of it all, when every effort proves in vain, is still inexpressibly great. — **Living water** is an allegorical expression in this conversation of Jesus with the woman, for it combines the illustration with the thing illustrated, and this in such a way that the meaning is made clear as the conversation proceeds. See Trench, *Parables*, p. 9, where the peculiarity of allegorical expressions is set forth. The expression, therefore, cannot mean “grace and truth” (Meyer), for neither is referred to here; nor “faith” (Luecke), nor “*gratia renovationis*” (Calvin), nor “the Word” (Weiss); nor “*the Spirit of the new life*” (Luthardt), nor “the Holy Ghost” (Stellhorn, who refers to John 7, 37-39), but simply life, i. e. spiritual life. A description of it is given by Koegel when he calls it “a complete satisfaction of all the needs of the soul, an inalienable possession of heavenly powers”; such indeed is true spiritual life; the gift of Jesus Christ our Savior.

V. 11. There is a mark of respect in the form of address now used by the woman, κύριε = lord. On this account we find no ironical play in the questions of the woman. She simply cannot understand where Jesus could obtain any kind of water, to say nothing of better water than that of Jacob’s well, and this idea of better water especially fills her with surprise and doubt. **Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep.** The words are very sensible, and there is no gainsaying them. Jesus had neither vessel (ἄντημα, comp. ἀντήσαι above) nor contrivance to lower a vessel.

A well over a hundred feet deep requires both, if the water is to be secured. The word here is "well," $\varphi\omicron\epsilon\alpha\omicron$, that which contains the water, not as in v. 5 and also v. 14, $\pi\eta\gamma\acute{\eta}$ = spring. Meyer has the true sense of the woman's words when he says: "Thou canst not mean the spring-water here in this well, for that thou couldst not give me, since thou hast no vessel to draw, which thou wouldst need because of the depth of the well." These facts she really treats as a premise, and the conclusion is that Jesus must mean some other water. Her reasoning is by no means bad, her thinking is on the right track — Jesus does mean other water. But where can he get it — and this water which he calls living water? — **From whence then** ($\omicron\upsilon\tilde{\nu}$, indicating that she is drawing a certain conclusion) **hast thou that living water?** $\tau\omicron\ \upsilon\delta\omega\omicron\ \tau\omicron\ \zeta\omega\nu$, the emphasis on the last word — wondering not only *whence* the water might be, but also what *sort* of water "living" water might be, but also what *sort* of flowing spring in distinction from water that does not flow, as in some cistern. — But at once the quick wit of this woman leaps to another conclusion — and again a correct one, although the mere suggestion of it fills her with surprise and even incredulity. If Jesus means other water than this in Jacob's well, and better than this, why, that is really saying that he is greater than Jacob who dug this well and left it for his descendants, yea, was satisfied himself with the water of this well. **Art thou greater than our father Jacob?** The Samaritans claimed to be descendants of Joseph, and thus of Jacob, hence the term "our father," spoken with a certain pride. The question has been disputed, but Keil, in connection with 2 Kg. 17, 24, points to 2 Chr. 34, 6 and 9, where we are told that in the days of King Josiah not a few Israelites remained in devastated Samaria, so that the conclusion is correct, the Samaritans were, not a heathen, but a mixed race, of

Israelitish and heathen elements, able, in a way at least, to point to Jacob as "our father." Josephus, *Antq.* 11, 8, 7, reports that the Jewish element among the Samaritans was augmented somewhat by renegade Jews who had transgressed the laws and traditions in their own land and fled then to Shechem. As the eyes of the woman rested upon the dusty, tired-out, thirsty traveler sitting by the well, it seemed incredible to her that he should be greater than the ancient patriarch. — On this connection of Jacob with the well she dwells especially — **which gave us the well**, digging it and leaving it to his descendants, among whom of course she reckons herself; **and drank thereof himself, and his sons, and his cattle**, which signifies that he considered the water of this well amply good enough for himself, not seeking any other, *ἐπιεν*, aorist. — The reasoning of this woman is typical in its way, and therefore very interesting. Her conclusions are altogether sound, and yet they are false. The good thing about her is that she puts the whole matter in the form of a question, leaving her mind open for the illuminating answer of Jesus. Unbelief and skepticism generally substitute, on the strength of their apparently correct reasoning, an ironclad, positive dictum for the question, and deny that they can be at fault. So they remain in error. The flaw in the woman's reasoning was that she failed to apprehend what Jesus meant by "living water"; she put this over against the very good water of Jacob's well, which was a mistake, for had not Jesus himself asked her for a drink of this very water? She was right, however, in supposing that Jesus meant some other and very superior water, and that he, being the giver of it, himself must be a superior sort of person. There is every reason to think that Jesus intended her to get this impression. When again the woman points back to Jacob, and argues that what was good enough for one so great

and good and for his family surely is good enough for her now, and who can possibly bring something better? she puts up exactly the same argument which is still used today. She forgot, of course, that while Jacob was satisfied with the good water of the well, he also by faith drank of the spiritual water of life. If our fathers have indeed been satisfied with mere earthly drink, or with human error for their souls, instead of pure divine truth, that certainly is no reason why we should be satisfied in like manner.

V. 13. The reply of Jesus is the climax of our text. It indicates that we are not to make the woman the important figure in our sermon on this text, but Jesus himself as the giver of living water. If the woman were to have our special attention the following verses would have been added, but this would have interfered with the general thought-line in these after-Epiphany texts; we are throughout to keep our eyes on Christ and see the unfolding of his Savior-glory. And here it unfolds and reveals itself indeed. Jesus makes perfectly plain, first that he is, indeed, far greater than Jacob of old, and secondly that what he offers is indeed far greater than the water of Jacob's well. In doing this he brings out the true character of living water, as something spiritual, not material, heavenly, not earthly, permanent, not transient; and thus also he sheds a bright light upon himself who is the giver of such a wondrous gift. — **Every one that drinketh of this water shall thirst again,** πᾶς ὁ πίνων, every one, whoever it may be. The proposition is self-evident for his hearer. In fact, no well was ever dug, no material water was ever found, no matter what its purity and excellence, which could allay thirst forever. While the words of Jesus treat only of the material water of the well beside which he sat, the inference lies close at hand for us, that indeed nothing material of any kind, nothing merely earthly is able

to quench the thirst of the soul and satisfy the desire of our immortal spirits. Koegel makes this fine application: "He who drinks the water of Jacob's well, who draws from the well of earthly pleasure, transient love, human wisdom, his own resolves and achievements, he shall thirst again. Why, the human heart is a depth into which God has placed the longing for eternity, for the highest good. What — shall such a human heart be able to see its fill, eat its fill, drink its fill, love its fill in that which perishes? Ever more burning will the thirst grow amid the husks and ruins, ever more consuming the feeling of disappointment, the emptiness, the loneliness, in the face of eternity." Some indeed succeed in stilling their thirst, but in a lamentable way. Do we not read in the parable of the Prodigal of a citizen in that far country, one who had become native to it and had gathered for himself a herd of swine — significant wealth! These are they who have satisfied their thirst by killing it. Sad creatures indeed! Augustine is right when he says that the soul is created for God, and will not rest until it rests in God. — **But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst;** ὅς ἄν πίη . . . οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ, indefinite relative clause referring vividly to the future, with the force of a condition of expectancy, and thus followed by the fut. indic. Mark the emphasis "that I shall give him," and the repetition of the same words in the next clause. Christ accepts the challenge of every man, no matter who he may be and what he may offer. And the test shall be simply this, the true and permanent quenching of the thirst of the heart. Conformable to "water" Christ speaks of one that **drinketh**. "If the water that Christ gives is *life in his name*, what can the drinking be but *faith* which, embracing and holding Christ, receives eternal life (John 3, 15, 16 and 36)?" Besser. Others explain it of the use of Word and Sacrament,

adding even — certainly a mistake — communion with God in prayer and the intercourse with true children of God. We do not get life through prayer, nor through other Christians, except they bring us the Word. The Word, however, always means to include faith, and faith the Word, even as Christ preached the Word here at the well and kindled faith thereby in the woman's heart. To hear the Word without faith is to put the vessel full of water to the lips, but not to drink. — **Shall never thirst**, still keeps to the figure in the allegory here employed, but already brings in so mighty a thought that the figure and the reality begin to be distinguished from each other. Here the foreign idea is introduced by some, that therefore he who drinks of this water shall never thirst, because as the thirst returns it shall be quenched again and again. We must keep to Christ's simple statement "shall never thirst," i. e. the thirst shall never again show itself, it shall be quenched once and for all. How can this be, seeing that every Christian constantly hungers and thirsts after the bread and water of life? The answer is quite simple. Life is here viewed as a *permanent* possession; once we have it, i. e. for good and all, there is no more desiring and thirsting as there was before — abiding satisfaction has come. The thought of drinking again and again is not entertained here. Since Jesus speaks of "life," it is as if before the drinking — to introduce another figure inherent in the word life — the man was dead, obtaining life he is regenerated, born anew, born of incorruptible seed; and being thus brought to life, he needs not to be brought to it again, regeneration is not repeated daily, the life goes on of its own accord, of course, strengthened and preserved continually by the use of the means of grace. — This is what Jesus himself says in the words which explain why "whosoever drinketh shall never thirst"; **but the water that I**

shall give him shall become in him a well of water. Involuntarily, as this second emphatic repetition of the words, "that I shall give him," occurs, we ask, And who art thou, who must thou be, to give such wondrous water? It is *the* question that must be asked and rightly answered, if we would understand correctly about the water. Here now the not thirsting εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, to all eternity, is clearly explained: once get the water (life), this itself becomes in us a well, πηγή, a spring (not φρέατος, a shaft, or cistern, or something that merely holds water and may also be empty and without water). More and more the reality comes out, looming up above the figure. Whoever saw a drink of water which of itself ἐν αὐτῷ, within him, became a well? Natural and material water has no such properties and powers. The words impel us to observe their true sense which is of spiritual realities, even of this wonderful "life," "the gift of God" (v. 10), "the water that I (Jesus) shall give." This is the strange thing about life, that once it is kindled it burns on and on of itself. So with ordinary natural life, although there is a terminus to it; more so with spiritual life, which indeed may also go out in death, but is not meant to, and Jesus here speaks of it in this sense. — It is a **well of water springing up unto eternal life.** "Springing up" has been interpreted in two ways: a "well of springing water unto eternal life"; and, a well of water "springing up into eternal life." The latter makes εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον depend on ἀλλομένου; the former upon πηγὴ ὕδατος. Both constructions are permissible, and practically the thought is the same, whether the springing extends so far, unto eternal life, or whether this well of water is unto eternal life. The spiritual life which we now have by faith in Christ flows on into eternal life and the heavenly blessedness to come. Besser quotes an old church father, whose name he omits: "This living water — what is it but

the life of our childhood in God, received in Baptism? What is it but the life of Christ, which nourishes us in the body and blood of the Supper? What is it but the life of the Holy Spirit, which is given us in the Gospel? Yea, it is *that* water which reveals itself in the heart of God the Father as the fountain, in all the angels as the river of glory, in the elect as the rippling stream of life, and which carries all who drink it onward in its maternal bosom, into the infinite ocean of the divinity, to which it streams back."

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

In treating a biblical narrative homiletically, one way is to remain with the narrative idea and to divide the text story itself into its natural parts. Applying this method here, we would have: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman: 1) how she meets Jesus; 2) how he offers her living water; 3) how he explains to her this living water; 4) how she asks for this water. A little meditation will very likely show that the present narrative does not promise well when treated in this manner. The reason is that while we indeed have an interesting story here it all centers in one point, namely in the living water of which Jesus speaks. To divide the story itself therefore does not produce superior results. Let us then reserve this method for other texts better adapted to it.—As stated the central point in the text is the "living water," and while Christ offers to give this water he himself really is the fountain of this water. So we may outline as follows:— In the apse of the Lutheran church at Rome the visitor sees a rock from which four streams of water pour. Deer at right and left drink from the streams. Christ is the rock, and the streams are the waters of life in the four Gospels, bearing the merits of Christ to all who are famished and cry with the Psalmist, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?"

Our Savior, the Fountain of Living Water.

- I. He has water for the soul.*
- II. He has water that is life.*
- III. He has water that, if we drink it, shall spring up unto eternal life.*

We may also use the auxiliary concept "Epiphany," combining it with the colorful phrase "at Jacob's well," which at once connects us with our text: *The Epiphany at Jacob's Well*. The theme promises to picture or describe this specific Epiphany or manifestation of Jesus. It is equivalent to the statement: Jesus reveals himself at Jacob's well. How he does this will form the body of the sermon. Here is one way of showing how:

The Epiphany at Jacob's Well.

- I. *He who was thirsty himself offered the most satisfying drink.*
- II. *He who had nothing wherewith to draw gave water in abundance.*
- III. *He who seemed less than Jacob revealed himself as infinitely greater.*
- IV. *He who gave drink made the drink itself a springing well.*

This elaboration is full of color drawn from the text, and at the same time it carries through the parts a contrast that is found in the text story itself. Of course, we also may divide more simply: 1) There is an Epiphany in the gift which Jesus offered; 2) also in the power of this gift; 3) in the Giver who extended this gift. The gift is spiritual life; the power of it complete soul satisfaction, v. 14; and the Giver, One greater than Jacob.

Langsdorff has this:

The Lord at Jacob's Well:

1) Thirsting; 2) Awakening thirst; 3) Quenching thirst. The last two parts will be easy to elaborate, the first part is less obvious. It pictures Jesus in his human nature. Do not allegorize this part, as though Jesus' thirst means his longing to save a soul. As man, who assumed our weaknesses, Jesus reaches out to us to save us, he who was greater than Jacob, namely God's own Son. — Langsdorff's theme, however, is not a true theme for three parts that all deal with thirst, for the theme itself, beyond the word "well," does not hint at thirst. Perhaps this is better: **When Jesus Begged a Drink at Jacob's Well:** 1) *He himself was athirst;* 2) *Yet anxious to awaken thirst;* 3) *And able forever to quench thirst.*

One point has not been utilized especially in the previous outlines, namely *drinking* the water of life, i. e., faith. It finds its place in the following. **What the Woman at Jacob's Well**

Learned about 1) *Thirsting*; 2) *Water*; 3) *Drinking*; 4) *Never thirsting again*.

Gerok's outline may suggest something to some preachers:

Jesus at Jacob's Well — Seeking to Save Souls Everywhere.

- I. *No place so inconvenient, but he knows how to use it.*
- II. *No time so unseasonable, but he knows how to make the best of it.*
- III. *No soul so base, but he knows how to take hold of it.*
- IV. *No need so great, but he knows how to provide for it.*

Every narrative text should induce the preacher to tell the text story at the proper place in his sermon, or parts of the story in different parts of his sermon. This is not done often enough, and again it is not done well enough. True and vivid narration is always interesting and instructive. Let us cultivate this precious art. There is, of course, a superficial way of telling a story or the different parts of it, namely just painting the event, or its parts, outwardly. This, even if dramatically done and couched in choice language, is too shallow and of little spiritual value. The narration must be shot through with *the inner significance* of what is told. Then it becomes truly illuminating and spiritually instructive. Some preachers introduce anecdotes or storiottes into their sermons and waste their time on telling these. Avoid them — so many are manufactured, doctored up, not true, take too long to tell, deflect the mind from the chief thing, and furnish a "point" that is of minor value at best, so often of no value at all. Learn to tell the text story.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

John 4, 31-42

This and the foregoing text constitute a pair, an arrangement repeated several times in the Eisenach gospel selections. The entire text culminates in the last clause, "This is indeed *the Savior of the World.*" Even the first section belongs under this heading, for all that Jesus says of his meat and drink, and of sowing and reaping and the fields white to harvest, is evidently meant of his work of saving men the world over. Here then is as grand an Epiphany text as one could desire: Jesus is revealed before our eyes as what he truly is, *the Savior of mankind.* And the very point in this text which marks it as an advance over the previous one is that of *world-wide salvation.* The whole story of missions is contained in this text. Jesus himself here begins the work outside of the Jewish nation, and he points to the great fields to be harvested all over the world. But ever, as we handle this text for our hearers, we must point, not to the work alone, but above the work, and in the work, and after the work to Jesus himself; he is the center and sum of it all. And keeping him ever before us we shall preach both an Epiphany sermon and a mission sermon, and nothing less than that ought to satisfy, if not the people too, at least the preacher himself.

"Jacob's well is dug on elevated ground, on a spur of Gerizim, and in a part of the plain unobstructed and unshaded by trees or buildings. From a distance in that clear air they (the disciples) had seen and had heard their Master in long and earnest conversation with a solitary figure. He a Jew, he a Rabbi, talking to 'a woman,' and that woman a Samaritan,

and that Samaritan a sinner! Yet they dared not suggest anything to him; they dared not question him. The sense of his majesty, the love and the faith his very presence breathed, overshadowed all minor doubts or wondering curiosities." Farrar. Our text takes up the story at a point after the return of the disciples from Sychar with food, and after the hasty departure of the woman for the town.

V. 31. In the former text Jesus asks for a drink and is refused, John 4, 7-9; here Jesus is asked to eat and he himself now refuses. **Rabbi, eat** — a fine picture of love and solicitude for Jesus. The imperfect ἠρώτων shows that the disciples urged Jesus repeatedly, — they kept urging him. The title here used by the disciples for Jesus, "Rabbi," Teacher, is full of respect and without a trace of undue familiarity. We do not know that they ever addressed him as "Brother." Zinzendorf and others have transgressed this unwritten law, and deserve anything but praise and imitation. — Jesus is not ready to eat at the moment, and here we catch a remarkable glimpse of the way he put his very heart and soul into his work. Instead of doing it mechanically, with a kind of professional ease, he did it with all his heart. It occupied him to such an extent that other things were altogether excluded. There was an exaltation about it which prevented him from at once descending to lesser and lower things. And this exaltation was full of the deepest satisfaction and joy, it was like food and drink to his soul, so sweet and rich, that while his soul still feasted, the needs of the body were in abeyance, weariness, thirst, and hunger were, for the time at least, gone. — V. 32. This is the sense of his reply to the disciples. **I have meat to eat that ye know not.** Here is an example of how we pastors and preachers ought to do our work; it ought to be food and drink to us, calling out all the activities of our minds and

souls, exalting us and carrying us away for the time, so that all our satisfaction is in this that we do at the Master's call, and in this alone. Beware of mechanical professionalism! Luther was frequently so wrapt up in his work that he cared not to eat and to drink. While on our part, as over against Christ, this can be overdone so as to be harmful to our bodies, and to injure us as instruments of the Lord, the danger generally is in the other direction, too little of that exalted and devoted enthusiasm which is the mark of Christ's best servants. — V. 33. The disciples asked each other, **Hath any man brought him aught to eat?** Note the descriptive imperf. ἔλεγον, and in the question the simple 2nd aorist ἤνεγκεν: did some one bring? We must not chide these disciples too much, as some commentators do, for their unspirituality and lack of understanding. Jesus himself said that they did not know the meat he had had to eat. They were away and had heard nothing of the conversation with the woman and had seen nothing of the Savior's success. How could they at once realize what his heart was now filled with? They had left him tired and thirsty, after a long morning's walk, and naturally, after the additional period of waiting while they went to the town, they imagine that he must long for food. And then someone had been at the well, as they saw, while they were gone. It was possible, just possible, that some person — perhaps this woman — for why else should Jesus have been talking with her? — had brought him food and prevented them. — Jesus does not chide them in the least, he merely explains, and, leaving the food still untouched, he continues to speak about that great work in which all his soul is wrapped up and into the midst of which he had just again plunged. V. 34: **My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work.** Βρωσις (v. 32) and βρωμα (v. 34) are two derivatives from

βιβρώσκω, in meaning practically the same; the former refers more to the activity of eating than the latter, like the German: *das Essen* as distinguished from *Speise*. Jesus uses a singular noun here, while in v. 8 the evangelist, in speaking of the food the disciples went to buy, uses the plural, τροφάς. They bought and then brought to Jesus different kinds of food, but one βρώμα is all his heart's desire. It is described by a double statement "to do the will of him that sent me," "and to accomplish his work." "The will of him that sent me" is the gracious will of God concerning the things necessary to our salvation. "His work" is that which the will of God intends, our redemption, including all that belongs to it. In his high-priestly prayer Jesus declares, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." John 17, 4. Here we have a fine description of the entire activity of Jesus in his office as the Messiah, doing God's will and work. So completely is the mind, heart, will, activity, and life of Jesus taken up with this will and work of his heavenly Father, that it is his "meat." The idea conveyed by the metaphor is not merely that he so likes the work that he fairly lives in it, but that the work is a necessity to him, something he must have as we must have food. Nor is this strange and saying too much when we remember he and his work were bound together as we see in no other case. Human talent and genius point frequently to some special work, in which the workers then will also take special delight; but Jesus existed on earth only for this one purpose, to do his Father's will and finish his work. Not only was there no other work possible for him here, but all his being pointed only to this one work, and if this had not been to do, his very being here would not have been. A Christian can and may also say, namely in his sphere, "My meat is to do the will of my heavenly Father and to finish the work he has set for me"; for

God has put him here and given him spiritual life and power in order that he may serve his Lord in his kingdom; but we and our service of God — imperfect as it is — are not bound together so intimately as Christ and his work, for we could separate from this work and leave it undone and do another contrary to God, but not so Christ. Yet we too are Christlike in whatever degree we succeed in making God's service the very substance of our lives.

V. 35. The harvest in Palestine occurs in the middle of the month Nisan, our April; accordingly Jesus spoke these words at Jacob's well in our month of December. The wheat had been sown in November, and therefore the fields were now covered with a thrifty growth of green. Looking from the well toward Sychar where the grainfields spread out, he addressed the disciples, using now the figure of harvest and the grain of the harvest in place of the "meat" — yet notice the close relation between the two! —: **Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest?** Jesus does not mean that the disciples actually say this; he asks a question, and the disciples for their part (ὕμεις), considering the grain before them, would certainly reply, Yes, about four months, a τετράμηνος sc. χρόνος. — But Jesus is of a different opinion, **Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest.** There is no ἐγώ to balance the ὑμείς, since the real point of contrast is not between what the disciples say and what Jesus says, but between the four months till harvest and the "white already unto harvest." The explanation of this difference and the justification for Jesus' word concerning the whiteness unto harvest at this very moment, is found in the bidding, "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, ἐπάρατε, aorist imperat. from ἐπαίρω. There was something worth seeing on those

fields, for in v. 30 we read that the people of Sychar "were coming to him." These people were the grain which Jesus saw on these fields, and coming to him as they were he could indeed say "the fields are white already unto harvest," ready to be reaped, as indeed he presently did reap them. Thus the contrast begun in v. 31 to 33, regarding the two kinds of "meat," is carried forward here into the two kinds of "harvest." The disciples and we with them are ever inclined to see only that which is material, and we must have our attention especially drawn to the spiritual. It often seems less real to us than the material, yet, if anything, is more so. At least it is infinitely more important and vital. We go into a large city and see great buildings, a vast amount of commerce, etc., but we so often fail to see the millions of poor sinners for whom Christ died, the "much people in this city" who may be gathered into Christ's kingdom, Acts 18, 10. We see a man's wealth, social position, learning, power, etc., but we often overlook the immortal soul he has to save. On the other hand, we see a poor wretch, criminal, outcast, loathsome, but again we do not see that this too is a soul bought by Christ's blood and desired by him for Paradise. In the eyes of Christ, the Savior of the world, all this is different. Our meat may be only the earthly, his meat is the spiritual; our view may be only of wheat, his is of souls gathered into his heavenly garner. "Already," ἤδη, may be construed as above, or it may be drawn to the following sentence, "Already he that reapeth," etc. There would be no material change in the sense, as the phrase "white unto harvest" means white now already, not after a longer or shorter period; and "he that reapeth," whether already or at a later time, "receiveth wages." Meyer puts ἤδη in contrast to τετραήμενος, and finds it put at the end for emphasis, which is entirely satisfactory, comp. 1 Jno. 4, 3.

V. 36. **He that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal** is all one thought, and therefore not a general statement applicable to both material and spiritual harvesting; Jesus is speaking only of the latter. The "and" is explicative: he receiveth wages, and the wages are that he gathered fruit (*καρπός*, used of trees and of fields, here of course wheat) unto life eternal. The wages of the spiritual reaper are the souls he gathers for eternal life (here not necessarily = heaven, but eternal life as now possessed and reaching into heaven). How can they be called wages? The reapers understand when they point with joy and gratification to the grain garnered for Christ, and when in the life to come that joy shall reach its greatest purity and fulness. God has ordered it so in his graciousness that he that reapeth shall receive such wages, and he has done this not only for the sake of the reaper, but also for the sake of the sower, **that** (*ἵνα*, in order that, with this intention) **he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together**. Here it comes out why gathering fruit unto life eternal is called wages, it is because of the *χαίρειν*, the rejoicing. But this is for both, the sower as well as the reaper. It is not so in material things; a man may sow a field with wheat and never live to reap it; dying before the harvest, he has no joy of it, save what he may have had by mere anticipation. But in the fields of the Lord this is different, the fruit gathered unto eternal life cannot escape the sower, even if he never got to reap, the fruit will reach him at last, he will see it and rejoice in it as well as the reaper. — V. 37: **For herein is the saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth**. "True," *ἀληθινός*, agreeable to truth, trustworthy. In other respects and situations it may not be so, but here, in this rejoicing together of both sower and reaper when the fruit is gathered for eternal life, this saying is brought out in

its real significance; the sower who himself does not reap is not at disadvantage, the reaper who steps in and garners what the sower planted secures no undue advantage: both shall rejoice together. — But who is meant by ὁ σπείρων, who by ὁ θερίζων? Jesus has spoken thus far entirely in general terms. He pointed indeed to the harvest, the people coming out to him from Sychar, but then he discoursed in general on the joy of the reaper and the sower. This generalizing implies that Jesus was not thinking only of the men of Sychar now coming to him as a field white for the sickle. Speaking of the sower and the reaper unto life eternal in such a broad way involuntarily broadens our whole vision. We have before us now all the sowing and all the reaping of fruit unto life. More important than ever is therefore the question, Whom does Jesus mean? Here is his answer, for now he mentions the persons plainly: V. 38. **I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not labored: others have labored, and ye are entered into their labor.** There is no special reference here to the people of Sychar. Jesus speaks of the whole mission and work of his disciples. They were “sent to reap.” But they could never reap if someone had not labored before them, if someone had not done the sowing. So Jesus adds, “others have labored,” *κεκοπιάκατε*, have grown weary with arduous exertion. If the disciples are “he that reapeth,” who are these others who “labored” in advance, doing the sowing? Meyer argues that this is Jesus, and Jesus alone; he makes the plural ἄλλοι a plural of category. But it is exceedingly strange that Jesus, who so clearly speaks of himself in other places, should here use the plural, when the singular would have been *the* word, provided he had meant himself alone and exclusively. Why should he say, “I sent you to reap,” and then, again meaning himself, continue, “others have labored” — and not — as alone would be proper — “another has

labored?" The old interpretation of the fathers, Luthardt, etc., is certainly correct: these others are Jesus and those back of him, the Baptist, the prophets, Moses, etc. In putting his own work alongside theirs he by no means cheapens it or makes it less fundamental than it is. He is the Sower of sowers, without whose sowing all other sowing would be naught, whose sowing alone made that of others what it was. But others sowed also, and Jesus is never averse to giving credit where it belongs. — When Jesus said, **I sent you to reap whereon ye have not labored**, and again, **and ye are entered into their labor**, he thought of all that important labor (κόπος, strain and effort) which was preparatory even to his own labor. There was the sowing of John the Baptist, sent to prepare men for Jesus, all in a certain way preparatory for Christ, and thus necessary. Christ's own work is added to all theirs, and now as the apostles presently go forth, they shall reap from all this sowing, and yet in that sowing was no labor of theirs at all, they shall simply enter into the labor of others, appropriate and use for their purposes what these others have wrought. In applying these truths to ourselves, we must of course single out Jesus as the Sower, into whose labors every reaper enters, for there is no reaping except from his sowing; in fact, before Jesus came, they who reaped did so on the strength of the sowing he was to do. Next, we may indeed say that Jesus himself did some reaping. Was not the field at Sychar white to harvest now? Did not he gather in the disciples to whom now he talked, and others besides? But Besser rightly says, Jesus devoted himself chiefly to the sowing, he did not leave a field reaped bare to his disciples, but a field thoroughly seeded, fast maturing unto harvest. When we compare the 500 brethren who gathered in Galilee to meet Jesus by appointment after his resurrection, with the 3,000, the 5,000, and the ever increas-

ing multitude of believers in the next few years, we see indeed that he was the sower, the disciples the reapers. Finally, however, looking at the work of those who preceded and who followed Jesus, we note that one set of men always enters into the labors of another set. The apostles reaped, but their work was also a sowing from which the pupils of the apostles reaped again, and so on down the ages. Think of how we have entered into other men's labors today! Recount the long line, the blessed names, the great exertions. Two thoughts at once come into mind, one that the reaper should be humble, not attribute the success to himself, but remember the Sower and the sowers and honor their work. The other, that the work of sowing is not only necessary, but exceedingly blessed, for the sower shall rejoice together with the reaper, each praising the work of the other, and both glorifying the work of Christ. Here is comfort, joy, divine assurance when one of us now is called upon to devote himself especially to the sowing, for instance in some hard mission field, where he is able to see but little of the great harvest that follows. When the sheaves are brought in at last with rejoicing, when the reapers shall sing their great song of praise, the sower who began the work that proved so successful shall lead the procession, and so even he shall enter into the labors of others, these reapers who came after him. But not one shall there be who doth not altogether enter into the labors of Christ.

The story is now rounded out and completed. There are two stages, the first after a goodly number had gone out to Jacob's well in response to the word of the woman and convinced themselves of the truth of her statements; the second after Jesus had been with them the two days and they had heard his word for themselves. V. 39. **And from that city many of the Samaritans believed on him** (ἐπίστευσαν, historical

áorist); yet we cannot think that they believed at once **because of the word of the woman, who testified, He told me all things that ever I did.** For she had added the question, "Can this be the Christ?" She did not assert that he was, her testimony restricted itself to the fact which struck home in her conscience, "He told me all things that ever I did." On the strength of this testimony the men of the city went out to the well, saw Christ and spoke with him, and then believed. — The supposition that the men of Sychar believed at once after the woman spoke to them, and the additional supposition that Jesus consented to stay in Sychar only after "many more believed because of his word," is upset by the woman's question in the first instance, and by the statement of the evangelist when he records Christ's willingness to stay, v. 40: **he abode there two days,** ahead of the fact, which evidently is the result of his stay, v. 41: **and many more believed because of his word,** the word spoken evidently after entering Sychar, during those two memorable days. We read of no signs; there was, as far as the record goes, only the woman's testimony and Christ's word as the foundation of the faith of Sychar, anxious for a Savior from "all that they ever did." Who is there that does not need such a Savior? Think of all that you ever did — how will you face it on that great day, how even now? The citizens of Jerusalem never asked Jesus to stay, the people of Jericho allowed him to pass through their city and no one asked him in. These Samaritans had only two days of his preaching, but the results were glorious; when Jesus went away he left "a well of water springing up unto eternal life" in many a heart, v. 14. — V. 42. Two kinds of faith are clearly distinguished, when these people at last **said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speak-**

ing: for we have heard of ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world. The one kind is because of the woman's speaking, διὰ τὴν σὴν λαλιάν. This λαλιά the evangelist calls λόγος in v. 39, referring to the sense of her utterance, whereas λαλιά brings out the fact that she spoke and was not silent. There is then a faith based on the true testimony of others. Such is the faith of many beginners, especially also of children taught by their parents. It is true faith, and it has saving power, but it must ever rank below that other faith which comes from one's own personal experience of Christ, as here when the men of Sychar heard for themselves and knew without the intervention of any other. So we must hear and know, and come into personal, direct contact with Christ. That other faith is sometimes easily upset, this is more solid and proof against temptation and attack. — The ugly assertion has been advanced that here the evangelist put his own words into the mouth of the Samaritans when he recorded that they knew Jesus **is indeed the Savior of the world.** It is ugly because it attacks the veracity of John, and it would destroy the doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture. The whole narrative shows us Samaritans, not bigoted, hypocritical, proud Jews. Faith found ready entrance and advanced rapidly in their hearts. And the very fact that they were Samaritans, not Jews, that Jesus abode with them and taught them, and we may also add — judging from the turn the conversation with the woman took, when Jesus told her of the true worshippers whom the Father seeks, not binding themselves to Jerusalem or Gerizim — that he taught them on the universality of God's grace and salvation: must have led them to this grand truth, and the blessed confession of it: "This is indeed the Savior of the world" — ἀληθῶς, in truth, in reality, and τοῦ κόσμου, for if

Jesus accepted the Samaritans, whom could he reject, seeing the Jews ranked them as heathen? "The Savior of the world" — this is indeed an Epiphany climax. The confession of the men of Sychar re-echoes through Christendom today, sends missionaries to the ends of the earth, and fills our own hearts with that consolation and joy which nothing less, and no one less great, than this Savior can give.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

This text is a bit more complicated than the previous one. There we had one central figure, namely "living water"; here we have two figures, namely "meat" and "fields white to the harvest" (or sowing and reaping). Naturally one may secure two sermon parts by dividing the text accordingly. The only crux would be a proper theme. But this too can be secured from the text. Here it is:

This is Indeed the Savior of the World!

- I. *Is not his meat to do the will of him that sent him and to accomplish his work?*
- II. *Is not his heart's desire to sow and to reap, and to gather fruit unto eternal life?*

By an inner or contents analysis we also obtain good results. Epiphany is intended to reveal the Savior, hence:

The Epiphany at Sychar.

Christ stands revealed

- I. *When he speaks of his work.*
- II. *When he points to the fields white unto harvest.*
- III. *When he accepts the name, Savior of the world.*

Here are two, one by Johann Rump, and one by Karl Gerok:

The Harvest is Here!

- I. *The Lord of the harvest is come.*
- II. *The work of harvesting has begun.*
- III. *The wages of the harvesters may be had.*

Our Beautiful Task in the Service of the Lord.

- I. *Our great Master.*
- II. *Our wide field of labor.*
- III. *Our noble companions in the work.*
- IV. *Our blessed reward.*

Both of these efforts fail to give prominence to verses 31-34, the section on "my meat." It will not do to omit these verses from the text; they are included in the text as selected in our series for the very purpose that we should preach on them. Gerok's theme too has no color, it is a mere generalization or abstraction from the text, and to be discounted accordingly. We prefer something like this:

Jesus' Word at Jacob's Well on Doing the Will of Him That Sent Him and Finishing His Work.

- I. Doing that will and finishing that work is *my meat*, he tells us.
- II. And the fruit of doing that will and finishing that work is like *reaping in the fields already white to harvest.*

In the first part the figure of the meat shows with what eagerness and willingness Jesus does his Father's will and work. And here the preacher must set forth what this will and work is, namely redemption and atonement, as comprised in the title "Christ the Savior of the World." In the second part the great ingathering of souls must be described, sowing and reaping (harvest) by means of the Gospel. In part one Jesus stands alone; in part two we are to be workers together with him.

Texts, as well as themes and parts, that turn on figures are always interesting. The one thing needful in properly handling them is to get very exactly just what the point is in each figure (the so-called *tertium comparationis*), and never to stretch the figure beyond that one point. This requires close thinking, a true imagination, and the ability to resist being carried off on a tangent.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Matthew 7, 24-29

Although the fifth Sunday after Epiphany does not often appear in our almanacs, the imagery of this text is so attractive that many a preacher who uses the Eisenach selections will be tempted to work this text in, either for an earlier Sunday or for an evening sermon. It is still an Epiphany text, and the Epiphany features in it should not be overlooked or left out in the treatment for the pulpit. As the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount this text refers back to the whole sermon, μου τοὺς λόγους, and in these words — let us remember — Jesus revealed himself, a clearer, fuller, richer revelation than any by signs or miracles could have been. The end of our text points again to this Epiphany feature. When Jesus revealed himself by his words, the multitudes were astonished, they beheld in him "one having authority." On this Epiphany basis the double comparison of Jesus is built up. In it we are shown the consequences of accepting or of rejecting the words of Jesus.

V. 24. Οὕτως connects this conclusion with what preceded, which is rightly taken to be the entire sermon of Jesus, and not merely the last section. Jesus says **these words of mine**, using the plural, which points to a number of words and doctrines. Then too the elaborate simile introduced in this conclusion is of general application; in fact, it applies to the entire body of Jesus' teaching. But while this conclusion embraces all that preceded it, both the climax in the simile, the one house withstanding, the other yielding to, the storm, as well as the future tense of the verbs "shall be likened," ὁμοιωθήσεται, connect this conclusion

with what immediately preceded it, when Jesus speaks of what will happen "in that day," v. 22, namely at the end of the world. These two features, the general reference to the many words of Jesus, and the special connection with the thought of the end, harmonize very well with each other, for all the words of Christ have a bearing directly upon the end and all that then shall be. — The first comparison is between **every one which heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, and a wise man, which built his house upon the rock.** The real point of the comparison is between the *doing* and the *wisdom*. The hearing, then, is taken as a matter of course, since there could be no doing without it. Instead of making the hearing something unimportant, it makes it something so important as to be simply necessary. Luther does the same in the answer to the question, How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? — namely in the Sacrament. Christ's words do the great thing and are the chief thing in the Sacrament, and yet they are chief "beside the bodily eating and drinking" without which there could be no Sacrament and no "great things" for us. So here, there could be no doing except there be first hearing. Doing and hearing, however, are sharply distinguished here; the hearing is not yet the doing, and it must not be taken in the pregnant sense of the word which includes doing, but in the sense in which **James (1, 22)** also uses it, "hearers only," who are then said to deceive themselves. The words of Christ are indeed meant to be heard, and this means by the outward ear, but his words are quick and powerful, and therefore always aim at not only being heard, but at being done. — And this is the thing that dare not be overlooked when we interpret the words **and doeth them**. Loy, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 312, says: "The Word of his grace and power is the means also by which he reaches and in-

fluences the hearts of men . . . All spiritual life depends on the sinner's hearing the heavenly truth and receiving its heavenly power, 'being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.' 1 Pet. 1, 23-25." The case then is not this, that Christ's words come to our ears, and having heard them, we then add unto them our own natural powers and do the words. That is the case when human words please and influence us, we of our own powers act upon them. Christ's words, however, carry their own power with them, and when we do them, we do them in this power only. And this is, as we may say, the normal or natural thing as regards the words of Christ. They would take possession of our hearts, fill them with a new power from above, and thus move them to do. There is always some resistance, the natural resistance of our sinful being, but the power of the Word overcomes this. Why it does not overcome every resistance we shall see later, also in the following text. — And now we can understand what Jesus means by **doeth them**, namely his words. Let us note here that "these words of mine" refer, as we said, to the entire Sermon on the Mount, but this Sermon is an exposition of the Law, yet of the Law, not as an independent way of salvation, so that Jesus and his words would be a new Moses to us, but as our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. "There never was and never can be any other way to the salvation prepared for us in Christ than that of recognizing our lost estate in sin, that we may flee for refuge to the hope set before us in Christ. Therefore

men everywhere need the Law now as they did when our Lord preached the Sermon on the Mount." Loy, p. 14. By ποιῶ μοι τοὺς λόγους Jesus therefore means this very thing: recognize your lost estate and flee to the hope set before you in Christ. The Baptist puts it into one word: Μετανοεῖτε, Matth. 3, 3; Jesus defined it: Μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ, Mark 1, 15; Paul and Silas answered the question, What must I do (ποιεῖν) to be saved? Πίστευσον ἐπὶ τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν, Acts 16, 31. Luther therefore rightly defines "doeth them" by saying: "Here too Christ also demands faith, for where there is no faith the commandments are not done; and all good works, according to the mere appearance, done without faith, are sin. On the other hand too, where there is faith, right and good works must follow. This is what Christ calls 'to do' with a pure heart." The idea is a broad one, however, as we see from Christ's expression, "and doeth *them*," i. e. his words (plural). The doing is the whole life of faith, embracing in it contrition, the confidence of the heart in Christ (conversion, regeneration) and the new obedience, all as one whole.

Such a man Jesus says **shall be likened unto a wise man.** This future tense has bothered commentators a little, and some have made it practically a present tense by putting in, at least in thought, the word now: "he shall be likened now already." But this is plainly incorrect, the more since this tense follows another future in v. 23: "I will profess unto them." The claim is made that the comparison is between the present action of the doer and a wise man, not between the future fate of both. But this separation of the action from the fate is a mistake. Jesus combines the two. There is no special wisdom in building on the rock if it were not for the ability of the house thus in the end to withstand the storm; nor does the wisdom of the doer, and that of him who builds on

the rock, become apparent as wisdom until the storm has swept over the house. So the future tense is in place. And let it be noted also that this form of ὁμοίω does not mean simply "shall be compared to," but "shall be made like." Both men shall eventually be in the same class. And this because of their wisdom. The man who hears and does Christ's words shall be in the same class with a wise man, ἀνὴρ φρόνιμος. We need not set up a definition of what is meant here by wisdom in general, as some do when they define wisdom as "using the right means to reach the end" (forgetting perhaps that the end itself may be foolish). The sort of wisdom here meant is described by the wise action of the man in question, **which built his house upon the rock.** He may have been foolish in other respects, but he was truly wise in this, as the event shows. Wisdom is more than philosophy or knowledge, it is good, sound judgment and correct knowledge put to practice; and therefore this wise man is represented to us, not as philosophizing, calculating, telling things, or anything like that, but as going ahead and actually building his house upon the rock. While the real point of the comparison is in the wisdom thus described, the whole imagery used in making the comparison is eminently fitting, and every part of it helps to picture in its way him who hears and does the words of Christ. All that was said of him was that he hears and does Christ's words, but the wise man, with whom he shall be classed, is pictured to us as building a house, and as building this house upon the rock; moreover, this house goes through a severe tempest, and it stands unmoved. This is the man with whom the doer of Christ's words is in one and the same class. It is natural then to seek in his case counterparts for the house, the rock, the tempest, the successful resistance against the tempest's violence. Christ may have had them in mind, but he

says nothing further to show us his thought in this direction. — By the **house**, οἰκία, it seems best to understand the life; he **built his house** would then mean, he established his life. The whole course of his life is meant, the house being finished when the life is done, ὑποδόμησεν, aorist. — The **rock**, πέτρα, the solid rock of a cliff, can hardly be his “doing of Jesus’ words” considered as one thing, for the “rock” is something apart from the man and his house and his building, he places himself, and his house, upon “the rock.” It is best to see in “the rock” the words of Christ, since these are directly mentioned by Christ himself. Of course, that is equal to saying, the rock is God himself, Deut. 32, 15 and 18; Ps. 18, 22; Is. 17, 10; for we can reach God only in the Word to build ourselves on him; it is likewise equal to saying the rock is Christ, the chief corner-stone, Is. 28, 16; Rom. 9, 33; 1 Pet. 2, 6; 1 Cor. 3, 11; again we have Christ only in the Word. — But what of the tempest which is so vividly described in its violence upon the house? This we take to mean death. There are, of course, other storms which also beat upon the house of our lives and threaten to ruin it; but when we take into consideration the supreme violence of the tempest here pictured, and the fact that this tempest is the supreme test of the stability of the house, then we know of only one mighty storm through which we all must pass — and this tempest is evidently one that comes to every one, πᾶς ὄστις — answering Christ’s description, namely the trial and shock of death. To pass through death uninjured is to be uninjured forever. — The details, **the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house**, simply show that every part of the house was put to the severest test. Bengel: *Pluvia, in tecto; flumina, in imo; venti, ad latera.* There is no substantial difference between the verbs προσέπεσαν, fall or beat upon, and, in the case

of the other house erected on the sand, προσέκοψαν, smote upon. — **And it fell not**, καὶ οὐκ ἔπεσεν. **This is the point of the whole description.** And the reason is explicitly stated: **for it was founded upon the rock**, τεθεμελίωτο, pluperfect, it had been founded, and therefore it always stood, upon the rock. Note how **“the rock” receives all the credit, not the house, not the builder, not any circumstance, but solely the rock.** So it is indeed, the rock is stronger than the storm; the words of Christ endure to all eternity; nothing can possibly overthrow them or that which is rooted and grounded in them. — The Christian is often severely tried in this life, nor will he always pass through his trials uninjured, but all these, since they are not the supreme tests, might be safely gone through, and yet his house fall at last when the test of tests comes. **We therefore reject the view which finds the counterpart of the great tempests in such passing trials.** Christ has the end in view, death, and perhaps also the end of the world when all things shake and fall, all — except the Word and they who have built upon it. Unless we are safe and solid in this supreme hour, all preliminary safety will avail us naught. — We must also observe the oratorical mastery of this description. One καὶ follows another; stroke upon stroke the thought is vividly painted before our eyes. And all this deals with the highest realities, gripping heart and soul to the very core. It is wonderful indeed! Travelers in the East tell us of the violence of the storms in that country and how they do indeed sweep houses away. To those who had experienced such tempests the effect of Christ’s word must have been heightened.

V. 26. Only a slight change, and the result is the very opposite! “The words with which the sermon ends have a doleful sound, suggesting the solemn words of the prophet: ‘The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of

the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Jer. 8, 20-22. But it need not be a despairing cry which goes up when the words come to our ears. They are spoken as a warning, not as the closing of the doors of grace on a sinful generation. The harvest is not yet passed for us who read, and there is a balm in Gilead, and there is a physician there, that the mortal wounds of sin may yet be healed by him who is mighty to save when all earthly skill and power have failed. The Lord Jesus who speaks the words still lives and still calls to all of us: 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' We who read, still have time to build wisely, that our house may not fall when the tempest comes." Loy, 311, etc. — **Heareth** is the same here as in the other description. Imagine the multitude hearing at this very time when Christ preached. Who could distinguish those who heard in vain from the others? The hearers and the hearing looked all alike. So they do still today when Jesus' words are preached. — And **these words of mine** are the same — the rock for us to build on. But here is the difference: **and doeth them not**, μη ποιῶν, no repentance, no faith, no life governed by continuous faith. — Into what class does every one of this kind belong? He is equal to a foolish man, ἀνήρ μωρός, dull, ignorant, and this is his foolishness and folly, no matter what wisdom he may otherwise display, say in his business, in his family, in his politics, in his friendships, etc.: he built his house upon the sand. "His house," his whole life with its eternal interests — on no better foundation than — sand, ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον! It may have been easy to do so, convenient, pleasant, in harmony with all his many neighbors, save a few. "The rock"

may have been higher up the side of the valley than the sand in the smooth river bottoms. But to think of building a house — and such a house: his whole life! — on nothing but sand! This shows the foolishness, the ridiculousness, the criminal folly and blindness of the man. There is no excuse for it, even before the court of common sense. No doubt this man thought himself wise in his own conceit; for are not these builders on the sand the very ones who boast of their wisdom and call the builders on the rock fools? — But **the sand**, what is that? We may give a comprehensive answer from that impressive hymn on justification, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness,” in the refrain:

“On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

Yes, *all other ground is sand!* **Lov** describes some of these sand-sites which have attracted builders after builders in the world’s great river-bottoms. “Alas, that so many to whom this word of salvation is sent allow themselves to be deceived by the vain thought, that if they only hear the Word they are doing a good work and acquire the merit of it, and that this is enough for such as would be plain Christians and make no profession to be saints.” Here is another sand-site: “Our nature strives to retain its sense of its own power and importance, and reason therefore exerts its energies, when the Word of God is heard and conscience is awakened, to bring this Word into harmony with its own inclinations. The righteousness which God requires is thus reduced to the civil righteousness of external works which nature approves, and the outward work is substituted for the inward holiness which the divine law demands. The good deeds performed and the natural sympathies of our hearts with the form of piety thus produced are readily

mistaken for obedience to the Word, and the self-deception is accomplished." And still another: "Some have professed acceptance of the Gospel and its glorious hopes of eternal blessedness through the atoning blood of Christ, but have failed to let the law expose to them their sins and reveal to them the divine curse that is upon it, and thus avoided the strait gate of repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore they continue on in the broad road that leads to destruction, with never a fear, until the storm comes, that their Christian profession will in such a condition avail them nothing." Ah, yes, there is much sand to build on, vast level tracts of it, some places even green with verdure and dotted with pleasant willows, but far from the rock. Some perhaps get close to the rock, a corner of their house may actually touch it, but even that does not change the foundation which is after all only sand. — Jesus pictures only the two, the doer and the non-doer, the wise and the foolish, the builder on the rock, and the builder on the sand. There is no golden mean — it is all throughout: either — or. — All is well with the house on sand perhaps for a long time. Warnings are laughed at while the sun shines. Even the preliminary storms and the little floods of adversities, and the moderate winds of sorrow may be safely endured, and thus the false feeling of security increased. Of course, sometimes these slighter tempests already cause sad wrecks among the houses on sand. That is a good thing if it serves to expose the folly which built them there and drives men to seek the rock. But the supreme test is in that hour when the final issue is at stake, eternal safety or eternal wreck. When that last terrific tempest comes it is too late — too late for the house on sand and the man who dwells in it. If we may distinguish between the two words, that regarding the house on the rock, rain, floods, and winds, *beat upon*

it, and this regarding the house on the sand, rain, floods, and winds *smote upon it*, the former is the stronger word (προσπίπτω), "to fall suddenly upon, to strike one"; the latter (προσοκόπτω), the weaker, "to stumble against, to strike the foot against." The idea suggested thus in using different words, one stronger first, one weaker last, is that the house on the rock withstood *all* the pounding of the tempest, but the house on the sand gave way to the *first* blow, which was not even the worst in the storm. — **And it fell**, καὶ ἔπεσεν, it sank, the collapse was complete (aorist), no recovery was possible. Nothing more terrible can be imagined than a life going down to everlasting ruin in the hour of death. — Jesus could not add, "for it was founded upon the sand," for who can *found* anything on sand. — So the last word is an echo of the one just before it, **and great was the fall thereof**. It comes like the reverberating crash of the fall, especially the emphatic word "great." There was utter wreck and ruin, and the debris was carried away by the deluge of water, the very sand on which the structure rested going down with the swollen waters also. Perhaps that house on the sand was very fine; some grand structures are built on sand. Perhaps it stood many a day, an attractive vision to the eye, visited, admired, enjoyed, perhaps imitated and copied by other builders on the sand. Alas, after the first moment of the storm the place thereof shall know it no more. — And with this tragic conclusion Jesus closes his sermon. Did a hush fall on the multitude? Did they all look for Jesus to say something more, to close as he began with the word "blessed?" As the silence deepened and all understood that the last word had been spoken, and that this mighty warning was the last word, the effect must have been great, and we can understand what the evangelist set down concerning it in v. 28-29.

V. 28. "And it came to pass," is a Hebrew phrase, used to usher in an important statement with a sort of dignified formality. "These sayings," τοὺς λόγους τούτους, are the ones just finished, the Sermon on the Mount. At the conclusion of them the astonishment manifested itself. Instead of saying that the astonishment began before Christ finished, we think it psychologically more correct to say that all were wrapt up during the delivery, every ear and heart fixed on the speaker. Finally when the voice that held them spell-bound was hushed in silence, then the astonishment broke forth. What caused it is not especially mentioned, although οἱ λόγοι already indicates it, for λόγοι refers to the sense, not to the art of speaking, the form of delivery, or anything like that. But we are plainly told **the multitudes were astounded at his teaching**, ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ. There were then crowds of hearers, a large audience. And the doctrine, the substance of Christ's words, **the διδαχὴ which this διδάσκαλος put forth in his sermon, was the thing which caused the astonishment.** Was it the newness and novelty of it? It was **the power of it, for he taught them as one having authority.** The expression ἦν διδάσκων, the circumscribed imperfect, he was teaching them, points in a strong manner to continuous, habitual teaching; it includes the sermon just delivered and other sermons and teaching. **What the people felt in all this teaching was the ἐξουσία, or rather the personality of Christ ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων, one having authority.** Here is the Epiphany element. In Christ's teaching he reveals himself, even when he does not speak directly about himself. He cannot do otherwise; and every receptive hearer must feel and note this. Jesus indeed had "authority," for he was the Son himself, sent by the Father, with the Spirit upon him. Can you get any higher authority? None higher is possible. It is, to borrow the image of the wisest of the Latin Fathers,

a sea in which a child may wade and in which an elephant may swim. — **And not as their scribes.** “The teaching of their scribes was narrow, dogmatical, material; it was cold in manner, frivolous in matter, second-hand, and iterative in its very essence; with no freshness in it, no force, no fire; servile to all authority, opposed to all independence; at once erudite and foolish, at once contemptuous and mean; never passing a hair’s breadth beyond the carefully watched boundry line of commentary and precedent; full of balanced inference, and orthodox hesitancy, and impossible literalism; elevating mere memory above genius, and repetition above originality; concerned only about priests and Pharisees, in Temple and synagogue, or school, or Sanhedrin, and mostly occupied with things infinitely little. It was not indeed wholly devoid of moral significance, nor is it impossible to find here and there among the debris of it, a noble thought; but it was occupied a thousandfold more with Levitical minutiae about mint, and anise, and cummin, and the length of fringes, and the breadth of phylacteries, and the washing of cups, and platters, and the particular quarter of a second when new moons and Sabbath days began.” Farrar. Our people have hardly a conception of the dreariness and the arid wastes of this teaching of the scribes. The empty, chaffy “talks” which are now frequently delivered as sermons in some Protestant pulpits, on all sorts of subjects, save the real διδασχὴ of Christ and the exposition of his λόγοι, without meat for the soul, without the one thing needful, are in a manner the continuation of the deliverances of the old Jewish scribes. It is a sign of the times that multitudes are satisfied with this sort of teaching and turn from the Gospel with its divine authority. This authority should in a measure clothe now every true Gospel minister, for as Heubner says, he has the divine call, he has the

full conviction of the truth of this Gospel in his own heart, he is an example of what he preaches, and he is moved with love and anxiety regarding the souls of men. The words of Christ, however, still speak for themselves; in them he is still teaching as one having authority. Hear him and do his words.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Let the preacher invest in Pfennigsdorf, *Der religiöse Wille*, Leipzig, A. Deichert, and study thoroughly the norms according to which the will moves in religious matters. The present text follows these norms with absolute exactness, and the thing is so plain, done with such simplicity and perfection of mastery, that even a tyro can see it. Here we see all shams, delusions, excuses, side issues, and everything else that would becloud the will, ripped away, and your will and my will are brought face to face with the supreme issue, the one that is all-decisive, the one in which we are now already involved. What decision are we going to make, what decision are we engaged in making right now? Are we doing what the wise man did? Are we doing what the foolish man did? Jesus puts it so squarely, so effectively, that there is only one decision we can make, namely: I must, I will be like the wise man! And if any man should refuse to make this decision, should decide to be like the foolish man, by that very decision he would forever stand self-condemned.—To move the will we must know the norms according to which it acts. It is useless to push and push at a wagon from the side—its wheels will not turn; get behind it and push in the line of the wheels—then, behold, it will go forward. Too many sermons push any old way, and the hearer's will is not propelled an inch. Push as Jesus does here, and you will get action of the right sort; and if you then fail to get action in your hearer's will, you have done your whole duty as a preacher, and the obdurate hearer himself must exonerate you and pronounce his own condemnation in the end. Christ and the apostles always obeyed the norms of the religious will. We cannot elucidate the norms of the will in these sermon aids, it would take too much space.—Since this was written the author has published his Homiletics, *The Sermon*, where the norms of the will are treated even more fully than by Pfennigsdorf.

House-building — planning and constructing a house such as you like — who does not enjoy it! But only a few get a

chance to build them fine homes here below. Nevertheless we are all building houses, even the poorest renters — and on quite a grand scale, too. Our lives are the houses we are building — and some of us are nearly through. A few of these houses are veritable palaces, laid out richly and handsomely; others are moderately fine, yet fair withal; some indeed are quite humble. But less depends on the size, beauty, and richness of the house than on the foundation upon which it rests. On what foundation are you building your house?

Are You Building the House of Your Life

- I. On the sand?* The sand — the house — the storm.
II. On the rock? The rock — the house — the storm.

No doubt it was beautiful to sit at the feet of the Lord and to hear the sermon with its mighty conclusion direct from his own lips; we could almost envy those men and women in the multitudes on the mount. But it is beautiful likewise to sit before an Evangelical Lutheran pulpit Sunday after Sunday when the very Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached in his name. The chief thing, however, is not in merely sitting where Jesus and his messengers speak, but in so hearing their words that we do them.

Are You Going to Both Hear and Do the Words of Jesus?

- I. Look at the man who only heard and did not do.*
 He did according to his own, or other men's, ideas (sand) — he shaped his life as he and they thought wise (house) — perhaps his life looked fair, prosperous, even grand — but see what happened in the hour of death (storm)!
- II. Then look more than once at the man who heard and who did.* He followed Jesus' words only (rock); state the substance of them fully and clearly. — Picture the life he built (house), humble perhaps, or grand and great. — See what happened in the hour of death (storm).

The biggest fools are found in spiritual matters, when men consider the loosest kind of sand entirely good enough to build the houses of their life upon. In this material world they wouldn't build a barn or a cowshed upon such a foundation. Read the 73rd Psalm for a description of men who built upon sand and perished. — In the building of our lives everything is staked on the final issue, when the great tempest descends. When that storm with its rain, floods, and winds descends it is

too late to change the foundation of the house.—Some of us are nearly finished with our spiritual house-building. We may not just know it at this moment. If tonight the final test should come to you, would it find that you had built in true faith upon the Gospel of salvation in Christ alone?—Learn what Jesus tells you about

The Biggest Fool in the World.

He who thinks

- I. The sand is as good as the rock.*
- II. If the house is fine the foundation does not matter.*
- III. Because fair weather has lasted long no storm will descend.*

Many preachers will split the text horizontally in the sermon, as the previous outlines do. But we may also split vertically, which is likewise analysis, only a variant form, applicable to a good many texts. Here is one of this type:

Christ's Authoritative Picture of the Wise and the Foolish Man.

- I. They look very much alike.*
- II. They differ in a vital matter.*
- III. Their final fate is as wide apart as heaven and hell.*

Do not spit a theme like this into part one, the wise man, and part two, the foolish man. That would lose the unity of the sermon, and would result in two little sermons pasted together. We want no twins in the pulpit.—Likewise avoid the word "two" or "three" in the theme, speaking then of the "two" or the "three" in two or in three parts. This is homiletical helplessness, excusable in homiletical infants, never in fullgrown homiletical men.

In going through the homiletical literature on this text we were not a little surprised to find a sermon which indeed emphasized the doing, but failed to set forth and explain what this doing signifies. The impression left was that by doing the moral precepts, as the so-called morality-preachers urge them on their hearers, a man would attain the wisdom here set forth by Jesus. A sermon like that is a calamity. For the human heart is ever prone to work-righteousness; it loves and understands that doctrine, and is ready to carry it out in action and life. Even to use the shibboleth "service," so current today, is more than dangerous. In our text it is absolutely necessary to state clearly and convincingly just what "doing these words of mine" means.

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

John 5, 39-47

In the last text in the Epiphany series we meet, as in all the preceding ones, a clear revelation of Christ. He is the one to be believed in, of whom the Scriptures and Moses testify, who comes in his Father's name and bestows life. This Epiphany feature is the basis of the text. There is every reason to believe in Christ — this is the substance of Christ's argument with the Jews. Combined with this Epiphany feature is the great fact of unbelief in Christ, and an analysis of what causes such unbelief. This makes a sad ending for the Epiphany series — unbelief, refusal to see the Savior-glory of Christ, and to accept the life and salvation revealed in him. It is, in a way, the very opposite of the old gospel text for the last after-Epiphany Sunday, which ends in a burst of glory, Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. But this sad and tragic ending of the new Epiphany line will be found entirely acceptable, for in the first place it is historically true: he manifested himself to his own and his own rejected that manifestation, even as thousands do so still; and in the second place, we are now approaching the Lenten cycle, which is altogether built up on the rejection of Christ and its tragic culmination on Calvary. The one cycle, as it were, thus merges into the other. So we have here at the end of the beautiful Epiphany series *the blessed Savior who is rejected, and can be rejected, as he shows forth his saving person and power, only by the most unreasonable and most inexcusable unbelief.*

For a description of the situation and the temper of the Jews with whom Jesus was dealing see the

text John 5, 19-29 for the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity. The healing of the impotent man at Bethesda caused the Jews to charge Jesus with Sabbath-breaking, and his calling God his Father created such a frenzy of hatred that they sought to kill Jesus. Far from fearing their murderous hatred or from mitigating his claims in the least, Jesus calmly faces the wicked Jews, establishes most fully every word he has uttered concerning himself as the Son of God, furnishes the most ample and convincing proof of his Sonship, and comes back upon the Jews with a direct, plain and terrible arraignment of their unbelief as utterly inexcusable, wicked, and worthy of condemnation. Through that part of the argument which forms our text there runs thus for us the strongest kind of justification for our faith in Jesus as the Savior.

V. 39. Grammatically ἐραυνᾶτε may be either the indicative, **Ye search**, or the imperative, *Search* (margin and A. V.). Translators as well as commentators are completely divided on the question; for a list of them see Meyer. This commentator thinks that the imperative would not harmonize with the following, "and ye will not come to me." Yet this is hardly decisive. Two arguments for the imperative seem to the writer to be stronger than anything adduced in support of the indicative. If the indicative were intended, and Jesus were conceding that the Jews indeed searched the Scriptures, and yet did not come to him as, according to the Scriptures, they should, we certainly would expect ἐραυνᾶτε μὲν — οὐ θέλετε δε. Meyer indeed calls the simple καί stronger, yet even he in arguing for the indicative is compelled to admit the disjunctive thought (ye search, yet do not come to me) which would demand some sort of disjunctive particle; yet the sentences show none. A second very strong reason for the imperative is that Christ is calling up his witnesses for his divinity, John

the Baptist (33-35), his own works (36), and the Father's word or the Scriptures. He considers the latter the strongest testimony. But it would be strange indeed if he so appealed to the witness of the Scriptures and yet admitted that the Jews really searched the Scriptures for life, and then failed to find it in them. He indeed says "ye will not come unto me," showing that the trouble is in their will, but this wrong will plainly shows that they do not search aright, and therefore it is in harmony with his thought, which he already indicates in v. 38 by the words, "ye have not his (the Father's) word abiding in you," to call on them to search the Scriptures. Where the will is wrong, the search cannot be right. Jesus cannot admit a right search for life in the Scriptures, and appeal to the Scriptures as a testimony for himself, and then admit that this testimony fails. It is the same today. Christ is in the Scriptures; mightily they testify of him. Whoever will not come to Christ in faith, has not the word of Scripture in himself, does not search them aright, whatever he may say in praise of them. — **The Scriptures**, τὰς γραφάς, the writings, signify the Old Testament as the Jews then had it, their canon being fixed since the days of Ezra. Jesus here calls the Old Testament Scriptures the Father's word, v. 38, a clear testimony from his own lips as to the divinity and the Inspiration of the entire Old Testament. Let us observe it well in these days of higher criticism and modernism which seem determined to overthrow this foundation of our faith. — **Because ye think that in them ye have eternal life.** "Οτι = "for" (A. V.); ὑμεῖς is put first for emphasis, "You on your part think you have in them eternal life." The argument is *ad hominem*. To think, to suppose, to imagine, δοκεῖν, does not imply that what one thinks is really so. Here it was not true that the Jews had eternal life in the Scriptures, they only

imagined they had it. But Jesus does not imply, by any means, that eternal life is not in the Scriptures, rather the opposite, for he bids them search the Scriptures. How eternal life is really in them, and yet how the Jews, in the way they handled the Scriptures, only imagined they had this life while really they did not have it, Jesus at once explains. — **Eternal life**, ζωὴν αἰώνιον = salvation; *life* is the opposite of death which sin has brought; and *eternal* life is the never-ending deliverance from sin and death. — **And these are they which testify of me** — ἐκεῖναί = they are the very ones, etc. They are the Father's word and witness of his Son, the greatest testimony there is for Jesus as the divine Savior. This is said here of the Old Testament, and therefore applies equally to the New, indeed in greater measure, since the promise was a shadow of things to come, and the fulfillment is the very substance itself. Eternal life is in the Scriptures since they testify of Christ who is the way, the truth, and the life. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." John 14, 6. Luther interprets finely when he writes: "But I will give you a remarkable interpretation and glossary of the Holy Scriptures, one you do not yet know, so that you may read the Scriptures and not err, namely this: See with all diligence that ye purify and open aright your eyes, and study in the Scriptures so that you seek and find ME, ME in them. He who reads them so that he finds me in them, is the right master of the Scriptures, the dust is out of his eyes, and he will certainly also find life in them. But if you do not find me in them, then truly you have not studied nor understood them aright, and have not eternal life; though you read them a thousand times and turn the leaves, it is all nothing and in vain." Koegel says: "If the Scriptures were dark, then their coming down to man would be a mockery, not a gift." And how they testify mightily

of Christ he describes as follows: "Is it not clear, that where the portals of Paradise are closed and covered with the flames of the cherubim, on the desert journey through thistles and thorns, the gentle consolation of the serpent-destroyer accompanies us? Is it not clear, that when the waters of the flood recede, and frightened man breathes easy again and raises his dimmed eyes from the devastated fields to the now cloudless sky, the witness in the clouds appears, the bow of peace, a promise of the Reconciler, a prelude of the hymn, 'All feud at last is ended?' Is it not clear, that in the Seed of Abraham, the One and only One; in the Scepter of Judah, the inalienable One; in the root of Jesse, growing a fresh Shoot again; in the Star of Bethlehem, all nations are to be blessed, Israel first and Israel last?" ("Israel last" is a false chiliastic note in Koegel's otherwise fine description.) "The unity of the race in Adam, the blood of Abel innocently shed, the silent sacrifice of Isaac on the wood, Joseph's sudden rise from prison to throne, David's persecution at the hands of his own flesh and blood, the brazen serpent, the Temple, the Sabbath, the sacrifices all, prefigure in a fragmentary way what is completely united and fully revealed in the Savior of God, in the Anointed of Israel. From the first word, 'In the beginning God made heaven and earth,' to the last page, which praises a new heaven and a new earth; from the Creator's counsel, 'Let us make men in our image, after our likeness,' to the exclamation, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men'; from the first Sabbath in Paradise to the final abiding rest prepared for the people of God — there is one development, one unfolding from book to book, one Spirit of prophecy, one cry of longing: Come, Lord Jesus, come. This is he, says John with upraised finger. To him give all the prophets witness, says Peter. The promises of God in him are yea, and in

him Amen, says Paul. Search the Scriptures, and these are they which testify of me, says Jesus himself." This then is the correct conclusion, 1) he who does not find Christ in the Old Testament, does not understand the Old Testament; 2) you cannot find eternal life in the Old Testament unless you find Christ in it. This applies to all Jewish study of the Old Testament even to-day, likewise to all study which denies the prophecies, which sees only a human history in the Old Testament, and is content with the finding of all sorts of "great and important truths" in it; and finally also to all study which denies the Inspiration of the Old Testament. — V. 40: **And ye will not come** (οὐ θέλετε) **unto me, that ye may have life.** This καί is like that in Matth. 23, 37, "and ye would not." It introduces the conclusion in regard to all the witnesses of Jesus, John, Jesus' works, the Father's word — the Jews simply would not, οὐ θέλετε. The fault was neither in Christ nor in the witnesses for Christ, but in the Jews themselves, namely in their wicked, obdurate, perverse will. It has been well said: v. 33-39 show that the Jews *could have* come, but v. 40 shows they *would not* come. Christ and the Gospel always offer the power which enables the sinner to come, and the natural, or rather normal, result should be that, moved by this power, he comes. Where this result does not follow there is only one explanation: the will has begun to resist wickedly and wilfully, and so does not come. — **Come unto me** = believe in me, John 6, 35. The inward coming is meant, when the sinner comes to the Savior and remains with him, saved. — **That ye may have life**, not only "think ye have"; ἵνα shows the purpose and intention, for whoever finds Christ in the Scriptures, Christ the fountain of eternal life, he will come to Christ for this very purpose, that he may have life, and this purpose will be realized, he will have life.

V. 41. Christ now analyzes the condition of his Jewish hearers, revealing the secret causes why they rejected him. What is here said refers not to the Scriptures themselves, but rather to the Father whose Word the Scriptures are. Naturally, if the position of the Jews toward God is wrong, their position toward his Word is wrong too; but this inference is not brought out here, the argument deals only with God. — **Glorify from men** I receive not — the object is put forward for emphasis; “glory” is honor, praise, distinction, but “from men.” *παρὰ ἀνθρώπων*, on the part of men, coming from them, and in distinction from the glory “that cometh from the only God, τὴν δόξαν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ μόνου θεοῦ. Jesus does not accept such honor and glory at all: when they would have made him a king he withdrew himself from the multitude and frustrated the plan. Christ took only that honor which God gave him, God directly, and God through the faith of believing men. All honor merely from men he spurned. Let not the Jews, therefore, imagine that Jesus is longing to be honored by them, as men seek honor from one another, and that he is charging them so severely because they are withholding such honor from him. — What moves Jesus to bring such severe charges against the Jews is something entirely different, v. 42: **But I know you that ye have not the love of God in yourselves.** Jesus knew what was in man, and needed not that any one should tell him, John 2, 22. It is not necessary to bring in the omniscience of Jesus here, as the entire conduct of the Jews was open to any discerning eye. The condemnation of the Jews is entirely due to themselves: they do not love God, and therefore do not receive him whom God has sent; in other words, they do not honor God, and therefore fail to honor aright him whom God has sent and in whom God is truly honored. “The love of God” = the love to God.

Here all the testimony which declares that Jesus is sent by God is meant, not only the special testimony of the Scriptures. All the testimony is rejected by the Jews because they do not love God. It is folly to-day for any man to say he loves God, or he honors God, as long as he rejects Christ. "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which sent him." John 5, 23. "The love of God," τὴν ἀγάπην τοῦ θεοῦ; note the article before each noun which designates the love as that true, real love due to God, the sum and substance of the very Law God himself had given the Jews. If in any measure they had had this love, then as true Israelites they would quickly have shown it by confessing Christ as God's Son and thus giving him the honor which God gave him. This is the distinctive mark of all true love to God to this very day; all lovers of God readily recognize God's Son, of whom he testifies amply that he is his Son, and thus they honor him, receiving him as God's Son, their Savior. — V. 43: **I am come in my Father's name**; Jesus came not in his own name. All the Father's testimony shows that the Father sent him. Jesus says "in my Father's name," thus distinguishing himself from all others whom God also sent and endowed with authority. Jesus is the very Son of God, and his coming rested in, was based upon, his Father's name or *revelation* given in the Scriptures; he came, and came thus, as the promised Messiah. As such he did his Father's bidding, with his Father's authority, accomplishing his Father's work. "I," ἐγώ, is contrasted with ἄλλος, "another" — what a tremendous difference between the two! "I am come," perfect tense, ἐλήλυθα, in the sense: I have come and so am here now; **and ye receive me not**, present tense, οὐ λαμβάνετε, they reject him still, even at this moment when Jesus speaks to them, and after all he has said and done. This refusal to receive him is the fruit of their not loving

God. — **If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive,** ἐάν ἕλθῃ . . . λήμψεσθε, condition of expectancy. “In his own name” is the opposite of “in my Father’s name” and means, without being sent by God, without having his authority, without doing his work. “In his own name” thus also means that such a deceiver puts his own name, authority, objects and work in the place of God’s; commissions, sends, directs himself as if he were his own God. To come in one’s own name is the height of self-glorification. — Jesus says to the Jews, **him ye will receive,** ἐκεῖνον, such a one, he will be agreeable to you. The positive reason for this Jesus gives in the next sentence, here only the fact is stated, on the basis of the negative reason that they do not love God. The words of Jesus are a prophecy concerning false messiahs, see Matth. 24, 24. Bengel quotes Schudt who states that 64 such messiahs appeared since the days of Christ; one of the most prominent of these was Bar-Cochba. Recent times have added still more deceivers to the number, and the end is not yet. “For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” 2 Thess. 2, 11-12. It is truly astonishing how one coming in his own name (in our own times even a woman!), seeking in the boldest, rankest way his own glory, advantage, power, money, and making others his dupes and victims, is received by thousands with open arms. They who count the Son of God too small to give their hearts to him, the Word of God too unreliable to trust their souls to him of whom it testifies, are ready to yield themselves with their hearts, their happiness, their property, their all, to any ignorant imposter who preys upon their credulity and uses them as his tools — What is the reason for it? V. 44: **How can ye believe,**

which receive glory one of another, and the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not? Jesus combines the two things he is speaking of, non-belief in himself and belief in any deceiver. Both rest on this basis that the Jews seek not the honor that comes from God, but that which comes from man. As long as they (or any one else) do this, so long they cannot believe in Christ, and are ready to believe a deceiver. "How is it possible with such people as you (ὅμεις) that ye should believe? It is altogether out of the question." The impossibility, however, is due, not to God, but to themselves. They are such as receive (λαμβάνοντες) glory one of another, i. e. such praise, distinction, honor, as emanates only from men and has no higher source, they receive, take, grasp. The present says that this characterizes them. — **And the glory that cometh from the only God ye seek not,** the praise of God, his commendation that he is well-pleased with them, which would be theirs if they really did God's will and believed in Christ, this they make no effort to secure. Some codices omit "God" and read significantly τὴν παρὰ τοῦ μόνου, "that cometh from the Only One," i. e. whose glory alone is worth possessing. Examples of this Jewish greediness for the honor of men we find in Matth. 23, 5-7: "But all their works they do for to be seen of men. . . . And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." John 12, 43: "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." St. Paul, however, writes that *he* is a Jew "whose praise is not of men, but of God," Rom. 2, 29. Examples of a similar concern about human praise in preference to God's praise are exceedingly abundant to-day: there are those who still love father and mother, worldly companions and associates, Christless societies and their so-called benefits

and the offices and distinctions they bestow, far more than God, his Word and church, and his divine commendation. Many a theologian in his modernism and in his radical notions is actuated by this pride which loves the praise of the critical schools of false learning and philosophy more than the praise of God. Koegel admonishes us: "Let every one examine himself in the mirror of this text, whether pride is not one of the greatest hindrances to faith, this being bound to a false regard for others, this dependence upon one's neighbor, the press, public opinion, the spirit of the times, this being chained fast to oneself in ceaseless self-destruction." Luther: "It is an exceedingly proud and glorious honor, when a man can boast of God, that he is God's servant, child, people, over against which all the honor of the world is altogether nothing. But the world regards not such honor, seeks honor from men. The false apostles teach what pleases men, is pleasant and acceptable to reason, and this in order to have peace and the favor and applause of the mob. And indeed they get what they seek; for such fellows get the prize and have the thanks of everyone, Matth. 6, 2 and 5. Where now are they who would like to have honor and do not know how to work it? always seek and never find. If you want honor, give all honor to God alone, and for yourself keep nothing but shame. Despise yourself, and let all your doing be nothing, and thus you will sanctify God's name and give honor to him alone. See, as soon as you do this, you are already full of honor, which is greater than the honor of all kings, and abides forever; for God adorns you and honors you with his name, so that you are called God's servant, God's child, God's people, and the like. What now could God do more for you, who gives you so much temporal and eternal good, and in addition the highest, even his own name, and the eternal honor? It seems to me, this is indeed worthy of our thanking

him from the heart and praising him; who is able for one of these things constantly to praise and thank God sufficiently?"

V. 45 is a statement and argument full of terrific force, utterly unanswerable, absolutely convincing, with not a shadow of a chance for reply, save the blind, wilful, desperate hatred rushing to its own destruction. The whole force of these words of Jesus can be felt only when we understand how the Jews clung to their **Moses**, boasted of him, glorified him, and felt themselves absolutely safe with him — not, of course, the real Moses, but the figure they had made of him in their minds. And now Christ with one sweep not only takes their Moses away, but hurls the real Moses against them as the one who already utterly condemns them. The powerful truth of the whole statement regarding Moses, and the perfect mastery with which it is delivered against the unbelief of the Jews (if possible yet to bring them to their senses, and to faith), must ever captivate and hold our hearts. — **Think not that I will accuse you to the Father;** ἐγὼ in contrast to the following Μουσῆς; κατηγορήσω, future, in contrast to ἔστιν ὁ κατηγορῶν. "Think not" implies that some might be inclined to do so. Jesus shall not accuse the Jews, but this will not better their case in the least, or in any way relieve them; on the contrary, an accuser already stands against them, one of whom they least expected accusation, and such accusation as he already brings. No period is mentioned in connection with the future κατηγορήσω, and it is best to mention none. Meyer observes that the end of the world cannot be meant since Jesus shall then appear as the judge, but he overlooks the fact that Jesus is only expressing what the Jews themselves thought, not what he personally thinks. If we were to say what period Jesus himself had in mind — if any — the time of his going to the

Father would seem most likely. — **There is one that accuseth you**, ἔστιν prominently put first, *is now*; ὁ κατηγορῶν, one accusing, one in the very act of accusing. — And now follows the effective mention of his name: **Moses, on whom ye have set your hope**. This expression is used in distinction from the one following, “believe Moses,” or “believe his writings.” The Jews set their hope on Moses, ἠλπίζατε, perfect tense, i. e. they have hoped in him and so their hope is in him now. “We are Moses’ disciples; we know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow (Jesus), we know not from whence he is.” John 9, 28-29. The hope of the Jews was that by following the outward regulations of the law of Moses they would be saved. They thus made of Moses and his law something both were never intended to be, much like all teachers of salvation by morality and work-righteousness to-day, in fact, these even degrade Christ to a similar level. This false Moses, this perversion of his teaching is the basis of the hopes of the Jews — utterly imaginary, and therefore dooming them to a terrible disappointment. — V. 46: **For if ye believed Moses**, the real Moses, in what he wrote, **ye would believe me**, εἰ with the imperfect, followed by the imperfect with ἄν, present condition of unreality; the idea is: If ye believed Moses *now*, ye would *now* believe me. And this conclusion is established beyond a shadow of doubt: **for he wrote of me**. “He wrote,” *Moses* wrote — let all the higher critics and modernists who have repudiated the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch face this authoritative declaration of Jesus. It is worth more than all the learned and elaborate deductions they have ever put forth, and it stands over against them, as Moses against these Jews in the text, as ὁ κατηγορῶν ὑμῶν. Moses wrote of Christ, not in a few prophetic passages only, as some may think, but in all his writings. Recall

the quotation from Koegel above and add another, Bengel: *Nusquam non* — *nowhere* did Moses *not* write of Jesus. "They (the Jews) believed not Moses in his account of the creation and his testimony on the fall of man, for if they had accepted this as truth, they as sinful men would have had to seek with all earnestness the living God, as did Enoch and Noah. They did not believe him in the account concerning the fathers and their faith, else they would have followed in the footsteps of Abraham. They did not believe in the sacred earnestness of the Law he delivered, judging the hearts, else their Pharisaic work-righteousness would have fallen to the ground. Finally, they did not believe him when his entire order of priests and sacrifices constantly renewed the memory of their sins, and pointed in shadowy outline to a future real fulfillment, else they would have become through Moses already what the Baptist finally tried to make of them, a people ready and prepared for the Lord, embracing his salvation with joy like Simeon." Stier. Moses did not merely *also* write of Christ, the whole center and substance of what he wrote is Christ, the uncreated Angel of the Covenant, the Angel of the Presence. The whole twenty-five centuries with which he deals he views in their relation to Christ. Ever and always faith in the Coming One decides the fate of man. Great things he passes over lightly, and little things, dry genealogies, small occurrences in the lives of the patriarchs, he describes at length, because these have a special bearing on Christ. From the first Gospel-promise through all the following history, ceremony, prophecy and promise, Christ is ever in the mind of Moses. And all this the Jews in Christ's day did not believe, nor do they believe it to-day; and the Jewish unbelief and ignorance has been adopted by thousands to-day as the very height of Bible knowledge and learning. — **But if ye believe**

not his writings, how shall ye believe my words? Not only did Christ say, Moses wrote, but he now adds "Moses' writings," placing a double seal of truth on the Pentateuch as the work of Moses. The contrast is not between "writings" and "words," but between "his" and "my." Of course, the Jews had only the *writings* of Moses, while they had Jesus' *words*, he then speaking face to face with them. We have the writings of both, but the relation between Moses and Christ is just the same for us as the writings of Moses and the words of Jesus were for the Jews in Christ's time. What a sad, sad question, with its implication of a negative answer! If you reject all the previous grace, light, revelation, training and purpose of God, how shall you profit by that which follows and ends his work? If you throw away part of the Bible, how shall you keep, and benefit by, the rest? If you discard all that points to Christ, how shall you have Christ at last? Let the wicked unbelief of the Jews ever be our warning, that we may believe with our whole heart and continue firm in the faith until the end.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

If one were simply to summarize this text and state in a theme what Jesus here does, and then in the parts of the sermon were simply to detail in order what has thus been summarized in the theme, he would have substantially an analytical sermon. Leaving out the reference of the text to the Jews broadens the sermon so that it includes all unbelievers who all act like these Jews.

How Jesus Exposes the Utter Folly of Unbelief.

- I. It rejects the highest and most truthful testimony and accepts the rankest deceivers.*
- II. It forfeits the honor from God and revels in that from men.*
- III. It casts aside the real Savior and invents a savior and salvation of its own.*

- IV. *It perverts the Scriptures and finds itself condemned by the very authority to which it appeals.*

Along the same line is the next formulation:

Jesus Lays Bare the Unreason of Unbelief.

- I. *It is most reasonable to believe God and God's Word, and the height of unreason to doubt or disbelieve.*
- II. *It is most reasonable to accept God's Savior and salvation, and the height of unreason to invent an impossible salvation of our own.*
- III. *It is most reasonable to love and honor God, his Word, and his Savior in deepest humility, and the height of unreason in pride to forfeit their honor for the sake of men.*

In both of these outlines note how the norms of the religious will are utilized. The world may love "follies," but all folly stands self-condemned, most of all religious folly. To be unreasonable is even to be ridiculous, and nobody normally cares to appear thus. The point of the sermon is intensified and made doubly telling by the fact that all unbelievers make their grand appeal to reason and claim to be reasonable and on this account unbelieving. They charge us with being unreasonable, and even mock us on this account. Here the tables are completely turned upon them by Jesus himself.—But in dealing thus with reason, that which is reasonable and that which is unreasonable, the preacher must thoroughly know his business (even also as Jesus did), or he will compromise Christ and the Gospel. When faith, Christ, the Gospel, etc., are said to accord with reason and are thus in the highest degree reasonable, we must mean, like Christ, that they agree 1) with the mind and its faculties, and are never against them; 2) with the laws of thinking or true logic, and are never against these; 3) with the principles which the mind necessarily arrives at and finds universally true and applicable, which principles Christ and the Gospel never contradict. Thus to *reject* Christ, etc., may be 1) just craziness; or 2) rankly fallacious; or 3) in principle false and lying. Mrs. Eddy and Christian Science attempt to violate the mind itself (point 1). The Jews and many unbelievers clash with point 2, setting up false premises and thus drawing false conclusions, or refusing to draw the right conclusions from true premises. All philosophic unbelief clashes with point 3, for instead of abiding by the principles that hold

universally in our thinking, they bring in other principles that hold only in what we observe in nature, and thus condemn or reject as unreasonable the divine realities that transcend nature. Example: unbelief rejects the Trinity, which lies wholly above reason, on the ground that we do not find it in nature. Unbelief rejects the Virgin birth, the resurrection, and all other miracles, which all again transcend nature, on the ground that they are unlike anything regularly observed in nature. It is thus that unbelief is the height of unreason, condemns itself, and even makes itself utterly ridiculous. And it is thus that faith is truly reasonable, wholly sane and sound, and supremely true and safe. Saying these things we in no way set up human reason as above the Scriptures, or even as on a level with them. We must thrust out unbelieving reason entirely in matters of religion, for, as for instance our text shows, all its deductions are false, unreasonable, ridiculous.

We add the following as possibly suggestive:

Search the Scriptures!

- I. They testify of Christ.*
- II. They impart the life in Christ.*
- III. They glorify God through Christ.*

THE LENTEN CYCLE

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THE LENTEN CYCLE

Septuagesima to Good Friday

The common arrangement of the festival half of the church year divides this half into three great groups, named respectively after the three great festivals, Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. The Epiphany season is then allotted to the Christmas group, and the Lenten season to the Easter group. This arrangement gives the greatest possible prominence to the three chief festivals, which they certainly deserve. In spite of this dominance of the three festivals it will be found that the Epiphany as well as the Lenten season has maintained a significance of its own, and though attached to Christmas and Easter respectively yet each exhibits a peculiar and well-defined thought of its own. For this reason, and because it facilitates the study of the texts to group them into smaller cycles, we have introduced the Epiphany as well as the Lenten texts as separate cycles. Each set of texts, of course, retains its general relation to the cycle with which it is especially allied, Epiphany with Christmas, and Lent with Easter.

Eleven texts thus comprise what we have called the Lenten cycle, leading us in slow and solemn procession the way the Master went, until in the last text we mount Calvary itself and see him die for our advantage on the cross. The thought of Christ's Passion, of course, rules in these texts; it could not be otherwise. Yet they are not meant to treat the Passion-story itself, or even to show us the different stages of the Passion. This is left to the special Lenten services, for which a special line of texts is furnished in the Eisenach selections as follows: Estomihi, John 11,

47-57; *Invocavit*, Matth. 16, 21-26; *Reminiscere*, Luke 22, 54-62; *Oculi*, Luke 22, 63-71; *Laetare*, Matth. 27, 15-31; *Judica*, Luke 23, 27-34a. We omit a treatment of these texts from this volume, keeping to the texts for the main Sunday morning service. These texts place before us the great Gospel thoughts concerning our Lord's Passion. At various times and in various ways Jesus referred to his Passion, each time shedding a flood of light upon his suffering and death. We will find, in these texts that the Passion-thought is woven into the other features found in each text. Some of these features are very prominent and important, and certainly deserve due attention. Yet the Passion-thought must never be lost sight of or allowed to be thrust aside. Even where it seems to recede entirely, as in the fifth text, it must be at the basis of the homiletical treatment, for no names are written in heaven except with the blood of the Lamb. Summing up the contents of the entire cycle we may say its great subject is: *The Savior presents himself to us in his Passion.*

Looking now at the individual texts we meet first of all a pair of texts which serve as an introduction to the series. They both deal with Bethany and the dear friends Jesus had there found. The two Sundays for which these texts are set, *Septuagesima* and *Sexagesima*, while properly belonging to the Lenten cycle, are nevertheless somewhat distinct from the Lenten thought proper. While Lent, in the narrower sense, begins with Ash Wednesday, the Sunday before it, *Quinquagesima* or *Estomihi*, even in the old gospel series is used to introduce Christ's Passion, for it tells us how Jesus announced to his disciples, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," Luke 18, 31. The same idea holds in the Eisenach arrangement. Accordingly we have in this series two introductory texts and nine subsequent texts on the Passion proper. Of these the

last two again are special texts, namely for Maundy Thursday and for Good Friday. The former presents Christ's institution of the Holy Supper, and the latter, as alone is proper, his death on Calvary.

There is something very fine about the first text, for Septuagesima, Mary of Bethany sitting at Jesus' feet. It ushers in the Lenten season by bidding us drop all distracting cares and labors in order that we may sit like Mary and hear what the Savior now has to tell us in this holy season. Its theme is: *Be still, and come and sit at Jesus' feet.* The season must color the text and by the Lenten touch make it more beautiful and effective for us. — Beside this lovely scene of peace and rest in Bethany the next Sunday, Sexagesima, places an entirely different one. Did Jesus say, "One thing is needful" — now the great hour of need has come; the blow has fallen, Lazarus lies dead! This was close before Christ's own death. But the note of this text, finely chosen from the whole account concerning Lazarus, is one eminently suited to help usher in the Passion season — it tells of *Christ, the Son of God, who is the resurrection and the life.* Take the Bethany setting of sorrow, bereavement, death and eternity — the dark picture is quite proper for Lent, — but keep the eyes fixed on him who by his own Passion and death brought us comfort and deliverance.

Now follow the seven texts which give us more or less direct glimpses of Christ's Passion. The one for Estomihi, rich in a number of thoughts, culminates in what Christ says of himself, his cup, his baptism, his coming to serve and give his life as a ransom. We take as its theme: *The Passion of Christ the very purpose for which he came.* — Next, *Invocavit* with the formal announcement of the Passion, Peter's attempt to dissuade Christ, and the appended admonition to the disciples; the theme: *Christ cannot be*

tempted to turn from his Passion. — Reminiscere has no direct mention of the Passion, though it speaks of Satan and the demons as conquered — which victory was finally achieved on Calvary. By bidding the disciples rejoice because their names were written in heaven, Jesus points out, as we may say: *The great object which in his Passion he had in view* — our salvation from the power of the devil, the writing of our names in heaven with his own blood. — Oculi again shows us Christ on his last journey; and when the disciples would like to call down fire on the inhospitable Samaritans, they are told to remember what spirit they are of. This spirit we see in him who has come, not to destroy, but to save men's lives. The theme of the text then is: *The spirit that moved Christ in his Passion.* — Now follows a deep and precious text, out of the very center of the Passion-thought: Christ the bread of life — we to eat his flesh and to drink his blood in order to have eternal life. The theme for Laetare then is: The way in which Christ offers us participation in the fruits of his Passion. — A new light falls on Christ's Passion from the Judica text; instead of appearing dark and dreadful it is placed before us as a glorification: *The glory of Christ's Passion*, or Christ is glorified in his Passion. — Finally comes Palm Sunday with a text so fine that it surely will delight the heart of the preacher who uses it, the anointing of Jesus at the farewell-supper in Bethany. What can this text say except that we owe him boundless gratitude who died for us. *The honor Christ deserves at our hands for his Passion.*

Two concluding texts crown this infinitely precious cycle, Holy Thursday with *the Sacrament Christ instituted on the basis of his Passion*, yes, on the very eve of it. And then the great festival-day itself, to which all the preceding Lenten days have led up, Good Friday, with *the climax of Christ's Passion.*

In all these texts there is no mere mechanical order, no stereotyped or hackneyed arrangement; text follows text rich with the power and life of Christ's Passion — and this is what the preacher should impart to his hearers. There are teachings, admonitions, warnings, applications in most of these texts. They will tempt the preacher into by-paths, some of them easy and attractive enough, others more steep and difficult. But the writer's suggestion is to keep in the main thought of the sermon to the great subject of the Passion, and to follow the by-paths never beyond a short distance. Christ is the chief subject in all these texts, and Christ as he shows himself to us in his Passion the subject of the cycle. "I have seen the Lord who died to save me," must be the unanimous answer of our hearers when they have heard our sermons on these blessed Lenten texts.

SEPTUAGESIMA

Luke 10, 38-42

In the old gospel lesson for this Sunday, the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, we have an admonition to work, and to work in the right spirit, knowing that work, reward, and all is of grace; the epistolary lesson seconds this thought, admonishing us to strenuous endeavor in running our race. Our Eisenach gospel text is on a different line altogether. There is indeed a time to work, and then zeal and the right spirit are certainly necessary; but there is also a time to stop work and instead sit quietly and let Jesus teach us his holy, saving Word. This is the thought presented in the brief narrative concerning Martha and Mary in Bethany. It is especially appropriate at the head of the Lenten cycle of texts, of these Eisenach texts which aim to let Jesus himself present himself to us in his Passion. Here evidently there is only one thing for us to do, namely to sit silently and reverently at Jesus' feet and with receptive hearts to take in the words he utters. We accordingly sum up this text in the statement, *Be still, and come and sit at Jesus' feet.*

V. 38. Some manuscripts begin this narrative with ἐγένετο, but the best ones omit the word. **As they went on their way**, ἐν τῷ πορεύεσθαι, pres. inf. — just when this was cannot be determined with absolute certainty. Luke is not concerned about the chronology and here it seems introduces this account because of its significance, not because of its occurring in chronological connection with what precedes and what follows. Farrar thinks that Jesus was on his way to the Feast of Dedication, John 10, 22. Robinson in his *Harmony* likewise places our narrative in this con-

nection, and it seems to be the best chronological arrangement. — The **certain village** was Bethany, House of Dates, although dates have long disappeared from the locality. The place lies less than two miles from Jerusalem, on the south-east slope of the Mount of Olives, near the usual road from Jerusalem to Jericho. The present village, as the author saw it in 1925, is composed of shabby stone hovels, the last houses before the desert hills on the way to Jericho and the Dead Sea. Bethany must have been a fairer, more prosperous place in the days of Christ. — **He entered** into a certain village; αὐτός following αὐτούς (Christ and the disciples), and the whole story reporting nothing further about the disciples, justifies the conclusion that Jesus alone entered the village and was received by Martha. — **A certain woman named Martha**, is here for the first time introduced by Luke. Speculation has been busy with Martha, even more than with her sister and brother. Some have imagined her the wife, or the widow of Simeon the leper, in whose house the farewell-supper to Christ was given; some have concluded that she was the oldest in the family circle of three, and again that she herself owned the house into which she invited Jesus, since some manuscripts read “into her house.” But when we examine these conjectures, they are found to rest on very frail foundations, so much so that it is best not to entertain them at all. We must content ourselves without these details, which are in no way vital to the story, and must not find fault with the sacred record as Inspiration has given it to us. — We are not so very sure that the little family circle belonged to the well-to-do or better-situated class, judging merely from the words, Martha received him **into her house**, εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν, ἢ εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτῆς. The house may have been simple and plain, and even the general sympathy expressed at Lazarus’ death may not have been due

to any great prominence or wealth of the family. In fact we prefer to think of this home that Jesus loved in Bethany as a quiet, simple one, refined but not pretentious in any way. — Martha, probably because she was the one who met Jesus or first saw his approach, **received him** into her house, took him under her roof, with evident affectionate hospitality, ὑπεδέξατο, used most frequently without any addition. This act and the whole narrative of what took place, indicates very clearly that a previous acquaintance had been formed, in fact, that these friends in Bethany were believers in Jesus. The way in which Jesus comes here to Bethany and is received by Martha, combined with the story of the raising of Lazarus and the last week of Jesus' life when nightly he went out to Bethany, proves that the tie between Jesus and these friends at Bethany was close and tender. How it was first formed we cannot tell; whether Jesus had stopped in Bethany before this we do not know. If we may form a conjecture, it seems that Jesus had a special purpose in coming now as he did, knowing that not many days hence — about three or four months, if this was the time of the Dedication Feast — a great shadow should fall upon the pleasant home in Bethany. Did he perhaps come to prepare and fortify the hearts of the two sisters? Too many of us fail to receive him in pleasant days into our homes and hearts, and then when dark days come we are lost in helpless, comfortless anguish. And another conjecture may be formed, since the Passion of Christ was not far away now, and since Mary was led to anoint Jesus just before his Passion when his friends in Bethany gathered to honor him. Did Jesus perhaps speak of the things that were now so close at hand, the great things concerning the sacrifice he should accomplish for the ransom of the world? These are deeper things than whether Martha was a widow, or the older, or well-

situated, and the like, and they are certainly in harmony with the ways of Jesus and the gracious leadings of God.

V. 39. In a simple way Mary is introduced and as the sister of Martha distinguished from the various other Marys mentioned in sacred history. **Which also sat at the Lord's feet.** The *καί* is significant, as it points to other things she did before, when Jesus entered, welcoming the honored and beloved Guest. But none of these other things are mentioned, they are of small importance as compared with this thing she "also" did, although Martha and many others would turn this around and lay stress on the other things and count this last as idle and unnecessary. Nothing indicates that Jesus was already at table, rather must we conclude that Martha's preparations were not yet advanced that far. The idea that Jesus already reclined on the couch to eat, and that Mary sat on the outer edge of the couch to the right near Jesus' feet is therefore altogether incorrect. — To be seated **at the feet** of one, (*παρακαθέσθαι*, pass. aorist participle, like our English "was seated," *παρά* beside), and especially to be thus seated in order to hear his word or doctrine, *τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ*, with the significant addition *πρὸς τοὺς πόδας*, as a pupil would sit, can only mean that the person is in the position of a learner, receiving the instruction of his Master. And that is exactly the situation here. Painters have often portrayed the scene for us, in its main features no doubt correctly. — The imperfect tense *ἤκουεν*, she **heard**, indicates prolonged action; seated at the Lord's feet she heard his word at length and for some time, which tallies with Martha's complaint. — Jesus is here called **the Lord** by Luke, the name by which Martha and Mary evidently addressed him, as we see in v. 40 and also 41. If pupils ordinarily sat at the feet of a human Rabbi or teacher, how appropriate

for this pupil to sit at the feet of Jesus, her Lord in the full sense of the word. This in fact is all that we hear in the whole narrative concerning Mary; it is the only thing we are told that she did: sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word. But what an important thing this one thing was! Mary sitting thus is like a flower lifting its chalice and petals to the sun, drinking in the light. By her attentive hearing she helped on her part to make the seat of Christ a pulpit, her own humble place at Jesus' feet a pew, and the whole room a chapel in which the mercy of Jehovah was proclaimed, yea, a very sanctuary, where God himself drew nigh with saving power, with comfort, light, and blessing to a sinful soul. There seems to be something entirely natural about Mary's sitting and listening to Jesus' word. When he speaks or makes it plain that he has some word of instruction to impart, there is only one thing to which her heart inclines, namely to forget everything else and to become completely absorbed in what Jesus says. This natural, devoted, devout, complete attention to Christ's word stands through all the ages of the church as the true mark of discipleship, there being nothing finer and loftier to distinguish it. To receive the doctrine of Christ with an attentive ear and an open heart is to be a Christian indeed; no work, no labor, no sacrifice, no suffering can take the place of it. To close the ear, to turn the heart away, no matter what the cause that induces us to do so, is bound to be fatal, since it shuts off the life-stream on which the faith in our hearts depends.

V. 40. Martha presents a very different picture from Mary, yet the difference has not always been adequately stated. She was **cumbered about much serving**, περιεσπᾶτο, literally she "was distracted," drawn hither and thither especially when *περὶ πολλὴν θιακονίαν* follows, comp. *περὶ πολλά* in v. 41, whereas it

is God's will that we "may attend upon the Lord without distraction," ἀπερισπάστως, 1 Cor. 7, 35. She loved Jesus, and it was to serve him that she was bustling. She was secretly vexed with herself as much as with Mary, that the latter enjoyed the privilege of hearing Jesus' word seated at his feet, whilst she could not persuade herself to do the same for fear that a varied enough repast should not be served up to him. This must be observed both in justice to Martha and in order to catch the force of Jesus' reply to her. He does not chide her for her working or for her much serving, but for allowing her mind to be divided, drawn away to other things, from the one thing to which now she should have devoted her whole attention. How often do we see similar cases today — a woman, for instance, who finds so many things resting upon her, demanding her time and attention, that, though she would like to, she cannot get time to read the Scriptures, cannot secure a quiet, restful hour for prayer, cannot get ready for the services of God's house. She is vexed with herself and chides others, and yet this does not remedy the trouble. — **And she came up to him and said;** really, she came up abruptly, ἐπιστάσα, participle from ἐπίστημι. **Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.** This translation points to the second aorist, κατέλιπεν, "did leave," so also the A. V. and the commentators generally. Yet Westcott and Hort, Alex. Souter, and Soden have the imperfect κατέλειπεν: she continued to leave. The aorist may indicate that Mary had been engaged in assisting Martha at the first and then left her sister to sit at Jesus' feet seemingly oblivious to what she had left; the imperfect is without this thought, but suggests a continuing neglect. Martha saw this action of her sister and did not approve it, in fact did not really understand and appreciate it. We may assume that

she tried to indicate her wishes to Mary by some sign or other while Jesus was speaking, but, of course, in vain. "That she help me," ἵνα, in order that; συναντιλάβηται as Godet points out, denotes three things, to take a burden upon oneself (middle voice), to do it for some one (ἀντί), and this by sharing the burden (σύν). — How must we understand these words of Martha? Various answers are given which we cannot accept. In the first place we cannot believe that Martha wanted to wound her sister's feelings by speaking to Jesus instead of addressing her. Nor can we think that she is prompted either by jealousy of the attention Mary is receiving, or by envy of her ease in sitting at Jesus' feet and escaping the work of serving a meal for the Master. The idea that Martha spoke in a joking way is certainly unworthy of attention. A very general opinion is that Martha found fault with Jesus himself for not caring that she served alone, and for keeping Mary away from helping by speaking to her as he did. Rump, however, in his sermon on the text, disposes of this view. Martha cannot be charged with such a piece of impoliteness to her guest, with such an exhibition of unfriendliness. If Martha had been guilty of such conduct, if she had charged Jesus with a fault, he would have answered accordingly, and Rump points out that Jesus did this on other occasions, for instance when at Cana he brooks no dictation, even only implied dictation on the part of his mother, and when on the shores of the Lake of Galilee he answers Peter's inquisitive question regarding John by saying to him, "What is that to thee?" John 21, 22. Nothing of the kind occurs here in Bethany. It is certainly best therefore to drop the idea that Martha so far forgot herself that she charged Jesus with wrong conduct. On the contrary, instead of finding fault in any way with Jesus, Martha's words are entirely prompted by her fervent desire to honor Jesus. He

was not only not burdensome to her, it was such a delight to have him as a guest that Martha could not do enough in honor of his entertainment, bringing out not only all the house afforded for his delectation, but anxious to enlist everybody else in the Lord's service. — When therefore Martha put her question, **Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone?** she took for granted that Jesus thought as she did, and really deprecated Mary's indifference to her sister's efforts. Of course Martha misunderstood several things. She knew indeed, that Jesus often had not where to lay his head, that he was beset by enemies, wearied by travel, preaching, controversy, work of all kinds. And now that she had him safely under her roof she meant to vie with those other women, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna, who ministered unto Jesus of their substance, Luke 8, 2-3. But she forgot the whole great lesson which the life of Jesus taught, that he had come not to be served, but to serve, and that, while he willingly accepted the hospitality of his friends as long as he did not feel himself burdensome to them, yet he always came to them in order first to give unto them, and to give more than ever could be offered him in return. Martha sees in Jesus too much the recipient, too little the Giver; too much the object of her motherly love and care, too little the great Host who cares for us all. This is the very point Jesus brings out in his reply to her, which is decisive as far as the significance and tone of her question is concerned. We therefore say: Martha does find fault with Mary for not sharing her motherly view, but she presumes that Jesus understands her feelings and intentions and finds them justified. She, therefore, probably expected Jesus to say: Do not trouble yourselves so much on my account; yet she looked for him to dismiss Mary to her aid. The thing which actually occurred she did not

expect, namely, that after all Mary's idea should be commended as the right one, and her own as one that rested on a misunderstanding. The more closely we view the whole situation, the more this solution commends itself as correct. It is somewhat like the scene in Simon's house a few weeks later, when Mary again by her anointing Jesus shows that she is far in advance of all others in appreciating the significance of the hour and the last opportunity it afforded for discerning love. None of the rest apprehended these things with anything like her intuitive insight, and the golden opportunity would have been utterly lost if it had not been for Mary. So here when Jesus was the guest of the sisters. It is Mary who apprehends aright, it is Martha who is left far behind. She is at fault, but ignorantly. Therefore Jesus is exceedingly kind and gentle, he explains, and the entire tone of his words shows that Martha, too, will accept his words and, though slower than her sister, will learn of him.

V. 41. **Martha, Martha** — a remarkably kind and tender address, as if Jesus would say: Child, child, in order to reach her heart (E. Frommel). — **Thou art anxious and troubled about many things.** The word *μεροῦνᾶς*, from *μερίζω*, to divide, means that Martha is anxious with a divided mind. It takes up the thought already touched in the word "cumbered with much serving," i. e. distracted, drawn hither and thither, thinking now of this and now of that, and thus missing that undivided singleness of heart, fixed on the one essential thing, which Jesus himself had inculcated in the Sermon on the Mount, Matth. 6, 22 and 24-31. See also Phil. 3, 13, "This one thing I do"; and John 6, 27, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you." The result of this division is to be "troubled," *θορυβάζειν*, disturbed, tossed about, the opposite of calm,

rest, true contentment and satisfaction. The "many things" which draw the mind now here, now there, thus cause the tossing about. Bengel adds to "anxious," inwardly; to "troubled" outwardly, and he calls "cumbered" a synonym of "troubled." Some commentators take it that though Jesus reprov'd Martha for her distraction he nevertheless meant his words to be an acknowledgment of her efforts in his behalf, mistaken thought they were for the moment. They then draw an application for those who are utterly indifferent and slothful in the service of the Master, wishing that these might wake up and be anxious and troubled about many things. Yet this attempted application shows that the whole thought is wide of the mark. The slothful are not to become anxious and troubled at all; one mistaken course is not to be set in place of another. Both must be corrected. There may be more of an excuse for one than for the other, but the excuse justifies neither; zeal without understanding is not commendable zeal. He who preaches singleness of heart, and who here emphasizes one thing as needful cannot contradict himself by covertly praising the divided and troubled heart. Sloth is corrected only by having life and energy put in its place by Christ through the Word; anxiety and a troubled mind are corrected only by having Christ remove them, and by placing in their stead the one needful thing, which then directs zeal in the right course and gives calmness to it and assurance from above. — **But one thing is needful**, the very thing Martha failed to appreciate in Mary. The best Greek text reads ἐνός δέ ἐστιν χρεία; the reading ὀλίγων δέ ἐστιν χρεία ἢ ἐνός, "but few things are needful, or one," has been adopted by Westcott and Hort without sufficient authority; on the evidence comp. Zahn. — What this one thing is, Jesus does not say, he only adds: **for Mary hath chosen the good part, which**

shall not be taken away from her. Bengel thinks "the good part" is a figure taken from the food Martha was so much concerned about. The word μερίς, itself would hardly point in the direction of food, especially with the adjective added to it, τὴν ἀγαθὴν μερίδα, it rather points back to μερομνῆς, thou art anxious, i. e. divided. Instead of being distracted and divided between many parts, Mary has elected one part, thus ending any division in the heart, and as hers she has picked out **the good part.** Luthardt quotes Num. 18, 20, "I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel"; Ps. 16, 6, "a goodly heritage"; and Ps. 73, 25, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" "The good part" and the "one thing" are, practically at least, identical. Various definitions of the "one thing" have been given, as commentators have kept more or less to the actual scene of the text, or allowed themselves in general simply to ask and answer the question, What is the one essential requisite for the soul? Besser says "the good part," or the "one thing" is *Christ*. Mayer makes it *the grace of God present and appropriated in Jesus Christ*; Luthardt, *Jesus Christ in order to hear his Word*; Meyer, *the care for the soul by undivided devotion to Christ and his Word*, and Stelhorn and Sommer the same. Luther, *to hear the Word of God and the Gospel*, or, as he varies it, "the good part, that is *faith and the Word.*" When Jesus says "one thing is needful," we might think of an action, but when he says "the good part," we must turn our attention to some treasure or possession, the *summum bonum*, not our doing or activity in any sense of the word, but the supreme gift of God to us. Yet we must keep the situation before us as it was in Bethany, and not simply ask an academic or theological question. **The good part, the one thing,** εἷς, is therefore best defined as the WORD. The whole text points to this answer, for Mary "sat at the Lord's feet, and heard

his word," and Jesus draws Martha's attention to this by saying of what Mary has done, she "hath chosen *the good part.*" We prefer to omit faith, hearing, undivided devotion, appropriation and any other addition to the Word denoting action. Not that these one and all are not necessary, but that they should not be mixed with that one thing which here should focus all our attention. — Moreover, it is not necessary to connect any activity or receptivity of ours with the Word, since Jesus says, Mary **hath chosen**, ἐξελέξατο, *the good part.* Her choosing is her sitting and hearing, her receiving and believing, her undivided devotion and appropriation, or what else we may be pleased to call it. And here we must differ from Meyer and object strongly to his attaching to the "one thing needful" Martha's "anxious and troubled" worry. It is altogether wrong to interpret "one thing is needful" by saying: one thing, "about which we ought to be anxious and troubled"; or "the good part" by saying, "Mary selected for her anxiousness and troubling the good part," i. e. from among all the different ones she might have selected. Let it be noted, once for all, that he who has the one thing needful, the good part, is thereby delivered from the anxiousness and troubling of one bothering with many things like Martha. As the "one thing" is here placed over against "many things," "the good part" (as one) over against the divided mind (μεριμνῶς), so "Mary hath chosen" (ἐξελέξατο, aorist, one definite past act) is placed over against "Martha, thou art anxious and troubled" (present tense, continued action). So Mary's choice is the end of anxiousness and troubling, it is rest for the soul, for our souls are restless and remain so until they have found rest in Christ (Augustine) — and we have Christ, or the grace, merits, salvation of Christ, only in his Word. — **Which shall not be taken away from her,** Jesus adds regarding Mary.

This is his answer to Martha who wished that Mary should leave the Word, λόγος, and work with many things, πολλά. It is also an assurance and promise to Mary herself, an encouragement, a comfort, and a shield of defense. The anxiety and worry of Martha Jesus would like to take away from her for good and all; to take the good part from Mary would only plunge her into the very condition from which Jesus would relieve her sister. — Martha and Mary have often been viewed as types, Martha of the Jewish zeal in the Law, Mary of the Pauline πίστις; Martha of the Roman Catholic Church, Mary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; Martha of the active life, Mary of the contemplative; Martha of certain energetic characters, Mary of those deep, quiet, and serene. In a good many of these comparisons it would seem as if Mary herself comes short somewhat of the true ideal, lacking somewhat of the energy and business activity of Martha, and as if the true ideal were really a combination of the two sisters. As regards this whole proceeding of making types out of these sisters, and also of combining their good points into one ideal, it should be said that it rests on a wrong conception of the whole point of the narrative, which means to place before us not so much Martha and Mary as the *one thing needful, the good part*, i. e. *the blessed, saving, soul-satisfying Word of Christ*. Where this is chosen, all else follows; where this is set aside and neglected, all else is useless, empty, dangerous, deceptive, vain. There is nothing good in Martha's anxious and troubled agitation; the only good thing is her love to Christ, but this must be cleared of the mistaken ideas which threaten to spoil it, it must be directed into the one correct channel, then all will come right. Jesus had succeeded in this with Mary, and no doubt succeeded also with Martha, although Luke fails to tell us what she did after receiving Jesus' answer. We cannot but

think that now she too put aside her labors for Christ and allowed him to labor for her, and that after Jesus had finished giving, both sisters combined in the grateful and loving return of gifts to him, and that he then accepted them as sweet and delightful to his heart.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Let us begin with a caution: Do not preach too much Mary and Martha; preach a great deal of Jesus. In other words, combine these sisters with Jesus, so that he will be reflected in all you say about them. — The text has a natural duality, namely Martha, and Mary, and what each did, and what Jesus said of each. If the sermon uses this duality in making two sermon parts of it, it dare not be left as a duality in the theme. Hackradt does that: Two words spoken by Jesus in Bethany, proceeding then to give first the words to Martha, and secondly the word to Mary. This makes two little undersized sermons pasted together in a mere formal way. We must have for the sermon a true unit idea, and this we must split into its natural parts. Even a baby can lay two blocks side by side; for the pulpit more should be required. — On the other hand there is a unit idea in the text, "the one thing needful," and the unity of it is so strong and compact that one does not perceive at once how it can properly be split for the parts of a sermon. — The way to proceed is this: 1) Where there is a duality or multiplicity we must combine so thoroughly as to achieve a true (not merely formal) unity; 2) where there is a compact unity the division of which is not at once apparent we must analyze. — Take the first case, the duality. We get a unity in the theme, Then we divide as the duality already at hand indicates:

Be Still, and Come, Sit at Jesus' Feet!

- I. *Leave trouble and distracting care* (Martha).
- II. *Drink in his blessed, saving Word* (Mary).

But instead of letting the sermon run out thus into two opposing parts, one negative, the other positive, it is far superior to add a third part, one in which the other two are tied together, thus gaining a final unit effect. Here we may add as part three:

III. *Win calm and strength, light and peace for your soul.* This, of course, means: by leaving trouble and care, and

by listening to the Word, you will gain this great benefit. And to hold this up to the will in the right way obeys the norms according to which the religious will acts. — We have the same thing in the next outline:

When the Guest Turned Host in Bethany.

- I. *Martha intended him only to be a guest, but this could not be.*
- II. *Christ came indeed to accept kindly hospitality, but even more to bring his saving gifts.*
- III. *Mary first sat at Christ's blessed table, and Martha no doubt soon followed.*

Here, too, part one and part two appear as opposites, and then part three ties them together and achieves a final unit effect. — And now let us take up the prominent unity in our text, the "one thing needful." Here we must analyze:

What Is the One Thing Needful?

We have already learned what this is, namely *the Word*. But that means: not our work; and hence also not our merit; and, combining what underlies both work and merit, not our giving. So we gain three parts: I. *God's Word and saving deeds* — not our work; II. *God's Word and saving grace* — not our merit; III. *God's Word and saving gifts* — not anything that we bring. — Florey has a division along this line:

One Thing is Needful.

- I. *Without which all others are naught (Martha).*
- II. *In which all others are found (Mary).*
- III. *Hold it ever.*

The third part is necessary, as in the first two outlines above, so that the sermon runs out, not in two opposite thoughts, but in one that combines these two. — Sometimes a unity is so compact that we desist from the effort of actually splitting it into component parts. We may treat the one thing needful (the Word) in this way. Instead of dividing what it contains, God's saving deeds, grace, and gifts, as we did above, leave it undivided, but, since it is so great and glorious, look at it from various angles. It is always one thing, just the Word, but there is its divinity, its power, and its wonderful effect.

Why Seek Above All the One Thing Needful?

- I. *It alone is divine* (contrast, Martha's distraction).
- II. *It alone has power* (again the human contrast).
- III. *It alone brings help and peace* (that is why Jesus wanted Martha as well as Mary to sit at his feet).

Another way is to take the unit idea, again leave it undivided, but split on our actions in regard to it: We may make the theme: **One Thing is Needful**, just as Foley has it, only now our theme thought is: This one great needful thing — how about us in regard to it, since it is so needful to us? Well, then we must I. *Know it fully* (which means understand its nature, just what it is and all that it is); II. *Seek it singly* (which means, we must really make it our own); and then we may add III. *Keep it firmly* (which deals with Martha's effort to make Mary give up listening). — In treatments like this the "one thing needful" is not always set forth at once as "the Word," the hearer is kept a bit in suspense at first, which is a good psychological procedure.

After meditating long on this text and the lovely picture it presents, thoughts like these may arise in our hearts: Suppose I (or you) could have been there — what would I (or you) have done? Helped Martha with zealous hands? Or sat down beside Mary? This would be a good approach to a sermon. — Again: The home at Bethany became a real church that day. And how about our homes now in the light of that one? Make this to answer:

Every House of Ours a Christian Chapel.

- I. *With Jesus in the chancel.*
- II. *With his Word ringing in our hearts.*
- III. *With every heart of ours uncumbered.*
- IV. *With light and strength for all the days to come.*

Here, finally, is a bit of sermon timber: At the last day there cometh a soul before the Lord with quiet assurance. The Lord asketh, Who art thou? Thereupon the soul is agitated and anxiously replieth, O dear Lord, dost thou not know me? No, saith the Lord, I do not know thee. O, my Lord and God, the poor soul now exclaims, dost thou not remember, that every Monday thou gavest the world I was in the Sewing Circle, every Tuesday in the Day Nursery for Children, every Wednesday in the People's Kitchen, every Thursday in the Mission Club,

every Friday in the Parament Society, every Saturday in the Reading Hour, and Sunday in the Association for Protecting Young Girls. This last the soul said weeping, and repeated it twice, and then added brokenly, O Lord, rememberest thou nothing of it all? Soul, saith the Lord, as oft as I came to visit thee I never found thee at home!—"Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful." Oeser, *Am Weg und Abseits*.

SEXAGESIMA.

John 11, 20-27.

It will be but a poor homiletical worker who fails to see and to utilize in a measure at least the peculiar advantage which this text offers in connection with, and in contrast to, the foregoing text. There all is serene and beautiful, even as artists with brush and pencil usually depict the scene; here the shadow has fallen, death has left a great void and sadness behind. There something needful was spoken of by Christ, needful of course for all times; here a special hour of need has arrived, and the very thing Jesus then offered now appears as the only thing that can stay and support the soul. These are things that give the text a special beauty and force, and it is certainly well to use them. — We are still on the threshold of Lent. Christ's present visit to Bethany occurred shortly before his Passion and his miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead hastened the Jewish conspiracy which brought about his own death. Our attention in this text is, therefore, properly focused upon Christ himself. There is a shadow in Bethany, and a shadow is deepening around Christ himself, but in the midst of it he stands forth before our eyes in heavenly light. In all this world of sin and death, and with all the power of death emanating from sin directed against him, he is the Victor over death forever, none other than *the Christ, the Son of God, who is the Resurrection and the Life*. As poor sinners, in the face of death and eternity, he is the one upon whom our hearts must be unwaveringly fixed, for he that believeth in him shall never die. — Our text is brief, purposely so. The first part of John's eleventh chapter, vs. 1-11, has been placed for the Fifteenth Sunday after Trin-

ity, which it may be well to compare. That text is a lesson on tribulation. Neither there nor here the raising of Lazarus is included in the text. We are not to dwell on the miracle, but on the word of Jesus which he speaks concerning himself. The text aims to bring us face to face with Jesus who tells us, as he told Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life"; and seeing him thus at the opening of the Passion season, the same heart-searching question comes to us, as to her, "Believest thou this?" Let us answer in true faith, as she did, and in fuller knowledge than she at that moment could have.

When Lazarus fell sick the sisters sent a pathetic message to Jesus in Perea, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Jesus purposely delayed until Lazarus was dead and buried. The body lay in the tomb four days already when finally — entirely too late according to human thinking — Jesus arrived at the village of his beloved friends. The house was still full of mourning and many consolers were trying to do their kindly work. This was the situation as Jesus drew nigh. That there was danger for himself in this coming goes without saying, but Jesus had his work to do and he did it, foes and danger notwithstanding.

In v. 20 simply the facts are told us that Martha (not both of the sisters) heard of Jesus' coming and, as was entirely natural with her active disposition, went to meet him while Mary remained in the house, knowing nothing of either Jesus' coming or of Martha's going forth to meet him. For seven days, according to Jewish custom in a case of bereavement, friends would come and condole with the mourning family. A number of visitors of this kind were present now at the home of the sisters. In some way unknown to us word reaches Martha **that Jesus was coming**. The words, ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἔρχεται, read like a quotation;

they were very likely the ones used by the messenger. — **Martha heard**, apparently no one else. The announcement is not made to all present, nor is it quietly passed from one to another, either from the messenger or from Martha to others. Afterwards Martha *secretly* calls her sister, so as to shut out even then any others. We, therefore, rightly conclude that the message came to Martha in the first place secretly also. The reason for this lies very close at hand. In the previous verse we read that “many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them,” etc. Throughout the Gospel of John *Jews* is the designation of Christ’s opponents; compare the remonstrance of the disciples in v. 8. It is undoubtedly so with the word here. This may serve to explain also why Jesus did not at once proceed to the house of his friends, the custom of condolence being known to him. So he pauses and sends a friendly private messenger, either directing him to Martha alone, as seems most probable, or the messenger thinking it enough to tell her. The message to Mary is afterwards sent by Martha, so that it seems as if the first messenger was told to speak to Martha only. We prefer to picture both sisters as sitting together in the house surrounded by the Jewish visitors. Martha’s leaving after a whispered message attracts no special attention, Mary remaining to hold the visitors where she was. The idea of Daechsel, in his sermon, that Martha *sought* Jesus, while Jesus sought Mary, is entirely unfounded and invented only to secure a contrast in picturing the two sisters. It is not right to take such liberties with the story in order to secure a balanced effect in the sermon.

V. 21. It was not difficult for Martha to find where Jesus was; he probably could come but one way, and the messenger may have returned with her, this being a friend of Jesus in the village where a

small circle of believers was found. As she reaches the Master, the thing that had again and again passed through her mind as well as through Mary's during the long, heart-breaking days of waiting, while Jesus did not come in response to the message sent him, now involuntarily comes forth from her heart and lips: **Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died**, εἰ with the imperf. indic. ἦς, followed by the aorist indic. with ἄν, the condition of past unreality, ἦς doing duty for the aorist which in N. T. Greek does not occur (Robertson: "Sometimes ἦν is aorist"). It is not an accusation, but an expression of sorrow. While Lazarus lay sick the sisters thought of Jesus: Oh, if only he were here! Then they finally sent for him. At last when Lazarus died, their longing changed to deep, sorrowful regret: Oh, if only he had been here! It was natural that they should thus long for him, for had he not healed hundreds of sick people of all kinds, and would he not heal their brother too, if he were here? In sending to him they may have thought it just possible that, without coming, by simply saying a word, he might heal their brother. Then, however, that brother died. And so there was left this one thought, rising again and again out of their sorrow: If only he had been here! There is a confession of faith in these words, faith in Christ's power to heal; not, however, also a reproach, as some suppose, for Mary utters the very same words, v. 32, and we cannot assume either that she reproached Jesus, or that the same words in her mouth had a sense different from that in the mouth of Martha; there is indeed poignant regret in her utterance, and this is mixed now with sad resignation, for her brother had died, and the terrible fact could not be altered. — That no reproach was intended by Martha is shown by the sentence which she adds, and which is remarkable in more ways than one. V. 22. **And even now**

I know that, whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee. “And even now,” though thou wast not here, though thou didst not heal my brother, though my brother is dead now and buried — *I still believe in thee!* This is the sense of her words. They resemble Asaph’s word in the 73rd Psalm: “My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever”; and Job’s: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,” Job 13, 15. — But Martha expresses her faith in a positive way. She says, **I know**, οἶδα. Thus she sums up all her past acquaintance with Jesus, all that she has heard from his lips, all that she has seen of his works; and this in spite of what has happened, so dark to her and so hard to explain and harmonize with her natural expectations regarding the gracious helpfulness of Jesus. “Even now” Martha is firmly convinced that he whom presently she confesses as the Son of God can do things fully in harmony with divine power; death and the grave have not set a limit across which he cannot reach. There is only one thing which suffices to explain Martha’s words, namely that she was convinced and knew that even now, though Lazarus was in the grave, Jesus could bring him forth to life again. — She puts this expression of her faith in a way which must not be misunderstood: **whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee.** “Ὅσα ἂν αἰτήσῃ, an indefinite conditional clause of expectancy; she expects Jesus to ask, and states positively what then will happen. And Jesus did ask of God; let us remember the words of his prayer, uttered aloud, just before he raised Lazarus, also the many expressions that he did the Father’s will, whatsoever he saw the Father do, etc. Moreover, the answer Jesus had sent the sisters in reply to their appeal in Lazarus’ sickness, positively stated that the sickness was “for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified

thereby." There is, therefore, no fault to be found with Martha's way of expressing her faith, saying that what Jesus asks of God, God will give him. The word "whatsoever," ὅσα, is especially great; it is a distinct echo of the same word used repeatedly by Jesus. The fact, too, that she leaves the matter of what Jesus will ask entirely with him, is a fine point in her faith. She neither pretends to dictate, nor to put forward her own wishes.

Some commentators say that Martha really does not expect Jesus to ask God anything in this case. We cannot think so. "Ὅσα ἄν with the subjunctive is too plain; it denotes expectancy. The promise sent to the sisters was too positive: the sickness was not to be unto death, but for the glory of God and of the Son of God. Martha had not forgotten this promise, her present words are not the product of just her own thoughts and conclusions regarding Jesus, they are the outgrowth of that promise sent her and Mary by Jesus. Jesus, she therefore would say, will ask something, and God will give him what he asks; this she knows positively. But what he will ask she does not know. She undoubtedly looked for Jesus to ask the healing of Lazarus while he still lived. Now that he was dead and buried four days she had given up defining what Jesus will ask to bring out the glory of God and his own glory. The long, painful waiting has chastened her heart. But though she hints at nothing she positively does include in her expression of assured faith the very greatest of possibilities, namely the resurrection of her brother. Two things assure us of this: first, the two miracles which Jesus had already wrought in raising Jairus' daughter and the widows' son at Nain, miracles which were surely known to Martha, and to which her heart could hardly help but turn now that her brother was dead; secondly, the promise of Jesus, that the sickness of Lazarus

was "not unto death." Just as Abraham boldly concluded that if God actually wanted Isaac slain, he could bring him back from the dead again and in some way or other redeem all his promises in Isaac, Heb. 11, 19, so Martha by no means left out this great possibility in thinking on the promise of Jesus to her and Mary. But she leaves it all in the hands of Jesus, in true meekness and humbleness of heart — "whatsoever thou shalt ask"; it was not her asking, her deciding, her choosing, but that of Jesus alone who would not err and who would not fail to redeem his word.

Only one weak human touch occurs in Martha's absolute confidence in Christ, it is the word αἰτήσι, "thou shalt ask," for αἰτεῖσθαι is used of human asking = to ask something for oneself, as when we creatures pray to God; whereas the asking of Jesus, God's Son, is constantly expressed on the part of Jesus by a word which points to his equality with God, as when an equal requests something of another, such as ἐρωτᾶν. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament*, I, p. 195 etc., writes: "The distinction between the words is this: αἰτέω, the Latin *peto*, is more submissive and suppliant, indeed the constant word by which is expressed the seeking of the inferior from the superior (Acts 12, 20); of the beggar from him that should give alms. Acts 3, 2); of the child from the parent (Matth. 7, 9; Luke 11, 11; Lam. 4, 4); of the subject from the ruler (Ezra 8, 22); of man from God (1 Kg. 3, 11; Matth. 7, 7; Jam. 1, 5; 1 John 3, 22); ἐρωτάω, on the other hand, is the Latin *rogo*; or sometimes *interrogo*. . . . Like the Latin *rogo* it implies on the part of the asker a certain equality, as of king with king (Luke 14, 32), or, if not equality, familiarity with him from whom the gift or favor is sought, which lends authority to the request. . . . The consciousness of his (Christ's) equal dignity speaks out of this, that as

often as he asks or declares that he will ask, anything of the Father, it is always ἐρωτῶ, ἐρωτήσω, an asking, that is, as upon equal terms (John 14, 16; 16, 26; 17, 9 and 15 and 20), never αἰτῶ or αἰτήσω. Martha, on the contrary, plainly reveals her poor unworthy notions of his person, and in fact declares that she sees in him no more than a prophet, ascribing the αἰτεῖσθαι to him, which he never ascribes to himself." Instead of saying with Trench that Martha declares Jesus only a prophet we prefer much to say, that, since she actually does call him the Son of God in v. 27, she was not fully conscious of what this great designation involved. In other words, she called him the Son, but seeing him pray to God, and seeing his lowly human form, she still thought of him as inferior to God. But who will blame her for this lack of knowledge, seeing that she is altogether on the right road to attain it?

V. 23. The first word of Jesus to Martha is a promise, or we may call it an assurance, hence he could not have understood her first word to be a reproach to him, Ἀναστήσεται is put first: "*Rise again shall thy brother.*" The word seems the positive answer to Martha's: "*Died would not have my brother.*" What does Jesus mean when he says, **Thy brother shall rise again?** Is it the resurrection at the last day, as Martha thought, or is it the resurrection at that very day? We have the same trouble with that word as Martha had. — She said, **I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.** Yes, she knew, and we say we know, but the trouble is, we often know no better than she knew. One question will show it —: Which seemed greater to Martha, and which would seem the greater to us, the resurrection at the last day, into life eternal, or the resurrection today into life temporal? How many commentators even, who try to

explain this word of Jesus, and Martha's way of taking it with little comfort, take it just about as she did! They are ever inclined to explain as if this last resurrection is *more* than the former, the one unto the eternal life of the body, whereas it is infinitely less. Meyer, Trench, Luthardt, Sommer, and others think that Christ's word was ambiguous, and purposely so. Trench for instance says: "With words purposely ambiguous, being meant for the trying of her faith, Jesus assures her that the deep, though unuttered longing of her heart shall indeed be granted." No, not ambiguous, but rather general, comprehensive, complete, and therefore truly glorious is the word of Jesus. It includes the lesser as well as the greater, that is the wonderful thing about it. And therefore it is not for the trying of her faith, but for the education of her faith, for Martha lacked the very thing so many of us lack to a lamentable degree today, namely the full understanding and conviction that all resurrection is comprehended in Christ alone, as he presently says. Martha, as Hiller says, is like a vessel tossed up and down by the waves, now rising on the crest of one, now sinking way down into the gulf as the waters yield. And the reason is that temporal life and the joy of living it together with our loved ones is still too precious to us compared with the eternal life which shall reach its climax for the body on the last great day in the blessed resurrection of believers. Purposely, therefore, our text does not contain the miracle of Lazarus' resurrection. Jesus did indeed that day call Lazarus back into his former life. But this was like a small gift added to an infinitely greater one simply for good measure. The greater one, the essential one is that Christ himself is the resurrection and the life, and that we are to have him, yea, him himself as our possession now and evermore. Jesus was educating Martha to this,

and is still trying to educate us in the same direction today. By his declaring, thy brother shall rise again, he simply laid down the first great fundamental proposition, on which he then proceeded to build the next, and the next, by which alone true comfort, hope, and joy are made our own. Martha's answer was natural enough — there is hardly one of us who would have made a better. But in eliciting it Jesus simply showed how much Martha still lacked — namely all the present, deep, soul-satisfying comfort, hope and joy that fills the heart when the resurrection is clearly comprehended in Christ as the resurrection and the life, in whom we possess our dead in Christ even more safely and fully than the living. Jesus wanted her to display her empty way of looking at the resurrection, in order that then he might fill her heart with the possession of himself, and leave no more such emptiness there.

V. 25-26 is the heart of the text, the center and kernel of the whole eleventh chapter of John. Jesus' first word was of the resurrection. There is none outside of him; and in him we have the resurrection indeed. **I am**, ἐγώ εἰμι — the light of the world, the bread of life, the resurrection and the life! "I am that I am" spoke Jehovah; "I am," Jesus Christ. "I am," now and for all ages to come. It is the voice of the Savior's divine majesty, the voice too of his victorious, triumphant love, mighty to save. — **The resurrection and the life**, ἡ ἀνάστασις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ. Let us contrast the two, as Trench does. "The Resurrection" is both something more and something less than "The Life." It is more, for it is Life in conflict with and overcoming death; it is Life being the death of death, vanquishing dissolution and decay, undoing all the work of death. It is at the same time less, for so long as Jesus bears the title some work of death still remains to be undone, mortality is not yet fully swal-

lowed up in life, the last enemy not wholly destroyed and put under his feet, 1 Cor. 15, 25-26. *Ego sum Resurrectio morientium et Vita viventium.* Bengel. Usually it is assumed that Christ is the Resurrection because he is the Life, i. e. the Life is the foundation of the Resurrection, or the Resurrection follows the Life; Meyer, however, thinks this is incorrect and makes the Life the consequence of the Resurrection. Of course, both in a way are correct, for Life follows and continues after the Resurrection, and Life also causes the victory over death, which is the Resurrection. Instead of balancing the two, the one over against the other, the two should be taken together as essentially one, for the thought of Life is in the Resurrection, and the thought of the Resurrection is in Life. Christ is not two, but one. And this one is expressed by two words because there is a twofold relation of that one, first Life as the opposite of death, and secondly the Resurrection as the annullment of death. That this is the true conception of the two designations is evidenced by what Jesus adds concerning the believer. Resurrection and Life are there seen to be terms which have a reference to us, each in its own way, though essentially one.—*Jesus is the Resurrection, therefore he that believeth in me, though he die, yet shall he live.* Again, *Jesus is the Life, therefore whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die.* Trench says it is difficult to interpret these two clauses so as to find a progress of thought in them. But is a progress intended? Trench supposes that the alternative to a progress is a mere repetition, he overlooks that the two clauses, while saying essentially the same thing, nevertheless, just as the two words Resurrection and Life, say this same thing with a difference in the persons. The vital point is the same, the application varies. This is the only progress; it is a twofold radiation from

one point, just as Resurrection and Life both radiate from the I am, Jesus — **He that believeth on me, though he die** — to him Christ is the Resurrection, the victory over death, he shall sleep indeed, **yet shall he live**, temporal death never harming him in the least. The condition is that of expectancy: *καὶ* (καί plus *ἐάν*) ἀποθάνῃ, 2nd aor. subj., followed by ζήσεται, fut. ind. This refers to Lazarus, and together with him to every believer who lies down to sleep till the resurrection morning. What a blessed thing Christ the Resurrection makes of death for the believer! What a comfort it gives to those who carry a believing brother to his bed in the grave! Just as we do not lose a brother, or other relative, when he retires for sleep in the night, so we do not lose him when he retires for sleep in the shadow of death. There is only the restful shadow, no real death; Christ has taken that away. Rejoice, O believing heart, at what Jesus makes for you of death! — But again, **Who-soever liveth and believeth on me shall never die**, οὐ μή ἀποθάνῃ the futuristic subj. with the double negative, the strongest form of denying something future. He “shall never die,” for to him who still lives in this earthly life and has his heart filled with faith, Christ will be the deathless Life; no death, in the real sense of the word, can touch him. This is Martha, Mary, and together with them every believer who continues in this world. What a joy to know that we shall never, οὐ μή, in no wise, die! And it is Christ who does all this; and it is faith, πιστεύειν, which connects us with Christ and makes us partakers of the Resurrection and the Life. Of course, something unexpressed lies behind this all, and at the approach of Lent we cannot but think of it. Acts 2, 24 tells us of it; also Rev. 1, 18. Calvary and Joseph’s garden show us fully what Christ here meant. — And now, having revealed himself to Martha, Jesus asks the

great question that is bound up in these words of his for all of us, **Believest thou this?** for thyself, as for thy brother? It is one thing to hear it, one thing to reason on it, argue over it; it is another to believe it. To believe it is to receive, have, hold, enjoy the reality and power of it with all that lies in it of joy, comfort, peace, and hope. And the measure of our believing, while not the measure of our possessing, since the smallest faith has Christ the Resurrection and the Life completely, is yet the measure of our enjoyment of it all.

V. 27. The answer of Martha affirms the question and adds the reason for the affirmation. **Yea, Lord,** refers to what Jesus has just said. It is a complete confession of faith. To look at what Martha adds as a restatement on her own part of just what she believes, and to find that this falls short of what Jesus has just said to her, is a mistake. There is no question at all as to whether she comprehended it all, for we today have not fathomed all the blessedness of Christ's wonderful words, we shall know them fully when we stand in the eternal light of the great resurrection morning. — Martha did not grasp in their fulness the things she said herself when she called Jesus **the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world,** hence she could not mean: Yea, Lord, I have believed at least this that I have understood of thy words. Moreover note that she says **I have believed,** ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα, perfect tense: I have believed hitherto and do still believe. Because of this, to which she emphatically adds, ἐγὼ, she now says, "Yea, Lord." And let us acknowledge that Martha has caught the very point in all that Christ said to her: his person. She can indeed believe that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, for she has believed and believes that he is none other than the Christ, the Son of God, he that cometh into the world. — She heaps up the desig-

nations; she gives a full confession of her faith regarding the person of Jesus. **The Christ** = the Messiah, promised in the old covenant, the center of hope for all true Israelites. — **The Son of God**, perhaps less clear to Martha, is the result of her teaching by Jesus himself and a response to the message Jesus himself had sent to her and Mary in the words, "This is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that *the Son of God* may be glorified thereby." Let us remember how the Jews persecuted Christ, and afterwards condemned him to death, for this very thing, that he called himself the Son of God and made himself equal with God. In the mind of Martha the name could mean no less than it did in the mouth of Jesus' deadly haters. — **He that cometh into the world**, ἐρχόμενος, is a standing Old Testament designation for the Messiah; compare Matth. 11, 3; Luke 7, 19-20; John 6, 14. We are reminded of Peter's confessions, John 6, 69; Matth. 16, 16; also of Nathanael's, John 1, 49. And the same confession comes forth from the hearts and lips of believers in every age. Let this confession rise in full strength during this season when we see again the Resurrection and the Life nailed to the cross for our advantage, that this confession and what it contains may carry us safely through every trial, every grief, and death itself at last.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

After one has grasped the relation of this text to the one preceding, the sermon will almost build itself. Jesus had said: "One thing is needful" — and here now we see the great need. But the Helper and the help are at hand. In fact these two: the need, and the help, comprise the heart of the text. So we may sketch out the following: Last Sunday — Bethany fair, sunny, happy. Today, dark, sad, mourners where Jesus had sat, a vacant chair, a dreadful tomb, a crushed hope. But had not Jesus said, One thing is needful? Now was the hour of need.

The Hour of Need in Bethany.*I. The need at its worst.*

1. The fair home in Bethany not immune — so our fair homes. It may be long until the shadow falls, but then it often falls the darker.
2. Lazarus died — in spite of every effort, even appeal to Christ. So often still.
3. What was behind it in Bethany? Sin and its deadly work, sin so often disregarded. Here see the depth of your real need.
4. What accompanied the death in Bethany? Utter feeling of helplessness; questions as to divine providence; emptiness of mere human comfort, crushed hearts; possible doubt of Jesus' power.

II. The help at its best.

1. Greater than the sisters supposed when they said, If thou hadst been here. Jesus purposely waited.
2. Greater than calling the dead back to this life. The raising of Lazarus let out of our text, and we are not to think, Oh, if Jesus would only raise our dead as he raised Lazarus.
3. So great as to free us completely from the power of death here and hereafter. Christ the life our champion; death our foe; the battle Christ fought with death; the victory his life won for us.
4. It is so easy to get this help at its best: Believe! Martha did believe, she knew who Christ was. Believe likewise, and live in the growing power of this faith.

In themes like this, turning on the word: "need," note the correlative idea of "help." In studying themes, and points in them for properly splitting themes, always bear in mind the plain implications, the correlative concepts or ideas, and many a good division will be found. — The climax of the text is in Christ's own word, declaring that He is the Resurrection and the Life. Here the correlative is sin and death on the one hand, comfort and joy on the other. So we outline:

Christ Bids Us Look Upon Him as the Resurrection and the Life.

- I. *See the havoc which sin and death have wrought.*
- II. *Behold the Savior who himself is the Resurrection and the Life.*
- III. *Rejoice in the comfort which he brings for us who live and us who die.*

We may also split into three parts by putting the need into the theme:

The Hour of Need in Bethany.

- I. *It was an hour of need indeed.*
- II. *It became an hour of grace through Jesus Christ.*
- III. *It ended as an hour of joy.*

Some may wish to put Martha forward, since the text deals with her. Of course, Martha would be used only to make Christ stand out with full prominence:

Martha's Faith in Christ, the Resurrection and the Life.

- I. *Its basis* (v. 27: "I have believed . . . Son of God").
- II. *Its battle* (v. 21: "If thou hadst been here").
- III. *Its triumph* (v. 25-26, enabling her great confession).

Martha may be used in another way. Note the psychology that runs through the text up to a magnificent climax: 1) *If thou hadst been here*; 2) *But I know*, v. 22, and: *I know*, v. 24; 3) *Believest thou this?* v. 26; and 4) *Yea, Lord, I believe.*"

The Triumph of Martha's Faith When Her Brother Lay Dead.

- I. *The hard conflict*, voiced in v. 21: *If*, etc.
- II. *The preliminary victory*, voiced in v. 22: *But* etc.
- III. *The wondrous help*, Christ's word v. 25-26.
- IV. *The complete victory*, voiced in v. 27.

QUINQUAGESIMA, OR ESTOMIHI

Mark 10, 35-45

The Wednesday following Estomihi is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent. Our text is intended to usher in this holy season and therefore strikes the first full and positive Passion-note. The action of the disciples is not the chief thing in the text, important as it is in occasioning what is the chief thing, and as furnishing a foil for it. Not even the admonition which Jesus gives to his disciples is the chief thing, though it naturally grows out of it and deserves a place in our sermon on the text. The chief thing undoubtedly is what Christ says concerning himself and his Passion. And focusing our attention upon that, it is not difficult to sum up briefly what he here says. He drinks a cup, he is baptized with a baptism, he gives his life a ransom for many, coming to minister, not to be ministered unto. Therefore we say, Christ presents himself in his Passion here, and this is what he tells us: *The Passion is the very purpose for which he came.* This, accordingly, must be the fundamental thought of the sermon. It will be eminently proper if all else is made completely subservient and secondary to it and so narrowed down as not to overshadow it. There is, of course, a fine chance here to preach the Christian ideal of service, i. e. to put this into the foreground and to use what Christ says of himself as an illustration and example of it, or as the perfect model for it. However suitable such a treatment of the text might be at another time, for this Sunday and in this cycle of texts, in which the controlling feature is that Jesus presents himself in his Passion to us, it would be a mistake in that it would forsake a

superior line of thought and treatment and adopt in place of it one manifestly inferior. Put Christ himself and his Passion forward, and you will lead your hearers to the very heart of this text. The parallel account is found Matth. 20, 20-28.

Christ is on his last journey, the next stage of which is Jericho. Already twice before Jesus has told his disciples about the end that awaited him. They are even now amazed that he actually sets out for Jerusalem. It is now that Jesus for the third time takes them about him, and with fuller, clearer, more startling, more terrible particulars than ever before, tells them that he shall be betrayed to the priests and scribes, condemned, handed over to the Gentiles, mocked, scourged, and — crowning horror of it all! — crucified; and that on the third day he shall rise again. It is Luke who particularly informs us that the disciples understand nothing of what Jesus really means. Not that they put away all thought of suffering, but that they hold fast their dream of earthly glory and interpret away the actual sense of their Master's word. This is the time, place, and situation for the incident which is narrated in our text.

V. 35. Matthew tells us: "Then came to him *the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons*, worshipping him, and asking a certain thing of him." The request emanated from all three, the mother speaking for them all. The present tense, **there come near unto him, . . . saying**, makes the description vivid. It was indeed a remarkable proceeding. — **James and John** belonged to the inner circle among the disciples, these two together with Peter being the chosen witnesses at the raising of Jairus' daughter and at the Transfiguration on the Mount. They are here called **the sons of Zebedee**, they were brothers, and not merely according to the flesh, but also in spirit, both following Jesus, both ranking among the foremost

of his followers, both united here, as in other things, in one way of thinking. Zebedee is usually thought to be dead at this time, since Matthew does not call Salome the wife of Zebedee, but the mother of his sons. Our text says nothing of this noble woman, one of the great characters of the New Testament, great even in this incident, although it involved a mistake. The coming of these three to Jesus must have been private, possibly during a rest on the journey, when Jesus was alone for a little while. The ten did not hear what took place until a little while after. — **Master**, or more exactly “Teacher” (margin), was the usual way of addressing Jesus; it is the word for Rabbi, see John 1, 38. — **We would that thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall ask of thee**, i. e. promise us the granting of a favor in advance of our telling thee what it is. A very human way of going about the thing. They seem to feel that there may be some hesitation or objection on the part of Jesus, most probably on account of the greatness of what they have in mind to ask. $\Theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega$ with $\iota\acute{\nu}\alpha$ and the subj. following expresses an indirect command, and is thus a substitute for the simple imperative; $\delta\ \acute{\epsilon}\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \alpha\iota\tau\acute{\eta}\sigma\omega\mu\epsilon\nu$ is an indefinite conditional relative clause of expectancy, using, as is so frequently the case, the $\acute{\epsilon}\acute{\alpha}\nu$ in full. — V. 36: **And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?** ποιήσω, aorist subj., deliberative. Jesus does not bind himself by assenting to their indefinite request. While we may assume that he knew their thoughts, he asked that they clearly express them. This, no doubt, was best because of the explanation he needed to give them. But aside from such considerations, Jesus always used proper caution, and thus gave us an example how we with our far more limited insight into the thoughts, shemes, and deceptions of men ought to proceed. Herod could make a rash and risky promise to the daughter of Herodias, Matth. 14, 7.

Jesus can and will do nothing of the kind. Sometimes such promises are asked of us with the appended assurance that they shall in no way conflict with our obligations to God or to the state, as in the various secret orders. But even thus to make the promise is to allow others to decide for us what conflicts with our obligations, i. e. to surrender our conscience to them; also there may be a conflict with some other obligation not thought of by those asking the promise; finally, if the thing to be promised is in every way right, good, and beneficial, why should it be veiled in secrecy at all, why should it not court the light at once and avoid the appearance of doubtfulness or evil? Let us ever follow the example of Jesus as given here in dealing with Salome and her sons. — **And they said unto him.** Besser is wrong when he writes about the surprised look on the faces of James and John when they heard their mother speak out her request. She indeed did the speaking, as we conclude from Matthew, but she spoke for all three, and it was just as if James and John themselves had spoken, for which reason Mark says, "*they* said unto him." — **Grant unto us,** or give unto us, presumes that the matter is wholly in Christ's power to do as he pleases. In a way this word, δὸς ἡμῖν, accompanied by the genuflection of Salome, expresses great faith. Usually the disciples were of little faith and failed to expect sufficiently of Christ, seldom, as here, they expected too much. Salome and her sons treat Jesus much like some royal personage about to come out of the obscurity in which he has lived hitherto, and presently to ascend his glorious throne. With far-reaching forethought they want to preëempt for themselves the very highest of the honors which then shall be forthcoming. Being first to see the near approach of the glorious future, first to honor Jesus by acknowledging it, and first to ask for positions in the kingdom that

shall be, they confidently expect that Jesus, like some such earthly king, will grant their early and honorable request. — **That we may sit** (ἵνα καθίσωμεν, where the classics would have the simple infin., or the infin. with τοῦ or ὥστε) **one on thy right hand, and one on thy left hand, in thy glory,** conveys the idea of a throne-room, with the king sitting in state and all the royal court assembled to do him honor, and on his right hand and on the left the chief ministers of the king, next to him in glory, and reflecting the light shed upon them from the throne. So Solomon honored his mother Bathsheba by having her seated on his right side, 1 Kgs. 2, 19; compare Ps. 45, 9. So Micaiah, the prophet, saw the vision of the heavenly court, the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left, 1 Kgs. 22, 19; 2 Chron. 18, 18. Another picture of this sort we find in Neh. 8, 4, Ezra standing in the pulpit before the people with his assistants on his right and on his left; compare also Zech. 4, 3 and 11-14. While in cases of division and judgment the right hand signifies honor and acceptance and the left shame and rejection, in a royal court or assemblage both sides are places of honor, the left only slightly less glorious than the right. Apparently James and John, together with Salome, did not decide which of the sons should sit on the right and which on the left side, willing to leave this at least to Jesus himself. Moreover, there is here a touch of that true mother-love in Salome's heart, which certainly Jesus also appreciated, that while she spoke for her sons she was forgetful of herself as to a place of special honor; her honor was to be that of her sons — for herself she asked no more. Let us note here that this request had some foundation at least in the promise of Jesus that his disciples "shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," Matth. 19, 28. Then,

too, we must say that in spite of all the faultiness of the request there is something grand in the idea of a mother and her son trying to secure the highest possible places in the kingdom of Jesus. When we see men everywhere, and too many in the church also, striving for the world's honor and high places, let us learn in true faith to put the δόξα and the βασιλεία of Christ, its honors and its high and blessed places, above all worldly grandeur for ourselves and our children. Salome's wish, in purified form, has been repeated again and again in the case of Christian mothers whose one desire and prayer for their sons was to see them in the holy office of the ministry preaching the Gospel to the church of Christ.

V. 38. Jesus is very gentle with these petitioners. Luther says that he severely rebukes the pride of the Pharisees, but the ambition of these his disciples he treats as a different thing, for there is faith in their hearts, and this pride of theirs, while still mingled with the thoughts of the flesh, is already in course of being converted into that humility which alone is great in the kingdom of God. — **Ye know not what ye ask**, i. e. what your request involves. "They sought the exaltation, but they did not see the step." Augustine. Bengel interprets: "Ye know not what my glory is, what it means to sit at my right and my left, to whom it belongs, and what it requires." The idea is not, that if they knew they would not desire those high places, but that then they would not make a request which plainly reveals their mistaken notion as to how those places may be obtained. And now Jesus points out the way to those places and in fact to all high places in his glorious kingdom. — **Are ye able to drink the cup that I drink?** What Christ meant by "the cup" is clearly shown by John 18, 11: "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" and his prayer in Gethsemane, that if it

were possible this cup may be taken from him, Matth. 26, 39 and 42. The cup signified the Passion of Christ in all its bitterness. In that precious Lenten hymn, "Over Kedron Jesus treadeth" occur the following lines which bring out this meaning,

"Praying that the bitter death
And the cup of doom may go."

The contents of the cup are usually understood to be the wrath of God because of our sin. To drink the cup means to undergo the bitterness of the Passion, the suffering for our sin. The present *πίνω* is used because Jesus by deciding to go up to Jerusalem for his Passion and by already being on his way, had actually entered upon his Passion. — **Or to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?** The word "or" repeats the general idea contained in the sentence concerning the cup, but in different imagery, thus adding to the idea and enriching it. The Passion of Christ is a subject great enough to deserve a twofold, yea, a manifold presentation.

Far too many commentators are content to repeat the idea that baptism here equals immersion, the water for the immersion being the great sufferings into which Christ was plunged. Thus Sommer: "Are you able to be completely *immersed* in suffering and death for my sake?" Meyer: "The point of comparison is in the *immersion*, not in the purification, as which the church fathers have conceived the baptism with blood, which would not fit Jesus" (why not, he fails to say). Besser: "In which dying he *immersed* himself, to emerge again in the glory of life." A few, like Haas, *Lutheran Commentary* and G. Mayer, are more guarded and at least omit immersion. Seiss in his *Baptist System Examined*, p. 197, disposes of these loose ideas in a thorough manner, showing that the imagery in Christ's words concerning his blood-bap-

tism is not of immersion at all. He writes: "We look next at the baptism of Christ spoken of in Luke 13, 50, Mark 10, 38, Matth. 20, 22-23. This is uniformly understood by Origen, Gregory Nazianzen, Augustine, and all the Fathers, as a baptism of blood. But the Savior never was totally *immersed* in blood. In the garden he was only *bedewed* with drops oozing from his pores. On the cross he was merely stained with what trickled from his pierced hands, feet, and temples, and flowed from his wounded side. If we understand it of the wrath of God which he endured for sinners, that wrath is always spoken of as *poured out*: Ps. 69, 24; 79, 6; Jer. 10, 25; Ezek. 7, 8; 21, 31; 2 Chron. 12, 7; Is. 52, 25; Jer. 7, 20; Lam. 2, 4; Ezek. 20, 33. If we understand it of the stripes and iniquities, which he bore for the world's salvation, these things are everywhere spoken of as *laid on* him. Is. 53, 4; 6, 8; 1 Pet. 2, 24. And it would be doing violence to the ordinary construction of language to read the Savior's words as if he had said, 'Are ye able to be *immersed with the immersion I am immersed with?*' 'I have an *immersion* to be immersed with.' 'Can ye be *immersed with the immersion I am immersed with?*' How much more natural and consistent to understand the question, 'Can ye endure to have *laid or poured upon* you what I have *laid upon* me?' So that in regard to this baptism, as in regard to the baptism by the Spirit, the entire phraseology of the Bible contemplates the application of the element to the subject in a way answering to *affusion*, and to *affusion* alone." Read his argument *in extenso*. The word *baptism*, if taken by itself, might leave in doubt whether an immersion is meant or some other mode of applying the water; but Seiss is correct, that when, in figurative language, the element for the baptism is suffering (or the Spirit), immersion is out of the question, and some other mode of application far more natural and fitting. Bengel,

and some others following him, refer the cup to Christ's internal suffering, the baptism to the external, but this distinction is too mechanical; what hurt his body hurt also his heart, and vice versa, and what men heaped upon him as well as what God poured out to him was virtually one undivided portion of bitterness. The cup as well as the baptism are here viewed by Christ in relation to his resulting exaltation; namely that by his Passion and death Christ earned his eternal glory. It has been well said that in ascending to his heavenly throne and sitting exalted at God's right hand we must behold first his *essential* glory, that which he had before the world began as the Son equal with the Father, and then also his *merited* glory, that which the Father gave the Son of man, Phil. 2, 9-11. The latter must be kept in mind here. It is a mistake to reduce what Jesus here says of the cup he drinks and the baptism he is baptized with, to the mere idea of great suffering in general, apart and separate from the great meritorious purposes of the suffering, in order to make an easy application to James and John when now Jesus says they too shall drink that cup and be baptized with that baptism. The idea in Christ's question is different in one essential point from his idea in his following admission that the two disciples shall indeed drink the cup, etc. In the question Christ's idea is: Can you suffer my sufferings and so *merit* the high places you desire? The true answer to this question is: No, we cannot. In the following admission that the two disciples shall indeed drink the cup and be baptized with the baptism, the idea of merit, and of *thereby* achieving the high places sought is dropped.

V. 39: **And they said unto him, We are able.** This answer proceeds out of the same ignorance as their petition. The simple fact of the case is they were not able, for no man on earth is or ever was able

to endure what Christ did for our sins and earn ever so lowly a place in heaven, to say nothing of the highest ones. — But the confident assertion of these two aspiring disciples leads Jesus to admit that in a certain way they indeed shall share his suffering. **And Jesus said unto them, The cup that I drink ye shall drink; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized.** Well, then, one might say, they ought to obtain the places thus earned. But at once we see, that this does not follow, for the idea of earning is absent here. There are really two ways of drinking the cup and being baptized with the baptism of Christ: one, the way impossible for James and John and every man, *the way of merit*, the way in which Christ suffered and purchased all heaven for us; the other, the *way of Christian self-sacrifice*, by Christ's help and after the manner of his suffering. "In the offering which Christ made to God for us there is one element which we will never be able to copy as such. The Son of God gave his life as ransom for many; by his suffering and death he rendered complete atonement for the sins of the world; his sacrifice was the propitiation for our sins. Now there is no sacrifice which we are able to make, no offering we are able to bring which will have any atoning or propitiating power with God. . . . Our best offerings are not without some stain of sin, and are therefore so far from making good any sin of our own" — and we add, win any place for us in heaven — "that they themselves have need of Christ's merit to make them truly acceptable to God. If then we would follow in the footsteps of him who gave his life for us, we must forever put aside the thought of meriting anything before God by our own doing or suffering. We are to bear the cross our Lord lays upon us only that we may praise his name and magnify his grace." Lenski, *His Footsteps*, 344 etc. This manner of drinking the cup and

being baptized with the baptism of Christ is referred to frequently in the Scriptures; thus 1 Pet. 4, 13: "Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings"; 2 Cor. 4, 10: "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus"; Gal. 6, 17: "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." How this suffering comes upon us Jesus himself tells us: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." John 15, 20. Also v. 18: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." It is incorrect to suppose that by the cup and the baptism for these two disciples Jesus necessarily meant martyrdom. James indeed was beheaded, Acts 12, 2, and his cup and baptism included martyrdom; but John in his long life was simply "our brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ," Rev. 1, 9. He indeed suffered imprisonment, Acts 4, 3, 21; 5, 18, scourging, Acts 5, 40, his life was endangered, Acts 5, 33, he was in exile, Rev. 1, 9, but he did not die a martyr. The tales that he had to drink a cup of poison and, in order to fulfil the saying of Christ regarding baptism, was immersed in seething oil, coming away from both ordeals unharmed, are inventions of men like Origen who could not be satisfied unless they had the most literal kind of fulfillment for Christ's prophetic statements. — The hatred of the world, more or less tribulation and persecution, in some instances even bloody martyrdom, are the lot of all Christ's followers, their cup, their baptism, which they share with him to whom they are joined as disciples and believers, whom the world first hated and still hates, and whom it would again nail to the cross if he should walk on earth in lowliness as once he walked.

But how about the places at Christ's right hand and left? V. 40: **But to sit on my right hand or on my left hand is not mine to give: but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared.** So then there are such places at Christ's right hand and left; so there is a δόξα to come, and the places are prepared for certain ones. These are great and wonderful things which dare not be overlooked. The correction which Jesus makes in the thoughts of his two disciples and their mother is not that they have misconceived his kingdom of glory entirely, that this is invisible and utterly spiritual without glorious places for men with souls and bodies, the correction is that they have misconceived the way to attain those most glorious places. They are not Christ's to give. "So he declares *as man*, that he has no authority, that he is a servant, and answers the disciples according to their view of him." Luther. Those places therefore cannot be secured from Christ as favorites or deserving servants of an earthly monarch receive grants from him according to his mere arbitrary will. In fact, it is already too late to come and ask for these places now as they have already been assigned. To whom Christ does not say. James and John are by no means shut out; nor does Christ say he does not know to whom the places are assigned, but he leaves the veil over them — in due time James and John and we all shall see for whom they were prepared, and the sight shall meet our approval and cause us to break out in praise to God. Matthew adds: prepared "of my Father," of him whose will Christ came to do in all things, whose will is salvation and glory for all disciples of Christ whether they receive the highest or the lowest places in the kingdom above. How the Father dealt in allotting the places Christ does not say, but we may well apply the rule, "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall also

reap bountifully," 2 Cor. 9, 6; "And they that be wise (or teachers) shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. 12, 3. Let us glory now in the labor and the cross, so shall we glory at last in the crown and diadem.

V. 41. How the ten **heard**, we do not know. Did James and John tell them in the supposition that the places were really theirs after all? **The ten** here show that they are very much like the two. — **To be moved with indignation** = to be indignant. They **began**, ἤρξαυτο, but Christ did not allow them to continue, he smothered the fire at its first outbreak. — **Concerning James and John** for seeking to gain an advantage over them, points to envy and a sense of being treated unfairly. Many men see no wrong in their success in securing a special advantage for themselves, but they become highly indignant at others and call them selfish, unfair, etc., when these happen to secure the coveted advantage for themselves.

V. 42. The ill-feeling among the disciples as well as the importance of what Jesus was about to say to them demanded that they all should be present to hear. They were all in danger of following a wrong principle and example. So Jesus states the principle, and then places over against it, as the one for them to follow always, the opposite principle, the one which rules exclusively in his kingdom. When James and John came to Jesus with their request they acted very much in line with the principles and practices found in mere human kingdoms. Not only that, but they as well as the ten undoubtedly had worldly ideas about the position they expected to occupy in Christ's kingdom. It was exceedingly necessary to clear these false notions away and to put the truth in their place. — **Ye know**, said Jesus, and thus appealed to the experience of the disciples, which we, of course, share

with them. — **That they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles**, *qui imperare censentur*, is not: who think they rule; but: who are looked upon and known to rule, kings, governors, and the like, actual rulers and considered such. They are further designated as **great ones**, οἱ μεγάλοι αὐτῶν, because of their great power exceeding that of the people beneath them. Now Christ says, this is what we know: such rulers and great ones **lord it over** the Gentiles, their subjects, and **exercise authority over them**, “*sie herrschen hochher ueber sie, sie ueben hochher Gewalt ueber sie,*” Lange, *Leben Jesu*, 2, 6, p. 1153, which is a good translation of κατακυριεύουσιν and κατεξουσιάζουσιν = treat them with lordship and with authority from above. Jesus merely states the fact; he does not say or intimate that this is wrong. The Scriptures tell us that “the powers that be are ordained of God,” Rom. 13, 1, and urge “every soul to be subject unto the higher powers.” Anarchy and rebellion are not countenanced by the Word of God. — Jesus purposely mentions the governments of the **Gentiles**, not the theocracy of the Jews, which was of a different order; he confines his comparison to secular governments in the secular states. The Jews themselves were under Gentile rule at the time, in fact Jesus himself was, and we know that he bade his questioners at one time give unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar’s, and himself paid the government tax. By speaking of the exercise of Gentile or secular state authority he does not mean to withdraw his followers from it. — But while he thus allows it to stand in its own sphere, he confines it to that: **But it is not so among you.** The present tense shows that Jesus is not speaking about the kingdom of glory in the future, but about the kingdom of grace as it was then already when his disciples stood about him. He does not say, It *shall not be* so, but, It *is* not so; a fact, it is not an admoni-

tion or an aim, that is here set before us. — Not that there are to be no great ones, or first ones, among the disciples, for Jesus plainly names such: **whosoever would become great among you, and whosoever would be first among you**, both beginning: ὃς ἂν θέλη, an indefinite relative clause of expectancy. “Great” is less than “first”; only one can be “first,” while more can be great. Remembering the desire of James and John, he sitting at Christ’s right would be first, he at his left second, both not only great, but the greatest. When Jesus says “whosoever” he indicates a universal principle in his kingdom; what he says applies throughout and to all without exception. Again Jesus says, whosoever “would become among you,” θέλη γενέσθαι ἐν ὑμῖν, but the future idea in the subjunctive must not be pressed to refer to the kingdom to come alone, it includes our future in this present kingdom among our fellow believers. In what does greatness and being first consist? In lording it over others as subjects, in using authority upon them? In the very opposite! He who aspires to greatness “among you,” my followers, says Christ, **shall be your minister**, and he who wants the very highest place as first and foremost of all, shall be **servant of all**. Note the “shall,” ἔσται, the future in an imperative sense (found a few times only in the N. T.). There is the same gradation here as between “great” and “first,” the former must be **minister**, servant (margin), διάκονος, the latter **servant**, bondservant (margin) or slave, δοῦλος; the former must be servant **among you** (church), the latter bondsman **of all** (world). The gradation is downward, an inverted pyramid; we must take our secular notions of greatness and turn them upside-down before we can get them to fit in the kingdom of Christ. Because many have not done this we today have the papacy which lords it over great multitudes and exercises authority over them in Gentile

fashion. See the Smalcald Articles, Jacobs, *Book of Concord*, p. 339. The same spirit has often enough lifted its head among Protestants. It is a wonderful principle which Jesus lays down; the more we consider it the more its truth dawns upon us. What a greatness in truly serving our fellow believers; what an exceeding greatness in truly serving all men! Besser says: They who conduct themselves as servants and bondmen of their brethren in Christ already sit at his right hand and at his left." And when Jesus says "whosoever *would*," he refers to James and John and their will expressed in their petition, and countenances such willing. — Oh, if only more of us "would!"

When Jesus spoke of secular greatness he began with "them which are accounted to rule" and went a step higher to "their great ones"; when, however, he spoke of godly or spiritual greatness he began at once where he had left off in the secular, he that would be "great," and then went not merely a step higher, but leaped at once to the very pinnacle, he that would be "first," *πρωτος*, "the servant of all." This last expression points to himself, for there has never really been a servant "of all" except Christ himself. — **For verily the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.** The **verily** is not in the best texts. **For** = in proof I adduce myself, the greatest, yea, the first in the kingdom, the very King himself. Let us not suppose that Christ is asking something of us from which he is exempt. Nothing could more plainly establish the principle he uttered than the great, surprising fact that it includes himself. — Do not think that he uses the name **Son of man**, because he is only a model for us in the achievement of this greatness, but the name stands here in the full Messianic sense as elsewhere. There is no reason apparent why it should be restricted in any way as to fitness in this connection. Jesus uses the word "not to be ministered

unto," διακονηθῆναι, and **to minister**, διακονῆσαι, which reaches back to "whosoever would become great among you, shall be your *minister*," διάκονος; then however he adds a description of his ministry, which reaches to the very limit of service, making him in the highest possible sense, as our ransom, *the servant of all*. So he leads all his disciples, every διάκονος and every δούλος, to look to him alone. Christ did accept some of the loving ministration of his followers, but never was the purpose of his life to take and not to give, but the reverse; so even in taking he gave, even accepting ministration he ministered. — And this was the great ministry and service he came to render, and by which he became πρῶτος forever, **to give his life a ransom for many**. **To give**, δοῦναι, is the highest act of the διακονῆσαι. **His life**, τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ, he came to give, and was even now on that errand; ψυχὴ, the soul, in the sense of the bodily life. The life is given by the shedding of the blood, and thus becomes "the price," τιμή, with which we are bought, 1 Cor. 6, 20, "Ye were bought with a price." — It is given **a ransom**, λύτρον, a price paid for another, here **for many**; "in whom we have redemption through his blood," τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν, i. e. redemption by the payment of a ransom, Eph. 1, 7; compare John 10, 11; Heb. 10, 5-10. Luther puts it finely in the Catechism: "purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood, and with his innocent suffering and death." Christ himself was the price for our redemption. In λύτρον as here used, the life being given for someone as a λύτρον, there is beyond question the Biblical and Lutheran doctrine that Christ was our substitute and that his sufferings were vicarious. Zahn collects the main passages of the New Testament, most of which are given below, as proof for the statement: "The idea of redemption (*redemptio*, *manumissio*) effected by

Jesus, especially by his death, would not return everywhere in the New Testament, if it did not go back to Jesus himself." He also adds the frequent comparisons with the redemption of Israel out of Egypt, which is looked at in the Old Testament in a similar manner, Ex. 6, 6; 15, 13; Ps. 77, 15. — **For** many, ἀντί = in place of them, and likewise declares that Christ gave himself into death as our substitute. Meyer says directly: "ἀντί designates the substitution." Nor does it make much difference, as far as the sense of ἀντί is concerned, whether we construe with λύτρον or with δοῦναι. It is substitution in either case. This precious doctrine must be held fast and taught with all clearness and power, because it is constantly denied and evaded by men who claim to be the foremost teachers in the churches around us. Rationalism has no use for it, and rationalism appears in many forms and in unexpected places. — For **many**, Jesus says regarding himself, while he had spoken of a servant of *all* just before. The redeemed are called "many" as compared with the one Son of man. Since there is no indication in the text that Jesus had in mind those especially who would accept his redemptive price in faith for themselves, we do not think it correct to so restrict the word "many" here; it is equal to *all*, for to them his service extended. Christ gave himself, 1 Tim. 2, 6; his blood is the price of our ransom, Rom. 3, 25; Eph. 1, 7; 1 Pet. 1, 19; he ransomed us from guilt and the penalty of sin and from the power of our accuser, the devil, 1 Cor. 6, 20; 7, 23; Gal. 3, 13; Tit. 2, 14; Acts 20, 28. The text so plainly teaches the doctrine of redemption in its fulness that it would be contrary to sound exegesis to limit the thought in any way so as to gain a better adaptation to the ministry and service Christ's disciples are to render in copying his example. Of course, no man can redeem another, Ps. 49, 7-8, but there is no danger here of making this specific

form of Christ's service to all the model form for our service to all. Yet he who gave his life a ransom, by that very act became our model in the highest sense of the word, after the manner of Paul's words: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Rom. 12, 1. "And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor." Eph. 5, 2. — "His life a ransom for many" — thus Jesus led his disciples on to Jerusalem and Calvary, and following him in the light of this word they learned to bury all worldly ambition and to become great in the heavenly fashion of their Master, by service and by sacrifice in love.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

In looking over the homiletical material available for this text we note the strong tendency to put the disciples in the foreground and to relegate what is said of Christ to the rear. One famous preacher elaborates the theme: "Concerning the sacred ambition to become great in the kingdom of God"; another: "Sacred ambition, its right, its danger, its satisfaction." This and all merely admonitory lines of thought should be abandoned here, and Christ's words concerning his Passion made the center of the sermon. — Keeping thus to Christ we may outline in simple analytical fashion, following in order the inner substance of the text:

The Son of Man is Not Come to be Ministered Unto, But to Minister.

- I. *He would have had a right to be ministered unto.*
- II. *He made himself the greatest servant of all.*
- III. *He performed an incomparable service. (As to its severity and humiliation, as to its blessedness and glory.)*
- IV. *He now asks us to appreciate and in a manner to copy after his service.*

Here is one still simpler :

Christ, the Servant Beyond Compare.

- I. *His service was to save us.*
- II. *His service is now in a way also our pattern.*

These, too, may be suggestive :

Christ's Greatness in His Passion.

- I. *The greatness of his humiliation.*
- II. *The greatness of his service.*
- III. *The greatness of his reward.*

Christ Our Ransom.

- I. *Its worth.*
- II. *Its payment.*
- III. *Its acceptance by us.*
- IV. *Its power in our lives.*

Christ's Thoughts Concerning His Kingdom Are Infinitely Higher Than Ours

- I. *We flee suffering, Christ seeks it.*
- II. *We seek honors, Christ shows us they are already allotted.*
- III. *We want to earn heaven, Christ tells us he alone can buy it.*

In most of these outlines James and John are thrust considerably to a side. They would come in only as the story is told, how Jesus came thus to speak of his passion, or they would come in incidentally in a part of the sermon. Now let no one deem this a calamity, for actually there is no loss. However, the sermon may feature these two disciples (and their mother) to a certain degree, but only, as in the previous text in the case of Martha, so as to make Christ stand out with supreme prominence.

When James and John Desired the Highest Honors

- I. *They were told of the wonderful principle in the Kingdom;*
- II. *Of Christ's supreme exemplification of that principle;*
- III. *Of our redemption by that exemplification; and*
- IV. *Of our imitation of Christ through his redemption.*

This can be filed into better form, especially by dressing down the big words. It is offered only as a suggestion.

INVOCAVIT

Matthew 16, 21-26

Once more we have Christ telling us of his Passion. He here announces it, he here refuses to be tempted away from it, he here calls his disciples to follow in the shadow of it. And again we will find this last element secondary, while the other two are plainly the primary ones. Moreover, the distinctive feature of the text is the second part of it, the temptation to forsake the Passion, to which Christ refused to yield. Here is a victory like that described in the old gospel text for this Sunday, when Christ repelled the three deadly attacks of the tempter. Our general theme then is: *Christ cannot be turned from his Passion.*

V. 21. **From that time** plainly marks a significant period in the life of Christ. Peter had just made his great confession of Christ in the name of all the disciples, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." One part of Christ's mission was thus, to a certain degree, accomplished: these men, his disciples, knew who he was, they bowed in faith before *his divine person*. But another work now presses for accomplishment, just as hard to finish successfully as this first had been. Let us notice that Jesus has definitely left the populous towns of Galilee where he labored so earnestly and long. The opposition of his foes increased to such a pitch that he withdrew, never to work there again as before. We find him in these days far from the former center of his activity, away up near the coasts of Tyre and Sidon in the northwest, down in the country of the Ten Cities in the southeast, finally here in the extreme north "in the parts of Cesarea Philippi," v. 13, avoiding the

town it seems and devoting himself to his disciples and such occasional preaching and deeds of mercy as came his way. The scene itself was fine enough, the noble ranges of Libanus and Anti-Libanus rising before him, and the snowy mass of Hermon glittering in the dawn, or flushed with the evening glow. Here in this retired corner of the land, after the great word on his person has been uttered, Jesus proceeds to utter the great word on *his work*. Often enough he had hinted at what he now plainly, yet with some reservation, says. Behind the temptation at the end of his forty days' fast Jesus clearly saw the shadow of the cross; when he had cleansed the Temple the first time he spoke of the temple of his body, which the Jews would destroy and he would raise up; in conversation with Nicodemus he told him plainly, "The Son of man must be lifted up." — But now the time has come for something more full and complete, now **began Jesus to show unto his disciples**, etc. He sets himself this task, ἤρξατο, aorist and by steady progress endeavors to accomplish it, δεικνύειν, pres. inf., durative. "Began," while it indicates a certain point yet implies a continuation. "His disciples" are the ones whom he teaches this absolutely necessary thing. They must not draw false conclusion from his divinity, such as they were only too much inclined to draw because of the vain Jewish hopes still lurking in their hearts. Though Jesus is God's Son and the Messiah there is to be no golden, glorious, refulgent earthly kingdom and grandeur ahead, but the very opposite, — **he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up**. This is the great Passion-program in its main outlines. Three verbs portray the suffering, one the final exaltation: ἀπελθεῖν, παθεῖν, ἀποκτανθῆναι — and then ἐγερθῆναι. They all depend on δεῖ, **must** = it is necessary. Why

necessary is not stated, and the word used is quite general, referring to any kind of necessity. We may say, however, that according to the Scriptures the necessity here meant is that of God's gracious counsel concerning our salvation, part of which had already been realized in the coming of his Son, to which necessarily the remainder must now be added until all is fully carried out as God planned. Matth. 26, 54; Luke 24, 26; John 3, 14; etc.

He must **go unto Jerusalem**, willingly, knowing why; Jerusalem the place for the sacrifice. The Jews followed Jesus with their hostility into Galilee, but in the end they needed not to seek him, he came to them. Luke 13, 33. **And suffer many things**, endure them with passive submission, and the "many things" are not yet specified, the word *πολλά* acting as a veil to cover them up. What they were Jesus knows fully as his later revelations show. The prophets had foretold them in all their terribleness, and the divine insight of Jesus, his full comprehension of the plans and purposes of God allowed nothing to remain hid from him. They were "many" indeed, and for their great number not in any way softened as to severity. This *πολλά παθεῖν* casts a light upon the *ἀπελθεῖν* preceding it in that it shows the greatness of Christ's voluntary delivery of himself into the hands of his enemies in Jerusalem who would inflict so much upon him. In the "many things" Christ suffered we may well see the reflection of the many sins he bore, which Paul Gerhardt in his great Passion hymn on the thorn-crowned head of Christ likens to the grains of sand upon the sea-shore. — Jesus states positively who shall inflict the many things upon him, **the elders and chief priests and scribes**. This is the solemn designation of a body, namely the highest judicial body of the Jewish nation, the Sanhedrim, **the body which** more than any one person, even the high priest, represented the

nation. The best explanation of its various members is given by Nebe, *Leidensgeschichte*, I, p. 10, etc. The elders were the old experienced men of the nation who had acted as judges in the local courts and had then been drawn into the high court or Council of the 71. They were men of tried practical experience in judicial matters. The chief priests some think were the heads of the 24 courses of priests, but more likely they were the most influential priests drawn from the entire priesthood into the Council. They were men devoted to the sanctuary and the sacred rights of the nation. The scribes were the men of learning from the great schools, thoroughly versed in legal lore. Usually the high priest acted as the chairman. The fact, that Christ here names the Sanhedrim as the agent of his suffering, points to a trial and a formal condemnation. The disciples knew that Christ's chief enemies were the Sanhedrists, and that this body had already taken cognizance of Christ and his work.— Thus far Jesus had escaped direct issue with this representative power of the nation; now he tells them, the issue shall be taken, and the Sanhedrim shall conquer, for not only shall Jesus suffer many things, but he shall actually **be killed**. The mockery, the scourging, the delivery into the hands of the Gentiles are omitted, for the disciples cannot bear all these details now. Also the method of the killing is withheld, it is not mentioned until chapter 20, 19. But the fact of the killing is positively and most plainly stated. The previous mention of the Sanhedrim pointed to a judicial killing. The verb ἀποκτανθῆναι, however, simply means killed in the sense of put out of the way, murdered and gotten rid of. It suggests no thought of justice on the part of the Jewish tribunal, but, in connection with the foregoing παθεῖν, the gravest kind of injustice, judicial murder. In this whole first announcement of his suffering and death

Jesus is brief, reserved, though absolutely truthful. He is like one breaking a terrible piece of news to his dearest friends. The shock cannot be avoided, but it is softened as much as possible. The very thought of seeing their beloved Master, whom they had just confessed as the Christ, the Son of the living God, a bleeding, murdered victim of the Sanhedrim in Jerusalem, must have fairly overwhelmed the hearts of the disciples, — not only because of their love and attachment and high hopes, but because of their assurance that the course of the true Messiah was the very opposite of suffering and death, namely greatness and glory. — Nevertheless there shall be glory, though of a kind far different from the vain expectation of the disciples, **and the third day be raised up.** This too “must” be, with the same necessity as all that preceded. Very important are the words “on the third day,” as they mark the exact time of the resurrection. Christ would be raised up not at some indefinite future time, but at a specified time. And here we may say that, although Jesus is announcing the things that should shortly befall him, gave his disciples a condensed statement of what the prophets had positively foretold concerning him, yet he viewed all that should come not only in the light of prophecy, but directly. There is only an analogy in the Old Testament for the three days, namely Jonah’s stay in the whale’s belly. In the word ἐγερθῆναι, “be raised up,” the resurrection is described as an act of the Father; in Mark 9, 31 and Luke 18, 33, it is described also as an act of Christ himself. Both are true: the Son of man was raised up, the Son of God arose. — Beyond relating Peter’s attempt to dissuade Christ from his Passion Matthew tells us nothing about the effect of Christ’s announcement to his disciples. It was certainly utterly at variance with their preconceived ideas. We cannot say — remembering what Peter

now does — that the bare words as Jesus uttered them were not understood by the disciples; they were understood well enough. And yet their true sense was hidden from them by the cloud of their own ideas concerning what the climax of the Messiah's career should be. This applies as well to the suffering and death as to the resurrection of Christ. In fact, an unbelieving criticism to this day denies not only the prophecy of Christ as here uttered, but even the fulfillment as recorded by all the evangelists and preached by all the apostles. The blessings of the Passion and Resurrection can be received and enjoyed only by faith.

V. 22. **And** reads as if this followed at once. — It has been said that **Peter** here was not the representative of all the disciples, but this can hardly be claimed. It is rather to be assumed that what he here said to Jesus coincided with the thoughts of the rest. Virtually he was their representative. — Peter **took** Jesus in order to speak privately with him, so as to make his urging more effective, προσλαβόμενος, having taken. And it was more effective thus, reproducing in a manner the situation when Jesus was tempted in the wilderness. — Peter **began** to rebuke him, which is the same word as when Jesus *began* to show his disciples his Passion, only this beginning was the opposite of the other and was squelched at once, like a deadly serpent raising its ugly head to strike. ἤρξατο, he actually began. — He began **to rebuke him** — the word has in it something of vehemence, strong urging as when one comes powerfully at another to show him he is entirely wrong, ἐπιτιμάω, to object to one as blamable. — **Be it far from thee, Lord!** or rather more exactly, Mercy on thee, Lord! It is an exclamation of disapproval mingled with pity. — **This shall never be done unto thee,** οὐ μὴ ἔσται, the future like a command, the double

negative = in no wise. Thank God, a false prophecy! Peter did not get a chance to say anything more, to add why this should not be unto Christ, as that it did not behoove the Son of God to suffer and to die; or that he should not go to Jerusalem and permit the Sanhedrim to lay hands on him, etc. Peter had forgotten the Baptist's word about the Lamb, as Besser says, and he had not learned how much every sinner on earth, Peter included, needed the atoning, cleansing blood of that Lamb. The very thing Peter rebuked Christ for afterwards became the sweetest kernel, the Alpha and Omega of all his apostolic preaching. To this very day they who fail to see the damning power of sin do not see the necessity of the cross, misinterpret Christ's Passion and death, and lose the very heart of the Gospel. The blood-theology of Christ is for penitent sinners who despair of all self-help. No wonder that Christ forbade his disciples to tell any man he was the Christ, after they saw his glory on the Mount. They who did not understand his priesthood could not proclaim his kingship. — Peter began, but did not finish. Jesus never paused one instant to ask his urgent disciple, Why? or, What makes you think so? He does not for one moment entertain the tempting thought or give it room in his heart. Here is an example for us who frequently dally with the serpent and then find its poisonous fangs lodged in us. The moment you recognize the tempter, away with him!

V. 23: **But he turned and said unto Peter.** The word "turned" does not say which way Jesus turned. Meyer and others take it that Jesus turned his back on Peter with disgust. Farrar describes thus: "Turning away from him, fixing his eyes on the other disciples, and speaking in the hearing of them all — for it was fit that they who had heard the words of the vast promise should hear also the crushing rebuke, —

he exclaimed, 'Get thee behind me, Satan!' " To turn and say to someone — mark that this belongs together — suggests not a turning away from, or turning the back to one, but turning to face him squarely. The idea that Jesus turned his back Meyer and others get from the words of Jesus "behind me," overlooking that turning thus Jesus himself places Peter behind him, whereas he told him, *Get thee* behind me, ὑπαγε. It is certainly more appropriate to think of Jesus squarely facing the tempter and bidding him get behind — this tempter then moving beaten to the rear, — than for Jesus himself to place him in the rear by turning away from him. Compare also the same word, στραφεῖς, in Luke 9, 55, text for Oculi, where no commentator thinks of turning the back to some one. — **Get thee behind me, Satan** = get out of my sight, out of my path. These are the very words used against Satan at the end of the third temptation at the beginning of Christ's ministry. For this reason it will not do to make Satan mean anything but the name of the archfiend himself. Unwittingly and with the best intentions Peter had made himself an agent of Satan. What a warning to watch our love, our good intentions, our best acts, lest perhaps after all they agree with Satan and not with Christ. Roman Catholic commentators are concerned about removing the name Satan from Peter, and make it mean merely "adversary," or the word is taken as not really spoken to Peter but only to the devil himself. Some others do the same, as Farrar: "The word (Satan), in fact, was among the Jews, as in the East generally, and to this day, a very common one for anything bold, powerful, dangerous — for every secret opponent or open enemy." All this may be so; yet in a striking and exact repetition, both from the lips of Jesus, both in temptations, yea, in the same kind of temptations, there can be no difference as to

who is meant by Satan — none but the Evil One himself. The argument that after just praising Peter as the *rock* Jesus could not have called him *Satan*, or an agent of Satan, overlooks that in Peter there was flesh as well as spirit, ignorance as well as faith, weakness as well as strength. How could Christ call him a rock when he knew Peter would deny him shamefully? The name pointed to what the grace of Christ would eventually make of Peter, as yet the work had only begun. The fact that the Scriptures tell us the faults of the apostles so plainly and truthfully is an indication of their absolute reliability; and these faults, as we read of them, are a comfort to us in our fight against the flesh and Satan, as Peter himself afterwards wrote, “knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” 1 Pet. 5, 9. — **Thou art a stumbling-block unto me,** *σκάνδαλον* = *σανδάλιθρον*. The word “stumblingblock” suggests to us a block lying in one’s path, over which one stumbles and falls to the ground; but the Greek word signifies the stick to which the bait in a trap is fixed, so as to spring the trap if the stick is touched. This is far more expressive of temptation. One may indeed *fall* in temptation (Rom. 14, 13), but here the thought is of one *caught* in temptation. One who falls may rise again, one who is caught in a death-trap is lost. The latter would have been the case if Jesus had been caught by means of the *σκάνδαλον*. In the metaphorical use of the word the general sense of offense prevails (A. V., compare also Matth. 18, 7-9). — Jesus states in what way Peter’s effort is a stumblingblock or offense to him: **for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.** “The things of God” and “the things of men” are here opposites; the former are the great, blessed, saving purposes, plans, and acts of God, the latter the blind, erring, sinful purposes and ways

of men. Peter "minded" (φρονεῖς) the latter, his heart with its thinking and desires was set on these, not on the others. "To the world the cross was offensive, to Christ whatever opposed the cross." Bengel. Besser remarks that in Peter's word, "This shall never be unto *thee*," lies the second thought, "This shall never be unto *me*." Peter must have been shocked at Christ's reply to his well-meant urging. He could then have hardly understood that by his attempt to dissuade Christ from the cross he was laying arrows upon the bow of Satan to shoot at his beloved Savior. The more reason why Peter's proceeding should be stopped. One thing, however, must have flashed into his mind with its human way of dreading the cross and advising against it, namely that all this about Christ's passion, death, and resurrection was a divine thing, "of God," and therefore holy, blessed, saving, and that every contradictory idea was evil, dangerous, damnable, satanic. Thus the very temptation Peter brought unwittingly upon Christ was used to help him on to true godliness. The text does not say whether Jesus' reply to Peter was uttered so that the other disciples also heard it. Farrar supposes so, and the words that follow lend some likelihood to the supposition.

In v. 24 we have "the things of God" as opposed to "the things of man" as they apply to us on the basis of their application to Christ in his passion and resurrection. **Then**, when Peter in dread of the cross advised against the cross, Jesus spoke these great words, and *then*, when we are inclined to repeat Peter's thoughts and to act according to them, we must allow Christ's words to set us right. Oh, how often this will be! — The word **disciples** is defined by **any man who would come after me**. A disciple is one who would come after or follow Christ. The word "would," θέλει, points to the will; there is no compulsion, no irresistible grace. In the condition of

reality εἰ θέλει there is the thought of actually willing to come after Jesus; the English "would" fails to bring this out clearly. E. Frommel says, "Christ does not draw his sheep by a rope; in his army there are none but volunteers." The grace of God in Christ is such as draws the will and wins it for the Savior and salvation. "To come after Christ" is to make him the leader, the head, the Shepherd of the flock, and us his followers, bound to him, following closely in his steps. To come after Jesus = faith in him as the Savior of our souls. None really "come after him" who make him only their teacher, their ideal, their moral leader. Note the universal reach of τις, "any man." — **Let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.** Ἀπαρνέομαι = decline, refuse, turn some one off, refuse association and companionship with some one. And the one thus to be denied is ἐαυτός, "himself," not some portion of self, some fault, some special desire and habit, some outward manner or practice, but the very center of one's being, S E L F. The natural, sinful self is meant as it centers in the things of this earthly life, like the Prodigal in the far country away from his father. "I know not the man," as Peter said of Christ when thrice he denied him, so must you say of yourself, if you would deny self and acknowledge Christ. This is not self-denial in the current sense of the word, but conversion, the very first essential of the life in Christ. It includes contrition, which sees all the sin of self and the damnation and death in it, and in dismay and sorrow turns from it and flees to Christ in faith as the only hope. So self is cast out of the heart and Christ put in its stead, so that with Paul you live henceforth not unto yourself, but unto Christ who died for you. Frommel says, "You can deny only one whom you know, with whom you have associated. You can deny a friend and break off relations with him. So the thing here is, to say to

the sinful old self, I know thee not, for I know another, for love of whom I must give thee up, for his love and favor is worth more to me than thine." Luther says our whole life is to be a repentance, i. e. a denial of self, a constant acknowledgment of Christ. — **And take up his cross.** The verb αἶρεῖν here used is not essentially different from λαμβάνειν, Matth. 10, 38; the former means take up or lift up so as to bear, the latter simply take. "The cross," τὸν σταυρόν, as they who are condemned to crucifixion must shoulder their crosses in order to carry them to the place of execution. The figure is very striking to us still, when we picture it vividly to our minds. Think of it: all followers of Christ like a great procession of men about to be crucified, each loaded with his cross, — αὐτοῦ — a particular one for each. We may even in Paul's language carry the figure farther, when he tells us that they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, Gal. 5, 24, and that he himself was crucified with Christ, Gal. 2, 20. Crucifixion, and the cross as a symbol of it, a dreadful burden indeed, was not a Jewish, but a Roman mode of execution. It must, therefore, have been strange to the disciples to hear Jesus speak of the cross for his followers. Why he chose the word they learned soon enough — because he himself bore the cross, and we must "come after him." The word "cross" has grown very familiar to us, and thus it has lost not only its striking symbolism, but, we fear, also its distinctive sense. The cross is that suffering which comes upon us as followers and confessors of Christ, which thus grows out of our connection with him. The cross is thus the mark of the Christian, and let us remember every Christian is marked by it. It is your badge of service in the army of the Lord; it is your medallion of honor, like the iron cross once granted by the German emperor and the old Victoria cross by the English king for valor. The cross is

distasteful to the flesh, but wholesome and necessary to the spirit in order to crucify the flesh and be drawn more closely to the crucified one. Christ shapes a special cross for every one, and he helps each one to bear it. But he calls on us to take it up and shoulder it, he wants our wills to act in following him who bore the cross for us. Christ's cross alone atones for our sins, there is no atoning power in our crosses; in fact there needs to be no such power, for Christ's cross is all-sufficient. — **And follow me**, with self denied and the cross upon us, so we are to follow; and he says emphatically "me" — this is he who went up to Jerusalem and suffered many things, was killed, and the third day rose again. "Follow me" means tread in my steps all your life long. Godet says that in traveling three things are necessary: first, to say farewell (to self); secondly, to carry our baggage (the cross); thirdly, to proceed with the journey (follow me). In studying the three imperatives, note that the first two are aorists: ἀπαρνησάσθω, ἀράτω, but the third a present tense: ἀκολουθεῖτω — "deny" and "take up" as one act, then "follow" continually; the former thus a preparation for the latter. — All these things are impossible to us, for no human powers are able to convert the heart or to follow Christ in the Christian life; but Christ himself enables us.

V. 25. He does it in the following words full of light, power, and grace. **For** introduces a great reason to move our hearts and draw our wills. **Whosoever**, ὅς, like τις, while an indefinite relative is universal in its force. **Would save his life shall lose it**, ἐὰν θέλῃ . . . ἀπολέσει, future, the case is one fully expected, and it is stated what in that case shall happen. The word θέλειν points to the will again, namely to the will of the natural self which must be denied, for its one purpose and effort is "to save the life," thereby losing it. The Lord uses a paradoxical

form of statement, in order to impress what he says upon the mind of his hearers, and to make them search out and discover his meaning. "Whosoever would save his life," by minding the things that be of men, with human wisdom, after Peter's fashion — as thousands the world over do, attending most earnestly only to the interests of their earthly existence, — he "shall lose it," even in the very act of his saving it in such fashion. He may get abundantly what he would, but in all his getting that will be absent which would really save his life. For "life" the Greek has ψυχή, translated in the margin "soul." It admits of a double sense, one the natural, and one the spiritual. Whoever makes his great concern the life natural, will certainly by that very thing lose the life spiritual. — **And whosoever shall lose his life for my sake,** ὃς ἂν ἀπολέσῃ . . . εὕρησιν, as in the previous sentence (ἄν = ἐάν, but is not always used in sentences of this kind). "Lose" here means relatively in suffering and cross-bearing, or entirely in giving it up in martyrdom, as some are called to do, he **shall find it**, he shall live indeed, in the full sense of the word, here already while he remains here, and forever after. To save one's life is, not to deny self; to lose one's life, in the second part of the paradox, is to deny self and to take up the cross. To lose one's life, in the first part of the paradox, is to lose it truly, the earthly existence and all connected with it, and the spiritual as well, namely life in the full sense of the word. What a tremendous irreparable loss! To find life is to obtain the true life and to have it now and evermore. The word find reminds us of the man in the parable who "found" the pearl of great price. Finding excludes merit, for this true life we neither make, nor earn in any way; it is a gift laid down for us where by the guidance and leading of God we merely find it. What an inexpressibly great and invaluable find! "For my

sake," Christ says, lose your life; the expression is a wide one, denoting that as we reject self and its fleshly, selfish promptings we accept Christ, and then remain true to him. "For my sake" includes conversion and the faithful Christian life following it. Oh, that we all might learn fully to put Christ in the place of self; to let the flesh and all its desires die, in order that Christ may be our life and live in us wholly! All our lives we must study and practice this lesson, and none of us learns it too well. Luther writes: "These two paradoxical sentences are, one a threat, the other a promise. The threat is: He that saves his life shall lose it. The promise: He that loses his life shall save it. But we must carefully note the little word 'for my sake.' For there are many who lose their life wilfully, and the heretics also suffer much (as they think) for God's sake, but in truth on account of their pride and in order to parade boastfully in their wisdom. Blessed, however, is he who suffers for Christ's sake."

V. 26. **For** adds a reason for what has just been said, and it does this in a way so convincing and simple that it certainly ought to move every one; yet many both disregard and contradict it. — **What shall a man be profited**, what benefit or advantage would he have, **if he shall gain the whole world** (ὁφεληθήσεται . . . ἐάν κερδήσῃ, regular condition of expectancy); putting the thing in its most favorable light and counting the possible profit in this direction at the very highest, **and forfeit his life**, i. e. in making this gain? **or what shall a man give in exchange for his life**, i. e. having thus lost it and gained only the world? The answer is, He is profited absolutely nothing, and there is absolutely nothing he can give. Christ here reduces the whole thing to a simple problem in profit and loss. Men strive for the things of this world, they can gain only a small measure of

them for a brief space of time. But suppose the highest world-ambition were actually fulfilled — a man have the whole world, all its wealth, power, pleasure, glory — the beauty of all fair things that ever grew on it, the grandeur of all the high things that ever towered aloft on it — all sensations, all enjoyments, all achievements, all satisfactions: what benefit would all of it be, if true life were forfeited in attaining this world-ambition? The answer comes out zero. This is the case even if the natural life be lost in grasping the world, or any one thing of the world. When a man dies, all that he has slips from him. But to lose the true life, or rather never to gain it while all else is gained, is to forfeit all in the end, for death must come in a short time. What then can a man give in exchange for the true life? Will the world, or any of its treasures, buy it for him? There is no possible coin to buy this life with. The only answer to the problem in this form is absolute zero once more. But here we see what it means to deny self and to follow Christ — it is to gain what the whole world is too poor a thing to pay for: the true life which is salvation here and hereafter. Christ, the Christ who died on Golgotha, he is the only price that buys the life, the soul, τὴν ψυχὴν, salvation, for us. In him we find life. Freely he gives himself to us who believe. If “the life” is worth more than the whole world, Christ crucified is worth more than “the life” (ψυχή, comp. Luke 9, 25: ἑαυτός, “his own self”) and Christ crucified is ours by faith. Who would not cheerfully trade a thousand worlds for Christ? And looking back from these conclusions let us glorify him who chose the cross for our sakes and spurned the temptation that tried to dissuade him, and let his mind be our mind as now we grasp his cross for our salvation and take up our cross in gratefulness to follow him,

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The story of the text moves forward with such distinct steps that ordinary homiletical analysis may easily be applied, and the resulting sermon will be simple, natural, and well balanced. There are four steps, and we have them in this outline:

The Temptation for Christ to Abandon the Cross.

- I. Christ's announcement of the cross.*
- II. Peter's attempt to turn Christ from the cross.*
- III. Christ's victory in adhering to the cross.*
- IV. Christ's presentation of the blessedness of the cross for us.*

Kromphardt's effort is less effective: **The Temptation of Jesus by Peter: I. How it came about; II. How it strongly affected Jesus; III. How Jesus victoriously overcame it.**

Instead of simple analysis, we may pick up the text at one of its vital points. One of these is the idea of necessity in the word "must," v. 21. This idea of necessity underlies the entire text: — The worldly principle and the divine — they square-ly contradict each other.

The Divine Necessity of the Cross

- I. Its divine necessity for Christ.*
 1. The decisive principle; not present or temporary advantage, but eternal salvation for us, and eternal joy and glory in this salvation of ours for Christ.
 2. Peter cannot tolerate present suffering, and forgets the eternal things, as men generally do.
 3. Satan deceitfully urges Christ to get the eternal things in an easier way than by the cross — i. e. to lose them.
 4. Christ is absolutely firm, sees and follows unwaveringly the only way to reach the glorious goal set for him by the Father for our sakes.
- II. Its divine necessity for the Christian.*
 1. The decisive principle for us is the same: which shall it be, present advantage, or eternal salvation?

2. The folly of men generally: either they discount the eternal altogether, or they try to run in both directions at once.
4. The Christian turns from the world in true repentance, puts Christ above all else in his soul in true faith, is ready to lose all else so he may retain Christ, is counted a fool by the world for losing so much of the earthly, but gains both the best of this life and life to come.

Another vital point is the "cross," v. 24, which lies also in the words "suffer, and be killed," v. 21: — Usually we think of the cross and what it involves as something terrible, from which we should flee at all hazard. That is what Peter thought when in our text he tried to turn Jesus from the cross. But Jesus looked at it with other eyes. He saw the glory of it:

The Glory of the Cross.

I. A mark of battle; II. A badge of service; III. A symbol of victory.

The idea of the cross as presented in our text may be turned in a slightly different direction: Jesus voluntarily accepted the cross, for love of us. He wants us to follow him voluntarily, also bearing our cross. He pictures the cross as something attractive, something not to flee from, but gladly to accept.

The Attractive Cross

- I. Our salvation made it so attractive for him.*
- II. Our profit should make it so for us.*

Of course, there is a difference between Christ's cross and ours, but this can be easily taken care of in the elaboration of the parts. — Here is a third treatment:

Two Views of the Cross.

- I. Two views of the cross as Christ bore it.*
The view which minds the things of men; the view which minds the things of God.
- II. Two also of the cross as the Christian bears it.*
The view which sees in it nothing but loss; the view which sees in it a little loss swallowed up in an immeasurable gain.

Note that the theme is not split on the word "two," which would make two little sermons tied together, but on the difference that lies in the term "cross." One may also formulate in this way: How shall we look at the cross: 1) At the one Christ bore for us; II. At the one we are to bear after Christ? The sub-parts can then be arranged as first negatively: not so etc., and secondly, positively: but so etc. — Bernbeck centers on the idea of our Lord's *greatness* as displayed in our text:

The Greatness of Our Savior as He Approaches Jerusalem and the Cross.

- I. *His firm determination in the face of death.*
- II. *His holy ardor in crushing the temptation of his own disciple.*
- III. *His divine wisdom in weighing the temporal and the eternal.*

The division may perhaps be improved: 1) See how he faces death; 2) Conquers temptation; 3) Invites us to follow his example. — Peter made a terrible mistake when he tried to make Jesus avoid the cross.

Make No Mistake About the Cross!

- I. *Christ bore his* — the result was redemption and salvation.
- II. *You bear yours* — the result will be eternal gain for you.

REMINISCERE

Luke 10, 17-20

A text on justification is essential to a good Lenten series, and here we have this text. In the last text Jesus tells us how he must be delivered into death and then rise again. Now comes our present text and adds why, namely, "for our justification," i. e. in order that our names may be written in heaven. This is *the great object which Christ had in view in his Passion*. The Passion itself is not directly mentioned in the text, yet Christ's great and everlasting victory over Satan is mentioned, and this is based on the Passion. The last text showed us the Evil One behind Peter trying to deceive and mislead Jesus, and we saw him hurled behind Christ with victorious power. Now, however, the whole victory of Christ rises before us: Satan fallen from heaven, his angels subject even to the commands of the seventy in Jesus' name. The blood of Christ delivers us from his power, it writes our names in heaven as the justified citizens of the new Jerusalem, it gives us eternal salvation.

V. 17. The beginning of Luke's tenth chapter recounts the mission of the seventy. They were chosen from the larger circle of Christ's disciples and sent two by two as advance heralds of Christ "before his face into every city and place whither he himself was about to come." The instructions with which they were sent out are fully recorded for us. They were merely to make ready the way for Christ himself who would come after them with his fuller preaching and instruction. It has been calculated that there were about thirty-five places to which the seventy could have

gone; but this seems very much as if thus the places were reckoned simply according to the number of pairs of the heralds, each pair going only to one town or locality. The instructions which Christ gave hardly bear out this view, for the heralds are told, if one place rejects them, to go on. The number seventy, however, divided into thirty-five parties, certainly covered the territory assigned to them in a comparatively short time. Their task done each pair returned to Jesus. Some place of meeting him must have been named in advance. They could, of course, return only at intervals as they happened, pair by pair, to finish their journey. The meeting-place, as far as can be judged, was at or near Jerusalem.—Thus **the seventy returned**. There is a complete unanimity among them as to the feelings that now fill them; not a trace of discouragement do we find, or of sadness as if they had met any failure on their brief mission, but all alike they return μετὰ χαρᾶς, **with joy**. The cause of their joy is exceptional. They rejoice, not because they were received everywhere with open arms and hearts, not because their message that the kingdom of God was come nigh found ready acceptance everywhere, not because their experience on their journey had been pleasant, not because they were accounted worthy to be Christ's missionaries, or because they themselves felt the full blessedness of the kingdom—but because the devils were subject unto them!—For this is the special feature of their report on their return, **Lord, even the devils are subject unto us in thy name**. The word καί, "even," shows that diseases were also subject to them, as, in fact, Christ had especially instructed them to heal the sick, v. 9. Jesus had not mentioned the driving out of demons when he gave them their instructions, although v. 18 shows that this power was included in their commission. What probably flattered the seventy es-

pecially was the fact that they were uniformly successful where in one instance at least the Twelve themselves had failed, Luke 9, 40. — **The devils or demons** (margin) were the evil spirits, or fallen angels, which took bodily possession of some poor mortals in order to abuse them in the most terrible ways. This fearful affliction is clearly distinguished from lunacy, Matth. 4, 24, and in the descriptions of possessed people, as the demoniac in the country of the Gadarenes (the evil spirit going into the swine), the dumb and blind demoniac, Matth. 12, 22, another merely dumb, Luke 11, 14, etc., Christ addressed the demons, these addressed him. In fact the whole New Testament account impresses upon the reader the reality of this terrible thing, human creatures possessed by devils. Accordingly we read in Horst's *Zauber-Bibliothek*: "It is in vain to attempt to clear away from these Gospel narratives the devil and his demons. Such an exegesis is opposed to the whole faith of the world at that time. If we are to make these statements mean now just what we please, why did no single man in the ancient world understand them so? Are we become wiser? Then let us congratulate ourselves on our good fortune: but we cannot, on that account, compel these venerable writers to say what they in their own time neither could nor would say." Matson, *The Adversary*, in the chapter on "Diabolism and Lunacy," p. 177, etc., goes fully into the question and recounts a number of modern cases. He gives as a good definition of possession the following: "A certain abnormal state of mind exists which is not insanity according to the legal definition of the term. It is a state unaffected, so far as science can prove, by any physical condition of the body; on which medicine appears to have no effect, and on which religion alone seems to exercise any beneficial control." — **Subject unto us in thy name** gives the power of Jesus' name all the

credit for the expulsion of the demons by the seventy. Not that this name wrought upon the demons in any way like a charm, but the very opposite. Christ had given power to these disciples to use his name for healing and undoing the devil's work. Christ himself therefore expelled every demon the seventy drove out. Charms are always a forsaking of God, using means which he has forbidden, therefore also so generally employed where prayer to God in Christ's name seems not to bring the desired result. There is no power of Jesus or of his holy, saving name in any charm; these rather are a subtle, cunning hold of the devil himself upon the mind and heart of those who trust in them.

As one pair of messengers after another arrives Jesus heard their report. Then, when all are together again at last, Jesus addressed them.

V. 18. There is quite a variety of interpretations for the brief statement: **I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven.** The old Fathers combine this fall of Satan with his original fall from God into sin in consequence of which he was cast out of heaven; a few advance the date to the birth of Christ; Lange and Philippi place it at the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness in the definite defeat of Satan there; still others, like Meyer, connect it with the sending out of the seventy. Some interpret "beheld," as an actual vision of Satan falling, others interpret of spiritual sight. The two tenses of the words "beheld," ἐθεώρουν, imperfect, and πεσόντα, aorist, must be noted. These tenses show that Satan fell at a definite moment in the past, and they preclude the idea that Jesus by his spiritual sight beheld the defeat of Satan as then in process of taking place and ending at a future time, either at Christ's death or resurrection, or at the last day. The fall, when Jesus spoke had already taken place (aorist), in one moment as it were, and Jesus had beheld it with continued gaze (imperfect). — The

idea of the sudden and terrible fall of Satan is shown also in the comparison **as lightning**, ὡς ἀστραπήν. We may read either "as lightning falls from heaven," or "fallen from heaven as lightning," for grammatically either combination can be made. But whether we say Satan fell, or Satan fell from heaven is virtually the same. Philippi, *Glaubenslehre*, 3, 324, points out that "heaven" is used in such phrases, not to denote a locality, but to denote either supernatural blessedness, or supernatural power. Here the latter is indicated by the whole context. "Like lightning," in one swift, terrific fall Satan was hurled down, down; and he fell **from heaven**, from his vast supernatural power. Leyser says: "All his power evanesced." Meyer writes: "Fallen from heaven does not presuppose that Satan's seat was in heaven, but connotes the thought of his highly-risen power, as above v. 15 and Is. 14, 12; to represent the rapidity and suddenness by the figure of the lightning was, because of the words 'from heaven,' just as natural and proper, as a similar comparison with lightning in Matth. 24, 27." In a mighty way, then, the great prince of darkness was hurled, like a flash, from the exalted seat of his power, broken, shattered, defeated. He is conquered, he cannot rule as he pleases and carry out all his diabolical designs. *When* this occurred is not stated. Two periods deserve special consideration: one when Satan lost his first estate and was cast out of heaven; the other when he met his first significant defeat at the hands of Jesus in the temptation in the wilderness. We prefer the latter with Philippi and Zahn, but acknowledge that the former also fits the words of Jesus. We scarcely need to say that Jesus here speaks of Satan as a mighty angel, an actual spirit-being, not a mere impersonal principle of evil. This great fiend, the implacable foe of man, has lost his mastery. To him, the very

head of the great evil spirit kingdom, Jesus directs the attention of his disciples. Because Satan's power is shattered, therefore the demons now are forced to yield. The disciples must not think that only here and there certain spirits have been defeated, much less that their victories over these spirits were the real victory; they must know that something tremendous lies back of all this, namely the total defeat of the whole power of Satan. And this is due to no one but to Jesus himself, for when he says, "I beheld," it is as if he had struck the blow that hurled the prince of evil down, and as if Jesus as the victor stood beholding in triumph what his saving power had wrought for man.

V. 19. Because Satan is fallen, therefore one victory after another shall be achieved over his power and the agents he uses. **Behold** — it certainly deserves attention. **I have given you**, δέδωκα = I have given you and ye now have. This is not a mere gift superadded to one already bestowed, but the original gift, only it is now defined in the light of the successful experience of the seventy. — **The gift is authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy.** "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet; because he had set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high because he hath known my name." Ps. 91, 13-14. "To tread upon serpents and scorpions" is a portion of what is included in "*all* the power of the enemy." Jesus is not speaking of any authority over the laws of nature and the destructive forces of nature as such, but of the authority over the devil's power. Just as the word heaven suggested the image of the lightning, so here the enemy, "that old serpent, the devil," suggests "serpents and scorpions." In the same way Paul writes to the Romans: "The God of

peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Rom. 16, 20. That the expression "to tread upon serpents and scorpions" is figurative is shown by the verb "tread," πατεῖν, and also by Ps. 91 quoted above. We know of no case where a serpent or a scorpion was actually trodden upon by one of Christ's disciples. Paul had an adder strike his hand and took no hurt from its poison, but he did not tread upon the creature, except in a figurative way. Acts 28, 5. The worst serpents and scorpions against which Christ's disciples have to contend are not the natural creatures whose poisonous properties threaten their earthly lives. Ez. 2, 6; Gen. 3, 15, and the passage from Romans above. It is a greater victory to tread upon delusion, deception, and spiritual falsehood than upon poisonous creatures. But this spiritual victory over the devil's power does not by any means exclude the special divine protection which God's providence vouchsafes to believers and especially to the messengers of the cross when devoting themselves to their work. Countless instances could here be adduced of just such wonderful experiences of treading unhurt upon dangerous creatures, of escaping from what seemed instant destruction. Yet this special divine protection is not a justification of recklessness on our part. We must use due caution and prudence. Nor does Christ mean to exempt his followers from all dangers, for some have died literally from the bite of serpents and the sting of scorpions. When it seems best to Christ he permits the death of his messengers, but only then. The devil cannot destroy the instruments of Christ until Christ himself is ready to lay them aside and use others.—The most marvelous expression here is not that concerning serpents and scorpions, but that concerning **all the power of the enemy**. To differentiate this as referring to the spiritual, while power to tread on serpents and

scorpions is made to refer to the natural domain, is certainly a mistake, as this last is included in the first. "All the power," ἐπὶ πᾶσαν τὴν δύναμιν, is the natural as well as the spiritual. We are masters over all the devil's power when we dwell under Christ in his kingdom. The more we know our dreadful "enemy" and his "power," the more we will understand the greatness of Christ's promise here.

"The old bitter foe
 Now means deadly woe:
 Deep guile and great might
 Are his dread arms in fight,
 On earth is not his equal. . . .

Though devils all the world should fill,
 All watching to devour us,
 We tremble not, we fear no ill,
 They cannot overpower us.
 This world's prince may still
 Scowl fierce as he will,
 He can harm us none,
 For he is judged — undone.
 One little word o'erthrows him."—*Luther*.

This fearlessness before the power of Satan the great Reformer manifested while on his journey to appear before the Diet of Worms in April, 1521. While in Frankfort he wrote to Spalatin: "I learn that an imperial order has been issued to frighten me; but Christ lives, and we will enter Worms in spite of the gates of hell and the evil spirits of the power of the air" (Eph. 2, 2). When he was tempted to quit his journey and accept such protection as powerful friends offered him, he repeated what he had likewise written to Spalatin from Oppenheim, that he would go to Worms though there were as many devils there as tiles upon the house-tops; though Huss was burned with fire, truth had not been burned. Before his death, however, he said: "I was unafraid, fright-

ened at nothing, God is able to make one even thus reckless; I do not know whether I could be so joyful now." Koestlin, *Martin Luther*, 3rd ed., p. 442, etc. — **And nothing shall in any wise hurt you.** The reading is either the fut. indic. ἀδικήσει, or the aor. subj. ἀδικήσῃ (so Alex. Souter, and R. V. margin); the former is less frequent, used in quotations from the LXX and by Christ, both are classic also, and express a strong negation of something in the future: "nothing in any way shall harm you." Meyer makes οὐδέν the object instead of the subject, reading: "the power of the enemy shall hurt you nothing in any wise"; but this is too unusual. The Lutheran Commentary remarks that this is a foretaste and a prefigurement of the times of complete redemption, when the groaning and travailing of creation shall cease, the curse be removed, and the new creation, characterized by righteousness and peace, be inaugurated. Baugher. There is something, unspeakably great in this assurance of Jesus to the seventy; compare also Mark 16, 18. Weak, erring, faulty, helpless men, pitted against the entire hellish kingdom, and yet not lost, not even hurt in any way, but triumphing completely. This was glorious indeed. It was plain now what it meant when the seventy had been able to heal the sick and free the possessed. But all this victory of theirs was a gift of Christ to them — "I have given you"; he was the Stronger who had despoiled the strong one and now divided the spoils to his followers.

The words as they read in v. 20 do not say: Rejoice not in this . . . but *rather* rejoice in the other (A. V.); but: Rejoice not in the former at all. There is no μάλλον, as a few texts would have it, and we must not insert one, as Zahn virtually suggests. Jesus purposely puts his thought into a striking form; let us remember Matth. 7, 22, where some will say in vain on the last day that they drove out devils in

Jesus' name. Ordinarily we would consider it a cause for joy when devils are driven out, and it certainly is for the victims that have found release, but here Jesus is speaking of the disciples and he leaves out reference to those freed from the dreadful bondage of possession. The joy the disciples are not to have at all is this: ὅτι τὰ πνεύματα ὑμῖν ὑποτάσσεται, i. e. the joy that they can lord it over these spirits and make them do their bidding, the joy of mere mastery. Such joy might prove very dangerous to them. Now Jesus might have put the contrast thus: But rejoice in this that poor souls were freed from the dominion of these spirits. He does a better thing, he points the disciples to themselves, to a joy which must mean everything to themselves. — It is **that your names are written in heaven**, ἐγγέγραπται have been written, and are thus on record now. Moses interceded for Israel after the worship of the golden calf, in the words: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin —; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." Ex. 32, 32. David prays against the wicked: "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous." Ps. 69, 28. Compare Is. 4, 3, "every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem." Paul writes of his "fellow laborers, whose names are in the book of life." Phil. 4, 3. Daniel does the same, in the great tribulation "thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book," cf. Dan. 12, 1. To him that overcometh is promised by the Lord: "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels," Rev. 3, 5; cf. 13, 8; 20, 12; especially also 21, 27: through the portals of the new Jerusalem none shall enter "but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." To have our names written in heaven is an expression most likely taken from the genealogical

records kept by the Jews. To be written in the Lamb's book of life = justification. The moment faith receives Christ and his merits, that moment a man is justified, i. e. his name is entered on the book of life. The moment faith dies and Christ is lost to a soul, the name is blotted out in heaven. "They that depart from thee shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters." Jer. 17, 13. The joy over the power to expel demons may be altogether delusive, for many at the last day shall exclaim in surprise: "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Matth. 7, 22. No charismatic faith, but only faith in the grace and merits of Christ saves. The joy over what we do, even in the name of Christ, is often not pure, as is the joy over what Christ does for us. The devil sinned through pride and great deeds are still a temptation to this sin of the devil. In all our casting out devils by the preaching of the Gospel let us not rejoice but be utterly humble and know that when we have done all we have earned no merit, but are nothing except lost sinners saved only by the blood of the Lamb. Our Confession (*Book of Concord*, Jacobs, 652, 13) calls Christ "the true book of life." It tells us, 653, 25, "only the elect, whose names are written in the book of life, are saved." "Therefore the entire Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, direct all men to Christ, as the Book of Life, in which they should seek the eternal election of the Father. For it has been decided by the Father from eternity that whom he would save he would save through Christ (John 14, 6): 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me.' And again (John 10, 9): 'I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved.'" 661, 66. "Therefore no one who would be saved should trouble or harass himself with

thoughts concerning the secret counsel of God, as to whether he also is elected and ordained to eternal life; for with these miserable Satan is accustomed to attack and annoy godly hearts. But they should hear Christ, who is the Book of Life and of God's eternal election of all God's children to eternal life; who testifies to all men without distinction that it is God's will that all men who labor and are heavy laden with sin should come to him, in order that he may give them rest and save them (Matth. 11, 28)." 661, 70. "Moreover, no occasion is afforded either for despondency or for a shameless, dissolute life by this doctrine, viz. when men are taught that they should seek eternal election in Christ and his holy Gospel, as in the Book of Life, which excludes no penitent sinner, but allures and calls all the poor, heavy-laden, and troubled, and promises the Holy Ghost for purification and renewal." 665, 89. Since "God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief (faith) of the truth," ἐν ἀγιασμῷ πνεύματος καὶ πίστει ἀληθείας, we may say both, that our names were written in heaven when before the foundation of the world God chose us in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1, 4), and that our names are written in heaven when now Christ is made ours by faith. For we are elected in no other way than we are justified, ἐν Χριστῷ = in Christ made ours with all his merits, which as all the Scriptures testify, is "in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth," or — expressing it in its briefest form — by faith. — **Rejoice** that your names are written, etc. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into his grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5, 1-2. This rejoicing includes the knowledge of our blessed condition as justified and chosen believers in Christ. Christ (the book of life)

is the foundation of our joy, and we are in Christ by faith, and so we rejoice. Day by day this joy is to fill us as men whose "citizenship is in heaven," Phil. 3, 20, whose names are recorded in the Lamb's book. Moreover, this joy is to increase until we reach our last earthly day. Valerius Herberger chose Luke 10, 20 in joy like this as his funeral text, fixing the following outlines: 1) Who the writer is that records our names in heaven; 2) what is meant by the ink; 3) what the pen is; 4) what the book is; 5) what the writing itself is. — "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven" is one of those far-reaching expressions which includes all our salvation in Christ Jesus. And in any sermon on these words, especially also in a Lenten sermon, Christ and his Passion and atoning merits must stand in the very foreground of the treatment.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

This is one of those texts the whole weight of which centers in one point: "But rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Whatever form the outline of the sermon may take, in some way this final statement in the text will exert full control. What is said of the seventy and of Satan in the text we all feel is only secondary to the supreme final clause. The great fault of too many of the outlines which have been made on this text is that they overlook what Herberger called "the ink with which our names are written in heaven," namely Christ's blood. There is nothing that can possibly take the place of this "ink" in a sermon on this text. — Almost automatically the preacher will use a little synthesis in his outline. Here are two, in which the writing of our names in heaven is not put last in the sermon as it is in the text.

Christ Lived and Died That Our Names Might be Written in Heaven.

- I. As delivered from the dominion of the devil;*
- II. As justified by his grace;*
- III. As living under him in his kingdom and serving him.*

The Passion of Christ Opens Up for Us a Fountain of Joy

- I. *Our greatest foe is fallen, and his doom is sealed.*
- II. *We are freed from Satan's chains and inscribed as citizens of heaven.*
- III. *The Lord accepts our humble service and blesses our weak endeavor.*

We may utilize the hint which Herberger has left us. He takes the figure of "writing" and expands that. There is the one who does the writing, the book, the ink, the pen, and finally the import of the writing. Here is an attempt to use this figure:

Rejoice Because Your Names Are Written in Heaven.

- I. *God wrote them himself* — in his infinite grace, so that we can truly rejoice. We never could write our names in heaven ourselves. Some think they can, and dream they have actually done so. But their joy is groundless.
- II. *In Christ, the Book of Life* — for he conquered Satan and death by dying for our sins, and thus became Life for us. Let us rejoice. There is no other book that bears the names of the citizens of heaven. They who think so have a delusive joy.
- III. *With the imperishable ink of Christ's blood* — which expiates our sin and guilt completely, so that we can truly rejoice. No other ink is used in heaven. Man's own merit is but water.
- IV. *With the golden pen of his verdict* — the verdict of eternal election in Christ, and the verdict of justification through Christ. True joy for us. No other pen is known in heaven.
- V. *Our names, he wrote, as his children and servants.* To be his own forever, inherit all his blessings, and live under him in his Kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

We add the following without further comment: *Rejoice that by the Blood of Christ Your Names Are Written in Heaven:* 1) Think what it cost! 2) Weigh what it is worth! — *Is Your Name Written in Heaven?* 1) As a dear child of God purchased by the Savior's blood? 2) As a true servant of God

grateful for the Savior's love? — *There is no joy like that of Knowing Our Names Written in Heaven.* 1) None flowing from so deep a fountain; 2) None rising to such lofty height; 3) None taking in so vast a range; 4) None enduring to such endless days. — *Christ, the Book of Life:* 1) Made so by his blood; 2) Open now in the Gospel (the 70 sent to preach); 3) Never to be closed by Satan (v. 18-19); 4) You and I written therein by faith.

OCULI

Luke 9, 51-56

The stamp of this text is deep and plain. The entire life of Christ is marked by an unmistakable spirit of love, and this manifests itself in a most heavenly manner especially in his Passion. While the text reaches through the entire life of Christ and embraces us also as true followers of Christ, the season of Lent, together with the opening verse of the text itself, leads us to think especially of the Lord's love in his passion. He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Thus we must show our hearers at this time *the spirit that moved Christ in his passion*. Our spirit must be of the same kind, but this is the application and should be secondary in our treatment of the text, at least at this time.

V. 51. Robinson places our text at the head of the last journey to Jerusalem, about six months before the death of Christ. Luke 9, 51 to 18, 30 does not follow a chronological order, *die innere Verwandtschaft der Stoffe*, as Zahn says, is the principle of the selection and grouping. We are not told the exact route taken by Jesus as he left Gennesareth. Conjecture is of no use in this case. The village to which the messengers were sent may perhaps have been En-gannim at the edge of the hills of northern Samaria. — **And it came to pass** is a common phrase in the Gospels to introduce some noteworthy incident. — **When the days were well-nigh come** is rather a free translation of the sense for the more literal, "when the days were being fulfilled," or more literal still, "in the fulfilling of the days of his being received up." The sense is, that it was nearing the

time for his being **received up**. Wieseler and Lange take ἡμέραι τῆς ἀναλήψεως to signify the days of his being received by men, i. e. when men would still receive Christ. But this idea is without foundation. Although ἀνάληψις occurs in the New Testament only in this place, ἀναλαμβάνεσθαι in Mark 16, 19; Acts 1, 2; 11, 22; 1 Tim. 3, 16, sufficiently indicates its sense, as the reception into heaven, — “received up into glory.” The word is so used also by other writers before and after Luke. Noesgen argues that Acts 2, 1 debars us from reckoning the days of Christ’s being received up, from the time of our text on until the accomplishment of his reception into glory, but that these days must be narrowed down to the ones actually included in the suffering and glorification of Christ. But this would give a future date, almost six months ahead, for our text. We therefore hold that these days began when Christ set himself to go to Jerusalem in order that all things written concerning him might be accomplished; nor does it seem improper (since “days” are mentioned, where Acts 2, 1 only has “day”) to so extend the “days,” since even the Passion and Ascension require at the very least 43 days. — **He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.** This is emphatically stated as an act of Christ, αὐτός, he himself did this. Jesus then knew “that he should be received up”; every step involved was perfectly clear before his eyes. He knew all that the prophets had written, and by his divine sight he beheld the reality which the prophets had uttered in veiled form; nothing was hidden from him. And all the suffering involved did not leave his heart unaffected. Before he was actually received up he must be “lifted up,” as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness. Christ’s going to the Father meant a pilgrimage through Gethsemane, Calvary, Joseph’s Garden. When then our text tells us, “he made rigid

(or immovable) his face to go to Jerusalem," ἐστήρισεν τοῦ πορεύεσθαι, pres.: "for going," we have here the mighty resolve of Christ to enter upon his Passion. There is more in the word than that he took a direct course for Jerusalem without deviating from this goal; there is also the great will and resolution of his soul, the effort of his whole human nature, determining to undergo the things that awaited him. The crisis for this resolution came in Gethsemane; here we meet a preliminary to it. — What a sad word **Jerusalem**, city of peace, becomes in this connection! It embodies and personifies all the enmity of the Jewish nation against the Messiah; it is the tool by which the dreadful work of bringing the Messiah unto death shall be executed — alas, a willing tool; it is the place where the rejection, the mockery, the condemnation, the delivery into the hands of the Gentiles, and finally the slaughter of the heavenly Lamb shall take place. All this lies in the word — he steadfastly sets his face *to go to Jerusalem*. What a contrast to the word as David had sung it of old, and so many of the pilgrims as they attended the great festivals: "Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!"

V. 52: **And sent messengers before his face.** So there was no delay, no hesitation of any kind; the first step was at once taken. We do not know positively who these messengers were, and little seems to be gained by mere conjecture. It may very well have been James and John — Jesus had sent out the seventy, two by two, and thus dealt wisely in affording his messengers companionship and a chance to counsel with each other. He sent two also on the Mount of Olives to get the colt of the ass, and again two to make ready the last Passover. If we conjecture at all, the sending of two is the best idea that suggests itself, and since James and John are mentioned as united in their opinion that he should make a terrible

example of the inhospitable Samaritans, these two naturally suggest themselves. — **And they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.** Westcott and Hort read ὡς ἐτομάσαι αὐτῷ, other editors ὥστε in the sense of ἵνα; ὡς would be very exceptional, ὥστε is best. The sense is quite apparent: “in order to make ready for him,” while the difficulty in the reading is hard to remove. Jesus, it seems, was still upon Galilean soil, or quite near the border. While Jesus and those with him waited, the messengers entered the village which lay near at hand, and endeavored to find a place for Christ and his followers to spend the night. “To make ready for him,” involves no more than the provision of a lodging for the company now on its journey southward. There is no hint anywhere that the messengers preached the kingdom in the village or asked the inhabitants to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. But by this time there was no border-village of Samaria in this whole section of the country in which Jesus was not known. The mere mention of his name, his mere presence with the disciples, at once conveyed the thought to Samaritan men, This is the Jewish Messiah. And so it was here.

V. 53. The efforts of the messengers were, therefore, in vain: **And they did not receive him.** The reason is stated: **because his face was as though he were going to Jerusalem,** πορευόμενον, “as one in the act of going.” There is more in these words than that the Samaritans refused entertainment to a party on its way to Jerusalem. If only the general dislike of Jews as Jews going to their sacred city were here expressed, this would be unusual and the reason for the refusal would be insufficient. We know that Jews did pass through Samaria in going south from Galilee to the holy city, and while they met some ill-will, they were not refused all entertainment. The very effort

here made by Jesus to take the way through Samaria on this occasion, and the very mission of the messengers to the first village, shows that Jesus and his disciples thought it feasible to pass through Samaria on their southward journey. More, then, than the common dislike of Jews, especially of Jews going to Jerusalem, is at the bottom of this refusal of the border village to receive Jesus and his party. They refused to receive *a reputed Jewish Messiah* on his way to Jerusalem, whom, of course, they considered no Messiah. Some bring in a multitude of pilgrims attached to the little band of Jesus and his disciples, but this is an invention. The messengers asked only for entertainment for Jesus. They wanted only to make ready "for him," and the Samaritans did not receive "him." Even the twelve are not mentioned, much less any larger company or multitude. The whole idea that the great crowd would have overtaxed the accommodations of the village is imported. The story as Luke tells it focuses all the refusal upon "him," Jesus alone. If the disciples had traveled simply as Jews we must conclude that this village would have received them—not with any show of friendship, to be sure, but in the common way, as aliens, as men of another faith. But a Jewish Messiah—no, him they declined to receive; and a Jewish Messiah going to Jerusalem, to carry out some great Messianic program for the nation—him they absolutely declined. This, too, helps us to understand the indignation of James and John, which would seem altogether out of proportion if the offense were only inhospitality on the part of the Samaritans. Jesus often had not where to lay his head, not because he only happened to be far from human habitations, but certainly also often enough because people were inhospitable and cared not to entertain him. Here, however, Jesus was refused because he came as the

Messiah. This refusal at the beginning of his journey is the sadly fitting preamble to the complete rejection awaiting him at the end of his journey, when Jerusalem cast him forth to be crucified by Gentile hands.

V. 54. It is a mistake to think that *ιδόντες* proves that James and John were not themselves the messengers, but were with Jesus and **saw** that lodging had been refused, by the return of the messengers, who otherwise would not have come back. Suppose James and John did see the messengers come back — how could they know that Jesus was refused lodging for the reason stated, until the messengers had spoken? Why should not the messengers return soon if Jesus had been acceptable to the Samaritans? “Saw” refers and must in any case refer to words uttered, either to those of the Samaritans directly, which is best, and we may thus include the actions of the Samaritans, or to those of the returning messengers whose report was made to Jesus. If James and John were not themselves the messengers, it seems strange that these two should at once get the same peculiar idea into their minds about the punishment deserved by the inhospitable Samaritans. To us it seems most natural to assume that James and John were indeed the messengers, and when they “saw this,” i. e. when they perceived that the Samaritans would not entertain their Messiah, they two waxed hot with indignation, and on their way back to make report spoke to each other, and so agreed together as to what would be a fitting penalty for men like these Samaritans. In no other way can the agreement of James and John, to the exclusion of the others, be explained so naturally. These two did not speak in the name of the other disciples as voicing the opinion of all, for then only one would have been the speaker, but they uttered their own peculiar idea. — And peculiar indeed it was: **Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to**

come down from heaven, and consume them? εἶπωμεν, subj. in a question of deliberation, here introduced by θέλεις (βούλομαι used likewise). Many manuscripts add: **even as Elijah did**; Noesgen is right when he declares that these words should be retained in the text. There are other questions in regard to vs. 55 and 56, which we cannot take up here; cf. Zahn, *Ev. d. Luk.*, p. 400 etc. Note ὑμεῖς in Christ's answer, which contrasts with Elijah. This prophet called down fire from heaven twice, to devour two captains of fifties and their fifties sent to him by King Ahaziah, 2 Kings 1, 10-12. "Fire from heaven" is not lightning, as modern wisdom would explain this miracle, making it accord with reason, but such devouring fire as fell down on Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel. It did not strike dead, it consumed. This consuming power is especially mentioned by the two apostles: καὶ ἀναλῶσαι αὐτούς. The fire that fell on Sodom and Gomorrah was different since it is called brimstone and fire, Gen. 19, 24, for which reason we think the more that James and John thought of the fire of Elijah. Samaria, too, was the very country in which the prophet had called down such fire of judgment. The extreme penalty thus designated would not have been in harmony with the wrong committed by the Samaritans if they had merely shown unfriendly inhospitality. They did far more, they rejected the divine Messiah himself and this, in a flagrant manner, much like King Ahaziah rejected God and inquired of the god of Ekron. — The disciples are sure that the power to call down fire is at their command, therefore they ask, Wilt thou that **we bid** fire to come down? They had witnessed Christ's glory on the Mount of Transfiguration and knew fully the wonderful power of his name. We must give them credit for their great faith in Christ; also for their zeal for Christ's honor. This contrasts markedly with the

coldness and indifference with which many followers of Jesus now see and hear his holy and blessed name and person flagrantly dishonored by men. — Mingled with faith and zeal we see also submission to Jesus in the hearts of the two disciples, for they act not on their own initiative, but first ask of Jesus, Lord, **wilt thou** that we bid fire to come down? But while these good points are acknowledged, there is that at the bottom of the whole proposition which vitiates it in the eyes of Christ.

V. 55. No doubt James and John in their agitation expected Jesus to assent to their proposition. But they were badly mistaken. For Jesus **turned and rebuked them**. This turning was to face them, just as the other in Matth. 16, 23, when Jesus faced Peter and administered a strong rebuke. It gives force to the rebuke to administer it squarely in the face of a person. The R. V. does not add the words of the rebuke, it places them in the margin as contained in "some ancient authorities." These, however, are strong enough to merit attention. Noesgen admits Christ's reply into the text, noting as a probable reason for its omission from the other codices that monkish copyists were reluctant to record what seemed to cast reproach upon the prophet who to them appeared as the father of ascetic life. Zahn argues at length for the retention of the entire longer reading, concluding that the omission was made early for fear of having heretical teachers make use of the section in question for their purposes. In general it seems improbable that the evangelist should record this incident and then leave out the very words of Christ which contain the real point and lesson of the whole narrative. The words, too, appear altogether genuine. — Jesus rebuked the disciples **and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of**. Luther translates very finely, οὐκ οἴδατε οἴου πνεύματός ἐστε ὑμεῖς, "of what

manner of Spirit ye are the children." "Ye know not" implies that there was no excuse for their not knowing; they should and could have known and lived up to this knowledge, but instead they yielded to their old way of thinking and acting. Luther translates the sentence as a question, but as a rebuke it is better translated as a positive declaration. "Ye do not know" is like the words in Matth. 20, 22. — **What manner of spirit ye are of** is taken in two ways by commentators, either that the spirit itself is different, or that the motions, the quality and kind of thoughts which originate from this spirit are different. Then, too, many take "spirit" to be simply the human spirit, as does the margin of the R. V., printing the word without a capital; see also A. V. which does the same in its regular text. Others read **Spirit**, i. e. the Holy Spirit. All seems to be simple when we read, "what manner of *spirit* ye are of," meaning that yours is a spirit of goodness, meekness, forbearance, patience, gentleness, willingness to suffer wrong, etc., as over against a spirit of harshness, rigorous justice, etc. — ἐστὲ = "are," not, "should be." Again, all seems to be simple when we interpret with Besser, Ye know not what manner of *Spirit* ye are of, for "the one Spirit who seeks ever but the one thing, namely the glorification of God, still does not at all times and to all persons speak one and the same thing. He speaks one thing in the Law, another thing through the Gospel," etc. But in both cases there are really great difficulties. The *spirit* of Elijah was not a wrong spirit by any means, nor was *the Spirit* moving Elijah only the Spirit of the Law. Because this prophet had to deal with a people and rulers who hardened themselves in sin, judgment and condemnation had to be proclaimed, but grace and mercy and the loving call of God invariably preceded it. Nor must we suppose that the thing is essentially different today,

for the sum of Christ's preaching and of our preaching is still, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned," is, in fact, judged already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John 3, 18. "What manner of spirit (or Spirit) ye are of," therefore, does not and cannot mean that either the spirit of James and John, or the Spirit moving them, is to be different in any essential way from the spirit of Elijah, or the Spirit moving Elijah. Old Calov is right when he declares that the Scriptures make no difference between the times before and those after the advent of Christ as far as leniency is concerned, and the object of Christ's coming extends forward and backward, as well to the times of the Old as to those of the New Testament. The Spirit of the Law indeed produces a spirit of fear, the Spirit of Christ a spirit of gentleness and leniency; but neither did the Spirit of the Law pertain only to the times before Christ, nor does the Spirit of Christ and the Gospel pertain only to these latter times. It is well to call these things to mind, otherwise the easy solution, based on supposed radical difference between the Old and the New Testament times, will mislead us. The Spirit in the days of Elijah is the same as the Spirit in the days of Christ and now; he moves us in the same direction and to the same thing; his qualities are the same, and he says the same, wherever the cases are the same. The Law is still in force, where the Gospel is rejected, and judgment still impends where grace is discarded. Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and prayed for his murderers, but he not only announced their destruction when he wept, he also himself actually sent it with all its terrors forty years after in the destruction of the holy city. "Ye know not what manner of spirit (Spirit) ye are of," therefore does not mean: you are of the Gospel, not of the

Law (as Elijah) ; nor, ye are of the same Spirit indeed as Elijah, but this Spirit speaks differently in you than in Elijah. All these and similar contrasts are on the wrong foundation. — The Samaritans did reject Jesus and would not entertain the Jewish Messiah; but we must ask, Had any special effort been made to win them for Christ? had the Gospel been preached to them? had they, after all such efforts, like Jerusalem, hardened their hearts in unbelief? had they, like Ahaziah and Ahab of old, constantly spurned God's grace, persisted in evil, and thus become ripe for the fire of judgment? We must answer no. Why then did James and John want to single them out for destruction by fire from heaven? There is only one answer: because they forgot the Spirit they were of, the Holy Spirit of both Testaments, and gave way to the fleshly desire for signal revenge. This did not Elijah, else no fire would have come down from heaven. Only Jonah was so foolish, and God showed him fully how wrong his ideas were. The same thing occurs today when the anger and indignation of Christians is aroused against some who reject Christ, or against even some of their own erring fellow Christians. In their haste they would shorten the day of grace of such people. This is not the right spirit in their own hearts, nor the Spirit of God as made manifest by the whole Scriptures. God waited 120 years in the days of Noah, 40 years after Christ's crucifixion in the days of Jerusalem, and he still waits long now. He shortens no man's day of grace unduly. And this is the lesson we must learn. It will be seen that the sense of Christ's words is virtually the same whether we read **spirit** or **Spirit**. We see no way of determining which of the two is here meant. — The words, **For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them** textually have less authority than the preceding, but a critic like Zahn

wants them retained, adducing strong reasons. Cf. however, Keil, *Die Ev. d. M. u. L.* It is possible they were introduced from Chapter 19, 10, and this with some variation. In themselves they are surely not inapt, and the preacher may, therefore, let them stand without hesitation. Christ came to save, not to judge. He indeed will attend also to judgment, but the measure and the time of his saving grace shall not be shortened. It is this spirit which loves and labors so earnestly, so perseveringly, so patiently to save, which fills his heart, and must fill the hearts of the disciples of all ages. The grandest manifestation of that spirit shone forth at the very time when the wrong spirit of James and John called for fire, for Christ was now on his way to die for the sins of the Samaritans as well as for those of his disciples. Note the Messianic *υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου*. — **And they went to another village**, not in Samaria, but in Galilee. — James and John were named Boanerges, Sons of thunder, by Christ himself, Mark 3, 17, and some have supposed that our text furnishes the explanation for this appellation. But this can hardly be, since nowhere do the Scriptures give a name derived from the faults of a man, and Boanerges is not a name that marks a fault, but one that marks a virtue, like the name Peter.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

This is another text which culminates in one point or expression, and that to such an extent that we can hardly avoid making the entire sermon turn on that one point. While James and John, like Peter in the text for *Invocavit*, will get their place in the sermon, they must not get in front of Jesus so as to dim the fact that here we see the spirit with which he went into his Passion. So instead of dividing the text story into parts, we will try first of all to analyze this "spirit" of which Jesus speaks:

The Spirit With Which Christ Entered His Passion.

- I. The spirit of infinite love for poor sinners.*
- II. The spirit of divine strength to bear all things for sinners.*
- III. The spirit of heavenly patience, which cuts off no sinner in haste.*

We may call this the spirit of patience, and then the outline may use first the Samaritans, secondly James and John, and from them reach out, thirdly, to all men; yet all three parts are connected centrally with Christ:

The Patience of Christ on His Way to the Passion.

- I. He is patient with the inhospitable Samaritans.*
- II. He is patient with the unholy zeal of his disciples.*
- III. He is patient — bearing the sins of the whole world.*

The idea of Christ's patience may be utilized in a more subjective way:

Patient Jesus:

I. Our comfort — what if he would treat us as James and John suggested? *II. Our pattern* — patient in love, in forbearance, in hope for our salvation to the last. *III. Our strength* — actually enabling us to attain patience like his, and to conquer all fleshly zeal.

Johann Rump has a good outline, only we would substitute some other term for "the sons of thunder" in part two:

Of What Spirit Are Ye the Children?

- I. Do ye belong to the children of this world, who scornfully turn away from the Savior?*
- II. Or to the sons of thunder, who would call down the fire of wrath?*
- III. Or to the children of God full of love to shed salvation upon men's souls?*

When we come to apply our text in a broad way to our own time and people we may see in it Christ's own directive as regards Christian tolerance. Where the spirit of Christ rules, no Inquisition is possible. Among the powers which Christ gave to his disciples there were no flames of fire. Bengel tells us that Christ wrought no miracles with fire; this he reserved for the final judgment.

The Spirit of Christ in Christian Tolerance

- I. *Never indifferent to the honor of Christ* — his person, cause, Gospel, doctrine, church, work, but burns with zeal like James and John, and uses all divinely appointed and approved means for maintaining this honor. That is the limit in one direction, beyond which Christian tolerance cannot go. Then, in the other direction Christian tolerance is
- II. *Never heartless toward the souls of men* — to kill and cut off from grace, to use carnal weapons against opponents contrary to the sword of the Spirit and love that seeks to save.

LAETARE

John 6, 47-57

In the Eisenach texts for Lent Jesus himself presents himself to us in his Passion. He does so in this Laetare text, for he declares, "The bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world." In each Lenten text Jesus presents some vital feature of his Passion to us. So in this Laetare text. In fact we have here a feature so important that the cycle would be imperfect without it. Christ here shows us: *The way in which we are to participate in the fruits of his Passion.* He does this in the words which constitute the climax of the whole text, "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life." These two points therefore make ours an ideal text for Laetare in the Eisenach line: 1) here Christ himself speaks in his wonderful way of his Passion; 2) here Christ tells us a thing about his Passion which we must know, namely how to participate in its blessed fruits. If these things are kept in mind the preacher will be true both to the text and also to the masterly line of thought in the cycle to which the text is intended to contribute a vital part.

After Christ had miraculously fed the five thousand he withdrew from them because they wanted to take him by force and make him king, John 6, 1-15. He went that night across to the other side of the sea, and was found at Capernaum by the searching multitude the next day. Here Christ deals with their desire for "the meat which perisheth" (v. 27), and with their entire unspiritual attitude of heart, and here he again offers himself to these people as "the true bread out of heaven" (v. 32). Thus, occasioned

by the preceding miracle and what followed, Christ delivered his great sermon on the Bread of Life, the closing part of which constitutes our text. This sermon as a whole, vs. 22-59, is properly divided into three parts, one rising above the other: 22-40, Jesus gives to him that believes, the Bread of Life; 41-51, Jesus gives to him that believes, himself as the Bread of Life; 42-59, Jesus gives to him that believes, his flesh as the Bread of Life. Our text includes the main part of the second and nearly all of the third section of the sermon. The cardinal thoughts are unchanged: 1) The bread which I will give is *my flesh*, for the life of the world; 2) He that *eateth* my flesh and *drinketh* my blood hath eternal life (vs. 51 and 54).

The Jews murmured because Christ said, "I am the bread which came down out of heaven," v. 41. In the second section of his discourse Christ answers this murmur, vs. 43-46. Then, however, he returns to his main line of thought and makes this rise still more grandly, and with blessedness still more unfolded, before his hearers. — V. 47 begins with **Verily, verily**, and rests what is now said on the everlasting foundation of Christ's authority. — **I say unto you.** He who doubts this verity and authority is doomed to drift and sink down miserably in soul-destroying error. — **He that believeth** hath eternal life. The present participle ὁ πιστεύων, "the one believing," denotes a continuous action or condition. If believing ceases, all that is here said concerning ὁ πιστεύων, the believing one, ceases likewise. But as long as believing continues so long that continues which Jesus here says. To believe is to embrace Christ in true confidence of the heart. — He that believeth **hath eternal life**, ἔχει, possesses it. The words fit together perfectly, for eternal life is a gift, and to have or to receive and possess the gift there must be an open hand into which the great Giver places the gift; and this hand is faith.

The essence of faith is that it is a receiving. That includes that he who believes is as a beggar, bringing nought, having nought in himself, but seeing that God has all and looking only to him (confidence, trust), receives what he gives, what he alone can give, namely the treasure of treasures, **eternal life**. — It is sometimes called simply “life,” the opposite of death. The true life is meant, which unites us who were dead in sin once more with God, the fountain of life. Where this life is, the death-grip of sin is broken, the Spirit of God has entered the heart and regenerated it. The essence of this life no man may know, just as no man knows what natural life really is in man, beast, or plant. But the life from God shows itself in a hundred ways, like other life; it breathes, it moves, it speaks, it acts. We can say faith itself *is* life, and again, as here, faith *has* life. It *is* life, because it is the divine spark or flame which distinguishes us from the dead; it has life, because it is the constant reception of that divine grace and gift which frees us from death and makes us one with God. — Here it is called as so often, **eternal** life, because its nature is to last forever. That does not mean that we might not lose it again during our earthly existence. We know that they who cease to believe do at once lose the life that was theirs while they believed. The eternity of life is this that no temporal death is able to take it away from us, it goes on after we lie down in the grave to sleep, for ever and ever. Faith has this life now and does not merely receive it at some future date. Jesus speaks very briefly here, he does not say as in v. 40, he that believeth “on me,” but the sense of his brief word is the same. No one has life at any time apart from Christ; joined to him we have life indeed, and faith is the tie that unites with him.

V. 48. The words, **I am the bread of life**, go back to v. 35, and the comparison with the manna

likewise takes up the thought of vs. 31-32, but here the object is a fuller statement and explanation, as we see it in the words, "The bread which I will give is my flesh." With great emphasis Jesus says: ἐγώ εἰμι. It is he, he alone who is the bread of life, and there is none beside him in all heaven and earth. This wonderful **I am** we hear from his lips again when he says, *I am* the light of the world; *I am* the way, the truth, and the life. It is spoken each time out of the divine fulness of his saving power and authority. — I am **the bread of life**, or as v. 51 has it, "the living bread," signifies the bread which contains and conveys life. The figure — here an emphatic repetition — is carried out allegorically in the following verses, the picture and the reality being interwoven so that the sense is clear as the discourse proceeds. The figure of the bread is chosen because of the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, and because of the ensuing demand that he do a sign to comport with the manna eaten by the Israelites in the desert. There is no reference in this figurative word "bread" to the real bread used in the institution of the Lord's Supper. The word "life" is the same as in the preceding sentence, "He that believeth hath eternal life." And here already we may say that to believe means to partake of the bread of life, or to receive Christ the living bread. There is no "life" or "eternal life" apart from Christ the living bread. If we ask for the point of comparison in the allegorical expression "bread of life," we will find, as in some other figures used by Christ, that he strains the image in order to convey the greatness and fulness of his thought. Ordinary bread *sustains* physical life; but Christ as the bread does not only *sustain* spiritual life, he even *gives* it, *enkindles* it. Therefore, however, he is not satisfied to call himself merely "bread," or "bread of life," but

uses the wonderful term "living bread," i. e. a bread full of life, able both to sustain and even to give life.

V. 49. In order to show fully the wonderful value of "the bread of life" Jesus now compares it with the manna to which the Jews had referred in vs. 30-31. The wonderful feeding of the five thousand after all did not satisfy the Jews. They thought of Moses who had fed Israel with manna so many years. Must not the Messiah do a thing equally great or greater? So they had asked Jesus, "What then doest thou for a sign, that we may see and believe thee?" Jesus at once corrected them as to the manna which they called Moses' bread from heaven, saying, "*My Father* giveth you the true bread out of heaven." And now he places the two side by side: the manna, which was not the true bread, but only a wonderful earthly food, and himself, who is indeed the true bread. In first correcting his hearers in regard to the manna he had already indicated that after eating the manna one would hunger again, while after eating the true bread from heaven one shall neither hunger nor thirst. Now he goes deeper, **Your fathers did eat the manna in the wilderness, and they died**, ἔφαγον . . . καὶ ἀπέθανον, 2nd aorists, stating historical facts. So after all, though miraculously given, the manna was not superior to other earthly food. It sustained life temporarily, and only the bodily life. It could never be called "the bread of life" in the full sense of the word, for they that did eat of it died at last. — **And they died** means nothing more than that they were overtaken at last by temporal death. The idea that eternal death is here meant is in no way indicated. The Jewish fathers did indeed perish in their sins. "For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses? . . . whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?" Heb. 3, 16, R. V. (The A. V. has "some," which is a wrong translation.) The manna

should have filled the hearts of the fathers with faith, but it did not. In itself, however, it was only an earthly bread; its powers were no greater than the bread with which Christ had fed the five thousand the day before. They who get no better bread than this, wonderful though it is, must eventually die. They will have lived only the common earthly life, with no higher life in them, and so their dying is a sad thing indeed; the only life they have they lose, for the only bread they have eaten is one that lets them die at last.

V. 50. But now look at "the bread of life." **This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.** All that Christ said of the manna is on the plane of the natural life; this other however, οὐτος, is on the spiritual plane. The manna is only improperly described as "out of heaven"; this other bread is the one which in reality "cometh down out of heaven," the place where no corrupting worm dwells. On the natural plane the manna could do no more than any other bread, it could keep the body only for a time; on the spiritual plane "the bread of life" does what no other spiritual bread (esteemed as such) can possibly do, preserve eternally from death. For this very purpose "the bread of life came down from heaven," ἵνα, in order that a man may eat thereof, and not die. The intention is that we shall eat of it, and the intended result will be that we escape death. As the food so the death, both in the case of the manna as mere earthly food, and the bread of life as spiritual or truly heavenly food. "The bread that cometh down out of heaven affects the sinners in the same way as the fruit of the tree of life in Paradise would have affected sinless man (Gen. 3, 22). By eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil death entered into man who had become sinful; by eating of the heavenly tree of life, whose name is Jesus, life and immortality (2 Tim. 1, 10) are returned

to redeemed man, and we are preserved from eternal death, from the never-dying worm of destruction." Besser. "And not die" refers to eternal death. We who eat the heavenly bread of life die according to this bodily life, but in thus dying we are different from all those who have not eaten of that bread. Our death is a mere sleep, their death is death indeed. This 50th verse reminds us strongly of Christ's word to Martha, "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." John 11, 25-26.

V. 51. **I am the living bread** — I and no other; and since by this repetition the Lord once more focuses our thoughts upon his person, he calls himself "*the living bread*," full of the life it is intended to impart. Compare ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς, the bread which belongs to the true life, and ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν, the bread, the very quality and characteristic of which is the true life. Christ himself is life, and therefore the Giver of life. — **Which came down out of heaven** — it is a historic fact, καταβάς, aorist participle; and this is brought out, as distinguished from the more indefinite present participle καταβαίνων, which designates a quality of "bread." — **If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever.** "Eat" = "believe," v. 47. The ἵνα of v. 50 shows that the purpose of the coming down of this bread is that men should eat it; the "if," εἰ of v. 51 shows that it is possible to refuse to eat this bread. But if any man does eat of it, i. e. "of this bread" (myself), not "of my bread," ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἄρτου, the variant reading — this bread (myself) being the *living bread*: "he shall live for ever." And here the positive effect is put where before the negative (escape from death) was mentioned. Thus the whole is rounded out; the blessed circle of salvation is closed. Christ, the life, is the center; and all who are made one with him, by faith, are full partakers of his life,

not only of something which he has, or of something which he does, but of what he himself is. — But in this figure of the bread there lies a still deeper meaning which not only shows *how* Christ is the bread of life, but also *how* we eat of this bread by faith. And so with one circle of thought complete, at once another, reaching out farther, is drawn. Its distinctive features are the word “flesh,” “the flesh of the Son of man, and his blood,” and corresponding therewith “eating” his flesh and “drinking” his blood. **Yea (καί) and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world.** There is some variation in the Greek texts. The A. V. retains after the word “flesh”: *which I will give for the life of the world,* and Philippi, Meyer, and Godet insist that these words are genuine, although the R. V. omits them entirely; but see Zahn, “Yea and,” καί . . . δέ = and moreover; it adds to the previous statement something different which elucidates. — **The bread . . . is my flesh.** Luthardt as well as Zahn reverses subject and predicate, but the reason is not convincing; the argument that the bread must be the predicate because it was spoken of before is not conclusive. In fact, the reverse is entirely natural: having spoken of the bread, Jesus now tells us what it is: “The bread is my flesh.” Commentators divide in regard to what is implied, or connoted, by the word flesh, σάρξ. Does it, or does it not, imply the death of Christ? In answering the question the further explanation of Christ must not be disregarded, and that makes it plain that the death of Christ is certainly implied. Also if the words, “my flesh *which I give for the life of the world,*” are genuine, the death is implied. But even without these words, if we read only that the bread which he will give, namely his flesh, is (or is given) for the life of the world, the question how this bread, his flesh, can be for the life of the world, involves the fact of Christ’s death, for

his flesh, apart from his sacrificial death, could bring no life for the world. The idea that Christ gives his flesh, his humanity in general, for the life of the world is too indefinite. Luther, followed by a few, in one place, explains that the flesh or humanity is the vehicle for the divinity of Christ: "We eat and drink the divinity in the human nature." But this whole idea is foreign to the text if in holding it we exclude the sacrificial death. There is no life-giving impartation to us of the divine nature of Christ, merely and only by means of his human nature. There is no divine Christ in us without the God-man Christ for us. Moreover, the future tense of δώσω seems strange if only the humanity or human nature in general is meant as the life-gift for the world. Such a gift would have to be referred back to the Incarnation, and the tense of the verb should therefore be the aorist or the present, and not the future. "Will give" is proper and plain when the coming sacrifice is kept in mind. The same line of thought holds when Keil refers δώσω to the bread as a gift and to its future eating; with the death of Christ left out and only his *Menschlichkeit* in mind, this future tense has no justification, the present would have expressed the thought adequately. Just as Paul says Gal. 2, 20, "The Son of God gave *himself* for me"; Eph. 5, 2, "Christ hath given *himself* for us"; and as Christ himself says John 10, 17, "I lay down *my life*"; Matth. 20, 28, "The Son of man came to give *his life* a ransom for many": so here he says, "The bread which I give is *my flesh*," and the giving throughout is that which was completed on the cross. Only by giving his flesh upon the cross (to die) did he become for us the bread of life; if his flesh had not been so given, it would never have been the bread of life. — **For the life of the world** shows the reach of this gift; it includes the world, the whole human race. This living bread, Christ, his flesh as

sacrificed on the cross, is a fountain so deep, full, abundant and overflowing with life and salvation, that all the world may take and drink and live forever. — Ideas like those of Delitzsch, that the flesh of Christ imparted to us becomes in us “a tincture of immortality,” vivifying our flesh at last in the resurrection, are avoided and made impossible when the gift of Christ’s flesh as the bread of life is rightly viewed as a gift in his sacrifice upon the cross. The same is true of similar ideas connected with the body and blood of Christ given to us in the Lord’s Supper.

V. 52. The verb, they **strove one with another** is put first: ἐμάχοντο οὖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους. To strive is more than to murmur, v. 41. They argue strenuously one with another as to what Christ could mean. **The Jews**, here as throughout John’s Gospel, are the opponents of Christ. Their striving is not divided on the line that some are favorably and others unfavorably inclined to Jesus, but that, while they all are inwardly opposed to Christ and his word, some put one construction, and some another on his words. — The question, as they put it, is correct enough. Its point is the **how** in regard to his **flesh**. What darkens Christ’s words for them comes plainly to view in the word οὗτος, **this man**. This designation is derogatory; it was spoken with a touch of scorn. “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know?” v. 42. Because in spite of his great miracle in feeding the five thousand, in spite of all evidence of his divinity, they persisted in their unbelief, regarding him merely as a man, therefore the question, How can he give us his flesh to eat? finds no proper answer. And it never will for those who think of Jesus as they did. No mere man can be the bread of life, and this bread his flesh, and this flesh for the life of the world. Luther is right when he places his finger on the little word *my* flesh: “With great, mighty letters we ought

to engrave in men's hearts what Christ says: MY, MY flesh. But they will not look at this *my*. The fanatics cannot grasp the word *my*. But with the word *my* he distinguishes and separates himself from all other flesh whatever it may be called. For here *my* flesh is as much as, I am God and God's Son, *my* flesh is filled with divinity (*durchgoetttert*), and is a divine flesh. His flesh alone will do it. To this God would have us attached and bound fast. Apart from the person who is born of Mary, and truly has flesh and blood and has been crucified, we are not to seek nor find God. For we are to grasp and find God alone by faith in the flesh and blood of Christ, and are to know that *this* flesh and blood is not fleshy and bloody, but both are full of divinity." Considering Christ only a man these Jews could think of no other way of eating his flesh than the gross natural way, for which they themselves have thus furnished the distinctive name, which our Confession (Formula of Concord, *Book of Concord*, Jacobs, 512, 15) explicitly rejects as the "Capernaïtic mode" of eating, which some have charged against the Lutheran doctrine of eating Christ's body in the Lord's Supper. This sort of eating is to masticate with the teeth and digest with the stomach. To the carnally minded Jews this was the only eating they could think of, and so they scorned the words of Christ. The reading "*his* flesh," αὐτοῦ, is doubtful, but "the flesh" is plain enough. Jesus did not say, "my flesh *to eat*," but this addition of the Jews is not incorrect as the answer of Jesus shows, who adopts and elaborates the word.

V. 53. Instead of softening his words, Jesus, as we may say, hardens them. And yet this hardening is only an elaboration, a fuller, more explicit, a clearer statement. It is impossible for him to retract a single utterance, for that would be to put deadly falsehood in place of truth. Christ had made abundant prepara-

tion with these Jews, and now he did not shrink from revealing the truth in its fulness. The great mass of his hearers would reject him and his word, and this now the more since he spoke so fully and clearly on the things necessary for their eternal life; but there was nothing else to do, since at every previous step they had done the same thing, only their complete inward rejection had not come out fully, as it does now. — The Jews had asked, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Some commentators act as if the question in general were wrong, and Besser exclaims, “Let us never repeat this Jewish how!” meaning, however, not merely its Jewish or unbelieving feature, but all inquiry as to the how. So also the answer of Jesus is regarded as a simple declaration of *the necessity* of eating his flesh and as a refusal to explain *how* this eating can be accomplished. But all this is a misconception. If we are to eat Christ’s flesh in order to have life, we must know how; if he gives us his flesh as the living bread we must know how, in order that we may receive it. And Christ answers both of these questions. He does it in his own way, combining the manner with the necessity. Of course, he does not satisfy either unbelief or curiosity, but he does satisfy faith. The speculation which would unravel all mystery will not be satisfied, but the soul hungering for life and salvation will know both how he gives us his flesh to eat, and thus also how we may eat it and live. — The case is somewhat like that of Nicodemus who also asked how in regard to regeneration. There as well as here Jesus used the solemn **Verily, verily, I say unto you**, in order to overcome all doubt and to impress the eternal importance of his words. There as well as here Jesus repeats his former statement and solemnly reasserts the necessity, but in both instances he adds that explanation which is necessary for faith. — He begins with the negative

as in the previous statement, v. 50: **Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in yourselves.** This is followed at once by the positive statement, as above in v. 51. Ἐὰν μὴ φάγητε . . . καὶ πίητε, a protasis of expectancy; but οὐκ ἔχετε, an apodosis of reality, as if Jesus were already reckoning with their unbelief. A new statement is added for explanation, namely concerning his blood and our drinking it. Incidentally Jesus accepts the word of the Jews, *eat* the flesh. He also adds his proper name, **Son of man**, the Messiah, a reference by no means only to his human nature, but to his Messianic person and office. It is a grave misconception of the spirit in which Christ uttered the entire sermon on the Bread of Life to say, as Luthardt does, that the word concerning the drinking of his blood was added "in order to increase the offense." The offense is always without due cause; Jesus never sets out to offend. The real purpose here is not to offend, but to explain and remove unfounded offense. To say further, as Luthardt and Zahn do, that the blood has no special significance, that it is only added to the flesh as a description of the human nature, is to cancel from this final and fullest declaration of Jesus the very thing which is distinctive and most explanatory. The discourse of Jesus starts with the simple truth: "He that believeth hath eternal life." This is the fundamental proposition. This, in fact, is all that is necessary. All that Christ adds is embraced in this one statement. All that he does is to unfold for us what is in it. And this is the unfolding: 1) We must believe in him to have life. 2) We must believe because he is the bread of life, the living bread, which came down out of heaven. Our having life depends absolutely upon him as the life. 3) To believe is to eat, and so to get life by means of the bread of life. 4) The bread is his flesh, and we must eat his flesh

to have life. 5) The bread is his flesh because of Christ's death, and so we must eat his flesh and drink his blood, i. e. partake of his sacrifice for us. This is the unfolding of the simple fundamental proposition. To this very day, when we preach to people to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved we still explain in substance just as Christ himself does here.

We may as well at this point sum up the arguments on the question whether Christ here speaks of the Lord's Supper, or whether his words point only to his atoning death. The Lord's Supper cannot be meant by the words: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves," first because the eating here spoken of is absolutely necessary for salvation. Yet children are saved without the Lord's Supper, so was the malefactor on the cross, so were the saints in the Old Testament, and the truth is generally acknowledged that only the *contemptus*, not the *defectus* of the Supper condemns. The evasion of Kahnis is vain when he tries to explain Christ's words so that he would say: "Except ye proceed from faith to the eating and drinking of my flesh and blood in the Sacrament"; Christ did not speak thus. Secondly, the eating and drinking here spoken of is always, necessarily, and without exception salutary, v. 54. This cannot be affirmed of the eating and drinking in the Sacrament. Furthermore, the word *σάωξι* is never used in the Sacrament, but always the word *σῶμα*. Our Confession explains as follows: "There is a twofold eating of the flesh of Christ, one 'spiritual,' of which Christ especially treats John 6, 54, which occurs in no other way than with the spirit and faith, in the preaching and consideration of the Gospel, as well as in the Lord's Supper, and by itself is useful and salutary, and necessary at all times for salvation to all Christians; without which spiritual participation also the sacramental or oral eating in the Supper is

not only not salutary, but even injurious and a cause of condemnation. But this spiritual eating is nothing else than *faith*, namely, to hearken to God's Word (wherein Christ, true God and man, is presented, together with all his benefits which he has purchased for us by his flesh given for us to death, and by his blood shed for us, namely, God's grace, the forgiveness of sins, righteousness and eternal life), to receive it with faith and appropriate it to ourselves. . . . He, I say, who with true confidence rests in the Word of the Gospel in all troubles and temptations, spiritually eats the body of Christ and drinks his blood." *Book of Concord*, Jacobs, 612, 61-62. The Confession then describes the sacramental and oral eating as distinguished from the spiritual which it finds in our text. When it says that John 6 treats "especially" of the spiritual eating which consists in nothing else than faith, the word "especially" carefully includes the fact, that in all the means of grace and their salutary use (including the Supper, of course) this spiritual eating or faith is required. Therefore, however, in John 6 there is no more reference to the Supper than to the other two means of grace by which also we are to believe and thus eat and drink Christ. In the Apology, 274, 75, nothing more is said than this same necessity of faith as the spiritual eating of Christ which underlies all the means of grace and thus also, and only thus, the Lord's Supper.— Finally, it would indeed be strange if Christ in dealing with the unbelieving Jews, should urge upon them the Lord's Supper and the special eating of his body and drinking of his blood there required. They were certainly not ready for this. The reply to this that Jesus urged Baptism upon Nicodemus is not pertinent, since regeneration is the first step, but the nourishment of the new life by the body and blood of the Lord's Supper is the last step, and is therefore not to be urged upon those who have

not yet taken the first. Besides Nicodemus had John's Baptism. — A second class of expositors admits that primarily our text does not deal with the Lord's Supper, yet they maintain that it does so secondarily. They contend that Christ so expressed himself that his words find their ultimate and completest fulfillment in the Lord's Supper. Among them there is considerable variety as to the way in which they find the Supper referred to: some say our text is a preparatory prophecy of the Supper; others that the idea of the Supper is included in Christ's words; Sartorius even calls the feeding of the five thousand "a significant prefigurement" of the Supper; Besser follows Bengel in saying that while our text properly deals with the spiritual eating, by way of inference it also refers to the Supper. Something is made, too, of the fact that John's Gospel does not mention the institution of the Lord's Supper, just as it fails to record the institution of Baptism (giving us, however, the conversation with Nicodemus). The best answer to most of these views is furnished by Besser himself who points to the hermeneutical rule of Hilary: a true reader of the Scriptures is he who expects the passages of Holy Writ themselves to furnish their meaning, who carries nothing into them, but takes out what they bring, and who is careful not to make the Scriptures say what he himself has conceived before taking them in hand. Rohnert asks whether this is all that Christ could mean by urging us seven different times in this chapter to eat his flesh and thrice to drink his blood — simply to believe in him? He betrays that he does not understand the supreme value of faith — faith in the Christ who gave his flesh and blood for us. For a good exposition of the old Lutheran view, that only the atoning death of Christ is meant by Christ in our text, see Philippi, *Glaubenslehre*, v. 11, p. 522, etc.; for the

defense of the double view see Rohnert, *Dogmatik*, p. 447, etc.

V. 54. The tremendous importance of eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood is brought out by the positive statement following hard upon the negative one: **He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life.** The English is unable to give the force of ὁ τρώγων, which is even more realistic than φαγεῖν, it is the German *knabbern*, audible eating, *manducare* (*mandere*); note the repetition of this participle in the following verses, and mark also the present tense: he who continues to eat. It is in vain to argue against what seems so plain and self-evident, namely that this statement is only another form of the one in v. 47 (comp. 40), "He that believeth hath eternal life." Is there some other way outside of believing by which I may get eternal life? The Gospel knows of none. Some of the newer commentators are led astray by their idea that believing is an act of man's own free will, a something which God requires of us, "a moral obligation," "that which man must do to be saved," an ethical deed. This induces these commentators to say that eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood cannot = faith, for so to eat and to drink is to receive something from Christ, not to render something ourselves. But we have already shown that faith = receiving from Christ, abandoning all else, trusting in him alone and allowing him to give us himself, his merits, his flesh and his blood; and therefore we can get no richer and truer definition of faith than this: faith = to eat Christ's flesh and to drink Christ's blood. If here again the point of comparison is asked for, why believing is called eating, it is simply in that eating is receiving of the most intimate kind. As eating receives food to be assimilated and sustain life, so believing receives Christ (his flesh and blood), and he is made one with

us, bringing into our souls all his saving life, to expel death, guilt, and sin, and to give us life and sustain it, true life that abides forever. — Note well the new feature added both in the previous verse and in this one: **and drinketh my blood**, again the present tense, ὁ πίνων. In a way the word “my flesh,” v. 51, is enough. It already includes Christ’s death, for the flesh of the Christ not slain for us can do us no good as far as getting eternal life is concerned. But the Jews overlooked this implication of Christ’s death. Therefore Jesus brings it forward as the vital thing with more emphasis, and he does this three different times, v. 53, 54, and 55. The death is indicated most strongly by the addition of the word **my blood** to **my flesh**. The following passages show the death connected with the flesh, σάραξ: 1 Pet. 3, 18, “being put to death in the flesh”; Eph. 2, 15, “having abolished in his flesh the enmity”; Col. 1, 22, “in the body of his flesh through death”; Heb. 10, 20, “through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” To these add the following concerning the blood, which point even more directly to the death, and this a sacrificial one: Lev. 17, 11, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” Heb. 9, 22, “Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.” 1 Pet. 1, 18, Ye were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Acts 20, 28, “the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” Comp. Heb. 9, 14; Eph. 1, 7; Rev. 5, 9. These passages, to which others may be added, suffice. The joint mention of Christ’s flesh and his blood as life-giving are inseparable from his atoning, sacrificial death. The argument of Zahn, that all Jesus says here concerning flesh and blood is merely like Matth. 16, 17;

Gal. 1, 16; 1 Cor. 15, 50, a reference to *Leiblichkeit*, with no implication of death, is thus more than answered; nor will it avail him to reply that it is "incredible," in the face of the passages we adduce, to assume that Christ spoke of his death in John 6. — **He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood** — one commentator is so carried away by his idea that Christ here speaks of his Supper that he declares "no sensible man would form the thought" that believing alone could be an eating and a drinking. 1 Cor. 10, 3-4 should have warned him: "And did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink," namely Christ; likewise Matth. 5, 6: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled"; also John 7, 37-38: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that *believeth* on me," etc. comp. John 4, where Christ offers living water to the Samaritan woman, who finally drank it by faith. Our Confession is right, therefore, when it says: *manducatio est credere*. The figure is not only permissible, but it is highly expressive and exceedingly rich in meaning. "Our faith and Christ, in whom we believe, do not remain separated, as for instance our thoughts of a friend fail to obtain our friend and do not secure him for us. Our faith has hands which reach up to Christ and touch him so that he feels it." Besser. We can say more, by eating and drinking we do not merely touch Christ, but receive him into ourselves, as our very own. By eating his flesh and drinking his blood all the benefits and blessings of his death for us are assimilated by us and united to our inmost being. And since the thought of life is made parallel with that of bread, eating and drinking is the means for conveying this life to us who without it are dead. And here it appears that in our condition of death we cannot even eat and drink (believe), but faith is wrought in us by

that blessed power of the Word which Christ was here vainly putting forth in trying to save the Jews. — It does not seem possible to discover a real distinction between τρώγειν and φαγεῖν as Jesus here uses the former. All we can say is that τρώγειν is more realistic, and that since πίνειν remains unchanged in the three verses, τρώγειν is only a verbal change. But the tense is important: ὁ τρώγων καὶ πίνων; the idea of continuation is added, where the previous aorists spoke only of the simple act.

And I will raise him up at the last day. The “I,” ἐγώ, is emphatic. This raising up is the ultimate proof of eternal life. Temporal death shall intervene, but the true life remains unharmed, to appear in all its glory when Christ fulfils his promise. The resurrection at the last day was a well-known article of the Jewish faith. John 11, 24. But the Jews did not know that the life which comes to us by faith in the death of Christ for us, alone guarantees the blessed resurrection to us. In order to be raised up in glory by Christ at the last day we must eat his flesh and drink his blood. 1 Pet. 1, 3.

V. 55. **For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.** Ἰάε shows that it is due to the flesh and blood which we eat and drink that Christ shall raise us up at the last day. The bread of life gives us the resurrection unto eternal life. “Meat indeed,” or “true food”; “drink indeed,” or “true drink,” ἀληθῆς, is such meat and drink as deserve the name in the fullest possible way. There was other meat and drink in Old Testament times, and men today have all sorts of earthly food and drink, but none of these deserves the predicate “true.” The sacred meat and drink during old covenant times could only promise the better food to come, and all other meat and drink is but for a day and has no abiding vitality in it. The attempt is made to use the word “true” here as an

argument for the claim that the Lord's Supper is meant by Christ. But Philippi points out very properly that "true" — some versions have ἀληθῶς instead of the adjective — is here used in opposition to the view of the Jews, who thought it impossible for Christ's flesh to be the bread of life. To men of this mind Jesus says: My flesh will do all that I say, for it is a real, not an imaginary, or only an apparant, or worse yet a false and lying food. — V. 56. And now Christ adds a valuable explanation for this blessed effect of his flesh and blood when we eat and drink it. **He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him.** "The consequence of justifying faith in Christ's redemptive death is the *unio mystica*." Philippi. He refers to John 15, 4, etc.; 17, 23; 1 John 3, 24; 4, 16. Because we abide in Christ, and he in us, he will raise us up at the last day. This abiding in him and he in us helps to make plain likewise what it means to have eternal life. So one blessed result sheds light upon another. The expression "abideth in me, and I in him" is typical of the mystic union of the believer with Christ. This union is by no means conditioned solely on the Lord's Supper. When Mayer tries to find something higher here than the mystic union, namely a peculiar sacramental union in which Christ receives, as well as the partaker of the Sacrament receives, he is climbing into speculative heights where we cannot follow him. Both phrases "he that eateth abideth in me," and "I in him" designate our benefit, and ours alone. For us to abide in Christ is salvation; for him to abide in us likewise. When it is said that we abide in him, he is our shelter, our safe stronghold, our garden of Eden; when it is said he abides in us he is our light, our joy, our pearl of great price, our fountain of life and peace. He is always the Giver, we the recipients. — In general we ought to be cautious about our imagination when we

study this text, and in fact the entire chapter. A false, overdone spirituality, striving to strike otherwise unknown depths, only plunges into error.

V. 57. **As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me.** Here the vital word is “living” and “live.” This verse contains the widest and highest reach of thought in the discourse, it goes back to the very fountain of all life, **the living Father**, ὁ ζῶν πατήρ. Not only is there no death in him, but he is absolutely the living one and the source of all life. Christ says that the living Father **sent me**. Christ sent by the living Father is the bearer of life to us, that is his mission, and for this he calls himself the bread of life. By the sending of the living Father he became the bread of life for us. — Sent thus, he says, **and I live because of the Father**. The preposition διὰ with the accusative does not indicate the cause, *per patrem*; nor the purpose, *for the Father*; but the reason, **because** of the Father, since my Father is the living Father. The essential oneness of the Christ with the Father is thus expressed. This person in human flesh, speaking to the Jews, was the Son of God, and as the Son one with the Father in the possession of life. Being in human flesh shows that he was “sent”; his life, and his living because of the Father was not to be reserved for himself, but to be imparted to others, to us. All that he said concerning his “flesh,” his “flesh and blood,” our “eating and drinking” shows how the impartation of life to us takes place — he must give himself as a sacrifice for us, and we must receive him by faith. — Thus will we have life: **so he that eateth me, he also shall live because of me**. Christ says “he that eateth *me*” and thus return to his previous statement in v. 51. If the Lord’s Supper were meant we should expect the mention of the flesh and the blood once more. The

inner climax of the entire discourse is in the word concerning the "living Father," for here Christ leads us to the supreme fountain itself. The hard saying for the carnal Jews was in the flesh and the blood which Christ insisted they must eat and drink in order to live. And for us who are to be concerned chiefly about how we may obtain life, this saying of Christ in its varied forms is the all-important thing. "So he that eateth me" is not the climax, but the abbreviated repetition of what was said before. — **He also**, *κακεῖνος*, is emphatic: *he* is the one. That he **shall live** was said before, likewise that his life depends on Christ, and that it is his because of the connection established between him and Christ. But here the word **because of me**, *δι' ἐμέ*, receives a special significance through the parallel phrase "because of the Father." Christ's life is in us when we eat Christ, but Christ's life as bound together with the living Father is here said to be ours; we live because of Christ who lives because of the Father. As the Father and Christ are bound together, so we and Christ, and the living Father's life is ours. In both cases, because Christ's is the living Father, and because ours is the living Christ, the relation indicated is a permanent, a continuous one. But with us it is conditional, and the condition is "he that eateth me," not once merely, but continuously. Should this eating cease, then will the living cease, which again cannot be explained of the Lord's Supper, without undue straining. The closing sentence of the sermon, v. 58, is omitted from our text, since it simply rounds out the discourse by bringing it back to the starting point, the bread of life.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Our text is part of the great discourse on the Bread of Life, and is thus more like an Epistle text than any we have had thus far. Let us note the absolute perfection which marks it. No man ever spoke like this Man. Inspiration is written

all over St. John's reproduction of this discourse. We admire the absolute finish of the parables; there is the same finish here — not one word too much or too little, and not one expression that could be improved. Yet note the simplicity and lucidity. The thought is put into the form of Biblical allegory. We say "Biblical," because this form is found so little outside of the sacred pages. This self-interpreting way of weaving figure and reality together is the perfection of beauty. The more one grasps it, the more he becomes enthralled. Because it is all so lucid and clear, it is easy to preach on — one thought is laid so distinctly and clearly upon the other. Apply the simplest form of analysis, and you get it all:

Christ in His Passion the Bread of Life.

- I. *The Christ of the Passion came down from heaven.*
- II. *The Christ of the Passion gave his flesh and his blood for our life.*
- III. *The Christ of the Passion offers himself to us in his Word.*
- IV. *The Christ of the Passion bids us eat and drink his flesh and his blood by faith.*
- V. *The Christ of the Passion will raise us up at the last day.*

Part three is perfectly in place, because right in the words of this text Christ is using his Word to offer himself to us. — We may also use fewer parts, concentrating on the idea of the food and of the eating, the two primary thoughts:

Christ Shows Us How to Become Partakers of the Benefits of His Passion.

- I. *By means of His Passion he offers himself to us as the Bread of Life.*
- II. *By faith in him and his Passion we eat of the Bread of Life.*

Here is another simple form, adding to the food and to the eating the resulting life. In the parts we use the exclamatory form. This might be used more frequently by preachers, both in casting themes and parts. Even the interrogative form is too infrequently used in the parts, though themes have it more often. The preacher should strive for variety in form:

Christ's Wonderful Word About Eating His Flesh and Drinking His Blood.

- I. O heavenly food!*
- II. O wonderful eating and drinking!*
- III. O heavenly life!*

As already pointed out in previous suggestions a text may at times be picked up, like a table cloth, by one of its corners, and the whole cloth will be lifted. Here is the important idea of *life* — note how many times the word is repeated, to say nothing of the additional implications. So we may outline:

Christ's Flesh and Blood, For the Life of the World.

- I. They won life; II. Offer life; III. Nourish life; IV. Crown life.*

Another one of the important corners is *believing* — see how the entire text is attached to it, for the eating and drinking is always simply believing. So we may outline from this angle:

The Mystery of Spiritual Eating and Drinking.

- I. All other eating ends in death, v. 49 and 53.*
- II. This eating receives Christ's flesh and blood.*
- III. By it we shall live now and forever.*

JUDICA

John 13, 31-35

This text, like some of the others in the Lenten cycle, contains two great lines of thought. The first is the thought of Christ's glorification; the other, the thought of love in the new commandment which the Lord gives his disciples. Holding fast the general theme of the cycle, Christ showing himself to us in his Passion, there can be no doubt for us as to which of these two thoughts is the primary and essential one for our sermon of Judica Sunday. It is the thought of Christ's glorification. We also see how in the text this is connected with the Passion, for here Christ tells us, "Yet a little while I am with you"; again, "Whither I go ye cannot come" (referring to his vicarious death); and finally, "As I have loved you," which love his Passion shows so gloriously. However then we may work in the second thought of the text, the first one must have the prominence. Heeding this, the text will gain for us a value all its own. It combines Passion and glorification. It gives us thus a new, an unusual, but ever a true and infinitely precious and blessed view of Christ's suffering and death. Where usually we see dark colors, painful, terrible, deadly things, we are shown the great act of Christ's Passion illuminated by a heavenly light, blazing with a glory brighter and fairer than earth has ever seen. Jesus shows himself to us in *the glory of his Passion*. This is the exalted theme of our text. To present the Passion thus to our hearers as a glorious thing is the task set before us; so will we do justice to this text in this place. Nor are we far from the glorious Easter festival, when this glory of the crucified One shall

blaze forth in all its fulness. And we do well to recall also, that in the original Lenten idea the Sundays are throughout intended to be festive days, not days of sadness and gloom. The note of glory is not discordant, but a true part of the Lenten harmony. And even the commandment, You love, as I have loved you, must be set into this radiance of the glorious love of Christ which moved him to sacrifice himself for us.

V. 31. It is well to compare the following passages: John 7, 39: "The Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." John 12, 23: "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified" (see the text for Jubilate). Also v. 12, 28: "Father, glorify thy name." John 14, 13: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." John 17, 1: "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that the Son may glorify thee"; v. 4-6: "I glorify thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me; and they have kept thy word." John 16, 14: "He (the Spirit) shall glorify me." Acts 3, 13: "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Servant Jesus."

There is a striking contrast between the opening words of Jesus in our text concerning his and the Father's glorification, and the statement of the preceding verse: "and it was night." For Christ there is glory even in his Passion — for Judas, turning forever from Christ — night. "This conclusion of the narrative about Judas has in it unintentionally something terrible, and in the very brevity of its simplest expression something deeply affecting." Meyer. The

thought of Judas' significant departure is carried forward into the first verse of our text by the word **therefore**, οὖν, and the phrase, **when he was gone out**. — **The Son of man** is the name Jesus uses in speaking of his glorification. It is that name so greatly beloved by him and so frequently used, by which he designates himself as the Messiah; the name which expresses in one term his being sent by the Father, his Incarnation, and his redemptive work. — **Glorified**, ἐδοξάσθη = made glorious and illustrious, by the bestowal of exaltation and honor. The word **now** and the following future tense mark a division: Christ is already glorified when he speaks, and he is to be glorified shortly after — **and straightway shall he glorify him**, δοξάσει. It will not do then to restrict the idea of glory and glorification to the heavenly exaltation which Christ shall shortly receive, and to interpret the glorification "now" (at the moment when Christ speaks) as a mere prolepsis, an anticipation in thought and not an actual glorification at the moment. We must conceive δοξάζω in its fulness and richness of meaning, as something extending in reality to Christ now as he stands in the shadow of death, not only as coming to him in the resurrection, ascension, and assumption of eternal power. There was a glorification even before this "now" of the text. Summing up what the great concept contains we may describe the glorification of Christ in its different parts as follows: Christ was glorified already when God thrice bestowed a signal honor upon him through the voice from heaven, Matth. 3, 17; Luke 9, 29; John 12, 28; likewise in the Transfiguration, and unnumbered times in the miracles which he wrought (comp. John 11, 4; 14, 10). Christ was also glorified at the moment indicated by the "now" of the text. His death is assured, his great work on the verge of completion, his task just about fulfilled; and viewing it thus it is glorious

indeed, for his Passion and death, into which he enters through the departure of Judas and his long-fixed resolve to endure it all, is the most perfect obedience to his heavenly Father which sheds unmeasured honor upon the Son who rendered it, a sweet-smelling savor to God, fairer than any sacrifice or offering ever brought to God. In all heaven and earth there is no act so worthy of praise as Christ's redemptive act; and this work of his is also the Father's work done through Christ. Finally, in the resurrection, ascension, and sitting at God's right hand that glorification of Christ appears by which his human nature enjoyed fully its participation in the properties of the divine, especially its heavenly majesty and power. One step further we may go, it is the glorification of Christ amid the ever wider circle of his followers, who render him honor and adoration and finally join the heavenly worshippers above.

And God is glorified in him. The glorification of Christ is the glorification of God at every stage, so also now in the glorious obedience, love, self-sacrifice, and vicarious death of Christ. In all this God himself is glorified in Christ, because Christ renders all this in honor of the Father. Calvin thinks the "and" should be taken in a causal sense: *for* or *because* God is glorified in him. But the relation in thought is clear enough without making the conjunction mean more than it naturally does: Christ is glorified, *and* (or, as we might say: and thus) God is glorified. The latter could here not be without the former. — **In him** some would like to translate "through him," making Christ the instrument or means. But ἐν αὐτῷ, "God is glorified *in him*," compared with the similar phrase immediately following, "God shall glorify him in himself," ἐν αὐτῷ = ἐν τῷ θεῷ, points to a union, as in passages like 2 Cor. 5, 19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world," etc.; John 17, 21, "Thou Father

in me, and I in thee"; and John 10, 30. Because of the oneness of the Father with the Son of man, every glorious deed of the Son glorified also the Father, and so the Father was glorified *in* Christ. All that Christ wrought and suffered glorified the Father, so especially when in voluntary and perfect obedience he redeemed us and proclaimed by word, act, and passion the love and mercy of God in giving us his only begotten Son, likewise his truth in keeping his promises concerning our salvation, and finally his righteousness and justice in the atonement which satisfied the claims of both. By all this Christ revealed God in a way to glorify him, to make him adorable in the eyes of men and angels.

V. 32. The A. V. has the words: "If God be glorified in him," which the best codices show to be interpolated. Instead of this sentence the text should have simply "and" — **and God shall glorify him in himself.** This is the glorification and exaltation described in Phil. 2, 9-11, where the "wherefore" so plainly connects the glorious exaltation causally with the obedience and death. "And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." — **In himself,** again not "through." As God is glorified in Christ, so Christ is glorified in God. "Christ shall be so glorified that his heavenly glory shall be embraced in God's own δόξα; his glory shall be none other than the divine glory itself, and his glorification shall be accomplished by his return into that communion with God out of which he proceeded and became man. John 17, 4-5." Meyer.

— **And straightway shall he glorify him.** The new thought is in εὐθὺς, which expresses the nearness of the coming glorification. It began with the descent into hell and the resurrection from the dead. Upon these, this outcome and result, and upon all the high purposes and ways of God in his Passion, Christ kept his heart fixed, and so he endured the pain, the shame, the cross and death. Notice the repetition of the word **glorify** — four times it occurs in two brief verses. The word itself seems to shine, sending out ray upon ray in manifold radiance. Three different kinds of glory are spoken of: Christ's glory as he has it at the moment in all that is his as he makes ready for his Passion; God's glory in this glory of Christ; and then the glory which shall crown both of these when the return to the Father is accomplished. — Keeping to what is immediately before Christ — and this is the vital thing, — what a marvelous view is here given us of his work, especially of the crowning part of it, his suffering and death for the redemption of the world. The bitterness, the severity, the shame is all swallowed up in glory. While he was transfigured on the mount he spoke with Moses and Elias "of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Luke 9, 31. We must ever keep in view as Christ did this glory of his redemptive work: glorious the Redeemer himself, glorious his obedience, glorious his sacrifice, glorious the fruit of his work for us, glorious its fruit for him, glorious the God and Father whose blessed will was thus carried out and still goes forward.

V. 33. Τεκνία occurs only in this one place in the Gospels. The designation is one of most affectionate endearment, but at the same time it connotes the immaturity of the disciples so addressed. They are still **little children**, not yet the men they would afterwards become. — In the words which this address prefaces, **yet a little while I am with you**, there

speaks a parental heart yearning over these "little children" who presently must be plunged into deep sorrow when the **little while** of Christ's remaining stay with them, just a few hours, is followed by his departure. The "little while," μικρόν, agrees with the previous "straightway." — Christ said to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye shall seek me and shall not find me," John 7, 34, and explained this later by adding, "Ye shall die in your sins," John 8, 21. He does not add such words in this case, but rather, "A little while and ye shall not see me" (seek): "and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father." John 16, 16. See also John 14, 3. — By the word **seek** Christ does not mean that they will search for him, but that their hearts will long for him in great sorrow because of his departure from them in suffering and death. Their souls will cry out for him — and he will be gone from them. — Very significant are the words, **Whither I go, ye cannot come.** His sacrificial death is for him alone; none else may endure it. Peter wanted to follow Jesus in spite of this word leaving all the disciples — and him also — behind; Christ told him, "Thou shalt follow me afterward." Is. 63, 3: "I have trodden the winepress alone." "No one can share with him the agony of these hours; but they shall share with him the glory in his Father's mansions." *Luth. Com.* — **So now I say to you,** in order to inform and prepare them for what should come.

V. 34. **A new commandment** Christ gives his disciples in this hour, "as they who leave give behests to their own," Calov. Ἐντολή, a precept, *Auftrag*, not here a commandment in the sense of the Decalog (as in Rom. 13, 9 for instance). In this hour Christ does not repeat the work of Moses laying a new burden upon his followers. — The precept is **new**. The commentators have pointed out many new features in it, differentiating it from the old commandment, "Thou

shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." We must remember Christ makes all things new. This precept is indeed the old will of God, not an absolutely new injunction without any connection with the old commandment. The disciples were not startled by the newness or strangeness of it, for it had a familiar and pleasant look to them. — Those commentators satisfy best who point to the further words as bringing out the newness: **As I have loved you, that ye also love one another**, ἵνα here introducing the purport or object (Robertson, p. 993). The aorist ἠγάπησα, where the English prefers the perfect, simply states the fact. Godet says: "In Christ, that is the explanation of this word 'new.'" Koegel writes: "The new thing in the law given this last night is the fact, that the Son of God loves us and gives himself for us, that we, being bone of his bone and spirit of his spirit, may embrace, nourish, and bear in the same love those who with us are born in him." Christ indeed has brought a new love into the world, a love not only faultless and perfect as love, but with the object of salvation, to seek and to save that which was lost. So are we to love one another. Bengel calls the precept new not as regards the Old Testament, but as regards the school of Christ, 1 John 3, 16, "and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"; and Gal. 6, 2, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." It is a commandment not given to the unwilling (hence not to all men), but to the willing; not to the bondslave, but to the free believer. It appeals to the new motive power implanted by Christ in the heart. It is suffused by the glory of which Christ has just spoken and which he touches again by referring to himself: **as I have loved you**. — The love is to be of **one to another**, and this seems to exclude all non-disciples. It cannot be otherwise, because the tie that binds Christ's own is always a thing apart, and in this way

we cannot love those who do not love Christ with us. — V. 35. Yet this love does not turn against those without, for Christ says: **By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples.** The knowledge is to be to them an attractive power to draw them into the circle of this love. It is something open, all men can **know** it and understand its significance, namely that **ye are disciples** to me, ἐμοί. Christ does not say that we are to make a display of our love to the world. He simply uses the future tense to express what under an expected condition shall be: γνώσονται. True love naturally manifests itself, and so all men **shall know** that this love born of Christ is in us. In the ancient church this mark of discipleship shone with marvelous brightness. Minucius Felix declared of the Christians: "They love each other even without being acquainted with each other." And the scoffer Julian: "Their master has implanted the belief in them that they are all brethren." In his Commentary on John's epistles Jerome tells us that when John was asked by the brethren why he constantly said, Little children, love one another, he replied, Because this is the precept of the Lord, and if only this is done it is enough. "Wherever the beginning of the new life from God is found in man this love in its beginnings is also found. It is not nature which brings this about. Even the very best orthodoxy cannot take the place of this essential feature (compare 1 John 3, 14). They who are born of God bear a mystery within them which unites them most intimately into one body, a mystery which no one knows but they themselves. But the power of this mystery appears unto the stranger. It is not a kind of fraternal union with prideful and hostile exclusion of those who are without. For love widens the heart to love even those with a love that believes all things and hopes all things." Roffhack. — Among the wrong interpretations of the "new

commandment" and the love which it enjoins it is well to note the following which all have had their advocates: a new commandment inasmuch as it is one which embraces in a unit all New Testament requirements as distinguished from the many diverse requirements in the Old Testament; new = illustrious; or the ultimate mandate, i. e. testament; or the youngest commandment; or one never growing old, always remaining new; or a renewed commandment; or one renewing the old man; or an unexpected commandment; or one containing a new life-principle (which in itself is correct, but not stated); or the new testament of Christ, i. e. the Lord's Supper. Over against all these ideas the text itself is sufficient: "as I have loved you" — our love to the brethren is based on this love of Christ, flows from it, and is thus new indeed, new *as growing out of faith* in Christ. — **If** ye have love to one another invites a test; ἐὰν ἔχητε implies that the test shall be met (expectancy). Still there will be false disciples, even the world shall discover that they are false, by their lack of love. The question is not wholly shut out: Have I this love which Christ enjoined upon his disciples the night before his death? How many instances do we meet where Christians show malice, spite, hatred, coldness, enmity to each other. There are often deep-seated quarrels in congregations. Let us remember, where there is no love there is no discipleship. The world also loves its own and has established many fraternal organizations. Not built on the love of Christ by faith, they cannot grow and flower that love which is rooted in faith and grows on no other soil. The love of Christians cannot reach perfection as long as the flesh dwells in us, but more and more as the flesh is overcome this love is to unfold itself until it reaches its full glory when we at last attain to and partake of the glory of Christ above.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The inclination of many preachers will be to put the "new commandment" into the foreground in handling this text, perhaps to preach on this theme exclusively. That is because their minds always incline to application and so-called lessons, and because appropriation is foreign to their homiletics. But to put our love forward here means to break the line of thought in this Lenten series, to let our love crowd out Christ's love and glory, to give to our people a task instead of a heavenly gift. The note of glory in Christ's passion deserves the fullest attention, inasmuch as it is not always brought out as effectively as this text demands that it should be. Only around the glorious love of Christ in his Passion let us humbly twine our love for the brethren. — The entire context shows us the Passion which underlies our text; in the text itself the words "now" and "straightway" point this out. The introduction may well tell the story. While the text naturally falls into the two sections on the glorification of Christ and on the new commandment, the latter may be drawn into the former, resulting in a compact and unified arrangement:

The Suffering Savior Glorified

I. *In the very suffering itself.*

Viewed, though dreadful in itself, as 1) the most wonderful, willing, perfect *obedience* to the Father (Eph. 5, 2); 2) as the atoning *sacrifice* for the sinful world (no nobler deed ever done — "whither I go ye cannot come"); 3) as the manifestation of boundless love ("as I have loved you").

II. *By the double reward of his suffering.*

1) The glory in *his exaltation* (descent, resurrection, etc.); 2) in *his followers* ("love as I have loved you" — the love that sacrifices and aims at salvation, glorifying Christ).

Expanded into more parts we may try the following: **The Glory of Christ's Passion:** The Glory 1) *Of his love*; 2) *Of his sacrifice*; 3) *Of his merit*; 4) *Of his reward*. Here, too, the love for our brethren is utilized in part four. — J. Sheatsley splits in the commoner way:

In the Shadow of the Cross —

- I. The Savior beholds himself glorified.*
- II. The Savior gives a new commandment to his disciples.*

If elaborated so that the new commandment is made the fruit of Christ's Passion in the hearts of those enriched by the blessedness of the Passion, this arrangement may pass. — Following this cue one might even start with the new commandment in the theme and make the entire presentation of this behest rest on the Passion. The only danger, and loss, might be that too little could be said in a natural way on the Glory of the Passion. Here is an effort of this type:

The New Commandment Christ Has Given Us.

- I. It is based on a new covenant.*
- II. It is to be obeyed by a new power.*
- III. It is to be the evidence of a new life.*

PALM SUNDAY

John 12, 1-8

Palm Sunday ushers in the sacred week called by the old church ἡ ἑβδομὰ ἡ μεγάλη, *hebdomas magna, septimana maior*, and by the Germans "the still week" or *Charwoche*, that is "week of mourning." We are now very near the shadow of the cross, in fact, in our text it falls directly upon this Sunday. Nebe in his introductory note to the old gospel text remarks on the choice of that text, wondering why the same text was selected for Palm Sunday as for the First Sunday in Advent, when other texts, necessitating no repetition, lay close at hand. He mentions as eminently suitable our text, the Anointing in Bethany. Nebe's wish is fulfilled in the Eisenach selections. And it is true, a better text could hardly be found in all the story of the Gospels. Our text describes a festive occasion, and Palm Sunday has more and more become a festive day among us by reason especially of the Confirmation ceremony which we like to set for this Sunday. The old text is also a festive one. But our text has other commendable features. Not only, as in the old text, is Christ honored here in a signal manner, but this honor is such that it is referred directly to his approaching death and burial. Even the meanness of Judas points in that direction, and he is described as the one "which should betray him." For our series of Lenten Sunday texts this one is especially fine since it continues the great theme of the series to the very end — Christ himself once more shows himself to us in his Passion. It is he who describes the anointing of Mary as done for his burial. The act of Mary and this word of Jesus concerning his burial are the chief

things in the text, and we thus have the great theme of the text in the words: Christ shows us *the honor he deserves at our hands for his Passion*. Outside of the old gospel text we know of none better adapted than ours both for this great Sunday as such and at the same time for the rite of Confirmation. The friends of Jesus honor him; Lazarus, the recipient of Christ's miraculous grace is present with a heart full of adoration; Martha and Mary, full of gratitude and love, vie with each other in serving Christ; Mary brings her great gift of ointment of spikenard — what finer examples of love, devotion, service, and offering can we set before a confirmation class? And even Judas with his wicked heart and words, and the rest who allow him to mislead them, serve to heighten the effect of Mary's devotion, and to point the warning against unfaithfulness. It would seem almost impossible for a capable expositor or preacher to overlook these most valuable features of the text and their suitability for the Sunday and the consecration of our catechumens so generally connected with it.

Chapter eleven ends with the statement that the chief priests had issued orders, that, if any man knew the whereabouts of Jesus, he should report it at headquarters so that Jesus might be arrested. V. 1. **Jesus therefore,** οὐδὲν, quietly proceeded to Bethany. The order of the chief priests did not amount to much, as Jesus was not in hiding, and any one who wanted to reach him could certainly find him. There was both a degree of prudence and a noble fearlessness in Jesus coming to Bethany. The next day he openly entered Jerusalem, but no man dared to touch him. — Jesus therefore **six days before the passover** came to Bethany. This statement in regard to the time seems to conflict with that of Matth. 26, 2, and of Mark 14, 1, where two days before the Passover are mentioned. But there is no conflict, as neither of these two evan-

gelist aims to give the exact date of the supper at Bethany. Both report a positive saying of Christ that he would be betrayed and crucified at the feast of the Passover two days hence, while at the very same time the Jewish authorities resolved *not* to destroy him at the Passover. Without following the chronological sequence of events, these two evangelists then loosely attach the story of the supper — Matthew merely says, “Now when Jesus was in Bethany,” fixing no exact date; Mark likewise, “And being in Bethany.” But John gives us the real date of this visit and supper at Bethany; it was “six days before the Passover.” Even this seemingly exact and plain way of stating the time has left room for some to dispute; they raise the question whether the Passover is on the 14th or on the 15th of Nisan, and then whether the festive day itself is to be counted in as one or not. For us it will be enough to take the commonest and simplest way of reckoning, making Jesus arrive in Bethany Friday, the 8th of Nisan. That morning, after a night spent in the house of Zaccheus, he left Jericho, and after a day’s journey arrived, in the late afternoon, at Bethany. The supper did not occur that night, as we gather from v. 12, where we are told that “on the morrow,” namely after the supper, Jesus made his royal entry into Jerusalem. The Sabbath began Friday evening. It is most natural to assume that Christ quietly spent that last Sabbath for him in his humiliation on earth, in the midst of his friends. Then when with the setting of Saturday’s sun the Sabbath ended the supper was made. — **Bethany** we have learned to know in two previous texts, and we need not repeat what was there said about the place and the family which lived in it, so dear to Jesus. — John, however, makes special mention of **Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead**. Nothing unusual is said of him, merely that he was there. The other two evangelists do not mention his presence especially.

He is referred to as he "whom Jesus raised from the dead," not in order to distinguish him from some other Lazarus, for there is none other save the one mentioned in a parable, nor to mark the village Bethany, for this was already plainly indicated, but in order to connect what now is told with the great, significant miracle reported in the previous chapter. "Whom Jesus raised from the dead" touches the great motives of love, gratitude, and adoration which moved the hearts of Jesus' friends in what they now did for Jesus. The A. V. retains ὁ τεθνηκώς, "which had been dead," but our text omits the designation. What it contains is at least implied, but it is hardly probable that Lazarus either now or later was commonly called so.

V. 2. **So**, οὕτως, they made him a supper there, i. e. since he had come to Bethany and this opportunity offered. Would that we might always make use of the opportunities which offer themselves to us to serve and honor Jesus. We let too many pass, or we recognize too late what we might have done. — Δείπνον is a **supper**. Luke 14, 12 distinguishes "a dinner" and "a supper." The latter was usually eaten toward the close of the day when it would be cooler and more pleasant, and was the favorite time for inviting guests. The phrase **made him a supper** is usually used of a feast especially prepared. The verb ἐποίησαν is plural and cannot be restricted to Lazarus. Several friends of Jesus combined their efforts on this occasion. Matthew and Mark tell us that this supper was made in the house of Simon the leper, about whom we have no further information whatever. On another occasion Jesus was invited by Martha into "her house." Were these two different houses? We think so. Hengstenberg is the one who has come forward with all sorts of ingenious combinations, some of which other commentators have been led to accept. He furnishes us the

following astonishing description: "By the side of Martha appears as her husband the exceedingly disagreeable person of Simon, whom in many things she had to please. Mary, whom we are accustomed to consider a quiet, meditative soul, opening her pure heart to the Savior as the tender flowers willingly unfold their petals and turn toward the sun, appears as a woman wild and passionate, who has found in Christ the subduing of the tumult of her passions, and who clings to him convulsively, in order not once more to become a violent instead of a placid sea. Lazarus probably went through a similar development. After having lived the life of a prodigal, he now eats the bread of charity in the house of his brother-in-law, and Christ loves him, not because of his natural amiableness, not as one who has continued in grace, but because he has come to seek and rejoices to find the lost." Nebe adds: "And then take in addition the black form of Judas, introduced as the probable son of Simon! Truly a family drama full of exciting complications!" But all this is invention pure and simple, not even of a kind that shows purity and nobility in the imagination. It is vapid romancing, somewhat after the order of the depraved French Renan. Sober thought will go no farther than to think of Simon as a man whom Jesus healed of leprosy. For some reason unknown to us the supper was made in his house; it is best to assume a natural reason, such as the special accommodation his house may have been able to furnish. — **And Martha served** — it is the same Martha as before, and yet not the same, for now she serves at the right time, and Jesus willingly accepts her service. The verb *διηκόνει* expresses service for service's sake. Too much is built on this mention of Martha when Hengstenberg makes her the manager of the service, or when, on the strength of her alone being mentioned as serving, she is assumed to be the

wife (or widow) of Simon — some supposing him to be present, others to be dead. There is no real reason to think Simon dead, he was at the supper. And the mention of Martha, and of Martha alone, is because of what follows regarding Mary. It is a fine sense of justice and fairness which does not omit Martha and her part where Mary steps forth so prominently. A supper for many guests — there were at least 15, and may well have been more, for why should Jesus not have more friends in Bethany? — would require more than one person to serve. Mary, no doubt, also helped, and very likely others. — **But Lazarus was one of them that sat at meat with him.** It was fitting that he should do so, and not serve or merely be present as one looking on. He was raised to life by the divine power of the Messiah, and therefore properly on this occasion graced the table in Jesus' honor. Meyer supposes that this mention of Lazarus is intended as a proof of his complete recovery, an idea in no way suggested by the text; Jesus had not raised him to sickness. Stier places Lazarus at one side of Jesus and Simon at the other. That would be possible if the guests sat at table in our modern fashion, but ἀνακειμένον, "of those reclining," shows that all lay upon couches as the fashion then was among the Jews, and consequently the head place was reserved for Jesus, the upper end of the central couch, and only one person could be next to Jesus. Who this was we simply do not know.

V. 3. We need not elaborate on the well-established fact that the act now described is not identical with the one narrated in Luke 7, 36, etc. since the two differ in regard to time, place, the owner of the house where the act took place, the moral character of the woman anointing the Lord, and the conversations connected with the acts. See the text for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity. Matthew and Mark do not mention the

name **Mary**, although they report the word of Jesus, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." In not mentioning her name these evangelists are guilty of no sin of omission, for it is her act, not her name which is to be praised in all the world. Gregory the Great has the doubtful distinction of identifying Mary with Mary Magdalene and the sinful woman who anointed Jesus in the Pharisee's house, and of giving this view general currency in the Roman Catholic church. But the truth was too forcibly brought out by Luther, Calov, Calvin and others for this view to obtain any credence (save on the part of the fanciful Hengstenberg) among Protestant commentators. The sister of Lazarus is not Mary Magdalene, nor that other unnamed woman. Luke introduces Mary in 10, 38, as a new personage, after he has mentioned Mary Magdalene in previous chapters, also after giving us the account of that unnamed woman in the Pharisee's house. If only one person is meant, then Luke certainly would name her at the first mention, and not give us three different designations in as many chapters, 7, 8, and 10. The great occasion offered itself as Jesus sat at meat; Mary saw it, and embraced it. Alas, for the blind who do not even see; and alas, for the dilatory who do not move in time. — She took **a pound of ointment of spikenard**. The margin has the note "*pistic nard*, *pistic* being perhaps a local name. Others take it to mean *genuine*; others, *liquid*." To these others the American Committee of translators of the R. V. belong, who read "pure nard" for spikenard, with "liquid nard" in the margin. This already gives the main substance of what must be said concerning the element Mary employed. John does not mention in what the $\mu\acute{\upsilon}\rho\omicron\nu$ was contained. It was in an alabaster cruse or flask, itself costly and hermetically sealed, so that the tapering neck was broken

(see Mark) when the ointment was used. — There was a considerable quantity of it, **a pound**, λίτραν, being twelve ounces according to the weight of water. The word **ointment**, μύρον, is the general term for the sap exuding from certain plants, used in perfumes. **Spikenard** is the translation of νάρδος πιστική. Nard is the plant which furnished the essence for the ointment, the finest coming from India. The word πιστική is disputed, the best derivation, and the one most generally accepted being from πίστις, so that the meaning would be trustworthy, reliable, unadulterated, pure; many preparations contained inferior substances. For our purpose this may suffice. — All the evangelists mention the value of Mary's ointment, Matthew has βαρυτίμου, "exceeding precious," and John πολυτίμου, **very precious**, of great value. The actual value Judas mentions. There has been some speculation as to how Mary came to have such a valuable ointment in her possession. This being mere speculation we may pass it by. Only with Nebe we unhesitatingly reject the idea that this ointment remained in Mary's possession from her former voluptuous life; this would assume a past for her which is in no way indicated and the very opposite of probable. Rather than assume anything of the kind we prefer to think that Mary provided this precious ointment long in advance especially for an occasion of this kind, freely spending her money for the honor of the Savior. The idea that it remained over from the burial of Lazarus is too improbable, considering the price.

John says she took it **and anointed the feet of Jesus**. Note the verb used, not χρίω, employed for ceremonial anointing, but ἀλείφω, any ordinary application of oil. He omits the anointing of the head (Matthew and Mark) because he takes for granted that his readers were acquainted with the narrative of the other evangelists. The precious fluid was abundant, and when poured out upon the head of Jesus it flowed

down upon his neck and body, and still the cruse was not empty, but held enough to be poured out upon the feet, and this in such abundance that Mary **wiped his feet with her hair**. The broken cruse was thus entirely emptied, and all its contents were offered to the Master. In the house of the Pharisee the holy feet of Jesus had not been washed, as even common politeness on the part of the host required, but at this supper in Bethany the washing certainly had not been omitted. But the devoted heart of Mary is not satisfied with the commoner fluid, she now adds from the abundance of this ointment, the richest she could find. How many a dusty, weary path those beloved feet had trodden — now they are honored indeed as they deserve, for every one of their steps had been marked with love. The Baptist said that he was unworthy to loose the latchet of the shoes of these feet, and Mary felt the same way. At the feet of Jesus she sat when she listened to the words of life, and these feet had brought the Master of death to recall her brother to life. It is a wonderful display of devotion that to the ointment for the feet Mary should add her hair in wiping them. In mentioning the hair the evangelist repeats the word feet, as if he meant to emphasize the humiliation expressed in this act. Woman's hair is her crown, her pride, her beauty, and this Mary puts at Jesus' feet. But in the case of a Jewish woman there is more in such an act. To unbind and loosen the hair in the presence of others was not considered decent. Lightfoot tells of a woman who prided herself on the fact that the beams of her house had never seen her hair. Mary's unbinding her hair and using it to wipe the feet of Jesus is thus an act of the very deepest humiliation in his honor. With her hair she takes her own honor to wipe the feet of Jesus. And in Mary's case this meant more than in the case of that other woman in the Pharisee's house, who did a similar thing. If there we may say, the proper place for a *sinner's* head it at the feet of Jesus,

here we may say, the proper place for a *disciple's* head is at the feet of Jesus. — **And the house was filled with the odor of the ointment**, another evidence of the quality of the ointment, and a symbol of the penetrating, far-reaching quality of Mary's act. "The odor of Mary's ointment has the promise that it shall penetrate and fill the whole world." Nebe. At first, however, the result seemed to be the opposite, the odor that filled the house failed to penetrate all the hearts present at the supper. To some it was not "a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God," Phil. 4, 18.

V. 4. **Judas** is named **Iscariot**, or "man of Kariot," to distinguish him from the other Judas among the Twelve. It has been well said, Jesus could designate him only after the place of his former home, not according to his real character, for this would have given him a terrible name. But even this name by which he is universally known has become a brand and a by-word of treachery and infamy. — **One of his disciples** — it almost seems impossible; alas, it is so — "one of the Twelve!" one of that chosen band, favored above all others, who should have been first to applaud, to understand, to copy, yea, who should himself have vied with Mary in doing things equally great and significant to honor Christ! — one of these men finds fault. — In striking contrast beside the designation "one of the Twelve," which points to the high things one naturally should expect from these men, John places the cold and awful fact: **which should betray him**. Yes, this explains it all! A traitor, though standing ever so high, is capable of what is here told this traitor did. John mentions only Judas as objecting to Mary's act, while Matthew says "the disciples," and Mark "some" had indignation. Nowhere are we told that *all* the disciples objected. When John focuses our attention upon Judas he supplements the story of the other evangelists by showing us how

the objection to Mary's deed arose. Judas is the one who without hesitation pronounced adverse judgment. He has a specious argument, and some are carried away by it, evidently not taking time to think and judge carefully. It is ever so. As Mary's ointment fills the house with its odor, so the poison of Judas' words contaminates at least some hearts. There are always those who do not form their own judgment, who are ready to accept the decision of another. In the basest moves a man can find supporters and abettors. No wickedness so deep but what it can shield and hide itself behind some plausible argument. How necessary it is to point our young inexperienced Christians to the danger that lies in the pleas of men like Judas. — **Which should betray him** must not be wrongly interpreted. There was no divine compulsion of any kind. The participle μέλλων indicates that Judas was about to betray Jesus, it points to something impending. The traitorous act of Judas was not the result of a divine decree, it was his own act entirely, just as other wicked deeds are the product of men's own hearts. Judas resisted all the grace of God, all the blessed influence and warnings of the Savior, and thus betrayed Christ. He resisted all the grace, so that grace could not restrain him, only almighty power; and this power is not used to convert and save, it is used only to carry out the purposes of God among the wicked, so controlling their wickedness that it shall further the blessed purposes of God.

Judas might have found many things to object to in Mary's deed and Christ's acceptance of it, for instance, that it was unbecoming an earnest man of simple manners; that the anointing of the feet as well as the head was a piece of extravagance and effeminacy offensive to Jewish custom; that such luxury did not agree with the life of a prophet; that Jesus himself had said, they that wear soft clothing dwell in king's houses, and among them the use of perfumes

and ointments might be considered appropriate, but not for one like Jesus. Wicked hearts can always find some specious argument against the honor due to Christ. But the point to which Judas draws attention is characteristic of the man. His heart is set on money, and so his eye sees the financial side. Therefore he said, v. 5, **Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence?** Incidentally we thus learn the probable price of the ointment, which was considerable, between \$40 and \$50. **And given to the poor,** πτωχοῖς, poor ones in general. On the face of it this looks as if Judas was really concerned about the poor, as if his heart was full of charity. But behind the words there lies the gravest kind of charge not merely against Mary, but against Christ himself. Judas implies that Jesus is robbing the poor, that he is selfishly, lavishly appropriating what might be used in charity; that for his own selfish honor and glorification he is allowing a waste that is sinful and wrong; that his example is wrong and harmful — and that Judas is the man who knows what is right, good, kind, charitable, and is not afraid to come out with it! This is the traitorous touch in this whole act of Judas. He was a traitor now as he sat among the Twelve and partook of the hospitality of Jesus' friends. We see now why John in his deeper view brings Judas, and the actual words of Judas, to our attention.

But how is it possible for this disciple to utter such things? This, too, John tells us, and thus bares the root of Judas' treachery, v. 6: **Now this he said, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief.** Since he urges the needs of the poor when he cares nothing for the poor, since he speaks the words of charity without having charity in his heart, he is a rank hypocrite. How many times has sweet charity served as a cloak for similar hypocrites? In this case hypocrisy is linked with secret criminality:

Judas was actually a thief. When his thefts became plain we are unable to say, but John does not base his positive accusation on mere supposition or suspicion. — Judas **having the bag took away what was put therein.** He was the treasurer of the little band, he carried the common purse. We here get a glimpse of the close relation between Christ and his disciples. What was his was also theirs, he shared his all with them, and Judas, Christ's familiar friend who lifted up his heel against him, ate his Master's bread. — **The bag,** γλωσσόκομον, really a case to keep mouthpieces (γλωσσαι) for flutes; then any case or box for valuables; here evidently a small box-like receptacle for money, translated "bag" by the Vulgate, and thus by Luther and our English versions. There is a difference of opinion as to the verb ἐβάσταζεν. Does it mean **took away** or simply *carried* (margin)? The verb itself means "carried," and only the context could furnish the idea "away," i. e. that he robbed the bag. Note the context in John 20, 15 to this effect. The argument is put forward that in having the bag it is already said that he carried it, and that therefore, if the verb simply means carried, we would have a mere repetition of thought; hence "carried *away*" or "took *away*" is taken to be the meaning of the verb. But John has already said, Judas was a thief, and in the statement that he had the bag and carried "what was put therein," he now brings out first the opportunity Judas had for stealing, and secondly the double baseness of his thefts. He had the bag — and stole: thus he abused his office of treasurer, thus he rewarded the trust placed in him. But more than this: he "carried what was put therein," the offerings of Jesus' friends (Luke 8, 3). The object of ἐβάσταζεν is βαλλόμενα: he regularly carried and had charge of the offerings; it would say entirely too much to read: he regularly stole the βαλλόμενα, the positive idea is altogether absent. Βάλλειν is the term always employed to designate

the act of offering. It was not only money he carried, money entrusted to him, but *sacred* money, offerings to the Lord. Stealing this kind of money makes his crime so much the blacker. Such was the depravity of this man! We may well assume that Judas had financial talent, and that thus in an entirely natural way he had been selected as the treasurer. Behold how he abused his talent to his own undoing! What a warning to us, especially when we too have financial talent, when we are placed in positions of trust, when perhaps Christ's money is placed in our care! Here is a warning for all church treasurers and for those who administer the funds of widows and orphans and other dependents. "The love of money is a root of all evil," and the love of money is exceedingly great in our day. Who will count the thieves inside and outside the prisons?—Why did not Jesus, who undoubtedly was aware of the thieving of Judas, take the bag away from him? He did not do it, and his course was right, even if we are unable fully to answer this question. Why does not God interfere by his omniscience and omnipotence in every case of crime, preventing it from being carried out? Jesus brought all his grace to bear upon Judas; if that proved ineffective there was nothing that could change the heart of this thief among his disciples. This is a better and truer answer than that which Nebe makes, when he says that the counsel of God prevented Jesus from taking the bag from Judas.

V. 7. We will understand Christ's answer better if we combine what all three evangelists report as the answer. It is this: "Let her alone; why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good; but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could. For in that she poured this ointment upon my body, she hath anointed my body aforehand for the burying. Amen,

I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." (Suessekind.) — "Ἀφεξ αὐτήν, ἵνα . . . τηρήσῃ αὐτό = **suffer her to keep it**; or (margin), "*Let her alone: it was that she might keep it.*" This reading is assured; and not: εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν . . . τετήρηκεν = "for the day of my burial she has kept it." The more difficult reading should be retained, according to the old rule of textual criticism, that the more difficult is liable to be the genuine, if we remember, as Luthardt and Keil state, that for the subjective thought to be expressed in past time the evangelist had no other choice but to use the aorist subjunctive τηρήσῃ. "Ἀφεξ is more than our English "let" with the third person, it is "do let" or "suffer"; ἵνα: "in order that she may keep." See Robertson, p. 932. The verb τηρεῖν cannot be taken in the sense of "observe," i. e. that Mary observed a custom. Αὐτό must mean the ointment, especially that poured out upon Jesus, not some part that perhaps was left. The sense "to keep," to preserve, to save, is best for τηρεῖν, especially when we note that Judas says that the ointment should have been sold. His idea was, it should have been sold long before this. The thought of a woman who pretended to be a disciple of Christ keeping such a cruse of ointment, and not disposing of it for the benefit of the poor, according to Judas' hypocritical judgment, was altogether unjustifiable. This is the idea that Jesus meets, saying: "Let her alone, that she should have kept it against the day of my burying." Matthew simply says, "She did it to prepare me for burial"; and Mark, "She hath anointed my body aforehead for the burial." — **The day of my burying** plainly indicates that Christ shall die, and that soon. The day of Christ's burial is so close at hand that Mary in anointing Jesus has already done what belongs to that day. None of the evangelists say that Jesus viewed the day of the supper

at Bethany as if it were already the day of his burial, but quite the contrary. Mark expressly says, "She hath anointed my body *aforehand* for the burial," and Matthew "*to prepare* me for burial." As these two distinguish between the time of Mary's act and the coming time of burial, so also does our text: "against the day of my burying," i. e. when now shortly it shall come. Stier is right when he pictures the thought of Jesus, saying: "In the midst of the joys of the festive supper Jesus beholds his body an anointed corpse in the tomb." The anointing now taking place he combined with the death and entombment presently to follow. That very next Sabbath his body would be resting in the grave. The body of Jesus was not anointed the day of his burial, but only wrapped in linen with spices sprinkled between the folds. So Mary's anointing in Bethany was the only and the actual anointing of Christ's body for burial. Christ did not speak fancifully when he said that Mary had kept this against his burial and should not be blamed for it, he spoke sober fact. — But did Mary actually think of Christ's burial and keep that ointment for that occasion? Keil refuses to entertain the question at all, saying that Jesus says nothing about it. If we had only Matthew and Mark this might pass. Some think that Mary was providentially governed and kept the ointment and used it in anointing Christ, without being conscious of the fact that it was for his burial. A few even venture to say that Jesus "*lent*" to Mary's act this significance regarding his entombment. A number admit that Mary had at least a foreboding, an anticipation of what was coming. Nebe scores them for virtually making Jesus play the part of a modern lawyer in defense of his client, inventing motives for her, or treating as clear motives what was dim in her mind; and this in the shadow of his own death and on the very subject of his death. The

words of the evangelists, and especially those of our text do ascribe to Mary the thought that she meant this anointing for Christ's burial. Nebe admits this very clearly, but he spoils his own admission and his own statements regarding the *τηρεϊν*, the *keeping* of the ointment, by saying that if we cannot bring ourselves to admit a clear understanding of the significance of Mary's act in her own mind, we may at least picture her as at first merely anointing Jesus in order to honor him, and then, in doing this, all at once conceiving the idea, as in a flash, that he was to die. So, we are told, the offering of her devotion became the anointing of his body for sepulture. But this is to give up entirely the force of the *keeping* of the ointment up to this time. No, we must hold Nebe fast to his own admissions: what Jesus had spoken in Galilee, Matth. 16, 21; what he had told his disciples so plainly at the beginning of his last journey, Matth. 20, 17, Mark 10, 32-33, Luke 18, 31-34; what even his enemies knew, Matth. 27, 63, all this Mary could not but also know. The disciples did not grasp it fully, did not realize properly what was impending — that is true enough. But why should not one person at least realize it? A woman's intuition could indeed outrun the slow reasoning of those dull-minded men. The great praise which Jesus bestowed on Mary's act, saying that wherever the Gospel should be preached, this that she did should be spoken of as a memorial for her, points clearly to the exceptional character of her act as one far, far in advance of the other disciples of Jesus. The conclusion must be that Mary knew what she was doing, and did it for the purpose of honoring Christ for his burial. She knew Jesus was going straight to his death — crucifixion, as he himself said. She intuitively concludes that when this death shall befall Christ at the hands of his enemies, it may be utterly impossible to reach him then and anoint his body. So she embraces this opportunity "aforehand," as Mark says, or

“against the day of my burying,” as John writes, and anoints Christ now — actually for his burial. And this is why her deed is worthy of being kept in mind as a memorial for her. She saw more than Peter and John. That a woman should have exceeded them need not surprise us when we remember the women, with only John, beneath the cross and the women at the tomb, and a woman (Mary Magdalene) as the first person to whom Christ showed himself after his resurrection.

V. 8: **For the poor ye have always with you.** The Greek article is used, τοὺς πτωχοὺς, because reference is had to the poor meant by Judas. The poor are with us today, and there will always be some in spite of social reforms, socialistic schemes, and economic progress. And Jesus is the last one to forget or neglect the poor. Mark adds: “And whensoever ye will ye can do them good.” This was a strong hint for thieving Judas who by secretly robbing Christ’s treasury robbed also the poor, to whom Christ was wont to give (John 13, 29). — **But me ye have not always.** The thought is that the poor are indeed to be taken care of, but the passing occasion to honor Jesus personally is not on that account to be left unimproved. It would have been a shame if he who was going into death for us all should not have been honored in a way befitting his death, by one at least who understood. “The anointing was necessary, as it is necessary that domes and minsters should be built; such anointing and building is sinful only when we want to anoint and build while something else is more necessary, when we want to do nothing but anoint and build.” Nebe. Where Jesus is anointed the poor will not suffer. Mary is a better almoner than any Judas that ever lived. There is a mean, low, beggarly spirit of utilitarianism and benevolence which is offended at every costly gift, every beautiful ornament, every display of genius and art, which honor Jesus and do not rob him to enrich

the poor; while we spurn this let us not fall into the opposite extreme, which some have also been guilty of, when they did many great and notable things ostensibly in honor of Christ, but forgot the Lazarus at their door.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

As in the previous Lenten texts we prefer to center our attention first of all upon Jesus. The main point of the text has already been pointed out—Jesus is honored. While the supper was in his honor, also, the real and most significant act of honoring him was undoubtedly in the anointing. Conceiving thus of the anointing as an honor, we get for the division the ideas of deserving and of accepting such honor. Hence we outline:

Our Lord and Savior Anointed for His Passion.

- I. He deserved the honor a thousandfold.*
- II. He accepted the honor with heavenly grace.*

These ideas may be used in still other ways. Two categories may serve us in connection with the idea of honoring Christ, namely why, and how. Instead, however, of using them as parts: 1) Why? 2) How? which would show no homiletical skill at all, we should seek a more attractive formulation. Here is an effort which the preacher may improve upon:

Come, and With Mary of Bethany Let Us Honor the King of Salvation!

- I. Think what he is to us!* Mark the excellency of his person; the greatness of his love and sacrifice; the infinite value of his spiritual gifts to us. What Mary knew in part we should now know fully.
- II. Study what we can offer to him!* Let us learn from his friends, Simon, Lazarus, Martha, and especially Mary—our faith, love, devotion—ordinary gifts and service, and when special opportunities open up our noblest and best offerings.—Let us learn also from his secret enemy Judas—cast out secret sin, hypocrisy, greed, dishonesty, and every vice.—Learn, too, from his faulty friends—overcome all fickleness, and

and never discourage, but always support every true heart in loving, honoring, and serving our Lord.

Holding fast that in this great Lenten text Jesus must be first, not Mary, we may nevertheless use Mary in thus elevating Jesus — we may look at Jesus through her enlightened eyes.

Jesus in Mary's Eyes When She Anointed Him in Bethany.

- I. *She bowed before him as her heavenly King.*
- II. *She foresaw his murderous death.*
- III. *She felt, no gift or honor was too high for him.*
- IV. *And for his sake she was ready to face any blame of men.*

On part two forget not that Martha had called Jesus the Son of God, and surely he was no less to Mary. He is the same to us. — Mary foresaw his death (part two), but we know it fully and all its significance. Can we think less of Jesus than Mary did? — In part three, the anointing, of course, could take place only once. We must bring other offerings in our heart's love. Let us do so. — Part four is easy to elaborate.

This text commends itself for certain special occasions. One is the anniversary of a society of young women. Here is the sermon that was used:

Mary of Bethany, a Picture of the Christian Woman's Ideal.

- I. *She has learned of Christ.*
- II. *She has leaned on Christ.*
- III. *She is impelled by gratefulness to Christ.*
- IV. *She gives her best to honor Christ.*
- V. *She is content with the commendation of Christ.*

Another was for a Women's Society dedicating an organ:

Odors were used extensively in ancient times. We use them also (flowers), but use sweet sounds more (music). Both delightful, but evanescent. Music the fairest, it appeals to the heart. But there must be something sweeter than the perfume and the harmony; the savor of love and devotion. Be sure this is in all that you do for the Master.

Mary's Ointment of Spikenard:**A Fine Illustration of What Women Can Do for the Lord Jesus***I. When like Mary they first sit at Jesus' feet.*

Mary's deed had its root in her learning of Jesus, and so always the highest and best forms of service come from receiving fully the Master's teaching. Some try to serve and honor him without knowledge, and fall into errors.

II. When like Mary they follow the holy impulses of their hearts.

Mary let nothing deter her, and something did happen to cast blame on her act. How many good impulses we let die, like buds blasted before bloom, by letting our opportunities pass, by letting false considerations deter us, by pausing until our enthusiasm fades.

III. When like Mary they rely in simplicity on Jesus' commendation.

"Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
The Master praises — what are men?"
Never ask: What will people say? but: What will Jesus say?

Here is one the author has not yet used:

"The House Was Filled With the Odor of the Ointment."

- I. Betokening the devotion of Mary.*
- II. Contrasting with the foulness of Judas.*
- III. Gracing in advance the Savior's sweet sacrifice of himself in death.*

Whether for some special occasion, like the ones we have named, or for Palm Sunday morning, or possibly Palm Sunday evening at a Reunion of the confirmed, we may do what story texts like this invite us to, namely place ourselves in spirit into the place and event portrayed in the text:

Let Us in Spirit Sit Down With the Guests to the Supper in Bethany.

- I. *How fine to be in the company of Jesus and his friends.*
- II. *How stimulating to see Jesus served and honored.*
- III. *How sad to see falseness and baseness in the very presence of Christ.*
- IV. *How comforting to hear Christ's words in defense of his own.*

GOOD FRIDAY

Luke 23, 39-46

What Christ has been telling us regarding his Passion is now set before us, on the day of his death, as a fact: Christ died. And in that death, which this day any well-selected gospel lesson is bound to set before us, we reach the height of our Lenten cycle — *the climax of Christ's Passion*. Our text from Luke places beside the brief account of the actual death of Christ the story of the dying malefactor's prayer — an excellent combination, as it shows us so clearly the glorious saving power of Christ's death. Every feature of the text, in fact, points in that direction, whether we hear the promise of Paradise from Christ's lips, watch the darkness that came over the land, behold the veil rent in the Temple, listen to Christ's dying words — all, like the death itself, show us *the climax of the Passion, full of salvation*.

V. 39. The crucifixion has taken place — Golgotha is crowned with its three crosses and three suffering, bleeding, slowly dying forms. One of these Luke calls our special attention to: **And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him.** There seems to be a discrepancy between Luke, who speaks only of one, and Matthew and Mark who speak of both malefactors as railing against Christ. The old fathers solved the difficulty by saying that at first both railed, and then one was converted and ceased. Another solution was attempted; Augustine, followed by others, thought really only one railed, and that the plural in Matthew and Mark is generic, meaning that besides the other classes of men also this class (the malefactor-class), railed. But the article

οἱ λησται in Matth. 27, 44 forbids this, especially since two are explicitly mentioned. From the grammarian's standpoint Robertson says that this plural is not to be taken for the singular, and then adopts the old explanation. And why should not the old solution be the true one? Is it impossible for the one malefactor to be converted on the cross when Christ himself hung at his side and when so many powerful impressions must have swept in upon his soul? By no means. Meyer is too ready, whenever a discrepancy appears, to fly to the solution of conflicting traditions and sources, some pure, others tainted. There is not a shadow of cause for it here. Both malefactors railed at first; one grew silent; then when the other not only continued, but went to the length of blasphemy — we behold what that silence of the one meant: his heart had been changed. Lange points out that when both malefactors are spoken of a milder verb is used, ὠνειδίζον = reproached; but here when the last railing of the impenitent malefactor is reported, a very strong word is used, ἐβλασφήμει = literally "blasphemed," and note the imperf. tense. This difference is very plain and can not be lightly brushed aside. When the first burst of pain swept over those poor crucified wretches they cried out and joined the voices of those who reproached Christ ("cast upon him the same reproach," Matthew 27, 44), but the one went farther as Luke here tells us, from reproach to blasphemy and then — to damnation. — His words are set down by the evangelist: **Art not thou the Christ? save thyself and us.** "If thou be Christ," A. V., has no good authority. The malefactor asks a question and makes a demand. We may assume that he heard the mockery of the others and from this, if not from other sources, learned that this strange, silent man, against whom all turned in such hatred, was called Christ. **Art not thou the Christ?** is a mocking question; οὐχί always expects an affirmative answer, and yet while in form this man's

question pretends to call out an affirmative reply, he betrays that he would not believe such a reply if given. Therein lies the mockery. Note the difference between this malefactor's mockery and that of the rulers and the soldiers in v. 35 and 37, both of whom use the conditional εἰ. The force of the malefactor's scoff is this: "Art not thou the Christ? To be sure thou art! Very well: save thyself and us! — but thou never wilt." — There was a stab in that word "thyself," a scornful sneer, as much as, "Why, you cannot save your own self — fine Christ!" "And us" — Oh, it would be a small thing to save us, if you could save yourself! The blasphemy of these words of the malefactor is in the unbelieving, unprovoked, derisive mockery of Christ as a Christ that was no Christ. There is something very characteristic in the things this malefactor demands of Christ: to save himself, and to save the two crucified with him. To save himself — that is the old suggestion of the devil; and it is truly remarkable how it follows Jesus with its tempting power to the very end. The heart of this malefactor speaks the thoughts of the evil one. Besides this he wants to be saved himself, and includes his companion, not because especially concerned about him, but because they two are in his mind linked together in calamity and in reproaching Christ. But "saved" for him is a chance to get back into the old life which now he saw surely slipping from him. It is the typical cry of unbelief in calamity and death: "Save us!" not with a true salvation, but with a transient, vain, false one. — Bengel has made the effort to prove by textual evidence that the impenitent malefactor was a Jew, the other a Gentile. The former calls Jesus "Christ," the latter speaks of a "kingdom," making Christ King; and to him Christ does not offer the promise of the fathers, but "Paradise," and the Greek of his reply indicates familiarity with the language. But none of these arguments hold water, as every Israelite knew about

the "kingdom," and no Gentile knew about "Paradise," and Greek culture was found among the Jews too. Tradition gives us for the impenitent malefactor the name Gestas, for the other the name Dysmas. Our real knowledge of them is restricted to about what our text supplies.

V. 40. When the blasphemer assumed that he could still speak for both he found he was mistaken: **But the other answered, and rebuking him said.** He feels bound to state that the blasphemer has not spoken in his name, and the blasphemy impels him to utter a strong and telling rebuke, ἐπιτιμῶν, objecting with the idea of censure and blame. — **Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?** Οὐδέ has been drawn to various words: Dost thou not even *fear* God; or, dost *thou* not even fear God; or, Dost thou not even fear *God*. Since οὐδέ, which is partly conjunction and partly adverb, is followed by φοβῆ, on which also lies the emphasis, it must be connected with that word: "Not even fear hast thou of God?" Nevertheless σύ also has a certain emphasis, or it would not be there. Fear then ought to fill this blasphemer's heart, the other tells him; like other scoffers, however, he is without this fear for which there is the greatest cause. It is proper to suppose that the fear this penitent malefactor spoke of had now entered his own heart. Where in his wicked course hitherto he too had not feared God, now this fear has taken hold on him. This fear of God smiting us with the Law and its penalties, "the terrors of conscience" as the fathers call them, are the marks of true contrition. — **Seeing thou art in the same condemnation,** or, "because thou art," etc., ὅτι. The invisible God was bringing visible condemnation upon them, τὸ κῆρυμα, the result of κρίνειν, the sentence, or its execution, here the latter. And the death-sentence which was executed in the crucifixion is viewed as the

judgment of God. "In the same condemnation" includes Christ. One might indeed suppose that this penitent malefactor viewed the crucifixion of all three crucified persons alike, and, doing this, some have taken *κοίμα* to mean only the same death-penalty; yet the crucifixion of Christ could not have been less than the condemnation of God. How this came upon Christ the speaker does not say. He at once adds an explanation, however, correcting any idea as though Christ suffered as the two malefactors suffered, for their sins and crimes.

V. 41: **And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds.** He is speaking of human judgment, but as in accord with the judgment of God upon them. *Ἡμεῖς* shows that in using *εἰ* before he did not mean to exclude himself. This judgment he calls just, and just for the reason (*γὰρ*) that it accords with the wicked deeds done; the genitive *ᾧν* depends on *ἄξια*, "things worthy of the things we did." Some commentators have tried to make a sort of patriot out of this penitent malefactor, a man rebelling against the Roman tyranny and fighting in Jewish zeal against the oppressors of his nation. But this effort to make him better than he himself says, is certainly misplaced. Nebe asks, Why make the man better than he himself confesses to be? why not believe his own words? And he is right. The crimes of this penitent must have been of such a kind as in justice to deserve the most terrible human punishment, nothing less than crucifixion. Murder; and terrible murder, aggravated by other crimes and repetitions of them, must have been his guilt — nothing less. And his associate on the cross was in the same guilt. In speaking for both, this man is right. His words are virtually a confession of sin, and a confession wrought by the fear of God, in the face of death, a confession with true contrition behind it. "One notes in his words the terror before

the stern Judge in heaven, the deep horror of sin, the bitter sorrow because of it. There is no more defiance of the heart; there is no trace of dissatisfaction with the penalty which has come upon him, no wish to shake it off; there is nothing of that wish to excuse himself and to cast the blame upon other men or upon circumstances, which wish is so deeply rooted in the unconverted man; willingly he submits to God's chastising rod and to the penalty of his sin; he is soft to the core of his heart." Thus G. Fritschel describes his contrite condition. — **But this man hath done nothing amiss.** Οὗτος, he whom the other was so shamefully, blasphemously abusing, who had done him no harm whatever; he who suffered all in silence and answered all his blasphemers — and that wicked one on the cross too — nothing, but bore the fearful wrong in patience. There is something exceedingly fine in this defense of the silent Jesus. There is a contrast between ἐπράξαμεν and ἔπραξεν; we have done crimes worthy of death — he has done, not only no crime, but nothing even **amiss**, ἄτοπον, *nil ineptum, nil importunum* (Bengel), nothing improper, out of place, out of the way. Here on the cross even the innocence of Jesus is once more acknowledged and declared. And the word does not only indicate innocence in the ordinary sense, but complete innocence. What man is there who has never done anything out of the way? There is none but Christ. And do we ask, how this malefactor could know Jesus well enough to say so much of him? he gives us his own answer, when he addresses Jesus as the true Messiah, the King who holds the keys to the eternal kingdom above. Bengel, Bleek, Meyer, and others suppose that he had heard of Jesus before, or that the account of him had penetrated the dungeon walls, and some even imagine that Jesus uttered words of instruction to the man at this time; but all such ideas are without any foundation in fact. We do not need them in the least, as Luther shows: "You might think, How

did this malefactor obtain such an abundant and clear knowledge, as to recognize and call Christ the Lord of eternal life, and from whom did he learn it? There is no doubt at all, he learned it from the prayer Jesus uttered on the cross. In Is. 53, 12, both is recorded, that the Messiah shall suffer and shall pray for the transgressors. When now this actually occurred on the cross, and the pious Lord begins to pray: Father, forgive them! the one malefactor grasps the word Father. For in this manner people do not usually speak to God; Christ is the only one who can thus speak to God, and he has taught it to us also. Therefore the malefactor concludes that he is the Son of God. And since he prays for the sinners he recognizes him as the true Messiah or Christ. And without doubt these passages of Isaiah and other similar prophets will have come to his mind, which perhaps he had heard in the Temple at Jerusalem or elsewhere in the synagogues, but did not understand. These now he combines, and the Holy Spirit makes such prophecies light and clear in his heart, so that he can no longer refrain, but must out and confess with his mouth as he believes in the heart." Nebe rightly adds to Christ's prayer the word to the daughters of Jerusalem, the inscription on the cross, the mockeries of the men under it, and the effect of Jesus' presence and the manner of his suffering: "The more he recognized the guilt of his sin, the higher grew his regard for the innocent One; the more he felt the need of the forgiveness of his sins, the more earnestly he longed to be assured of a gracious remembrance by him who had prayed for the transgressors. The more he looked at the Lord, considered his fate, weighed all the circumstances of which he had been an eye and ear-witness, the more he grew certain in faith, that the superscription above the head of the man crucified with him attested the truth, that he was the King of the Jews whom the prophets had promised and concerning whose bitter sufferings and

shameful death they had spoken. As he at once on recognizing his sin confessed it, so now that he has recognized in Jesus of Nazareth the King of promise he confesses the Lord on the cross as King." With all this explanation it is well to remember that we cannot really solve the problem of conversion, especially when side by side we see two men under the same effective influence of grace, the one converted, the other not. "This belongs among the high mysteries of the inner history of the soul, withdrawn from the eyes of the world, which shall only be revealed in the light of eternal life." Fritschel.

V. 42. Bengel says of the malefactor's prayer: *Exquisitissima oratio!* Luther: "The faith that dies in Peter arises again in the malefactor." We must correct the text of the A. V. by omitting "Lord." Ἰησοῦ is vocative. Nebe wants it to be the dative: "And he said to Jesus," leaving the petition without an address. But if the plain address, "Jesus," is unusual, more so would be the total omission of an address; and this especially since the man had been speaking to another, and on the cross could not turn from one person to another in speaking. Jesus was crucified between the two malefactors, and thus this one speaking had to turn his head in the same direction to speak to his companion and to Christ. He surely used some address in the words now spoken to the latter; and if "Jesus" in its bareness is unusual, there is a great deal more so in the petition that follows. — **Remember me**, μνήσθητί μου, pass. aor. imperative in the active sense: *gedenke meiner* — wonderful for its humility, leaving all to Jesus, with not even a wish expressed as to what he hopes Jesus will do. At the same time a word of great *faith*, relying completely on Jesus, knowing that whatever he will do will be blessedness. This greatness grows more and more when we stop to think: all the world turns from Christ, even his disciples, but this man turns to him; the cross,

the deadly offense of the Jews, this man finds agreeable to the King; never trained in the school of Jesus, this man outruns all others in grasping the essentials; through the cloud of the shame he sees the glory and the crown; amid the doom of death he beholds a deathless King triumphant; in the apparently helpless victim nailed by foes to the deadly cross he recognizes the Son of God, the dispenser of eternal gifts. Oh, just to be remembered by him — just that is forever enough! “Tell me, O malefactor,” says Augustine, “where is the sapphire throne? where are the cherubim and the heavenly hosts? where is crown, scepter, and purple, that thou callest him Lord? Dost thou see other than the crown of thorns? a scepter other than the nails in his pierced hands? a purple other than his blood? a throne other than the cross? servants other than the executioners? What glories dost thou see in him?” Ah, but this malefactor saw what Jesus once promised to Nathanael: the heavens open! And this one man in all that crowd about the cross of Christ — he alone asking to be remembered, where all should have fallen on their faces and begged the same: he is the one who assures us, in this terrible hour, that though hatred, mockery, blindness and blasphemy rise like a flood against Christ, ever there will be those who seek him in spite of it all, see his glory and embrace his salvation. — **When thou comest in thy kingdom** (some authorities have changed this incorrectly to: *into* thy kingdom, changing the sense materially). This word recognizes the kingship of Jesus. Ps. 2, 6. What a glimpse we catch here of the man’s faith — he sees the King in the bleeding, dying form on the cross, the eternal King! **Kingdom** must be taken in the Messianic sense, the glorious kingdom which the Messiah was to establish. It is not = heaven, although “into thy kingdom” is usually so understood. When and how this King shall inaugurate the Messianic kingdom is not indicated; only the fact that, beyond doubt, he shall do so, is here

expressed. There will be a wondrous kingdom with this crucified King over it, ruling forever. The Lord shall come "in his kingdom" does not mean he shall enter it, but having entered it shall "come," i. e. return: *sich in seiner Koenigsherrschaft offenbaren*, shall come in his glory as King. We would like to know just how the man conceived it, whether it was like Luke 19, 15, or not, but we have no hint. And now, how could the Savior remember him who was on the cross of death — what could he do for him? Nebe thinks, raise him from the dead and give him a place in the kingdom. But why should we determine what the humility of the man evidently means to leave undetermined? All that is asked is this: that he be remembered by Jesus when Jesus shall come as the King glorious in the Messianic kingdom.

V. 43. **And he said unto him**, he who had been silent when the railing malefactor spoke, **Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in Paradise.** It was a king's word indeed. There is the golden seal of divine truth and authority, Ἀμὴν σοι λέγω, used so often during the ministry. To thee I say — thee, sinner, contrite sinner, believing sinner. It would have been enough if he had said, Amen I say, I will remember thee. But he says far, far more. Instead of an indefinite promise and assurance for an indefinite time in the future, there is a clear, full, definite promise, and the time — today. — **Today** is put emphatically forward. That is a wonderful part of the joy, that it shall arrive so soon. O what balm to one suffering as that sinner did! In a little while all his pangs should forever be at an end. It is a bad mistake, made in the interest of error, to draw σήμερον to λέγω, where it would be more than superfluous. — **With me in Paradise** — with the King himself, and his kingdom not an earthly one, however grand and sweet, not even one first to be established at the end of the world, so that we must wait till then to enter it — but

a heavenly kingdom already established, already lit up with unspeakable glory: Paradise. But we are told, Paradise is not heaven, but "the kingdom of the dead," and that while Christ went into this he did not enter heaven until his ascension and furthermore the malefactor, who this day went to Paradise, at the ascension went with Christ into heaven. But there should be no doubt as to what Christ meant by Paradise, since just before dying, in this very text, he tells us, when he commends his spirit into his Father's hands. Paradise = his Father's hands = heaven. There are not four places in the beyond, heaven and hell, and sheol or hades with two departments, Paradise and a preliminary place of torture; but two, heaven and hell. The soul of Jesus at death and the soul of the malefactor at death went to the same place; Christ calls it Paradise and again, "Father, into thy hands." Both Christ and the malefactor left their bodies behind. Stephen, dying, prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." This was after Christ's ascension when he is admitted to have been in heaven indeed and not in an inferior place in the kingdom of the dead, a so-called Paradise. The soul of Stephen went where Christ was, where the malefactor's soul was — into Paradise, the Father's hands or — which is equal to this — Christ's hands, heaven. Dillmann is quoted with approval by Keil: "The notion that Paradise was ever supposed to be in the lower world, . . . is altogether without proof and is utterly incredible." **With me** denotes fellowship and blessed communion. Christ's promise to the malefactor was a prophecy, namely of death that very day; *σήμερον* has the emphasis. The crucified often suffered three to four days. Christ foresaw this man's violent end, and told him it would be that very day, and there were not many hours left. Christ's promise to the malefactor is the death-blow to the doctrine of purgatory. But most important of all, Christ's word is an absolution pronounced upon a repentant sinner.

Christ pronounced him just, forgave him all his sins and received him as a child and heir of God. It is this to which again and again our best writers have pointed and on which they have dwelt at length. Melanchthon found it "the comfort of supremest sweetness." Luther writes: "Here he uses his priestly office, takes the keys and absolves from sins. All this is done for our comfort." This sinner brought absolutely nothing of his own, he was justified by faith alone, accepting Christ and his merits. "This is a mighty sermon on how to be justified and saved through the Crucified One alone." Fritschel. Copernicus had placed on his tomb in the Dome at Naumburg the following inscription:

*Non parem Pauli gratiam requiro,
Veniam Petri non posco, sed quam
In crucis ligno dederas latroni
Sedulus oro.*

V. 44. **The sixth hour**, of the Jewish day, counting the day as distinguished from the night, and beginning at six (our modern time) in the morning, is therefore noon. Luke says **about** the sixth hour, not marking the time to the minute. At this time of day, when the sun is in the zenith and at the very brightest, a strange thing occurred, **a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour**. Astronomers tell us that this being the time near to full moon here could be no natural eclipse of the sun, as this occurs only at the time of the new moon. — **The sun's light failing** explains this much, that the darkness was not caused by clouds intervening, vapors, or anything due to an earthquake, as has been suggested. The trouble was with the sun himself. Considering the other signs connected with the death of Christ, which were clearly due to supernatural agencies, for instance the rending of the veil in the

sanctuary, there is every reason to attribute this strange darkening directly to God's power. One commentator writes: "One must think of an *extraordinary*, miraculous darkening, a divine sign-language in nature, whose darkening made the whole earth to appear as mourning the approaching death of God's Son." The phrase ἐφ' ὅλην τὴν γῆν describes the extent of the darkening. The two opinions as to the meaning are in the English text and in the marginal reading: **over the whole land**, and: *over the whole earth*. The idea that this darkening pertained only to the Jewish land and people as having rejected and putting to death God's Son, is certainly untenable, for the Gentiles were also implicated in his death, and Christ died for all men. The words are best explained as describing a general darkening, not merely a local one. Anything shutting off the light in the sun himself was bound to cause a darkness over the whole day-side of the globe at that time. And this is what is meant. The duration of the darkening is given as lasting three hours. Note that no eclipse lasts that long. It is preposterous to think that Luke's words mean: there was a darkening from the sixth to the ninth hour, the sun, however, still being visible; then at the ninth hour the sun disappeared in total darkness. For the whole three hours there was darkness, *σκότος*, real darkness, not merely a dimness; and this was due from beginning to end to the failing of the sun's light, τοῦ ἡλίου ἐκλείοντος. — Many symbolic explanations of this phenomenon have been offered: that it symbolized the powers of darkness; that it was nature mourning for its Lord; that it was a veiling of nature's face before the horror of this murder; that it was a picture of Israel's condition, the light being gone from it (John 12, 35); etc. The best explanation is the one which connects this darkness with the suffering of Christ, as the symbol of God's wrath because of sin, and as the symbol of Christ's suffering in now being for-

saken of God. Luke does not report the cry, *Eli, Eli*, etc., but this explains best what this fearful darkness meant. Those three hours in darkness were the bitterest of all Christ's sufferings; then his Father, yea, his God forsook him and seeing him covered with the world's sin and guilt turned away from him; then Christ tasted the cup of damnation for our sins, the bitter, burning cup of divine wrath. This is why the sun was darkened over all the earth.

V. 45: **And the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.** Luke's mention of this fact here is no contradiction of the narrative of the other evangelists, nor need we assume that this rending began with the darkness and was finished at the death of Christ. The **and** is consecutive, it tells what followed after the darkness, when a number of things occurred at once, as it were blow upon blow. There were two veils of the Temple or sanctuary, one covering the entrance to the Holy place, and the other to the Holy of Holies. Bleek, in his work on Hebrews, has investigated the question, as to which veil is meant, and finds that preferably *καταπέτασμα* is used to designate the inner veil, the one before the Holy of Holies, Ex. 26, 31-35; Lev. 21, 23; 24, 3; Num. 4, 5. This then, we safely conclude, was **the veil of the temple**. The outer veil was called *κάλυμμα* or *ἐπίσπαστρον*, and sometimes with the same name as the inner. Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, III. 7, 7, describes the veils of the tabernacle, both the outer and the inner, as follows: "Composed of four things, they declared the four elements; for the plain linen was proper to signify the earth, because the flax grows out of the earth. The purple signified the sea, because that color is dyed by the blood of a sea shell-fish. The blue is fit to signify the air, and the scarlet will naturally be an indication of fire." Then too he tells us this about the veils in Solomon's Temple (VIII, 3, 3): "He also had veils of blue and purple, and scarlet, and the brightest and softest

linen, with the most curious flowers wrought upon them." From these descriptions we may gather what the veil in Christ's time was like. It was 30 cubits in length, woven as thick as a finger (Besser even says as four fingers!), with thirty-eightfold twisted threads. The idea that it was renewed annually and was woven by pure maidens, is most likely an imagination. The veil certainly was massive, heavy, and large, of the very best material and workmanship. — This veil **was rent in the midst**, ἐσχίσθη . . . μέσον, from top to bottom, as we are told by Matthew. There are no decent natural explanations. The only sufficient one offered is that of the earthquake causing the great cross-beam above the veil to break in two and crashing down to rend the veil. But this is a figment, as we have no account of any such effect of the earthquake dislocating parts of the Temple. He who caused the sun's light to fail, he by the same power rent the veil. In all these occurrences we have God's miraculous power working his will. To rend a thing **in the midst**, i. e. through the middle, shows design; someone purposely rent this veil. From the top to the bottom has been explained as by a hand from above moving down, i. e. the hand of God, or his angelic agent. The rent veil fell apart and exposed the Holy of Holies to view. Christ died near three o'clock in the afternoon, about the time of the evening sacrifice, and it may well have been that one or more priests, busy in the Holy place or before it, witnessed the rending, at least promptly discovered and reported it. The effect upon the Temple authorities and priests, as well as others, must have been great. — This veil signified that the way to God had not yet been opened (Heb. 9, 8); it constantly proclaimed, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Is. 59, 2. But the high priest once a year, not without blood,

passed behind this veil (Heb. 9, 7), to make atonement for the people. All this grand symbolism had now served its purpose, since Christ, our eternal High Priest, with a better blood than any ever offered in the Temple, through the veil of his flesh entered into the Holy of Holies of heaven (not merely into a land of the dead) before the face of God, and made an everlasting atonement for all the world (Heb. 9, 12 and 24-25). Because the real atonement had been made the symbolic and prophetic was to end as no longer needed. And thus the access to the Father was opened for us, Rom. 5, 2; Eph. 2, 18; Eph. 3, 12. This is the significance of the miraculous rending of the Temple-veil.

V. 46. Luke gives only a brief account, omitting things recorded by the other synoptists, bidding us thus to focus our attention not upon a complete and detailed narrative, but upon the special features which he sets before us. **And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice**, φωνήσας φωνῇ μεγάλῃ (with a great, mighty voice), has been variously interpreted. The loudness of his voice has been taken to signify that his vital powers were still strong, that he had not come to the lowest ebb, that when now he died he yielded up his life voluntarily, John 10, 18. Again, that he wanted all standing about the cross to hear. Again, that he cried in the greatest bodily distress and pain, like David, Ps. 31, 6. It has even been added that tears accompanied this cry, Heb. 5, 7. Of all these explanations undoubtedly the first is the best, and yet it is not satisfactory. There is no way to determine absolutely which word of Christ was spoken last, whether "It is finished," or, "Father, into thy hands." Bugenhagen in his *Passion History* puts the commendation into his Father's hands last, which, for internal reasons, seems correct. Neither of these words indicates pain, agony, or tears, but the opposite — victory,

assurance, peace. The fight was won, the bitterness passed when that deepest agony in being forsaken by God came to its end. We may say indeed that in crying aloud Christ wanted those about the cross to hear, but this was only incidental. As to whether his vital powers would yet have continued him in life or not, that is hard to say. Christ was no ordinary person and died no ordinary death. When then he does not let his life ebb away drop by drop, growing weaker and weaker, as we see so many die, but dies with words loudly, strongly spoken, we may say that he wanted to die thus. His going voluntarily into his Passion is his laying down his life for us without any one's taking it from him. We prefer decidedly to think that Christ's wounds and suffering in the way natural to the human body produced his death, and that he did not give up his life before the time. His loud crying is due to the fervor and intensity of his feeling which could not be satisfied with softer tones. Who will weigh all that lay in the word τετέλειται? the joy, the relief, the triumph, the glory, the blessedness! — And it is even so with, **Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.** — **Father**, once more the sweet word of Sonship, returning to the first word uttered on the cross, likewise “Father.” “The wonderful circle, which no criticism shall break, is now complete.” Nebe. This word “Father” shows that the sin which Christ assumed for us, and for which God turned from him as one made altogether sin and made a curse, was now gone. This dreadful thing — sin — which disturbed the peace between the Father and the Son, is now removed. “Father” — it is the obedient Son who utters the word, obedient unto death, in whom the Father was now indeed well pleased. — His **spirit** Christ commends into his Father's hands, πνεῦμά μου. Spirit and soul are identical in substance, and while body and soul (or spirit) are separated in death, we

are nowhere told that a separation is possible between soul and spirit. Dying is described by the Scriptures both as a yielding up of the soul, Gen. 35, 18; 1 Kings 17, 21; Acts 15, 26; and as a yielding up of the spirit, besides our passage in the text, Ps. 31, 6; Acts 7, 59; Luke 8, 51. Luther pointed out the difference in the usual meaning of spirit and soul, when he said, in explaining Luke 1, 46-47, that the spirit is the highest, deepest, noblest part of man, with which he is able to grasp incomprehensible, invisible, eternal things, and is in short the house where faith and the Word of God dwell; while soul is *the same spirit* according to nature; in that it makes alive the body and works through it, and its nature is to grasp what reason knows and comprehends. Soul is often used for the entire man, as when on the day of Pentecost 3,000 souls were added to the church. While soul and spirit are separately used in regular set phrases or expressions, yet both are used only of what is highest in man. All that can be said, on the basis of Scripture, is that soul and spirit are really the same higher, immaterial element in man, and each term is at times used of it with a different relation. The spirit of Christ is the same as his soul. It is by no means his divinity, but as in us, his human spirit (or soul). — Of this spirit he says, **I commend**, παρατίθεμαι, present, not future (*textus receptus*), and the middle voice = I deposit, I lay aside for myself. The idea is that he to whom something is commended shall keep it in trust and return it, Luke 12, 48; Acts 14, 23; 2 Tim. 2, 2. As a treasure Christ deposits his spirit into his Father's hands. — **Thy hands**, εἰς χεῖράς σου, the hands of the almighty, all-faithful, loving Father; and the "hands" are his power. Presently those hands will return the spirit in Christ's resurrection from the dead. — Christ dying prayer was repeated, addressed to

Jesus equal in might with the Father, by Stephen, Acts 7, 59. When John Huss was being led out to his death by fire, the tall cap painted with devils on his head, and his foes consigning him to the devil, he repeated again and again: "But I commend my spirit into thy hands, thou hast redeemed me, my Lord Jesus, thou God of truth." When Bengel died, Nov. 2, 1752, they comforted him with the words: "Lord Jesus, to thee will I live, to thee will I die," and when the words were reached, "and thine will I be forever" (see Communion liturgy), with his hand on his breast he said aloud, "Yea," and fell gently asleep. (Besser.) Luther's comfort in his dying hours was this same word. He repeated it twice in passing to his room when his ailment had taken hold on him. In his last prayer he said: "I pray thee, my Lord Jesus Christ, let my soul be commended to thee; O heavenly Father, though I must leave this body and be torn from this life, I know surely that I will remain eternally with thee and no one shall pluck me out of thy hands." Thrice in Latin he repeated John 3, 16; also Ps. 68, 21. And finally: "I go hence, I will yield my spirit," and then thrice in quick succession: "Father, into thine hands I commit my spirit, thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth." Koestlin, *Martin Luther, Sein Leben und seine Schriften*, 2, p. 634 etc. — Nebe does not admit that Christ's dying prayer is from Ps. 31, 6. It certainly is, although changed in those things which fit Christ, the dying Son of God, alone. — **And having said this he gave up the ghost.** Luke has the one word ἐξέπνευσεν = expired, or breathed his last, or breathed out his spirit. The other evangelists report that his head sank upon his breast, and so he died. There was no long struggle, no gradual cessation of breathing, but all was over in a few moments. Baugher in the *Luth. Com.* follows some English medical authorities

in stating that the actual death of Jesus was due to a rupture of the walls of the heart, so that we might satisfy our sentimental feeling in saying that Jesus really died of a broken heart. A few others have followed in this line. The author left the matter undecided in the two previous editions. But he must now say that the best medical authorities call this an impossible theory. A lesion like that could result only from a degeneration of the heart, and this only in older persons where disease has left its effects. This statement covers also the tentative suggestion that perhaps some artery burst and caused death. John 10, 17-18 has been used to maintain that Jesus died not from physical causes at all, but by a mere volition of his own. But the passage deals with the entire action of Jesus in giving himself into death for us. The death of Jesus is due to the physical effects of suffering and crucifixion. This alone is the cause assigned in the Scriptures. — Lord Jesus Christ, thou Lamb of God, thou art worthy to receive praise and thanksgiving for thy work upon the cross for us poor sinners. Help us to embrace thee and thy sacrifice for us in true faith, to live ever in the power of thy saving death, and at last to die commending our souls into thy pierced hands! Amen.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The text story falls into two parts, one dealing with the malefactor, the other with Jesus' death. There are few preachers who would follow this analytical order in the sermon; almost automatically they would at least reverse the two text parts in preaching on them, which would be synthesis. The theme thus might be: *Our Savior Dies on Golgotha*, with the two parts: 1) It was a Savior-death indeed; 2) It showed its saving power in the malefactor who died with the Savior. — But many of us will be more inclined to center the entire sermon directly upon Jesus himself. We would seek an outline like this, combining the negative and the positive effects of his death:

The Climax of Christ's Passion on Golgotha.

- I. *He dies and pays the penalty for our sins.*
- II. *He dies and opens the way to Paradise.*

In part one, as well as in part two, the malefactor would here be touched upon, yet Christ himself would remain the center of each of the two parts. — How the important details of the narrative can be used as to their inner significance is shown in the following outline: Note the synthesis both in the parts themselves and in the sub-parts.

The Blessed Significance of the Death of Jesus Christ.

- I. *For the whole world.*
 1. He bears our sins (the darkness).
 2. His sacrifice is complete (Father, into thy hands).
 3. His atoning blood is in the Holy of Holies above (the veil is rent).
- II. *For the individual penitent sinner.*
 1. Justified through Christ's death.
 2. Received into Paradise.
 3. Shown how to die.

Some will want to use the impenitent malefactor as well as the penitent one. They may do so with great propriety. Here is one way:

The Three Crosses on Golgotha.

What do they proclaim as we look at them today?

- I. *Sin — all three of them.*
- II. *Redemption — the central one.*
- III. *Pardon for sin through redemption — the one on the right.*

One could make a special part on the impenitent malefactor, but this would produce one of those coordinations that are not really sound. No negative is really coordinate with a positive; the abnormal is never on a level with the normal; blasphemous unbelief ought not to be paired with penitent faith. So we use the third cross as one that also shows sin and what sin brings forth, in part one; and in the other two parts this cross

on the left will be mentioned only in passing: redemption is set between the transgressors, and the pardoned sinner has what the other might also have had, but rejected. — Let us add one more, synthetic in form:

How the Lord Jesus Died on the Cross.

- I. *With great signs, telling what his death meant.*
- II. *In blessed peace, his soul going home to the Father.*
- III. *Taking the first fruits of his death with him.*

THE EASTER CYCLE

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THE EASTER CYCLE

Easter Sunday to Cantate

The Easter cycle of texts is peculiar in that there are no preparatory texts leading up to the height contained in the cycle. It begins like the Epiphany cycle, with the full burst of its glory on Easter Morning. And so great is the radiance that it fills with its overflow all the following texts up to and including Cantate. In this the arrangement of the church year follows closely the great fact as it really occurred. The disciples were expecting no resurrection, did not even think of it when the guard was stationed before the tomb to prevent them from taking the body and saying Christ had risen. With heavy hearts the women proceed to the tomb on Sunday morning. Suddenly they stand before this miracle of salvation: He is risen!

Six texts constitute the Easter cycle, the first three, each distinguished by an appearance of the risen Christ, forming a whole, for Easter Sunday, Easter Monday and the octave of Easter belong together. In the second trio the glory slowly diminishes; there is no appearance of Christ. — The Easter morning text has this advantage over the old gospel text from Mark, it shows us the risen Savior himself. This element in the new text deserves to be fully utilized. This text, of course, presents the great and blessed fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Its note is joy, triumph, glory for God's people everywhere and at all times. — The text for Easter Monday (which we omit, but which might be used for Easter night where there is no Monday service), Christ appearing to Mary Magdalene, resembles the text in the old gospel series: the resurrection is accomplished, the fountain of joy

and comfort already flows, but there are hearts that do not know and realize it as yet. So Mary Magdalene stands weeping at the open tomb. The risen Savior appears to her, as he appears in the old text to the two disciples at Emmaus. Now she too has the risen Christ. The text deals thus with the appropriation of the Easter joy.—Quasimodogeniti, the octave of Easter Sunday, fittingly brings us the risen One again, as the glorified Good Shepherd attending to his flock here on earth; he deals with one of his sheep (Peter) in forgiving love, and he provides for all his flock while on earth.

Misericordias Domini, already somewhat removed from Easter, presents no appearance of the Savior, but gives us one of the most glorious promises for the hereafter, a promise the fulfillment of which his resurrection and exaltation assure us completely. Here we see the Father's house of many mansions where the exalted Savior has prepared a place for us and to which he himself is the way.—Jubilate and Cantate constitute a pair; they are of an intermediate character. The first shows us a company of Greeks *coming* to Jesus with longing hearts; the second shows us a select few *remaining* with Jesus when the test comes and many forsake him. While the texts thus link together there is in both of them the afterglow of Easter; in the first the statement, "The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified," followed by the description of the fruits of his death and resurrection (many drawn to him) and the promises based on his exaltation ("where I am," etc.; "if any serve me," etc.); in the second text we have likewise a statement of Christ, "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" and the confession of Peter, "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Both go back to what occurred at Easter, and

the latter points forward to the festival of the Ascension.

The thought-line in this cycle is therefore as follows:

1. The risen Savior, or the *fact* of the resurrection itself, at once glorious and blessed.
2. The risen Savior *appropriated*. John 20, 11-18.
3. The risen Savior and his flock on earth.
4. This Savior has prepared a home for his loved ones in heaven.
5. This Savior all men should desire and seek.
6. All who have found this Savior should abide with him.

EASTER SUNDAY

Matthew 28, 1-10

This text, like the one from Mark's Gospel, is intended to present *the great fact* of the Savior's resurrection, a fact of *tremendous importance*, filled for all men and especially for God's people *with unmeasured blessedness*. — In treating this text the story of the resurrection as told by all the evangelists must, of course, be kept in mind, while those parts and features brought out by Matthew in his terse and summary account may be given special prominence. The Easter sermon, however, is no place for the treatment of difficulties in the four Gospel accounts. Likewise it is no place to refute at any length the doubt and unbelief that have assailed the resurrection of Christ. This may be handled at another time. Christ is risen! That is an incontrovertible fact for the preacher, and he proclaims it to all who hear him much as the angel proclaimed the resurrection to the women at the tomb. He is bound to proclaim it so as to bring out in large measure the blessedness that is forever contained in this saving deed. There is no other way properly to proclaim it on Easter morning. — A special feature of this text is the account of the appearance of Christ to the women on the way. This crowns the story and gives it a glory of its own. Two more appearances follow in the next two texts; they carry the Easter-glory into the after-celebration.

It is unfortunate that the R. V. has translated ὄψε δὲ σαββάτων with "now late on the sabbath day"; that would be the sense of ὄψε in classic Greek, but later Greek uses it with the genitive in the sense of "after"; so here, not: "late on," but: "after the sab-

bath day." Stelhorn: long after something; Zahn: *erst nach*; Nebe and others all agree. Matthew then accords fully with Mark's statement: "When the sabbath was passed." Matthew writing for Jews reckoned the duration of the day after the Jewish fashion, from sunset to sunset. Τὰ σάββατα cannot in the same sentence mean "sabbath day" and "week." Noesgen translates it "week" both times, which is hard to justify. The Jews had no names for the week days, therefore they designate them with reference to the Sabbath. Μία τῶν σαββάτων is the Greek for the Hebrew expression = the first (day) with reference to the sabbath, i. e., the first that follows the sabbath. — **As it began to dawn**, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ (supply ὥρα), dat. of time, agrees with Luke, "very early in the morning," and John, "when it was yet dark," and does not conflict with Mark, "at the rising of the sun." They started before the dawn, the sun rising about the time they reached the tomb. "On Sunday Christ wanted to arise, because this was the day he had begun to create the world with the calling into existence of light. The light which is the life of the created world gives its day for the festival of that life which is the light of the redeemed world. Sunday, Christ's resurrection day, John calls 'the Lord's day,' Rev. 1, 10; this day the church, gathered by the preaching of the resurrection, has sanctified for its beautiful services (Acts 20, 7; 1 Cor. 16, 2)." Besser. — Matthew mentions only two women, **Mary Magdalene and the other Mary**. The former of Magdala in Galilee, whom Jesus had freed from a terrible affliction (Mark 16, 9: "out of whom he had cast seven devils"); popularly supposed to be identical with the sinful woman in Simon's house, for which, however, there is no evidence; who stood under the cross (John 19, 25) and also beheld where Jesus was laid (Mark 15, 47). She is the leader among the women, in this

respect like Peter among the disciples; she has a wonderful love for Jesus, in this respect like John. The other Mary, the wife of Alpheus, the mother of James and Joses, also witnessed the crucifixion and atonement. But there were others, either with them or close behind: Salome, the mother of the sons of Zebedee, Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's steward. "Behold thus the church that proceeds to the tomb! There is she of the grace of God (Joanna), the daughter of peace (Salome), and they who know bitterness (Mary); for them the Easter sun rises." Besser. The Savior's mother was absent. Some suppose it was because she did not seek the living among the dead (Besser and others), but there is no evidence for it; we simply do not know why she was absent. — **To see the sepulchre**, and then to finish the anointing of the body. The two objects are one; everything would depend on what they would see on reaching the tomb. It is the wonderful love of these women which must fill us with admiration; all their faith and hope had been buried in Joseph's tomb, but their love rises above faith and hope to honor him upon whom their nation had heaped the terrible dishonor of the cross.

V. 2. **And behold**, while they are on the way, an unexpected and remarkable thing happens, **there was a great earthquake**, etc. A great shock occurred. "As the earthquake tolled the bell for Christ to pass to his grave, so the Lord God rang the peal again for his resurrection." Luther. A new era begins for the world; the firstfruit of the resurrection has appeared — how the earth will quake when the great harvest is gathered at last. The shock is not attributed to Christ, but to the action of the angel. None of the evangelists attempt to describe the resurrection itself. It occurred without earthly witnesses. All those paintings who portray the glorious Savior leaving the

tomb, while the guard flees and falls in dismay at sight of him, are untrue to fact, and the real fact of the case should be carefully taught. Silently, invisibly, wondrously, gloriously Christ's living body passed through the rock. This mode of being our Formula of Concord, Art. VII, connects with the Lord's Supper: "The incomprehensible, spiritual mode, according to which he neither occupies nor makes room, but penetrates all creatures according to his will, as, to make an imperfect comparison, my sight penetrates air, light or water, and does not occupy or make room; likewise, as light and heat penetrate air, water, glass, crystal, and the like, and is in them, and also does not make or occupy room; and much more the like. This mode he used when he rose from the closed sepulchre, and passed through the closed door, and in the bread and wine in the Holy Supper, and, as it is believed, when he was born of his mother." Jacobs 619, 100. — **Rolled back the stone from the door and sat upon it;** for it is a different tomb now and requires a different watchman, not keepers of the dead, but an inhabitant from the eternal realms of life and light. Note the imperfect ἐκάθητο after the aorist ἀπεκύλισε; he rolled the stone away and was sitting upon it. The servant appears first, presently the Master shall be seen. It is a mistake to speak of the angel's appearance as something not wholly new and employed to lead up to that which was wholly new, the resurrection; to the women the angel vision was wholly new and was meant to be so. The angel opens the empty tomb to show that it is empty, and to announce the wondrous fact and its significance, for which such a herald was peculiarly fit. A new era has begun, heaven and earth are now joined, for Christ our Savior is risen. The wall of separation has fallen; God is reconciled to men; the sacrifice of the Son has been accepted by the Father. "Just as formerly your

sins hung about his neck and fastened him to the cross, so you now see in this other picture (namely of the resurrection) that no more sin is upon him, but utter righteousness; no pain or sorrow, but utter joy; no death, but utter life, and an eternal life, with which this temporal life cannot be compared. In this picture we certainly have reason to rejoice." Luther. The stone is best conceived as a great upright circular slab, set in a groove, to be rolled to one side and thus to expose the opening into the rock behind it. The angel by touching it hurled it away from the rock wall entirely, making it fall flat upon the ground, and then he sat upon it — the tomb open to all eyes. How the earthquake was caused is shown by γάε, it was caused by the angel who opened the empty tomb. The women felt the shock, and then, drawing nearer, saw the angel sitting on the stone.

V. 3. The angel is like Christ at his transfiguration, only the glory is that of a created being, while Christ's is the manifestation of his deity. The **watchers**, οἱ τηροῦντες and their weapons are useless now. Not only did God spoil the effort of his enemies, he also turned their means for overcoming the truth into means for aiding the victory of the truth. Gerhard shows that Christ's resurrection is just as terrible for his foes as it is comforting for his friends. The angel has no "Fear not ye" for the keepers; they and those who placed them there, and all others who would not have Christ risen, have every cause for fear: "Ye shall die in your sins," John 8, 21.

V. 5. Matthew does not state that the angel passed into the tomb. The angel's words indicate that he had changed his location; while Luke mentions two angels, Matthew merely notes the speaker. His whole narrative is marked by brevity. Μὴ φοβείσθε ὑμεῖς, precious words from angel lips, assuring us sinful mortals every time they are spoken, for behind

them is all the fulness of saving grace. The women who sought the body of the crucified Jesus had no cause to fear the herald of his resurrection, as did the keepers. Note the emphatic ὑμεῖς: Do *you* not fear, whatever these keepers may do; and φοβεῖσθε is continuous. — None who seek **Jesus, which hath been crucified**, τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον, need be fearing; his crucifixion ends fear, and his resurrection makes the glad tidings known. Luther puts it thus: "This is as much as to say, What foolish, simple little people you are that you should be terrified and fear. For Christ lives and is risen from the dead. Therefore, the proper thing is for you to be glad and never to worry about anything. For that Christ lives he lives for your good, that you should enjoy him, and by him be protected and preserved from all misery. He means to tell us that the resurrection of Christ is to comfort us against the devil, sin, death, and hell. For if these foes could continue to do damage, it would be impossible for us not to fear. This is the first command, not only to the women, but to all baptized and believing Christians who know and believe that Christ is risen, namely that they are not to fear." Luther was a master painter, we may well copy him.

V. 6. Οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε, where they themselves had helped to place him and had left him cold and still. But what has become of the body? Ἠγέρθη, **for he is risen, even as he said**. The aorist passive literally means "he was awakened, he was raised," although, as Robertson remarks, the sense of this passive aorist may simply be intransitive; hence the translation of the R. V.: "he is risen." The resurrection, however, is described as the act of God; "raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father," Rom. 6, 4; 8, 11; Matth. 16, 21; 17, 23; 26, 32. On the other hand, compare Mark 9, 31; Luke 18, 33, where the resurrection is described as Christ's own act, ἀναστήσεται.

Both terms are true: the Father raised Christ from the dead, and he himself arose from the dead, for he himself is true God. Jesus has power to lay his life down, and he has power to take it again, John 10, 18. — The angel emphasizes: **as he said**, not merely calling to remembrance his promise to rise, but adducing it as incontrovertible proof. The word of Jesus outranks that of any angel. The effect of the angel's statement must have been powerful. Like a flash the truth must have come over the women: just as they had not thought that he would really be delivered, mocked, scourged, spit upon, crucified, so they had not thought at all of his being raised from the dead, as he said; but now as the first had been done, so also this last — **as he said**. The word of Jesus cannot fail. Undoubtedly the women did not fully realize what the resurrection of Jesus was, but Nebe certainly is right when he says that these women understood it better than many modern theologians who refuse to believe in a bodily resurrection in spite of the word, **he is not here**, but imagine that only his spirit continues today in blessing. — **Come, see the place where the Lord lay**, the place they knew so well. Δεῦτε is the adverb hither, in the sense of our "come here," always used with a plural imperative either expressed or understood; so here ἴδετε, "see." The absence of the body is thus strongly placed before them who certainly expected to find it there. This absence of Christ's dead body, and the necessity of accounting for what became of it, has been a great stumbling-block for those who deny the resurrection. They can resort only to explanations utterly contrary to the Scriptures, fanciful, improbable, and damaging to their own claim.

V. 7. There is a task, now that Christ is risen, an unexpected duty to be promptly executed: ταχὺ πορευθεῖσαι, "having gone quickly," εἰπατε (2nd aor. imperat.), "tell his disciples." They are not to remain

in astonishment at the tomb, they are not to give way to the fascination of this strange sight, they are not to stay and speculate about this thing they had seen and heard, they must go and tell the blessed news. The "many infallible proofs" would follow in due time, to stand for all time; here it is the Easter message for the hearts of the disciples that is to be proclaimed: ὅτι (*recitativum*) Ἠγγέρθη ἀπὸ τῶν νεκρῶν. We may well say that this arrangement for bringing the news to the disciples is remarkable. No angel appears to them; women are the divinely chosen messengers. Many reasons have been put forward for this, Gerhard has five of them: God chooses the weak; overwhelmed most by the sorrow they are to be first in the joy; the presence of women at the tomb silences the Jewish falsehood that the disciples stole the body; as death came by woman, so salvation and life are to be announced by her; God wanted to reward woman's active love. One thing is certain, women here receive a signal honor; this reaches its climax when Christ appears first to Mary Magdalene. When we remember the women beneath the cross with only John, who seems to have had no reason to fear the high priest (John 18, 15), beside them; when again we see them here at the tomb so early, and even John not with them: we have sufficient answer to the question, why these women were so honored. There is no conflict here with 1 Cor. 14, 35, for they were to carry but this one message. — **And lo, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.** The resurrection it at once connected with the promise that they should see him. This gives the message its blessed fulness. Think of the expectation thus aroused! "You," ὑμᾶς, includes the women; so also ὄψεσθε, "ye shall see him." When Galilee is mentioned this evidently does not forbid the appearance in Judea. The supposition of Grotius and others, that Jesus at

first intended to meet the disciples only in Galilee, but afterwards allowed his yearning heart and the weakness of the disciples to move him to appear at once, is certainly wrong. Christ does not plan faultily, nor does he vacillate. In Galilee he had determined to gather his beloved flock about him, there in their old home far from the hostile high priests he would bind them together so as never to be scattered again as they had been at his death. Here in Judea he would prepare them for the meetings in Galilee. — The heaven-sent messenger puts his authority into the balance, as Gabriel did before Zacharias: ἰδοὺ εἶπον ὑμῖν; and he can well do so, for his word is the word of God, and God sent him.

V. 8. "They departed" is the fem. 2nd aor. participle, ἀπελθοῦσαι = having left, or when they had gone, ταχύ, quickly. They thus made a hasty movement to leave the tomb, not running at once, but after getting away a little from the place, ἔδραμον, they broke into full run; the 2nd aor. simply states the fact of what they did. Their own feelings speed their feet; *fear*, because of the angel and the awesome interference of almighty power; *joy*, because of the glad tidings. Both mingled, but joy outranked fear, it was great (μεγάλης does not modify both nouns, as they differ in gender; if it had been intended to modify both, nouns of the same gender could easily have been found — Bleek). The fear has vanished now, but the *great joy* has remained.

V. 9. They said nothing to any person whom they chanced to meet; presently, after they had gone some considerable distance, Jesus himself met them. Here was the climax to all that had occurred before. Χαίετε, be glad, be happy, rejoice! the present tense: continue to do this. Jesus does not use the Jewish form of greeting, Peace to you, but the Greek form, also used by Jews. Undoubtedly he does this because this form

answers his purpose best. We do not care to make the two forms identical, one merely a free translation of the other, as Zahn does; for the Greek translations of the Jewish vernacular distinguish between the two, so that where "peace to you" is said in the one language it is rendered so also in the other. Gerhard well says that Christ's greeting of peace was more than the customary salutation: peace as the fruit of his resurrection; so also the greeting *χαίρειν* is more than a polite salutation, it is joy and happiness as the fruit of his resurrection; and what greater cause of joy than Christ's resurrection can there be, through which we are lifted from sin to righteousness, from death to life, from hell to heaven? Every Easter sermon must be a repetition of this *χαίρετε*, must aim to plant this joy into the hearer's heart. — Αἱ δὲ προσελθοῦσαι ἐκράτησαν αὐτοῦ τοὺς πόδας — the participle and verb as in v. 7 and 8; while *κρατεῖν* usually has the accusative for the whole of what is grasped, and the genitive for the special part, here the reverse construction is used: took hold of him, αὐτοῦ, by the feet, τοὺς πόδας. The idea is conveyed that they did this deliberately; they did not rush to him, it was measured and full of reverence. It was not to assure themselves that he was not a phantom; it was not merely as a sign of love (Weiss); nor was it the result of overpowering awe produced by a wonderful superhuman appearance, so that they cast themselves as suppliants at his feet (Meyer); it was a natural and proper act of worship, the first *προσκύνησις* in the true and full sense of the word offered to Christ. They have the angel's word that he is risen, they now see and feel the wonderful change that has come over him, their hearts are powerfully moved, and so most naturally they sink at his feet and render him the worship of their hearts. Jesus accepts it because it is worship and in so far different from the act of Mary Mag-

dalene. With these women all believers sink down and worship.

. V. 10. Fear is to be cast out completely; φοβεῖσθε, **Fear not**, as above, present tense. "By this Christ wants to teach us all how we are to use his resurrection aright, casting out all fear, being happy and joyful, knowing that we have no longer a dead and buried Christ, but by faith comforting ourselves with the risen Christ and his victory, and rejoicing. For there is nothing in the whole world to frighten a Christian who has Christ as his Lord. Sin cannot do it, for we know that Christ has made payment for it. Death also cannot do it, for Christ has overcome it. He has rent asunder hell, bound and captured the devil. Though the world in its way is hostile to the Christians and inflicts all ills, what about it? it is all only temporal suffering, since we know that over against it we are to enjoy the resurrection of Christ unto eternal life. Therefore, this sermon of the angel, and afterward of our Lord Christ, is constantly to abide among Christians, Be not afraid, be glad, thank and praise God, for Christ is risen and is no longer here" (in the tomb). Luther. A significant term — τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου — giving to the command to inform them a new light. It is to impress them with the fact, that though risen and glorified and duly worshipped by them, he acknowledges the disciples as truly his own, united with him as his brethren. "If now Christ is our brother I would like to know what we still lack? Brethren in the flesh have common possessions, have together one father, one inheritance, else they would not be brethren; so we have common possessions with Christ, and have together one Father and one inheritance, which does not grow less when divided, but whoever has one part of the spiritual inheritance has it all." Luther. The emphasis is all on what thus becomes ours, not, as some have thought, on our work or what we must

render to our Brother. All that Christ has on this great day of his resurrection he has not for himself, but for all his brethren with him. — **Into Galilee**, there lies a special emphasis in this mention of Galilee; we see what is meant when in v. 16 the disciples all gather in Galilee to receive there the Master's great command to evangelize the world, and his promise assuring them of success.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The sabbath was past. The stillness of death enveloped the garden near Golgotha. Just as the Galilean women remained quiet during the sabbath according to the law (Luke 23, 56), so also the Lord, resting from the completed work of redemption had kept the sabbath in Joseph's tomb. It was night on earth. Rigid arose the cold rocks, the garden was empty and awesomely still. Hostile soldiers, an armed rampart, was set to protect the cold, dead world from him whom even in death it feared. It was night in the hearts of the disciples. Their love was crucified, their honor debased, their hope killed, their life made desolate and void. The seven stars of the words on the cross were covered by the storm-clouds that rose in their souls. They wept and lamented, John 16, 20. Scattered without comfort, united without comfort, they thought, saw, and spoke of only one thing, and that was of his tomb. God himself lay dead in that tomb. The wicked were preparing to bring in the harvest of their seed of blood. They had much goods laid up for many years; now the life of pleasure was to begin, they thought to proceed joyously as lords of the world. The devil's spies passed through the garden; the longer all remained still, the more their fears subsided, they hoped soon now to satiate their destructive greed and to tread under foot the world they had finally conquered. For God lay *dead* in that tomb. But hell was already destroyed, the devil's throne upset, principalities and powers despoiled. The hopes of the wicked were mere dreams, a terrible awakening awaited them, the harvest would be as the seed, blood and destruction. The angels were preparing with rejoicing to descend upon the redeemed earth, the road from heaven to Joseph's garden was filled with the angel-hosts of the Lord, the whole heaven stooped down to the tomb. For *God* lay dead in that tomb. Now Sunday dawned, the third day after the preparation or day of the Lord's death and burial. Up, up,

my soul, with joy behold the triumph of the Lord! Christ the Lord is risen today! Besser.

In preaching repeatedly on this text we have found no outline quite so satisfactory to us personally as this simple analytical arrangement.

The Easter Miracle in Its Blessedness

- I. There's an open tomb.*
- II. There's a shining angel.*
- III. There's a blessed announcement.*
- IV. There's an inspiring duty.*
- V. There's the living Savior himself.*

Remember that the entire tone must be festive. A glow must fill the preacher's heart and burn like a flame in his words. Away with cold, didactic dissertation! The very introduction must ring with the high note voiced by the congregation in its Easter hymn: "Hallelujah, lo he wakes!"

In the first outline the text itself passes before us part by part. Here is another which operates in an entirely different manner. The great Easter fact that Jesus lives is made to radiate in different directions. In an outline like this the details of the text are utilized in synthetic fashion wherever any of them may be of service in the sermon parts.

Jesus Lives!

That is:

- I. A fountain of joy for you this Easter morn.*
- II. A source of strength for you in your entire life.*
- III. A stream of grace for you in the Holy Sacrament.*
- IV. A well-spring of hope for you in the face of death.*

Part three is very appropriate when the Sacrament is celebrated at the Easter service. — Here is another along this line, but allowing more of the features of the text to show in the parts:

The Significance of the Angel's Message: He is Risen

- I. Victory proclaimed.*
- II. Salvation shed abroad.*
- III. Promises fulfilled to the uttermost.*
- IV. Hope made everlastingly sure.*

A highly effective, even dramatic, contrast is secured when the living and risen Christ is placed over against a Christ that remained dead. This may be done in various ways, according to the outline. Thus in part one: "There is an open tomb." Picture Jesus as dead, locked fast in death. No open tomb. If opened, then only by human hands. Then no empty tomb. But one with the decaying body of Jesus. Then all the sorrow and the tears and the broken hopes of the women more than justified. Now picture the glorious reality in the text, keeping the strong contrasts, striking each thought fully and squarely. A treatment like this should not be wordy, or it will lose; and the contrasts must be clear and clean, or again it will lose.

Our Easter Hallelujah Chorus:

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

- I. *Hallelujah! the stone is gone!*
- II. *Hallelujah! an angel is there!*
- III. *Hallelujah! the grave is vacant!*
- IV. *Hallelujah! the risen Lord himself appears!*

The contrast to this chorus of Easter praise is: Woe unto us, there is no Savior!

Easter, like every great festival of salvation, demands homiletical *appropriation*. Nothing less will do. To offer instead, homiletical application is an unpardonable crime for a preacher of the Gospel. — There is a place in our text where this application feature may creep in and expand unduly, namely where the women are sent as messengers to tell the disciples, and so altogether too much emphasis may be placed upon the idea of "service" which we are to render. — Some preachers love allegory, and so they abuse the rock in this text. Incidental allegory (figurative treatment) may pass, and when well done in sermons may be pleasing — mark, when well done. But entire sermons or entire sermon parts based on allegory are altogether a mistake. For allegory is *not* real interpretation or exposition at all; it is human fancy, that is all. That rock in the text, that tomb, that open door, are simple realities and must be treated as such, and our fancies about them must be scrapped. They are human notions, no more. On Easter day we want the realities of the Word, nothing less. Why bring a few paper flowers of our own making, where God's garden is all ablaze with divine truth?

QUASIMODOGENITI

John 21, 15-19

This is an exceedingly well chosen text. As the octave of Easter Quasimodogeniti is the closing celebration of the great festival. Very properly, therefore, we have the text showing us the risen Savior; and he is shown as meeting his disciples in Galilee — as he promised on Easter morning. This Sunday is frequently used for confirmation or for the first communion of the newly confirmed. What better words of Jesus could be selected for such occasions at this time than his question, "Lovest thou me?" and his command, "Feed my lambs, my sheep!" It is a fine touch that the very Peter who was told to feed the lambs afterwards wrote the words from which this Sunday takes its name, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." 1 Peter 2, 2.

The risen Lord had appeared to Peter personally on Easter Sunday, Luke 24, 34 and 1 Cor. 15, 5. Although we do not know what was said and done at this appearance we may well conclude that it signally marked Peter's absolution, for Jesus mentioned Peter especially when he sent his first message to the disciples, Mark 16, 7. Peter was present also when Jesus appeared to the disciples behind locked doors and gave them the commission: "So send I you." All this must be borne in mind as we take up this text. Peter, then, was already absolved and reinstated by the Lord himself, and we know that the other disciples had not turned from him. Here now the Lord deals publicly with Peter. John has made a record of this action for the Church for all time. The fall of Peter was so grave

a matter that we can well understand the purpose of Jesus in here dealing with Peter so as to eradicate the last trace of any false confidence in Peter himself, and in publicly reinstating him in his apostleship so as to shut off any foolish criticism by other believers. We have here an example of Christ's earnest and loving discipline, which is the more important as it deals with one of his chosen disciples. — Two striking circumstances deserve notice, the draught of fishes and the fire of coals. The former reminds us of Peter's first call to the work, Luke 5, 10; the latter of the fire of coals beside which Peter forfeited his apostleship.

V. 15. The beauty of the early morning was over the scene — Christ and seven of his apostles. The evangelist brings out a contrast by designating his fellow apostle as **Simon Peter**, when the Lord thrice addressed him as **Simon (son) of John**. The idea in this cannot be that for the Master the period of discipleship was as if it had not been. Some commentators find no special significance in Christ's mode of addressing Peter. Evidently there is such a significance, since in this Gospel of John we constantly have "Simon Peter" and only once the exceptional "Peter," and now here in a special and marked way: Σίμων Ἰωάννου; as the genitive indicates, this exceptional form of address refers to the past. Lange, Zahn, and others are right when they find here that Christ reminds Peter of his natural descent and weakness. Trusting in himself he had fallen and shown himself only as Simon (son) of John; by the Savior's grace he who was helpless in himself is to be made a Peter, as the evangelist once again calls him. **These**, in the phrase πλέον τούτων, cannot mean the things belonging to his fisherman's occupation, as though he had meant to forsake his apostleship; τούτων must be taken as a masculine, not a neuter, the other disciples are meant. But the sense is not that the Lord really expected

greater love from Peter than from the others because more was to be entrusted to Peter than to the others, namely the papacy; Peter's answer destroys any such interpretation. This disciple did at one time boast of loving Christ more than the others, but his boast led him to his fall, and this is what Christ refers to. Peter will never boast thus again. His humility goes even farther. Christ asked Ἀγαπᾷς με; Peter replies only φιλῶ σε. Many old commentators think there is no difference in the two verbs, and none appears in our English translation; but there undoubtedly is a difference, one which lends added depth and significance to the dialog. Ἀγαπᾶν = the love of reason which chooses and judges, thus the more elevated love (*diligō*); φιλέω = the love of the inclinations, of the heart, even of the passions, thus a lower kind of love (*amo*). See Stelhorn, *Woerterbuch*. Zahn is very explicit on the matter and shows a number of cases where φιλέω would be impossible, and others where ἀγαπᾶν would be utterly out of place. See also Keil. While in certain cases either verb might do, this certainly does not identify them. Any reference to the Aramaic, as the language which Jesus spoke, is useless in this connection, since we have no Aramaic of this narrative; the Aramaic may or may not have had two verbs the counterpart of these in Greek, there are always other means at hand, besides verbs only, for indicating desired differences in thought. "Peter is modest, he confesses that he does not yet love Christ, as the Lord, the Son of God, deserves to be loved, in that respectful, reverent, deep, eternal manner, but that he loves him only as one is loved to whom our hearts are drawn affectionately, with a warm, clinging, passionate attachment. Openly and honestly he confesses that his love still lacks the higher consecration, and therefore also the proper depth, the eternal endurance." Nebe. — Peter is very careful now in his

claims and profession. He has learned much by his fall. **He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee,** ὅτι φιλῶ σε. Peter does not appeal to the Lord's memory of the evidences of his attachment, but to his omniscience which is more trustworthy than Peter's own examination of the state of his heart. Besides the deep humility Peter here reveals confidence and trust in the Lord. When Keil refers to Acts 1, 24: "which knowest the hearts of all men," as applicable here, he is right, but his reason is wrong, namely that something less than omniscience is meant; to know all hearts is possible only to the omniscient God.

The Lord accepts this humble profession and replies, **Feed my lambs.** Τὰ ἀρνία μου — so the Lord has a flock which is his (feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood," Acts 20, 37). He is the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the sheep, John 10, 11. See Is. 40, 11. The **lambs** are put first; they are valuable, for much may be expected from them, they need more attention on account of their helplessness. To feed, teach, spiritually nourish the children is a duty so important that Christ lays it upon his apostle as the first part of his sacred office. So it lies upon all pastors (shepherds); nor may it be transferred to others, for it is as integral a part of their office as feeding the sheep. Βόσκει = feed, provide with forage, pasture; "teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have said unto you"; comp. 1 John 2, 12-13. "To feed means to teach the Church the faith with living voice, or to govern by the Gospel." Luther. "Do not, my brother, exchange the shepherd staff of the Gospel for the driver's stick of the Law." Koegel. To feed the lambs, this is our chief duty toward children, and the glory of our church is that she has given her strength to this task. This has been called the "sunny province" of a pastor's labor. At least an attachment to Christ like Peter's (φιλεῖν), is required for

this work; ἀγαπᾶν, love as the highest devotion would be better.

V. 16. In his second question the Lord retains ἀγαπᾶς, thus inquiring still after the higher love, but mercifully omits *more than these*. Peter even now does not venture to profess the higher love, but adheres to the humbler word, and to his appeal to Christ's omniscience. A significant change appears in the command, ποιμαίνει τὰ προβάτιά μου, Tend, lead, "expresses more than βόσκω, that activity which carefully governs," Stelhorn. And this duty is for the προβάτια.* This term describes the lambs as sufficiently grown to be led forth and guided; the diminutive implies at the same time that they are dear and tender. Peter is charged with the youth of the church. But he who leads must himself be rightly led by Christ. That clock is useless which indicates one hour with its hands and strikes another with its gong. Besser tells us concerning Gregory Nazianzen: "His speech had the effect of thunder, because his life was as the accompanying lightning." Hausmann reports of Luther: "What we teach, he lives." Right leading braves the wolf when he comes to attack (Acts 20, 29). But when some maintain that the leading here entrusted to Peter signifies the divine institution of a general church government, they go beyond Christ's words in the direction of Rome.

V. 17. Christ's third question vividly recalls the three denials. To say that here we have only special emphasis forgets to explain why such emphasis should be necessary; in Peter's life we need not seek long. Still the old name is used, but now at last the Lord questions even that lower form of love which Peter had professed: φιλεῖς με; It is not the third asking alone that grieved Peter so, it is especially that the Lord

*So also Tischendorf reads, following B, C, while Aleph, A, D, have πρόβατα. Cf. besides Zahn.

should ask about this love now in the third question. Ah, he had deserved that even his personal attachment (*φιλεῖν*) to the Lord should be called in question! — This explains his answer. He emphasizes the omniscience of the Lord, **thou knowest all things** (Ps. 7, 10). Before Christ's penetrating vision he bares his soul: "**Thou knowest**" (*γινώσκεις* = with penetrating knowledge; more than *ιδεῖν* — perceive) **that I love** (*φιλω*) **thee**. The Lord accepts this confession, for he knows. **Feed**, nourish, my sheep, *πρόβατα*, the adult members of the flock, or the flock in general.* "When Christ instituted the ministry he first asks Peter three times whether he loves him. For he saw indeed that no man would be a proper preacher or Christian except he have delight in him and love him. But how can one delight in him and love him, if he do not first firmly believe in him, that in him he will have all things, and if he do not know without doubt that Christ is his treasure and Savior, life and consolation? Where this is in the heart love will follow and flow out. If love, however, is present it cannot rest and be idle, but will show itself, preach and teach every one, desire to plant Christ into every heart and bring all to him, and for this cause risk and love what it must and can." Luther. — Thrice Peter had denied the Lord, thrice the Lord asks him humbly to confess his love, accepting him and reinstating him formally into his office. Other interpretations of the three questions and commands are fanciful and in the interest of the false doctrine of Rome. The Romish idea is that the "lambs" are the laity, the "sheep" the clergy. "As

*Nebe abides by the twofold division of the flock, into strong and weak, matured and beginners; we prefer the threefold division, indicated by John himself, 1 John 2, 13. Nebe, however, describes a threefold duty of the shepherd: feeding the lambs in the fold, leading the sheep, and feeding the sheep in distant pastures. This also gives a satisfactory treatment of the text in sermons.

to that which is said (John 21, 15 sqq.): 'Feed my sheep,' and 'Lovest thou me more than these?' it does not as yet follow hence that a peculiar superiority was given Peter. He bids him 'feed,' i. e. teach the Word, or rule the Church with the Word, which Peter has in common with the other apostles." *Smalcald Articles* (Power and Primacy of the Pope), Jacobs 343, 30. Instead of a special exaltation of Peter there is a serious reminder of his defection. Christ nowhere puts Peter over the other apostles. And we know that the apostle to the Gentiles exceeded Peter, especially also in the writings which form the New Testament and stand as an inspired authority for all time.

What connection have v. 18-19 with the foregoing? Are they a further question, whether Peter will be ready to render the highest proof of love, from which he shrank when he denied the Lord? The text furnishes no indication to this effect. Are they merely an admonition to patience and resignation? (Gerhard). There is no hint of it. Besser and others take them in the sense of a promised reward. But this too seems a thought carried into the words. John plainly tells us that these words are prophecy. Knowing what awaited him, namely a martyr's death, Peter naturally would devote himself zealously to the flock while his life lasted, and would make ready for the trial when it should come. So Paul also learned in advance, "how great things he must suffer for my name's sake," Acts 9, 16. — **Verily, verily** — a solemn assurance by him who is verity itself. — Two images are presented in concrete form: 1) young Peter, girding himself and walking whither he would; 2) old Peter, stretching forth his hands to let another gird him, and carry him whither he would not. One may ask, whether the present hour when Jesus said this to Peter is counted in with his youth, or with his age. Had he not girded his fisher's coat about him when he first saw Jesus at

the seaside? Had he not leaped into the water, asking no one, not even inquiring what the others would do, following entirely his own will? This looks like youth. But had not Peter also, immediately after those active movements, shown himself, in his humility, his dependence on Christ's knowledge, his love? This looks like ripeness and age. The present, we may say, is viewed as a time of transition. — **When thou shalt be old** is a plain intimation that he would reach a good old age. Peter, no longer youthful now, would receive abundant time — about 35 years — to show his love in shepherding Christ's flock. — **Thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.** John's interpretation is historical, not ethical. The latter view, to which some commentators strongly incline, is impossible. Long before his death Peter was humble, resigned, no longer self-willed; to postpone this development to the last is to slander the great apostle. Nor can the words "whither thou wouldest not" possibly mean that Peter would not go whither the Lord desired to lead him, for the contrary is true. The "other" who would gird Peter and "carry" him is the executioner. Peter yields to him, holding up his hands, in order to be bound with a rope about the body. Not his hands or his feet are tied, to fetter and hold him, but a rope is put about his body as was customary with criminals who were to be haled to execution. Some see in the stretching forth of the hands a depicting of the crucifixion, a nailing of the outstretched hands to the cross. But that would make the crucifixion precede the haling to the cross. The text does not describe the exact mode of Peter's death, inasmuch as he would be haled to any violent death under an executioner's hands. If, nevertheless, the stretched-forth hands are taken as a description of Peter's crucifixion this can only be done by separating them from their context, which

Luthardt is willing to do; we cannot follow him. Eusebius reports (book 3, chap. 1): "At last Peter came to Rome, where he was crucified, head downward; for so he himself had desired to suffer." In b. 2, ch. 25 he names various authorities for the fact that Peter was crucified by Nero. This apostle, as far as we know, was the only one crucified. — Peter's martyrdom **should glorify God**, in showing the work of the Lord brought to such perfection in Peter that he gave his life for the faith. "A martyr's death reflects the death of Christ by crucifixion." Lange. "As with the feeding of the sheep so with his suffering in death this favored apostle would follow in the Master's steps and glorify God." Koegel. "To glorify God" came to signify in the early church "to undergo martyrdom." "Is it something strange that the servant should die for his good Lord, when the Lord died for his evil servants?" Ambrosius. "Not at the end of every Christian's course stands the martyr's cross; but no Christian can finish his course without being led from Peter's youth to Peter's age and being exercised in cross-bearing. . . . According to the judgment of men will-power is man's glory, but Christians are manly and strong and grow into a perfect man and unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ (Eph. 4, 13) when they rest resignedly in the will of the Lord, whose hand performs miracles with a broken staff and a bruised vine-branch." Besser.

V. 19. Christ moved away from the place; Peter walked after him, and John, unbidden, did the same. This action, however, must be taken in connection with the foregoing words, and thus it becomes symbolic. Peter "follows and shows thereby that he is ready to go the way Christ has marked out for him, even to martyrdom. Once Christ had said, "Thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards"; for this the time had now arrived. He follows the

crucified Christ, who is also risen from the dead and is about to assume his heavenly throne. "He who is of earth follows him who is of heaven; the mortal him who is in life immortal; the dweller in this world him who dwells with the Father; and being led by him there is no doubt as to the goal." Mayer.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Unless one has learned how to look at a text like this, he will see too little in it. Probably only this: 1) As Jesus asked for Peter's love—so he now asks for ours; 2) As Jesus gave Peter a work to do—so he now gives us work also. This is ordinary homiletical application, of the commonest type. It centers on what *we* do and offer to Christ, not on what *he* does and gives to us. Yet the latter is always the chief thing.—Only the great saving acts of Christ admit of homiletical appropriation in the full sense of the term, and our text does not record such an act. Nevertheless, all texts in which Christ appears, in which he does something, or speaks of our salvation, rise above the common level of mere application, and allow a treatment akin to and approaching appropriation. Now the more we get above common application and approach appropriation, the richer the sermon is bound to be. Moreover, as texts go, there will always be abundant room to use application, namely what *we* are to do, or not to do. So we should take every opportunity to tell who *he*, the Lord is, what *he* has done, does now, will yet do; for *his* doing is always rich in blessing for us.—What stands out most in our text? Why, the Lord's concern about Peter, and besides that his concern for his flock. And it is the risen Lord who shows this concern. So instead of drawing lines from *Peter* to us today in the sermon, we decidedly prefer to draw lines directly from *Jesus* to us. This, however, is not really appropriation; it approaches appropriation. Here is a sample:

How the Risen Savior Cares for His Own

I. *The single sheep.*

1. He carefully deals with each one.
2. He tenderly yet firmly lays bare the weakness.
3. He graciously pardons the sin.
4. He lovingly accepts the love (even the lower).

5. He generously reinstates.
6. He kindly provides time, position, and ability for work.
7. He mightily strengthens for sacrifice (perhaps even the greatest).

II. The entire flock.

1. They are his ("my").
2. They are lambs, etc.
3. They are provided with shepherds.
4. They are fed.
5. They are tended (led).
6. They are gathered at last into one great fold.

There will be no trouble about giving Peter his full due in a sermon of this kind, but Peter will not crowd too far in front and prevent us from getting very close to Jesus himself. — We ought to admit, however, that the parts as given above are not really a division of the theme. The point of cleavage in the theme is *how* the Savior cares, *not* who the persons are for whom he cares. The "how" is pushed into the elaboration; it should already appear in the formulation of the parts. Let the preacher improve the outline accordingly. — Another effort to connect as directly as possible with Jesus is the following:

**Why the Risen Savior Asks as the Main Question,
Lovest Thou Me?**

We will find that it is this question which *I. Reminds us of our sin; II. Points us to Christ's redemption and pardon; III Lays upon us some burden.*

The author has never had much use for mere formal divisions. They seem so much to pick the text up only by its outer garment, as if the preacher did not succeed in reaching right into its heart. Such is Johann Rump's effort: **Christ and Peter at the Sea of Tiberias.** We note 1) *A Threefold question*; 2) *A threefold answer*; 3) *A threefold appointment* — leaving out the conclusion of the text where there is nothing "threefold" to match the other parts. Now a good sermon may be preached on a formal division, but it would be a better sermon if the division penetrated more. And homiletics is so often a question on what it is better to do. A number of even little betterments make a great improvement. — In the following outline Peter gets a little more room. Be sure, however, to give full

weight in the elaboration to part one, and do not put the chief stress on part two or even three:

Why Does the Risen Savior Ask for Peter's Love?

- I. *Love is the mark of gratitude for pardon.*
- II. *Love is the chief equipment for work.*
- III. *Love is the strength for bearing the cross.*

Harking back to what we said in the beginning on this text we add:

The Risen Savior and the Great Question of Love

- I. *He meets us with love.* The love of redemption — which calls for our faith — makes us his flock, lambs, etc. — puts us into his care to be fed and led.
- II. *He calls forth our love.* Reminding us of our lack of it — asking it to rise higher — giving us more and more for which to love him.
- III. *He accepts our love.* Honoring us with tasks under his hand — distinguishing us with sacrifices to bear for his name's sake.

MISERICORDIAS DOMINI

John 14, 1-6

This text deals with heaven and the Christian's glorious hope, and this in a manner full of the sweetest consolation. If to a certain degree it forms a contrast to the former text which touched Peters' sin, set before him his great work on earth, and foretold his martyrdom, it is nevertheless the complement of the former text. Pardoned, after life's labors, trials, and crosses we shall be received into our Father's house. — This heavenly hope and comfort rests for its fulfillment on Christ, our risen and exalted Redeemer. The text brings this out clearly in its repeated reference to his going away, namely to his Father and that Father's house. — It does more. In those pregnant closing words of the sixth verse the entire way of salvation is sketched, and in them also, as in the whole text — though spoken just before Christ's Passion — there is the radiant Easter light of heaven. "Here," namely in this entire discourse, "the Lord has abundantly poured out those precious consolations, which all Christians enjoy, and which men ought to seek in all their trials and tribulations. Moreover, we have here a summary of all the principal articles of Christian doctrine, most powerfully established, as nowhere else in the Scriptures, such as: the doctrine of the three distinct Persons in the Trinity; of the divine and human nature of Christ and his eternal, indivisible Person; also of the righteousness of faith and the true consolation for an anxious conscience." Luther. In a way this text may be summed up in the words: "Blessed are the homesick, for they shall be taken home."

V. 1. Christ's statement, "Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you" (John 13, 33), **troubled**, disturbed, shook to and fro, the hearts of his disciples, as they were gathered about the Master just before his Passion. Separation — Christ's going whither they could not come, — also his bidding them at parting to love one another: it was all very depressing for them who did not comprehend the inwardness of it all. Christ wanted to remove this troubled condition, and there was ample cause to make it vanish. But it was difficult to make the comfort effective in the hearts of his disciples. Even we today do not appreciate as we should the blessed comforts here offered. — Πιστεύετε may be either indicative or imperative; so we find four interpretations with corresponding variations. We prefer the marginal reading of the R. V., the two **believe** in the same mode, two imperatives, which suits the thought better than to have one or the other or both indicative, and harmonizes with *ταρασσέσθω*. **Believe in God; also in me believe!** It is an injunction, to overcome the trouble of their hearts. Trust in God, and especially also trust in Christ will do it. Roffhack rightly emphasizes the majesty of this word of Christ. God cannot fail, his plans for the salvation of Israel and the world will reach their glorious goal — **believe in God!** — But when Christ speaks of God the disciples must remember his word, "I and my Father are one" (John 10, 30), also the confession Peter had made for them all, "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the Living God," and every statement Christ had made to them concerning the Father and himself (as he will presently add, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father — I am in the Father, and the Father in me"). Therefore, as the Father, so the Son (true God) merits their fullest trust, even if his going

away troubles them now because they do not understand it as they should. Christ, the Son, will not fail them, on this they may rely — **also in me believe!** See how *believe in me* is here set beside *believe in God*. The two are equally trustworthy, for they are equally God. This call to the troubled hearts to trust in God and in Christ may well be repeated no matter what the trouble now, whether it be some painful visitation of providence in our lives, or some blindness and sorrow due to our weak nature; this trust will relieve and help.

V. 2 is variously read by commentators. The description and assurance here given, together with the promise following are mighty antidotes against troubled hearts, and powerful stimulants to faith. There is no more expressive or beautiful name for heaven than **my Father's house**. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand." Ps. 84, 1-2 and 10. A real place is meant. "By the term heaven a certain *πού* (somewhere) must be understood, in which the blessed shall see God and enjoy that heavenly glory and bliss." Gerhard. It is wrong to spiritualize the concrete expressions in this text as though they are merely figurative and symbolical. "My Father's house" lends to the word "Father" and "our Father who art in heaven" a richer meaning; he has a home, a house, *οἰκία*, for his "household of God" (Eph. 2, 19), where his children (Gal. 3, 26; Rom. 8, 14-17) shall dwell with him. All the tenderness and attractiveness, the restfulness and comfort that lies for us in the word "home" is here applied to heaven. Christ paints it in such colors that the heavenly "homesickness" is awakened in our hearts, and that by the hope of this home through Christ we are consoled in every trouble. — **Mansions** — abiding-

places (margin), μοναί, from μένω, to remain (in the N. T. only here and in v. 23). Here we are pilgrims. (Bunyan, "Pilgrims Progress"). "As Abraham owned only a burial-place (*Machpelah*) among the children of Heth so we own as our inheritance on earth only a grave. In the hut of our body sin and death are tenants; every hour they are breaking it down." Koegel. In those "abiding-places" in our Father's house we will remain forever, all our wanderings ended.

"My Father's house on high,
Home of my soul, how near.
At times to faith's foreseeing eye
Thy golden gates appear!"

There are **many** mansions "because there are many members of his body." Irenæus. The μοναί πολλαί (the latter word has the emphasis) are in contrast to Christ as the one Son; not he alone shall dwell in the οἰκία τοῦ πατρὸς, but all his followers with him. It is folly to interpret "many" as referring to men of all kinds of opinions, convictions, faiths, and the like; only believers will enter above. Devout writers have used this word of Christ as a basis for their human imaginings of what heaven is like, but it is well to bear in mind that no human thought can adequately portray the Father's house with its many mansions; fanciful minds are not content with the brief and rich words of Christ. "Many" is not "manifold," or of many kinds (Besser), although they may be various enough. **Are**, at this time; *SUNT*, as Bengel prints the word to bring out its meaning; realities in the fullest sense of the word. In fact, the realities of heaven are more real than anything material of earth, for all earthly things are but a vain show. "To them" (the lovers of truth) "the things on earth are copies of the things in heaven. They know that the earthly tabernacle is made after the pattern of things seen in the Mount

(Ex. 25, 40; 1 Chron. 28, 11-12); and the question suggested by the angel in Milton is often forced upon their meditations —

‘What if earth
Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?’ ”
Trench, *Parables*, p. 13.

If it were not so, εἰ δὲ μὴ, is an abbreviated protasis, with the thought of unreality, as the apodosis shows: εἶπον ἄν ὑμῖν, “I would have told you.” Here is the proof of his trustworthiness; he would never deceive them by a false hope, as the world does. — **For I go to prepare a place for you.** He speaks of his ascension. The many abiding-places are truly for the disciples, Christ’s going has for one of its objects the preparation of these places for them. This statement, as well as the following promise, answers the question of the disciples, How about us? What “preparing the place for them” includes the Lord does not say. Besser thinks that Christ entering Paradise unlocks the entrance to his Father’s house by virtue of his blood; Koegel, that he adorns it with his presence. “Christ is busied in preparing for us what will give us satisfaction and joy. When we expect a guest we love and have written for, we take pleasure in preparing for his reception, — we hang in his room the pictures he likes; if he is infirm we wheel in the easiest chair; we gather the flowers he admires and set them on his table; we go back and back to see if nothing else will suggest itself to us so that when he comes he may have entire satisfaction. This is enough for us that Christ is similarly occupied.” *Exposition of Bible*. He, the exalted Redeemer, for us poor sinners! That preparation will make the place delightful for us as was the Mount of Transfiguration for Peter, when he wanted to erect the three tabernacles there, only the tabernacles (abiding-places) will all be ready.

V. 3. The **if** is affirmative, εἰάν with the subj. states an expected case; the context shows that the expectation will surely be realized. Christ will do more than prepare the place, since we could not reach it by our own abilities. — **I come again**, ἔρχομαι, preserved in its tense in this translation, but as πάλιν also shows, with the sense of the future. Besser goes too far when he includes in this coming again all the work of Christ, Baptism, instruction in his Word, the Lord's Supper, etc. As far as this spiritual presence is concerned Christ never left his disciples. Ebrard and Olshausen find it in the resurrection of Christ, and his receiving the disciples unto himself they explain as "the reception into the communion of his heavenly life," whether we are still on earth or taken from the earth. Evidently so to spiritualize **will receive you unto myself** is not correct, and leaves the interpretation of "I come again" = resurrection in doubt. *The Luth. Com.* combines for the "coming again" Easter, Pentecost, hour of death, and second advent — a mingling of ideas which condemns itself. Ἐρχομαι here is fully explained by ἐλεύσεται in Acts 1, 11, "shall so come," namely at the end of the world. From other passages we know that the soul shall anticipate the body in its entrance into Paradise (Lazarus in the parable — the malefactor), but Christ does not "come" for the soul in the sense in which he has promised to come in the last great day. The angels, not the Lord, came for Lazarus' soul; dying Stephen beholds Christ in his heavenly throne, Christ does not come to him. But the time between our death and the glorious coming of the Lord is in reality so brief that Christ spans it with one word: "I come." For a moment the body lies in the sleep of the grave, while the soul has its separate taste of heaven, then Christ comes again and takes us unto himself. Bengel adds: "The Father's house, the Son's house, comp. John

16, 15." — **That where I am ye may be also** is the crowning glory of the whole comforting assurance of Christ. What the disciples secretly feared was to be separated from Christ, and now they hear that an eternity of exalted and blessed communion with Christ is awaiting them. Our great Lord has preceded us, but we, through his great help, shall not remain behind.

V. 4. **And whither I go, ye know the way.** (So the correct reading). This sums up the measure of comfort which Christ gives. Knowing the way to that blessed abode, and Christ personally coming to conduct them thither, no cause for sadness is left.

V. 5. We feel like chiding Thomas for his contradiction, yet the wonderful and kind answer thus elicited makes us thankful for the question of this pessimistic apostle. Christ says, **Ye know; Thomas, We know not.** Despondent Thomas by thus contradicting darkens the clear words of Christ for his own soul, just as he did again when he was told Christ was risen. Let the shadows flee from our hearts when Christ's words like sunshine flood them with the light of hope and consolation; he who would still shut out the light does a dangerous and hurtful thing.

V. 6. Jesus does not say, "*I show you the way,*" like a second Moses; but, "*I am the way.*" Nor, "*I have the truth,*" like another Elijah; but "*I am the truth.*" Not only, "*I lead unto life,*" as one of his apostles; but, "*I am the life.*" Koegel. — Christ, the Word made flesh, is the one Mediator between God and man, in all that he was, did, and does for us — "**I — the way,** ἡ ὁδός." The everlasting Savior is the way. A wonderful way indeed — I, a person! This "way" is like a mighty stream bearing with its own flood-power our little bark to the great ocean. Jacob saw "the way" in the ladder of his dream. Christ tells of it in the words, "And I, if I be lifted up from the

earth, will draw all men unto me." John 12, 32. Isaiah complains, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to *his own way*." 53, 6. Our own "ways" lead unto destruction; only this one "WAY" leads to salvation. Note that by knowing this "way" the saving power of faith becomes plain. If Christ with his blessed merits is the way, to walk this way is to believe in Christ. If this great and blessed Person is the way, all idea of our person, our excellence, and our work must fall; he must be made ours, we his, so shall we be on the way — and this is faith. "He, therefore, that trusteth by his works to merit grace, doth despise the merits and grace of Christ, and seeketh by his own power, without Christ, to come unto the Father: whereas Christ hath said expressly of himself, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'" *Augsb. Conf.*, Jacobs 44, 10. "Therefore the entire Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, direct all men to Christ, as to the Book of Life, in which they should seek the eternal election of the Father. For it has been decided by the Father from eternity that whom he would save he would save through Christ: 'No man cometh unto the Father but by me.'" *Formula of Concord*, J. 661, 66. This statement is for those who base their salvation on the mysterious election of God, and add Christ "the way" only as a means for carrying this elective decree into execution. — **And the truth**, ἡ ἀλήθεια: "Jesus was not merely truthful, that is, his words were not merely correct, and were not merely honest expressions of his thoughts. Jesus was not merely of the truth, full of longing for divine, everlasting truth, and inwardly illuminated, renewed, and purified by the reception of truth. He was truth itself, the very embodiment and source of divine truth, the outflow and expression of divine truth for men, the fountain of all that illuminates, renews, purifies, uplifts, and saves our fallen

race." Lenski, *His Footsteps*, 254. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came" (not: was given) "by Jesus Christ." John 1, 17. As all the blessed truth of God for our salvation stands revealed in Christ, so again faith is the only means for receiving it. — Christ is **the life**, ἡ ζωὴ, not merely in the sense that for himself he has true, abiding, blessed life; he is the source of all true life for us, its inexhaustible, its sole fountain. In our sin is death; by his life he has destroyed the power of this death, and now sets us free in life. And once more, for us to receive Christ the life faith is necessary; the heart, dead in trespasses and sins, must be opened (by faith) that life may enter and abide in it. "Take us upon thyself as the way; enlighten us as the truth; regenerate us as the life." Ambrosius. Instead of simply co-ordinating, some interpret: Christ is the way by being the truth and the life. — **No one cometh unto the Father, but by me.** There is no salvation outside of Christ; no soul enters heaven, no person is admitted to the Father's house, except by Christ. "He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16, 16. John 3, 36; Acts 4, 12. All hopes of heaven outside of Christ are doomed to dreadful disappointment. There are those who dream of a possibility of receiving Christ after death for those who have rejected him in this life, and thus allowing them to come to the Father in spite of their unbelief in this life. There is no foundation for such a doctrine in the words of Christ or any other Scripture.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

One way to get a sermon out of a text is to go right up to it and ask it some questions. Try it with our text. What is Jesus really doing in this text? The text answers you, he is comforting his disciples so that they shall no longer be troubled or afraid. How is he doing that? The text answers, by placing their great hope before them. That already is enough to sketch the outlines for a sermon: —

Jesus Comforts His Disciples in Parting

- I. *They know whither he is going.*
- II. *That there he will prepare a place for them.*
- III. *That he will come and take them thither.*
- IV. *That the place is the Father's house and mansions.*
- V. *That he himself is the way.*

In these parts the hope is expanded in detail. — There are several outstanding expressions in the text. They are like beautiful portals through which we may look into the entire text, yea, through which we may walk right into it and view all its beauties. Take this one:

I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life

- I. *Then we know where we are going.* To the Father's house with many mansions. This Way leads there. This Truth does not deceive us about it. This Life can lead nowhere else.
- II. *Then we know what path to take.* This Way, Truth, Life. There is no other. It is wonderful, for this path itself carries us to our home.
- III. *Then we need not be troubled or afraid.* The uncertainty of Thomas is groundless. We can joyfully believe in God and in Christ. We are fortified against all who would mislead us by another way, v. 6b.

Another of these notable expressions is that of the Father's house with many mansions. But it would be too commonplace altogether to use only categories, and skeletonize: *The Many Mansions in Our Father's House*: 1) What are these mansions? 2) How do we get to these mansions? Zapf has a far better suggestion:

What Does a Christian Know Concerning the Father's House?

- I. *He has a mansion there.*
- II. *He has a Lord there.*
- III. *He has a way thither.*

With the Father's house and its mansions we naturally connect the idea of *home*. Spurgeon writes on this: Home is home only for the members of the family, not for strangers. We must have the home or family spirit; else home will not be home for us. So as regards our home in heaven. In a land of spirit and

spiritual things how can they be happy who have neglected these all their lives; they can never be at home in them. In a land of worship and adoration, how can they be at home. There is a dream which is told (I tell it not for the dream, but for the moral of it) of a young woman who imagined that she was in heaven unconverted, and thought she saw upon the pavement of transparent gold multitudes of spirits dancing to the sweetest music. She stood still, unhappy, motionless, silent, and when the king said to her, "Why do you not partake of the joy?" she answered, "I cannot join in the dance, for I do not know the measure; I cannot join in the song, for I do not know the tune"; then said he in a voice of thunder, "What dost thou here?" And she thought herself cast out forever. — We may outline by using the "home" idea:

Our True Home:

The Father's House with Many Mansions

- I. *Of course, it is only for his children.*
- II. *A way is made for them to reach it.*
- III. *Jesus himself comes to receive them.*
- IV. *While waiting let us not be troubled or afraid.*

As regards the Way let us note the following: "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me," no matter how much he tries without me. The omission of Christ is absolutely fatal — and it is this Christ who through the atoning cross went to the Father. There is no single truth of the Gospel which our latitudinarian age needs more than this. How many, in their scraps of religious faith and practice, are satisfied with the words "God," "Father," "the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, the idea that a little morality, a little seriousness in a religious way, a little wish to reach heaven at last, is fully sufficient to save the soul. Yet no man cometh to the Father except through Christ crucified for our sins and raised for our justification.

Sursum Corda — Lift Up Your Hearts!

- I. *Jesus shows us our beautiful home.*
- II. *Jesus fills our hearts with the longing for home.*
- III. *Jesus shows us the true way home.*
- IV. *Jesus promises us the blessed home-coming.*

JUBILATE

John 12, 20-26

Two features stand out prominently in this text and no doubt caused its selection for the third Sunday after Easter. The first is the *glorification* of Christ in his death and resurrection, pictured here by the grain of wheat falling into the earth and dying to bring much fruit; the second is *the coming of the Gentiles* with their request to see Jesus, an indication of the abundance of fruit in due time to follow. The text stands in the light of those that precede it, especially in the light of the Easter texts proper. The preacher therefore proclaims the glorification accomplished and the abundance of fruit already brought forth and being added to constantly. The homiletical treatment of this text should put Christ forward as the glorious theme, and not his followers with their self-denial and reward of grace. The two features mentioned in the beginning must be made to stand out prominently, while v. 25 and 26 receive minor consideration.

V. 20. **Certain Greeks** were not Greek Jews or Hellenists, but "proselytes of the gate," the φοβούμενοι or σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν of the acts, former idolaters who had accepted the essentials of the Jewish religion and some of its customs and practices, without formally being received into the synagogue by circumcision, which would have made them "proselytes of righteousness." They resembled the Ethiopian eunuch, the centurion Cornelius and others. Ἐκ τῶν ἀναβαίνοντων (pres.) = among those accustomed to go, who went again and again; whether these ἀναβαίνοντες were all proselytes like themselves, or native Jews is not stated, the former seems to be the

case. Their purpose is said to be **to worship at the feast**, ἵνα προσκυνήσωσιν ἐν τῇ ἑορτῇ. Solomon's dedication prayer, 1 Kings 8, 41-43, expressly refers to such "strangers": "Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm); when he shall come and pray toward this house; hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name." It has been supposed that these Greeks went up to the feast in order also to form business connections with some of the many Jews congregating at Jerusalem at this time, but there is no mercenary hint in the text. Koegel's surmise is more probable: "Had the news of Lazarus' resurrection reached them? Had the festal entry of Christ drawn their attention to the King of Israel? Had some life-word from the lips of Jesus reached them, as a puff of wind bears the pollen of a plant to distant places? Enough, the magnetic needle turns to the north, and the heart that is of the truth longs for the King of Truth." "Just as the setting sun sends out its most beautiful rays and lights up the circle of the earth afar, so the glory of our Lord Christ standing at the threshold of death sends out its rays, and the desire to see him is roused even in the hearts of Gentiles coming from afar; in the same manner at the dawn, in his childhood, the wise men, as the firstfruits of the Gentiles, were drawn by the light of the wondrous star from far away Persia." Gerhard. Bengel calls their coming "a prelude of the transition of God's kingdom from the Jews to the Gentiles."

V. 21. Why these Greeks placed their request before a disciple and before Philip in particular is not stated. It seems most likely that Jesus was in the court of the men, where Gentiles could not enter. Happening to find Philip passing in or out, whom perhaps they had met in Bethsaida, they send their request by him. Luthardt observes that these Gentiles are brought into personal touch with Christ through the ministration of the congregation gathered from Israel. Respectfully they address Philip. *Θέλομεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἰδεῖν* — significant words! If these Greeks had merely been sightseers we may well conclude that their request would have been disregarded by Christ and not recorded by John; but their hearts long for closer contact with the Savior. “See” — modestly (Bengel).

V. 22. Some commentators describe Philip as timid and diffident, but that seems to be done merely to explain his action here in coming and telling Andrew. The text makes no explanation. Philip and Andrew were from the same town and are repeatedly mentioned together. There was reason for some hesitation on the part of Philip, for Christ had instructed his apostles not to go in the way of the Gentiles (Matth. 10, 5), and had declared concerning himself that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matth. 16, 24). Yet he had heard the petition of the woman of Canaan and had declared that many from the east and the west would come and sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven (Matth. 8, 11). So the two tell Jesus.

V. 23. The answer is made to the disciples and nothing is said about the Greeks. The evangelist is not concerned about them, but makes his chief purpose to report the words of Jesus, for which the request of the Gentiles furnishes the occasion. There is no doubt that Jesus allowed the Greeks to see him at an opportune moment, though Meyer does not think so,

and we have no report of the meeting. Little did Philip and Andrew imagine how this request of a few Gentiles would affect the heart of their Master. — **The hour is come** — often before this we are told, the hour had not yet come. (John 7, 6 and 30; 8, 20, etc. See the author's *His Footsteps*: "Mine Hour," p. 100, etc.) "Over against the hour of man's passionate haste stands the hour of God's calm deliberation. The waves may foam and break upon the rock with all their might, ever immovable the rock rears its head on high," p. 104. "The hour, of which Christ speaks, was indeed an hour of bitterest anguish, yet an hour full of glory, the hour of victory over all the foes of hell, the hour, therefore, that would bring forth years of never-ending blessedness for his disciples," p. 105. (See John 11, 9; 13, 1; 16, 32; 17, 1.) — **That the Son of man should be glorified.** (See the exposition of John 13, 31-35 for Judica Sunday.) In the one word $\delta\omicron\xi\alpha\sigma\theta\eta$ everything is summed up: the Passion as something glorious, the exaltation following it, and the future adoration by the hosts of believers the world over and in heaven. Christ was glorified in the obedience he rendered to the Father even unto the death of the cross, and in the redemption he thus achieved for the fallen world; he was glorified when the Father highly exalted him, giving him a name above every name and seating him at his right hand; he was and is glorified in the work of the Holy Spirit ("he shall glorify me," John 16, 14) as it leads thousands to the feet of Christ the Savior. The view which restricts the glorification to the resurrection and ascension, is too narrow. Jesus sees the magnificent vista of the future opening before him, reaching from that moment onward through the ages to all eternity — and it is one shining path of glory. It is "the Son of man" who is thus glorified, so called as the Messiah (Dan. 7, 13), not merely true man and

connected with our race, but its head, in and through whom we men shall be made what God desires.

The double solemn assurance in v. 24 marks a word of highest import for all time. To Nicodemus the Jew, Jesus speaks of the serpent lifted up in the wilderness; for these Greeks, to whom his word was presently reported, he speaks of the **grain of wheat**, a symbol which is clear to Jew and Gentile alike. With divine mastery Christ pictures the glorification which is about to begin for him. The image chosen perfectly illustrates both the necessity of the cross and the resultant glory. If a grain of wheat be not put into the soil, it will indeed not die, but it will then remain alone, αὐτὸς μόνος μένει, hence producing nothing. So would the Son of man remain alone if he would not stoop to the cross and death. But if the grain fall into the earth and die, though it be consumed its living germ arises and bears abundant fruit. So God's Son incarnate shall die and rise gloriously from the dead, and who will measure the wonders of his own glory and the abundance of the fruit that will follow in the children of God, made such and rendered Christlike by him? "The death of Christ was the death of the most fertile grain of wheat." Augustine. In the petition of these Greeks, Jesus sees the great harvest beginning that will go on and on as the product of the great Grain of Wheat (himself) which fell into the earth and died. The emphasis is not merely on the necessity of Christ's death in fulfillment of his mission, but on the glorification in the abundance of fruit thus resulting, πολὺν καρπὸν φέρει (pres. with fut. sense, as the thought shows). "Christ's passion is the great foundation for mission work, and mission work is the great fruit of his passion." Mayer. Blessed are you if you can truly count yourself among the fruit — and that is for us preachers to apply to our own souls before we proclaim it to our hearers.

V. 25. **Life** = soul, ψυχή. Ὁ φιλῶν = the lover of his soul, who is passionately attached to it, in the lower sense of the word "love"; he loses it, ἀπολλύει, in that very act of loving it. "If you have loved ill you have hated; if you have hated well you have loved." Augustine. The world is full of these evil lovers who love themselves to their own destruction. May this word make of us blessed haters who shall hate themselves to their own eternal salvation. But many will hate themselves bitterly at last, for not having hated themselves properly in this life. — Μισεῖν is here used relatively, as in Luke 14, 26, which is indicated also by the modification "in this world," i. e., who is ready to go contrary to his natural inclinations and desires in his life here on earth, to wound, grieve, deny, crucify, mortify self in repentance and sanctification. Such a man shall win eternal life by the grace of God. Ὁ κόσμος οὗτος as used here is not identical with ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος, "this world age," but as throughout in John's Gospel this term signifies the world as a place, *ein dinglicher Organismus* (Goebel), and the thought of sinfulness, corruption and separation from God may or may not be connected with the term. Comp. John 9, 39; 11, 9; 12, 26; 13, 1; 18, 36; 1 John 4, 17; for this world as wicked, 12, 31; 16, 11. Bengel indeed adds to the word in our passage; "visible, vain, fallen, evil earth — but here the decision is made." But in the text itself this implication does not lie on the surface, it is more remote. Φυλάξει is fut., and some texts have ἀπολέσει to match it; the fut. tense points to what will surely follow or result for him who hates his life in the sense here meant: he shall guard, protect, keep it εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, for life eternal; his soul shall reach and attain that. "Freedom and salvation the half-hearted do not win." Arndt. Thus the disciples of Christ who are the fruit of the Grain of Wheat are like the seed-corn from which they grew, only the two

are not absolutely alike in the picture as here drawn: Christ dying bears much fruit in blessing for others who are made his and saved; the Christian hating his life in this world himself has all the resulting blessedness. The parable of the grain of wheat thus applies strictly only to the Son of man.

V. 26. The emphasis is on the word **me**: "*If me any man serve, me let him follow.*" And he has just described himself. Our Savior thus glorified — yea, him we should serve, our Master beyond compare — and blessed will the service be. But him we must "follow" (ἐμοὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω), if we would truly be his servants, walking in his footsteps, becoming ever more like him. The Son of man has many admirers, but few followers. Likewise many preachers who tell others to follow, but themselves are reluctant and remiss in following. The best service is to follow him. Deacons and deaconesses we are all called to be (ἐάν τις διακονῇ. . . . ὁ διάκονος ὁ ἐμός). And a "deacon" is one who serves for service sake. — **And where I am, there shall also my servant be**, ἔσται, is not a command in the disguise of a promise, as if Christ said, Whether under the cross or in glory my servant must be with me (so Besser). This is a true promise of glorious union with Christ in heaven, as in the previous text, "that where I am, there ye may be also." The present tense εἰμί makes vivid Christ's future exaltation. **Where — there**, he means the place of supreme blessedness. Calov. That is blessed service indeed which leads to the exaltation with the Master whom we serve. "Behold the example of all the patriarchs, with what great constancy they have held out in their woe and affliction, and you will see in them also the fruit of their patience and constancy. Joseph would never have attained to such honor, if at first he had not been plagued, killed and crushed. Therefore, if you are a Christian, let the world be angry at you

and take from you all it can; but do you comfort yourselves by this, the worse they intend and conspire the nearer God is to you and intends the very best; thus the Christians' afflictions and persecutions serve the one purpose that we trust and know God will control everything for the best. When what is ours is condemned and ruined, it will all become better, as was the case with Christ, for when they crucified him they only accomplished this that he became a King eternally." Luther. — The promise is doubled and magnified: **If any man serve me, him will the Father honor.** Unspeakably great shall be the reward of this diaconate or service. "It was something great when Joseph was honored by Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, and Mordecai by Ahasuerus, the Persian prince; but it is something immensely greater for the Blessed and Only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, to honor the servants of Jesus Christ." Gerhard. Who will describe this honor, when we shall sit with Christ in His throne (Rev. 3, 21)? How the honor exceeds the service! Perish the thought of our merit! The reward is here not in accord with our desert, but only in accord with the infinite greatness and mercy of him who delights to bestow it. And here again the glory shines in fullest splendor, the glory of the Son of man enfolding, uplifting into the eternal light of heaven his humble, faulty, unworthy servants and followers. Oh, if the Father so honors the servants of his Son, how will he honor the Son himself after the service he rendered! "Thine is the glory, forever and ever. Amen."

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

There are three things that stand out in this text: 1) the desire and request of the Greeks; 2) the reply of Jesus on the corn of wheat; 3) the addition about us either losing or keeping our life. We may easily use these three points as sermon parts:

The Desire of Certain Greeks to See Jesus

- I. *A holy and significant desire.*
- II. *Fully met in what Jesus said of himself.*
- III. *Bringing the most blessed results when satisfied.*

These parts are reticent, for they all withhold something: 1) Significant in what respect? 2) What did Jesus say, and how did this meet the desire? 3) What is this result? Psychologically it is always better to formulate in a way that leaves questions in the hearer's mind, thus arousing his attention, instead of at once revealing the entire substance of what the preacher intends to offer. Here we may add that it is a psychological mistake to leave the hearer wholly in the dark, or all at sea, as to what is coming in the sermon. It is spurious homiletical wisdom not to formulate parts at all, or to hide any formulation that is made so that the hearer shall not detect it at all or detect it only by special mental effort. Attention is neither secured or held in such a manner. Unless the details of the sermon are exceptional the hearer's thoughts will drift away. And when the sermon is finished the hearer will retain only the most hazy impression of what was said. While arousing a mild curiosity is good, a striking way of actually telling what is to be offered in each part is also good. It is good because it strikes and thus arouses.—Adapting the outline of Achelis we may put the matter in this form:

“Sir, We Would See Jesus!”

- I. *Think of the desire!*
- II. *Weigh the response!*
- III. *Mark the outcome!*

These Greeks found something very attractive and desirable in Jesus to come thus with their request. The words of Jesus concerning himself show us what is indeed most desirable in him. And what he adds concerning us completes the picture of desirability.

**Is Christ Your Heart's Desire,
So That You, Too, Long to See Him?**

- I. *He awakens desire.* These Greeks. Yet many desire him not. Why they pass by the Most Desirable One. They desire him who feel their inner emptiness, loss, danger.

- II. *He meets desire.* He, the heavenly Corn of Wheat, dying (Passion, redemption, etc.), bringing forth much fruit (glorification, salvation for thousands). Wondrous desirability! Yet some decline and spurn it.
- III. *He more than satisfies desire.* Follow and serve him, and you will experience it. By losing your life you will gain it eternally. So many love their lives, and in that very love lose them.

Many preachers will stop with the striking request of the Greeks. A rationalistic minister in Germany preached sermons very fine as to form and delivery, but empty as to Christ. One day he found a slip of paper in his pulpit Bible, with the words, "Sir, we would see Jesus." The thing went to his heart; he himself sought and found Jesus, and then preached him to his hearers. Some time after that he discovered another slip of paper in his Bible; this contained the words, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." (John 20, 20).—But the figure of the corn of wheat will also attract the sermon writer:

The Most Wonderful Corn of Wheat That Ever Died and Brought Forth Fruit

- I. *Christ in his Passion and glorification.*
 II. *Christ in our hearts to follow and serve.*

Koegel, in his graphic way, cutting to the very root of things, says of materialism, this outgrowth of dust and dirt, that it would knock from the hand of our race the faint candle with which, like a poor widow, it is trying to find a lost penny for its needs on the great journey into the beyond; and that is what materialism calls — enlightening the age! About the grave of Christ materialism stations a new set of guards, its omnipotent laws of nature, and in the name of the king of terrors forbids the victory of the King of the Resurrection, and this it calls — science! But one law of nature is enough to upset all the ridiculous postures of materialism — the little grain of wheat that bursts its coffin in the soil and grows up a living, fruitful plant.

CANTATE

John 6, 60-69

The burden of this text is not the great confession of Peter as such, nor an indefinite abundance of important Scripture thoughts that is here set before us, it is the general admonition, that once having come to the glorious Christ *we should evermore abide with him*. So Cantate rounds out the Easter cycle, and so it completes the thought of the Jubilate text, "We would see Jesus": having seen him and believed in him, let us forever be found faithful to him. The note of glory continues in this text as in all those of the Easter cycle: "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?" It is a simpler note here, proclaiming only the glory of the ascension, and so the more fitting for a Sunday near the Ascension festival. Its general import, however, marks it as the last text of the Easter circle.

V. 60. By **many of his disciples** is meant the larger circle of learners attached to Jesus. Among them a severe sifting takes place. Assembled in the synagogue at Capernaum where Jesus delivered his memorable sermon on "The Bread of Life," ἀκούσαντες, when they had heard it (Jesus had finished), they make answer to it: "This is a hard saying"; ὁ λόγος, word, referring to Christ's sermon in general and in particular to its climax, the eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood in order to live forever. By "hard," σκληρός, is meant offensive, objectionable; therefore "who can hear it?" (ἀκούειν, continue to do so) and submit to it? — it is intolerable. It is not that Christ's words were misunderstood, on the contrary, their chief import was understood so well that the

hearts of these men rebelled. Christ describe these disciples who enthusiastically wanted to make him an earthly king after the feeding of the 5,000 and from whom he withdrew. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed," v. 26-27. They would not do this, and when the "meat which endureth unto everlasting life," the flesh and blood of the Son of man, was placed before them, they scorned it. The world is full of men who desire "the meat which perisheth," above all else.

V. 61. Jesus needed no one to inform him; he knew the effect of his words upon men of this stamp. They were offended, they stumbled at his words, and showed it by murmuring. The words of Jesus were indeed blessed truth, calculated to win, satisfy, rejoice the hearts of poor hungry sinners; there was nothing evil, faulty, hurtful, or blameworthy in them. Christ *gave* no offense; these men *took* offense where they should have accepted the saving truth with thanks. Jesus cannot remove the offense, that would be to alter the truth that saves and destroy its saving power; on the contrary, he can only cause these men to stumble the more when he tells them the other necessary parts of the saving truth. — One such part lies close at hand, for it helps to explain what he has just preached, and is involved in his statements on the Bread of Life: **What then if ye should behold the Son of man ascending where he was before?** The protasis stands alone: ἐὰν θεωρῆτε etc., naturally ending with a rising inflection, like a question; the Lord omits the apodosis, or rather leaves it to his hearers to supply: "when then? say it yourself!" Christ

is speaking of his ascension (which, of course, involves his death and resurrection). His "ascending where he was before" plainly indicates who he really was that spoke of our eating his flesh, etc., and how he comes to speak so. By this unfinished sentence Jesus is not raising a new point to increase the offense of the already offended disciples, he is pointing them to the one thing that is able to overcome their doubts and misgivings and to lead them to faith. It will not do to make "the bloody death" of Christ the great stumbling block of the Jews, 1 Cor. 1, 23; Gal. 5, 11; or to find in Christ's ascending where he was before "his dying." The first interpretation is too narrow (see v. 26, 27 and 52), because the entire sermon in the synagoge offended these hearers, the objection to it rising step by step as the sermon proceeded to its climax. The second interpretation puts the emphasis at the wrong place; it is here not on the death, the humiliation, cross, but on the exaltation and glory, for Christ's flesh and blood are full of saving power only because he is the glorious Son of God; and this great truth Jesus wanted his hearers to perceive. It is this truth that lies behind his sermon on the Bread and his demand that every one must eat it to be saved. The general statements regarding the offense of the cross, therefore, do not apply here. "Christ points these people to his exaltation and ascension as an incontrovertible proof, that he is not a mere man, but also true God, and therefore has the right to make life, etc., dependent on his being received by faith." *Stellhorn*. But this, alas, proves to be more than ever contrary to the desires of these earthly-minded men. It is wrong to find the climax of offense, as far as the ascension is concerned, "in the withdrawal of Christ's flesh and blood from the perception of the senses" — with Christ ascended how shall men be able to eat his flesh and drink his blood? This view misses the point

in the unbelief of these offended men, who stumble, first of all, at the spiritual purposes of Christ in offering them instead of earthly food himself as the heavenly food; and secondly, they stumble much more at the divine exaltation of Christ by which this heavenly food is guaranteed to us as heavenly food indeed. He calls himself properly **the Son of man** (compare the exposition of the name in the text for the Second Sunday in Advent), for as such he ascended, and that visibly before the eyes of his disciples. **Where he was before**, not indeed according to his human nature, for it is the *person* that is meant, and before his coming to earth he dwelt with his divine nature in the glory of heaven.

The words of v. 63 must be read in the light of what just precedes, Christ's reference to his exaltation. If he were not the Son of man and could not ascend as he says, and if there were no place where he "was before," then indeed all his utterances in regard to himself and his flesh as the bread of life would be a delusion. Christ does not say "*my* flesh profiteth nothing." This disposes of Zwingli, who made these words the bulwark of his doctrine on the Lord's Supper, triumphantly exclaiming: "Here you have it, you flesh-eaters, the flesh profiteth nothing!" Bugenhagen replied: "If Christ here speaks of *his* flesh, he makes himself a liar, for he has just said, his flesh is the life of the world; and Luther deems it one of the greatest blasphemies for Zwingli and Oekolampad to say, Christ's flesh profits nothing, just as though there were nothing here but simple flesh, with no deity in it." Calov reviews the old interpretations of these words of which there are chiefly two: 1, Those that take the word "spirit" to mean "*the spiritual divine nature*" (to which, of course, in Christ his flesh was joined by the personal union), and the word "flesh" to mean "flesh of a mere man" (which, of course,

Christ's flesh was not). 2, Those who take it to mean "*the spiritual sense*" (namely of Christ's words) as opposed to "the carnal or Capernaïtic sense" — flesh — which profits nothing, whereas the true spiritual sense brings life. Calov rightly follows the first; so does Bengel, who states that Christ here assumes a condition, and that an impossible one, if *he were flesh only*. Meyer does likewise, he takes 63a as a general statement from which the deduction as to Christ's spirit and flesh is then made; "the flesh, in so far as it profits nothing, is *the flesh without the Spirit*; 'the spirit that quickeneth' is the spirit whose *bearer* is the flesh, i. e. the bodily appearance of Christ," which body was given into atoning death for us. Flesh, mere flesh, separate from the divine Spirit, such flesh in man, or even in Christ himself (assuming the impossible, for in Christ it could not be so) profits nothing. It is the Spirit that quickens, i. e. works life, the divine Spirit which was in Christ and made his flesh life-giving, a bearer, a channel of life for us, to be received, of course, by faith alone. The Formula of Concord states: "So, too, the power to quicken is not in the flesh of Christ as in his divine nature, viz. as an essential property." Jacobs, 635, 61. It inheres in the spirit, or divine nature, as its own essential possession, and is given to the human nature by its union to the divine in the person of Christ. The thing, then, for Christ's hearers to understand is, that when he calls upon them to eat his flesh he is not offering them mere dead flesh; the thing that makes his flesh life-giving is the Spirit, his eternal, divine nature as the Son of God, to which we have access by his flesh and which has made his flesh the Bread of Life for us. — **The words**, τὰ ῥήματα = the statements, **that I have spoken unto you**, ἐγὼ (emphatic) λελάληκα, uttered, these words cannot be presumptuous statements, like those of some dreamer or enthusiast. The reference

is to the words of his sermon on the Bread of Life, although the statement is true of all his "words." Ἐγώ = he who is not mere flesh, nor his flesh mere flesh. Because he is divine, therefore all that he has spoken in his sermon on his flesh and blood πνεῦμά ἐστιν καὶ ζωὴ ἐστιν, spiritual, saving power and true life is in them, flowing out to the hearers, to become theirs by faith.

In v. 64 he plainly states the fault in his hearers. It is not a mere failure to understand him, an intellectual shortcoming. "They understand him well enough to see he is not the person for their purposes. They seek earth, and heaven is thrust upon them. They turn away disappointed." *Exp. of Bible*. The fault is one of the heart, unbelief. There is no greater or more fatal fault, for it absolutely shuts the door against all the mercy and help of God for poor sinners. Jesus knew the unbelieving ones from the beginning, when he began to reach out for the hearts of men. Even one of the Twelve was among this number, and Jesus knew it, although Judas did not openly turn away from Christ as yet. "We pray in this petition, that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us, nor entice us into misbelief," etc. *Smaller Catech.* Ἐξ ἀρχῆς, variously interpreted, refers to the beginning when those here spoken of attached themselves to Christ; comp. 2, 24 etc.

V. 65. **For this cause have I said unto you** refers to what Jesus said in v. 44. "Moreover, the declaration that no one can come to Christ except the Father draw him is right and true. But the Father will not do this without means, and has ordained for this purpose his Word and Sacraments as ordinary means and instruments; and it is the will neither of the Father nor of the Son that a man should not hear or should despise the preaching of his Word, and with-

out the Word and Sacraments should expect the drawing of the Father. For the Father draws indeed by the power of his Holy Ghost according to his usual order, by the hearing of his holy, divine Word, as with a net, whereby the elect are delivered from the jaws of the devil. Every poor sinner should therefore repair thereto, hear it attentively, and should not doubt the drawing of the Father. For the Holy Ghost will be with his Word in his power, and thereby work; and this is the drawing of the Father. But the reason that not all who hear it believe, and some are therefore condemned the more deeply, is not that God has not desired their salvation, but it is their own fault, as they have heard the Word in such a manner as not to learn, but only to despise, traduce and disgrace it, and have resisted the Holy Ghost, who through the Word wishes to work in them." *Formula of Concord*, Jacobs, 662, 76-78. "From this it follows, that Jesus does not mean here to excuse unbelief, as if it were due to an inactivity of the Father as the primal cause, but he declares by implication as the hidden cause their not willing, their opposition to the saving will of God." Mayer. "Not the Father, but their belly had drawn them." Brenz. "Judas would have liked nothing better than for Jesus to have allowed himself actually to be made a king by the Jews; that would have been a Messiah for his avarice, for his earthly-mindedness." Besser.

V. 66. A sad, sad fact is here recorded: ἀπῆλθον, they left him, καὶ οὐκέτι μετ' αὐτοῦ περιεπάτου, they were walking indeed, but no longer with him. Not the number, the sincerity counts with Christ. Prove your own heart; there are preachers who in the hour of sifting are found lacking in the sincerity which their confession and profession must lead us to expect. "Right after the day in which the enthusiasm of the people had reached its climax, the work of Jesus

seemed to be ruined in Galilee; it looked like a rich harvest-field over which a hail-storm had swept." Godet. A better illustration is that of a tree after the wind had shaken the branches and scattered the wormy fruit on the ground. People lament over such "losses," but they are no losses; the sifting is a gain, and necessary, lest all the fruit become wormy at last.

In v. 67 the question begins with μή and thus expects a negative answer; Jesus knew his faithful ones. Now was the time for decision and confession. Peter, ever ready to take the lead, makes the confession for all (Judas' failure to dissent marks his hypocrisy). Here is the parting of the ways, Peter and the faithful ones turn to the right. "The Christian Church does as Peter does here: To whom shall we go? what shall we learn or hear? I know nothing but thee, Lord; I know no sermon, but thou hast words of eternal life. This preaching has the right sound and hold, it has marrow in its bones, and delivers from eternal death, sin and all woe." Luther. "Believe" is here put before "know" (8, 32). "Practical conviction may precede or follow discursive insight. The former is the natural result of the direct and overwhelming impression by which the apostles were drawn to Christ, chapter 1. Therefore, however, as experience shows, the one does not exclude the other, but includes it." Meyer. A fuller, deeper knowing always follows the experience of believing. The perfect tense expresses an accomplished fact. — The R. V. is to be preferred: **Holy One of God**, instead of "Christ, the Son of the living God," which is from Matth. 16, 16. At various times, in various ways the apostles confessed their faith in Christ; here they confess him, with great firmness, as the Messiah, sanctified and set apart (ὁ ἅγιος) by God himself as the only Savior, also manifesting himself as such in the absolute holiness of his person.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Those accustomed only to straight analytical preaching, who in addition use only two or three parts may not like the following outline. Yet it gathers effectively all the main thoughts of the text and links them together synthetically in a natural sequence. There being six parts, each will have no more than 2 or 3 brief sub-parts. The outline is practically the sermon:

Constancy,

As Pictured in the Noble Confession of Peter

- I. *It overcomes the temptation of worldly-mindedness.*
- II. *It resists the evil example of the majority.*
- III. *It shows the secret deception of hypocrisy.*
- IV. *It accepts the words of eternal life.*
- VI. *It praises the Holy One of God.*
- V. *It follows the only Savior of men.*

Many preachers will follow Koegel and others in fastening on the question addressed to the Twelve. This is Koegel's treatment:

"Will Ye Also Go Away?"

- I. *A question which sets us free: Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of liberty.*
- II. *A question which awakens our hearts: Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of truth.*
- III. *A question which divides and separates: Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of faithfulness.*

Here is another:

"Will Ye Also Go Away?"

- I. *So many have already gone!*
Consider the number — the cause — the effect upon others.
- II. *But blessed are they that remain!*
There are always some — what makes them remain? — the blessed result.

This question sifted Jesus' followers. So we may describe:

The Great Sifting at Capernaum

- I. *Unavoidable* — the hard saying cannot be softened, i. e., the truth cannot be changed.
- II. *Essential* — faith and unbelief (v. 64) must be separated sooner or later.
- III. *Tragic* — many withdrew from Jesus, and even Judas was inwardly withdrawn.
- IV. *Clarifying* — the disciples' position clear — their faith shining with a clearer confession.

The following is similar and simpler:

The Parting of the Ways at Capernaum

- I. *The Lord himself brought it about.*
- II. *Many choose the wrong course.*
- III. *The few strengthened and confirmed.*

THE PENTECOST CYCLE

(527)

THE PENTECOST CYCLE

Rogate to Trinity Sunday

This cycle begins with Rogate and ends with the Trinity Festival. It resembles the Christmas cycle in having three festival heights in it, Ascension, Pentecost and Trinity. The last indeed is really the finale of the entire festival half of the church year, and in so far reaches beyond the Pentecost cycle. — The inner relation of the six texts comprised in this cycle is not as close and naturally cannot be, as in other cycles. The Pentecost festival dominates the cycle, Rogate, Exaudi and the two Pentecost texts proper are controlled by the great deed of God, the Outpouring of the Spirit. The Ascension takes its place in historical harmony with these texts. These general considerations are carried out in the Eisenach gospels as follows:

Rogate opens the cycle; treating indeed of the special subject of prayer, it is based on the great Pentecost fact, the sending of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of prayer, and by whom we are enabled to pray acceptably to God. The reference to the Spirit is contained in the last verse of the text, and goes far beyond the thought of prayer, for the Holy Ghost is set before us as the fountain and summary of all spiritual gifts of God, the best gift of all, for which we are to pray and by which acceptable prayer is made. In this reference to the Holy Spirit in connection with prayer the text fills its place for this Sunday more perfectly than the old gospel text.

The Ascension text, from Luke, is well chosen, filling its place perfectly in setting Christ's ascension strikingly before us. A second text is offered, John 17, 11-26, in which no direct mention of Christ's

ascension occurs. Christ speaks of the glory given him by the Father and prays for his apostles and all believers who are left in the world from which he has withdrawn his visible presence. We omit a treatment of this text, as it will scarcely be needed.

Exaudi also contains a clear reference to the Holy Spirit in the last verse of the text. It is a fine text for this Sunday between two great festivals, referring as it does to both and thus fitting perfectly in its place. While not really preferable to the old gospel text, it offers a new text entirely acceptable. It shows what the Holy Spirit, whom the ascended Lord sends, will do in and through the believers.

The same thing must be said of the text for Pentecost Sunday. Like the old text it shows us the Comforter, sent by the Father at Christ's prayer, and the blessed character and work of this Comforter. — The text for Pentecost Monday John 15, 9-16, (which may also be used as an evening text where no Monday service is held), like the text in the old series, makes no mention of the Holy Spirit, yet the Spirit's grace is the one requisite for the love, obedience, fruitfulness, and the continuance in the same, which Christ describes as the mark of his true disciples. It thus follows the lines of the Sunday text, deepening and amplifying the thoughts there expressed.

The Matthew text for Trinity Sunday is exceedingly well chosen. It contains first of all the blessed name itself; it accords with the old text with its demand for the new birth by the general command and institution of Baptism; it thus not only links itself to Pentecost, but also forms a fine opening text for the Trinity series. This series, as we shall see, has for its general theme The Kingdom of God, and the Trinity text with the Great Commission and Promise is the portal to the presentation of this kingdom and the things of this kingdom.

Focusing the thoughts thus presented, we view these texts as follows:

1. The blessed duty of prayer and the most blessed gift promised in answer to prayer.
2. The ascending Savior blessing his disciples.
3. The blessed work of the Spirit in making believers fountains of blessing.
4. The Spirit of God, the Comforter and Spirit of truth and love.
5. Our constant dependence upon the Holy Spirit (“*continue* ye in my love,” John 15, 9; “that your fruit should *remain*,” v. 16).
6. The Triune God opening for us the portals of salvation.

ROGATE

Luke 11, 5-13

When in the year 466 as a result of earthquakes in several countries there was great distress, Bishop Claudius Mamertus of Vienna directed that the first three days before the Ascension festival should be used for fasting, praying and processions in the churches and on the fields in order to call upon God to remove the distress. Gradually this custom was introduced in other places, and in 591 prescribed for the whole Christian Church. Thus Rogate Sunday became the special Prayer Sunday of the year, and the week beginning with this Sunday the Week of Prayer. The custom of praying for the prosperity of the fruits of the field, for protection from the loss of the crops, and for favorable weather was added, and was retained by the Lutheran Church after the Reformation, but has now almost entirely disappeared. So much for the history of Rogate. — It is certainly proper to devote one Sunday in the church year to special and detailed instruction on the vital subject of Christian prayer; and this Sunday, preceding Pentecost, is certainly well chosen for the purpose. The Holy Spirit, as the sum of all good and perfect gifts is also the Spirit of prayer, and is himself bestowed upon us, in answer to our prayer. He will not only help us to pray, but also himself be the best answer to our prayer.

V. 5. **And he said unto them.** It is doubtful whether the words following were spoken by Christ in immediate connection with the Lord's Prayer which he gave the disciples in answer to a request on their part. We know that the Lord repeated the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount (Matth. 6, 9-13)

and there did not at once append the promises in regard to prayer (Matth. 7, 7-11). But the connection of thought is plain. Christ teaches his disciples *what* to pray for, and then *how* to pray. The two belong together.

Trench explains our text as a parable, but strictly speaking it is not such. It does not begin in the usual form of a parable, nor narrate facts as the parables do. It is a question in form, and in substance an argumentative illustration, a supposed case from which a powerful argument *a minori ad majus* is drawn, or as Trench puts it, "more accurately, from the worse to the better." Accordingly the features of the illustration are all chosen with this in view: 1) only a friend — whereas God is a Father; 2) midnight, the time that offers the best excuse for refusing a request — with God there is no night, much less midnight; 3) asking for a stranger whom the sleeper does not even know and to whom he is under no obligation whatever — we are all known to God; 4) a slight need, even considering Eastern customs of hospitality, the friend might well be asked to wait for refreshment till morning — our needs so often far greater; 5) a small thing asked for, just a few slight loaves of bread, which were so small that one man might eat three at midnight — whereas our requests to God require far greater gifts for body and soul; 6) a selfish, unfriendly plea for refusing the request — where God is perfect love and kindness and his promises rich beyond our believing. Φίλος is active in sense, one who loves, not passive, one loved; the petitioner here counts on his friend's affection. Τίς ἔξ ὑμῶν ἔξει . . . καὶ πορεύσεται . . . καὶ εἴπη . . . κάκεινος . . . εἴπη, first two future indicatives, then two aorist subjunctives, a puzzle to many grammarians, who usually doubt the reading, as though the future indicative may have been used all through, or call these subjunctives "hard." Robertson helps to

clear up the matter by saying that deliberative questions use either the subj. or the fut. indic., and that we may have the rhetorical use of the futuristic subj. in questions. At any rate after the two future tenses the discourse goes on as if we had *ἐάν* to begin with. This change is the more tolerable, it seems, since the sentence is long drawn out, and instead of ending as it began, in a question, ends with a strong declaration. — “Do not trouble me,” *μή μοι κόπους πάρεχε*, literally: Do not furnish me exertions, weariness, a lot of toil, = “quit troubling me”; the plural is a sort of subjective overstatement. *Ἀναστάς* agrees in case with the subject of *δύναμαι*. On the basis of the illustration so chosen Christ puts the climax.

V. 8 furnishes the point of the illustration, which its various features serve to emphasize: there is not a single consideration in the whole story strong enough to induce the sleeper to hand out the three loaves, but one thing conquers him, the **importunity** of the petitioner who carries on so with his pleading, seeking, and knocking at the closed door that the sleeper, simply to get rid of him and have rest again, gives him his request. Luke 18, 5. The word *ἀναιδία* is stronger than importunity, it is literally *shamelessness*; such it was when he kept up his noisy begging after being refused in so positive a manner. The touch is added that the sleeper even himself gets up to reach out the loaves, and does not send one of his children or servants. In *ὅσων χεῖρει* lies the possibility that perhaps more than three were supplied at last. — Sommer follows out the points of the illustration after the manner of a parable. The friend who is asked is God. The loaves are the benefits we ask of God. The guest at midnight is our need. The asking for bread is our prayer. The plea that the door is shut, etc., is the spiritual doubt arising for us when God does not at once and in the way expected by us hear our prayer. The importunity is

perseverance in prayer. Waiting outside the door is the test of our faith and patience. The rising and giving as many as are needed is the final answer to prayer. — The illustration shows a friend *unwilling* to help; he appears so and really is so. God at times appears so to us also, but he never really is so. See how Christ dealt with the woman of Canaan. She persevered and obtained her request, but not because Christ merely wanted to get rid of her; his heart overflowed with mercy and he delighted in her great faith. Two other examples belong here, Abraham pleading for the two doomed cities — and he obtained every request he made, even going much farther in his requests than he at first intended; and Jacob wrestling with the Angel of the Lord and prevailing. — There is something improvident in the man who has not a loaf in the house when night sets in. He is like so many who might by timely prayer secure God's gifts, but foolishly forget, neglect, or waste their time in mere work and pleasure. Then unexpectedly they are caught by some unforeseen need. To them the words, "Trouble me not; the door is now shut — I cannot rise and give thee," apply with special force. Why do they come so late, when they might have come earlier while the door was open and the friend might easily have granted the favor? — But even such applications strengthen the chief point: Pray and faint not; keep on shamelessly, until you are heard; for you certainly will be heard.

V. 9. Now Jesus makes the application. *Ἀιτεῖτε* = ask humbly. This verb is used of the petition of subordinates, and so fits our prayers unto God; it is never used of Christ praying to the Father, his requests are expressed by the verb *ἔρωτάω*. — *Ζητεῖτε* = seek, search for, with persistence. *Κρούετε* = beat, pound, knock, and keep on with it. Each verb is more intense than the preceding one. Their choice is due to the

foregoing illustration, especially also the last of the three, which is not otherwise used of prayer: the friend in need at first called out at his friend's house, *humbly asking* for bread; receiving no response he *diligently sought* where the sleeper might be lying, and repeated his request; still obtaining no answer he began *knocking* at the door until he aroused the sleeper and finally obtained his request. Note the present tenses of these imperatives; they bid us keep on with our efforts indefinitely if necessary, till we be heard. — A threefold promise is given for faith to build on. It is Christ's own promise, stated in the most positive way: "It shall be given you," etc. This promise, let it be remembered, has never been broken. — The words of this verse have been embodied in the Baptismal Liturgy of our church. See Luther's *Taufbuechlein*, Mueller: *Die symbolischen Buecher*, 770, 13. When the church holds up this promise to the Lord it is abundantly heard.

V. 10 shows that thus it is among men, and on this fact Christ rests his illustration. But there is more here, as is shown by the word "for." Men may fail, but God never fails; therefore ask, etc. It has been said that the lesson in the illustration is not *perseverance*, as is usually supposed, to which Jesus does not refer when he makes his application, but *the certainty of being heard*. But Jesus does bring out the perseverance, in the words "Ask, seek, knock," which plainly teach the "importunity"; and the very certainty of being heard stimulates us to *persevere in prayer*. Augustine states that he who knows no sleep excites us sleepers that we arouse ourselves to prayer. "In this ascending scale of earnestness, an exhortation is implicitly contained not merely to prayer, but to increasing urgency in prayer, even till the suppliant carry away the boon which he requires, and which God is only waiting for the arrival of the proper

moment to bestow." Trench. "*Non dat nisi petenti, ne det non capienti.*" Augustine. So much does God love prayer, that when we begin to pray he hides in order that we may seek him, and locks the door that he may compel us to knock. He not only "listens for our prayer," but waits to be sought and yearns that we may knock, so that at last he may open and give us all the abundance of his grace and gifts. "When then we have knocked once or twice he waits a little. Finally, when we have knocked too much he opens and says: Now what do you want? — Lord, that I may have this or that. — Then he says: Why then, have it! So we must arouse him." Luther.

The argument is still from the less to the greater, from what an earthly father would not do to what the heavenly Father would certainly not do, i. e. give evil gifts. This contrast is increased in the following verse by setting parents who are evil over against the Father who is goodness and perfection itself. Jesus speaks of the common food of the common people, bread, fish, eggs, which parents give to their children to nourish their bodies well. There is a gradation upward, the egg being the richest and costliest of these three foods. In what Christ puts over against this food there is a gradation downward. The stone is useless, the serpent harmful, the scorpion deadly. If no earthly father would so answer the cry of his hungry child, how much less the heavenly Father? "Indeed, beloved, these words were spoken by him who is 'true man,' who knew the human heart and its love. He reminds us of the love of parents, the softest side in man, the love that beats feebly even in the most degraded, whose heart is almost wholly callous in sin. He is asking thee, father-heart, mother-heart: 'Can you hear your child pleading in sore distress without offering it in love what you are able to offer, even if you are only a poor sinner? Does not your eye fill with tears at the cry of

its voice, at sight of its distress? And do you imagine for a moment that God, who is nothing but eternal love, who himself put this wealth of love into you — do you imagine he could let one of his children plead earnestly without helping it? You could suppose he would reward your fervent pleading, your believing, undismayed seeking, your knocking, with cold, merciless replies? You could think he would answer your childlike folded hands, your humble imploring look by hiding himself, locking his heart? Tell me, do you know your God's heart no better than this? This is what the Savior means to tell his disciples." Johann Rump.

V. 13. Stier calls the words "being evil," *πονηροὶ ὑπάρχοντες*, such as do what is evil or wicked, the strongest proof in the Bible for original sin; it is hardly that, but certainly strong. There are enough exceedingly evil parents. In their blind folly they fail to supply the true needs of their children especially in spiritual things, giving them what is utterly useless, a stone, or what is plainly harmful, a serpent, or even what is manifestly poisonous, a scorpion. They think they do enough when they provide only temporal things for their children, letting their souls starve (a stone); they teach them only business success, and so inculcate what is actually harmful (a serpent); they perhaps even lead them to scoff at the church, the Bible, religion, and so give them what is deadly (a scorpion). How utterly unnatural, to say nothing more! And even we who are not like these often err, desiring both for ourselves and our children what is not really good, and even wanting God to grant it. A case in point is found in Monica, the godly mother of wicked Augustine, who dreaded nothing more than her son's going to that city full of temptation, the metropolis Rome. She asked God to prevent it. But God gave her the best gift when it seemed as if he had denied

her prayer. But the fact remains that, evil, misled, blind and foolish as we are, our natural parental love tries to give to our children what we think is good. How much more will the Father in heaven do the same? Having perfect love and wisdom he will give the best possible gift to his children. That gift is his Holy Spirit. To have this gift is to be converted and justified and thus made God's child and heir; to be sanctified and kept in the true faith till the end. What are all other gifts compared with this cardinal gift or fountain of spiritual gifts? Yet few desire it as they should. And how greatly should we who preach the art of prayer to others pray for God's best gift to ourselves, that we may do our precious work with sanctified hearts and lips! All our success depends on the Holy Spirit, without whom we are nothing and can do nothing. May none of us lack the Spirit!

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

This text deals not with the general subject of prayer, but with the certainty of being heard, in fact of being heard in the best possible way. The sum of the text is: You shall receive, in fact receive the very best gift. In setting this forth Jesus uses three short paragraphs: 1) an illustration, v. 5-8; 2) a three-fold assurance, v. 9-10; 3) a comparison, v. 11-13. Of course, the entire text deals with real prayer, not with anything that men may call prayer. It is the prayer of true faith that has this certainty of being answered, and answered in the best possible way. Perhaps it will be good to state this pointedly in the introduction: — Prayer that is utterly in vain with no certainty whatever; and prayer that has the most wonderful certainty one can imagine.

The Wonderful Certainty of True Prayer

- I. *As certain as is the kindness of God.* Way beyond the friendship of a friend (here use the illustration, from the less to the greater).
- II. *As certain as is the truth of God.* The three solemn promises, which God cannot break.
- III. *As certain as is the greatness of God.* If a father gives only good gifts, shall the heavenly Father give any less than the best?

V. 9-10 may be worked in with the two illustrations in our text:

God Cannot Do Less Than Answer Prayer

- I. *Less than a friend who gives what is asked.*
Therefore ask, seek, knock.
- II. *Less than a father who gives the best he has.*
Therefore again ask, seek, knock.

When the text is studied closely and analyzed minutely, a number of blessed things will be found embedded in it. They are like secrets which we all ought to know, and most of us ought to know far better than we do:

The Secrets of Christian Prayer Revealed by the Savior

- I. *The secret of Perseverance* (that we must keep on).
- II. *The secret of Importunity* (that we must grow more and more earnest and intense).
- III. *The secret of Certainty* (that God is bound to hear us).
- IV. *The secret of Blessing* (God gives no useless, harmful, or deadly gifts).
- V. *The secret of the Holy Spirit* (he is the best gift and the sum of all spiritual gifts).

An outline may be built up from the first part of the text, so that the other two parts are used, worked into the elaboration:

The Shameless Friend Who Came at Midnight

- I. *His shamelessness shames us.* Why are we discouraged so soon? Is God not far more friendly than this man's friend? Oh, then let us ask, seek, knock!
- II. *His success assures us.* Shall we get less than this man from his friend? Must not God give us his very best? Is he not our Father? Know then: it shall be given you; you shall find; it shall be opened unto you.

In the same manner we may work up the theme: The Friend who would not Take No as an Answer: 1) His persistence; 2) His success.

ASCENSION

Luke 24, 50-53

The very brevity of this text compels the preacher to concentrate his efforts on the great saving fact here recorded. The Lord's accompanying act of blessing and the worship and joy of the disciples are so intimately connected with the ascension proper that they do not lead away from it. The old text from Mark contains much more than the account of the ascension, thus giving the preacher considerable occasion to wander away from the central fact.

V. 50. The transitional $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ makes Meyer think that Luke in this passage knows nothing of Christ's remaining for forty days after his resurrection and showing himself to the disciples, but that the evangelist describes the ascension as taking place on the day of the resurrection. Since the Scriptures elsewhere are positive as to the 40 days, Meyer supposes that there must have been two traditions concerning the ascension among the first Christians, one that Christ ascended on the day of his resurrection, the other that he ascended 40 days later, and that Luke here follows the first tradition and that he changes to the second in the Acts. Quite a structure to build on the particle $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$! And this in the face of Luke's narrative which tells of the appearance of Christ at Emmaus late Sunday evening, so that if Christ ascended that day, it must have been at night! $\Delta\acute{\epsilon}$ is often placed where something new, different from the preceding, yet not altogether contrary, is added. Luke is not narrating facts immediately connected with each other in point of time, as is indicated by the words "and he said unto them" in v. 44 and 46, which plainly indicate

breaks in the narrative. Luke really says nothing in regard to the time. — V. 49 indicates that it was Jerusalem from which Jesus led the disciples. They went to the Mt. of Olives **until over against Bethany**, and here the ascension took place. The Mt. of Olives, the place where Gethsemane lay, became the place of the ascension; ἕως πρὸς Βηθανίαν = up to the point where the road to Jericho forks and the one part leads to Bethany; πρὸς with the acc. indicates the direction. “What may have moved the hearts of the disciples, especially of Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, when the Lord passed over the brook Kidron with them? Here 43 days earlier they had witnessed his deepest soul-agony, his sorrowfulness even unto death; here they had seen from afar how like a worm he lay in the dust, and his strong crying had reached even their sleep-dulled ears. And the Lord himself, with what thoughts did he come again to this scene of his suffering, moistened with the bloody sweat of his brow when he wrestled with death? And the angel who came to strengthen him, oh how he would now desire with joyful shout to serve him in his ascension!” Besser. The places of our own humiliation and of our exaltation often lie close together. Where all was once darkness (“this is your hour and the power of darkness”) there presently through the grace of God the heavens are opened and the blessings of God shed upon us. — **And he lifted up his hands, and blessed them**, ἐπάρας, having lifted up, εὐλόγησεν, he blessed. The uplifted hands convey the blessing, for they are Christ’s hands. What words the Lord uttered we are not told. But the hands which held the prints of the nails mark the character of the blessing his lips uttered. **Blessed** is more than a wish, it is a *gift* conveyed to the disciples by divine power and grace. They received it into their hearts, as their “worship” and “great joy” help to show. This blessing of Christ

has ever continued with the disciples of the ascended Christ here below.

The greatness of the act set forth in v. 51 in simple words is marked by the circumstantial phrase "and it came to pass." While the Lord's hands were uplifted in blessing he arose from the earth. Blessing and ascending — so he closed his earthly work. **He parted from them**, διέστη ἀπ' αὐτῶν, this time visibly, their eyes following him, Acts 1, 10, until he finally disappeared, a cloud hiding him from their sight. — **And was carried up into heaven**, omitted in some of the codices, yet truly describes what took place; ἀνεφέρετο is the imperf.: "he was being carried," by a continuing motion (not suddenly snatched out of sight). What a majestic deed the ascension was! How it completed and rounded out the earthly career of the Savior! No other mode of departure would have left the impress this left. Now the disciples looked for no more appearances, like those after the resurrection. Now the words of Christ concerning his going to the Father, sending the Comforter, his promises concerning the kingdom and concerning his return at the last day became clear. — The Scriptures abundantly describe the power and significance of Christ's ascension. Philippi draws a distinction that must not be overlooked: "He entered the place of heavenly spirits in order to present himself before them in his glory; but at the same time he entered into the heavenly mode of existence exalted above all earthly limitations. For he ascended not only into heaven, but up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things, Eph. 4, 10." *Glaubenslehre*, IV, 1, 185. "God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." Phil. 2, 9. "Set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places . . . and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church." Eph. 1, 20 and 22. "That the

right hand of God is constantly used as the symbol of the almighty power of God, and consequently that sitting at God's right hand can denote only the participation in divine omnipotence, ought, because self-evident, not to be proved over and over again. Even in the 110th Psalm, where the Messiah is first shown as seated at God's right hand, this is not merely a position of honor, but the divine energy of omnipotence. The Lord makes the enemies of the Messiah seated at his right hand his footstool, and the Messiah seated at the right hand of God is to rule as a victor in the midst of his enemies." Philippi, IV, 1, 186. Thus the right hand of God is everywhere. — **Heaven** is indeed a *place*, where the eternal glory and majesty of God, which itself fills all the universe, dwells in unclouded splendor, and where the angels and blessed dwell with God. Of Christ's ascent to this *place* we read in Acts 1, 9; John 6, 62; Heb. 4, 14; 9, 24; comp. John 14, 1-6, the text for *Misericordias Domini*. Of the *exaltation* included in this ascent we read in Dan. 7, 14; Ps. 110, 1; Matth. 22, 44; Acts 2, 34; Heb. 1, 13; and several places already mentioned. The *saving* power of this exaltation of Christ is brought out in the following passages: Acts 2, 33; Rom. 8, 34; Eph. 2, 6; Heb. 6, 19-20; 9, 24. With the ascension Christ fully entered upon his *kingly* work. His prophetic and high-priestly work he completed on earth and now continues it in heaven; but his kingly work he began on earth, and now executes it fully and most gloriously in heaven. Philippi IV, 2, 344. — The Formula of Concord also refers to the ascension and exaltation of Christ in its articles on the Person of Christ and on the Lord's Supper. "We also believe, teach, and confess that it was not a mere man who, for us, . . . ascended into heaven, and was raised to the majesty and almighty power of God, but a man whose human nature has such a profound, ineffable union and communion

with the Son of God that it is one person with him." Jacobs 518, 13. Among the rejected doctrines is the following: "That, because of his ascension into heaven with his body, Christ is so inclosed and circumscribed in a definite place in heaven that with his body he cannot or will not be truly present with us in the Holy Supper, which is celebrated according to the institution of Christ upon earth, but that he is as remote therefrom as heaven and earth are from one another, as some Sacramentarians" (Calvin and Beza), "have wilfully and wickedly falsified the text (Acts 3, 21): 'Who must occupy heaven,' for the confirmation of their error, and instead thereof have rendered it: 'Who must be received by heaven' or 'in heaven,' or be circumscribed and contained, so that in his human nature he could or would be in no way with us upon earth." Jacobs 623, 119. "But now, since not merely as any other saint he has ascended to heaven, but, as the apostle testifies, 'above all heavens,' and also truly fills all things, and is everywhere present not only as God, but also as man rules from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth; as the prophets predict, and the apostles testify that he everywhere wrought with them and confirmed the word with signs following. Yet this occurred not in an earthly way, but, as Dr. Luther explains, according to the manner of the right hand of God, which is no fixed place in heaven, as the Sacramentarians assert without any ground in Holy Scriptures, but is nothing else than the almighty power of God, which fills heaven and earth, in which Christ is placed according to his humanity, really, i. e., in deed and truth, without confusion and equalizing of the two natures in their essence and essential properties." Jacobs 629, 26, etc. The disciples, as they stood watching the Savior ascend, saw only the beginning of the glorious act; its completion they could not behold with earthly eyes, the entrance into the heavenly portals

as David describes it, Ps. 47, 5-9; 68, 18, when the human nature of Christ was exhibited in the fulness of glory to the blessed spirits of heaven, and when the exercise of everlasting power and majesty was placed into our Savior's hands.

V. 52. The words "worshipped him" are not found in some of the old codices. As for themselves (in contrast with Christ) they worshipped, i. e., adored and honored him with gesture and word as the Son of God, their Savior. Comp. Matth. 28, 9, Easter Sunday. "*Christus est Deus*" is Bengel's significant note. This worship has continued in all Christian hearts, and will continue to all eternity. Acts 1 tells us of the angels standing beside the disciples, and of their announcement of Christ's glorious return. — Christ's visible presence was gone, but there was **great joy** in the hearts of his disciples: mark the word "great." They were not bereaved, they were enriched. Luther explains it: For this he ascended on high that he might be able to work and work more than ever. The words are high and mighty and give great comfort to hearts, that they who believe this grow happy and courageous, and relying upon it say: My Lord Christ is Lord over death, devil, sin, righteousness, body, life, foes and friends — what should cause me to fear?" Indeed their fear was gone; no more they hid behind locked doors in the city of their enemies, but went openly into the Temple courts, and openly blessed God for his marvelous gifts. — Διὰ παντός (χρόνου), "continually," without fear of *the Jewish* authorities. Where human prudence would have dictated departure from Jerusalem, the command of Jesus to await in Jerusalem the promise of the Father held them there, but not with fearful or timid hearts; they were joyful and courageous in the face of their enemies. — **Blessing God**, εὐλογοῦντες, pres. tense, durative, while thus in the Temple. And why they "were speaking well" of

God is not far for us to seek. This day we have all reason to continue with joyful hearts the blessings and praises which they uttered of God.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

First of all our people are entitled to a description of the ascension of our Lord, and that means, not so much a picture of the minor features connected with it, as of the great and glorious act itself. There are sermons for this festival which omit the description; they are inferior to that extent. Secondly our people are entitled to a full account of what this great saving act really means. This is even more necessary. To achieve this second requirement no mere application formula will do, as for instance: Christ ascended — we too shall ascend. Not even if to the second half we add: we too shall ascend *through Christ*. No; as for the other festivals so for this one we must use appropriation: Christ ascended for you and me — believe, receive it, and let all the blessedness of it fill your heart and life! — Yet even so a problem develops, for the text, already so short speaks of the ascension itself only in the briefest terms: "He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." How shall we get the sermon out of these few words? In the first place, these words, though so few, state a tremendous act. They are highly concentrated, and brief only for that reason; they sum up, and the moment we see what they sum up a great wealth appears. In the second place, we are not left to our own devices in unfolding what these few words gather into a concentrated statement, parallel passages furnish us just what lies in these few words. On top of that the text itself adds a few valuable elements, namely the blessing as Christ ascends, and the worship, joy, and waiting of the disciples. — We therefore apply inner analysis to the central fact stated in the text.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Forever Exalted in His Ascension

- I. *He enters heaven.* Here describe the act vividly, yet soberly and truly. According to his human (not divine) nature. Help the hearers realize the tremendousness of the act. Enoch's, Elijah's lifting up, and ours at last, pale beside this act of our Lord.
- II. *He rules as King for ever.* Here describe his power and majesty, exercised now according to his human nature. How vain all opposition, how glorious his dominion.

- III. Render him the worship he deserves. Give him all your faith. Bow before him like the Eleven. Rejoice and wait for his gifts with ever increasing joy.*

Today We Celebrate Anew Our Savior's Ascension

We should split this theme on the word "celebrate" in order to arrive at the parts.

- I. We realize that our Savior is forever exalted.*
- 1) He has entered the glory of heaven.
 - 2) He reigns with everlasting power and majesty.
 - 3) He dispenses all the gifts of salvation.
- II. We open our hearts to receive our Savior's blessings.*
- 1) The blessings: the love of his heart; the atonement as marked by his pierced hands; the protection of those hands; the promises spoken before his ascension.
 - 2) The reception: he on high, we amid sin, suffering, trial, temptation — trusting his love, relying on his atonement, keeping in the shelter of his protection, clinging to his promises.
- III. We worship our Savior with joy and praise.*
- 1) We feel and realize what it means to have such a Savior — joy and worship in the heart. •
 - 2) We show by word and act that we have such a Savior — joy and worship in our assemblies and in our lives generally.

Karl Gerok has a pair of outlines that are interesting. They might be combined and make one rich sermon. If the second is used by itself care must be taken to bring the ascension itself into each part, and not in any way to slight the substance of this great saving act.

Heaven in the Light of Christ's Ascension

- I. The throne-room of God's majesty.*
- II. The treasure-vault of God's blessing.*
- III. The father-house of God's children,*

The Earth in the Light of Christ's Ascension

- I. A garden of heavenly blessing.*
- II. A temple of divine worship.*
- III. A field for pious labor.*
- IV. An anteroom for the upper sanctuary.*

"It is easily said and understood that the Lord ascended to heaven and sits at God's right hand. But this is a dead word and understanding, if it is not grasped with the heart. Therefore, we must let his ascension and sitting be an active and living thing which constantly proceeds, and must not think that he has gone and sits above and lets us rule here; on the contrary, he has ascended in order to work and rule more than ever. For if he had remained on earth, visibly before the people, he could not have wrought so much; for all people could not have been with him to hear him. Therefore he began a way by which he could deal with all and rule all, so that he might preach to all, and all might hear, and he could be with all. When he was on earth, he was far from us; now he is very near to us." Luther.

This is an ancient picture of Christians made for a heathen: "They dwell in this their home, but only as sojourners; they take part in everything as citizens, but bear everything as if strangers; they are in the flesh, but do not live according to the flesh; they dwell on earth, but their conversation is in heaven; they obey the existing laws, but exceed with their lives the demands of the laws; they love all men, and are persecuted by all; they are captured and condemned, yea, they are killed and by this made alive; they are beggarly poor, and make many rich; they are in want of everything, and at the same time have abundance of everything; they are despised, and by being despised are glorified; they are reviled, and at the same time recognized as just." All this could not be without the risen and ascended Lord.

EXAUDI

John 7, 33-39

The feast of tabernacles, John 7, 2, the purpose of which is set forth Ex. 23, 16 and Lev. 23, 43, reminded the Jews of the time they dwelt in tents in passing through the wilderness. It was also a festival of thanksgiving for the fruit harvest. Seven days were devoted to its celebration, from the 15th to the 22nd of Tisri, the seventh month; and the eighth day was a special day of convocation, a solemn assembly, with sacrifices and special solemnity as the last festival day of the year. Lev. 23, 36; Num. 29, 35. On each day, most likely also on the eighth, water was drawn from the Pool of Siloam in a golden jug and poured into two basins adjoining the western side of the altar, and wine into the other, whilst the words of Is. 12, 3, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation," were repeated, in commemoration of the water drawn from the rock in the desert; the choir sang the great Hallel and waved palms during the recitation of the different parts of Ps. 118 used in the service. It was at this feast that Jesus spoke the words of our text. The context shows us that some of the people were favorably inclined to Jesus, but the Pharisees and the Sanhedrim, the more inflamed thereby, planned to arrest him, and sent officers to take him. These officers and some of the members of the Sanhedrim probably stood by while Jesus spoke as follows, addressing them especially.

V. 33. "Therefore," οὖν, refers plainly to the hostile act of the Jewish leaders as manifested by the presence of the officers to take Jesus. The Lord as it were gives them a public answer. It is a terrible word

of warning, yet by implication contains a final call to make use of the short time remaining. The word has an ironical tinge; they wanted to get rid of him as quickly as possible, meaning to resort even to violent arrest, and Jesus tells them, "Yet a little while I am with you." Luther says of these and the following words: "They are terrible words, I do not like to read them. And our best advice is not to think that the Gospel we now have will remain forever. Tell me, after twenty years how it will be? When the present pious, upright preachers are dead others will come who will preach and act as suits the devil. The word cannot abide long, for ingratitude is too great; thus despising it and being satiated will cause it to disappear, for God cannot always look on. When, then, the word is gone you will not be able to refrain, you will desire to be pious and blessed, to have grace and forgiveness of sin and heaven; but it will be in vain. This is the worst of it, when Christ is gone I must seek all this, and fail to find it." Luther's prophecy for Germany was duly fulfilled: Today or tomorrow, it will come to this that Germany is bathed in blood. There did come soon enough the bloody counter-reformation, then the 30 year's war. After a respite under Spener, Francke and others, came the sad days of rationalism — some cultivating literature, others ridiculing religion, and still others exalting their reason as the true enlightenment. These days ended in the oppression of a foreign tyrant.* Have we not warning enough? — Jesus knew the brevity of his hour and here states it to his foes (*χρόνον μικρόν*), as afterwards he stated it to his disciples (*μικρόν*). John 13, 33. — **I go unto him that sent me** is a plain declaration of his Messianic mission, of its completion

*Since these words were written in the 2nd edition the world's war has followed, carrying Germany to the brink of ruin. But do not fail to think of our own land!

and success, and of his return to heaven when the work is done. It refers indeed to his death, but not primarily, as the final act of leaving this world was the ascension. The argument that Jesus did not utter these words, but that the evangelist added them, because the Jews could not but have understood them and would therefore have answered differently, is a supposition which fails to measure properly the blind, wilful, scoffing folly of these haters of Christ. These very words which mark Christ's Messianic claims so plainly served to fan their hatred to a blaze.

V. 34. What is meant by this seeking? It cannot well be a *hostile* seeking, for Christ will be exalted in heaven. Some think it will be a seeking *to obtain help* against the penalties and ills that will come upon them to destroy their nation, but Christ never showed himself in the role of a political or military deliverer. Nor can this be that *repentant* seeking which is always wrought by the Holy Spirit and ends in finding grace and pardon. Jesus himself explains the seeking of the Jews, John 8, 21, "Ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins." With unchanged hearts, *in their unchanged sinful condition* they shall seek him, the Messiah, like Esau sought the blessing, Heb. 12, 17. "The seeking described in our text must in reality be a non-seeking, a pretended and therefore vain seeking, as long as the end of it is: ye shall seek me, and shall not find me." Koegel. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord. And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall not find it. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. They shall swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again." Amos 8, 11-14. "Because

I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear or evil." Prov. 1, 24-33. This is the seeking that shows itself when the day of grace is past. "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation. . . . And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Heb. 3, 15-19. This condition of unbelief is indicated by the words of Jesus, **and where I am, ye cannot come.** The ἐγώ is placed next to the ὑμεῖς to bring out the contrast — in heaven and blessedness *he, they* amid death and damnation.

V. 35. Οὗτος, derisively: this fellow. Μή marks the improbability of their own supposition, the implied answer to the query being negative. Of course, he will not go to the Dispersion, but this very reference to such a possibility brings out the mockery of those who make it. Οἱ Ἕλληνες are the heathen Greeks; ἡ διασπορά τῶν Ἑλλήνων, the Jews among heathen Greeks outside the Holy Land; there were great numbers of these, especially in certain localities. The implication is that Jesus might go to the Jews outside the Holy Land, and

finding himself rejected even by them, descend to teaching the heathen Greeks. One can imagine the sneering ridicule in these words applied to Jesus claiming the position of the Messiah. A fine Messiah descending to such a depth διδάσκειν τοὺς Ἕλληνας! But the blind mockery of these foes of Christ unwittingly spoke prophecy; for Paul followed this very course in his missionary labors, carrying the Gospel to the Jews in heathen lands, and when these rejected it turning to the Gentiles. And even John who wrote this account of the mockery of Christ, put it into the very language of the "Greeks," who came to take the place of the outcast Jews. — **What is this word**, etc. must not be understood as addressed to Jesus, but as part of the mocking questioning the Jews had among themselves. They turn his statement over and over and claim they can make neither head nor tail out of it. It is for this reason also that Jesus pays no further attention to them.

V. 37. Bengel takes **the last day** to be the seventh day, but there was nothing to distinguish the seventh, it not even being a day of convocation, and the sacrifices on it being less numerous. Lev. 23, 36 and Neh. 8, 18 point to the eighth as the *last* and *great* day of the feast, in fact it was customary in later times to speak of an eight-day celebration; comp. Josephus *Ant.* 3, 10. 4. In spite of Zahn's effort to bring forward something "great" for the seventh day and to dissociate the eight from the festival as such, the festival as celebrated and as commonly spoken of consisted of eight days, with the last day very prominent. It is correct, with Besser and others, to ascribe the greatness of the day to the convocation witnessing for the last time the pouring out of the water from Siolam, and to the singing in fullest chorus Psalms 113-118. It was, in fact, the last festive day of the Jewish year, and thus had a peculiar distinction. —

The action of Jesus accords with the greatness of the day, he **stood and cried**, which was unusual for him. Note that two finite verbs are used ἰσθήκει καὶ ἔκραξεν, and not a participle for the former; the action of both is on the same plane: he posted himself — he cried out. This is explained by the great festive multitude, necessitating that Jesus find some place where to stand and speak; also by the importance of the message he had to deliver to all this concourse of people. What Jesus thus did is also in fullest harmony with the symbolic action witnessed by the people, in fact it is the fulfillment of what that action merely pictured. — Ἐάν τις διψᾷ, “if any one shall thirst,” shall be suffering thirst (pres. subj.) implies that there will be such; but τις in this multitude sounds as if there hardly would be many. The latter is sad, the former blessed — and we often find it so still. It is *spiritual* thirst that is meant, a figure of speech constantly recurring in the Scriptures. To refuse to connect the words of Christ which speak of thirst and drinking with the libation poured out at the altar by the priest, because there was no drinking in the ceremony, is to lose sight of the miracle which this ceremony commemorated, the water gushing out of the rock at Meribah to quench *the thirst* of the fainting multitude. Christ is the true Rock of Salvation; his grace and gifts (salvation) are the true waters of life. — Does any person really thirst for salvation? — let him come to Christ and drink. — **Drink** = receive, i. e. by faith. The presence of Christ, the impression of all he had hitherto said and done, and his very call now were the means for producing that thirst which he desired so much in order that he might quench it. These means would draw the heart to come, i. e. turn from every other fountain and promise to this one living fountain and divine promise in Christ. The coming is not our own natural ability, for “I believe that I cannot by my

own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him." Christ draws us, and thus we are led to come. But many refuse to come, persistently resist his saving will and grace, and so are lost.

V. 38. Ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ . . . ποταμοὶ ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας αὐτοῦ ῥεύσουσιν, in construction an anacoluthon, beginning with a nominative, when the sentence goes on with the genitive (αὐτοῦ). "He that believeth on me" = he that has come and quenched his thirst. For him a glorious result shall follow: not only shall he himself be ever after satisfied (so in John 4, 14, "never thirst" — "in him a well of water"), but others shall be refreshed by him: **out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.** The fountain = Christ; drawing or drinking = faith; the vessel receiving the water = the inner man; the water = true life; the flowing out = saving effect upon others. Κοιλία = abdominal cavity with its contents. Because some in our time might feel the expression to be inelegant, we must not change it to "heart," "body," or something else. See the proposal of the American Committee R. V.: "from within him," by which little if anything is gained in this respect. The flowing out is like that of the pitcher or jug in the hands of the priest at the altar. Thus the *mouth* gives utterance to what is in the man. — **Living water** has indeed flowed from the lips of believers. And not only a tiny rivulet here and there, but from each true and active believer ποταμοὶ ὕδατος ζῶντος; this is not the believer's great credit, but rather the credit of the Spirit and Word, which produce such an abundance. Think of the apostles; the hosts of faithful preachers and pastors (among them men like Luther), the godly fathers and mothers who instructed their children in righteousness, and all others who taught, comforted, rebuked, admonished, etc., their fellow men. What

blessed streams of "living water!" Of course, works of faith and love are included, and every manifestation of the Spirit in believers; but nothing is so effective for salvation as the Word. "What is the apostolic word itself through which we believe (John 17, 20), what are the confessions of the church, in harmony with which we believe, what are her hymns, her prayers, her sermons, all the testimonies of her faith and love in saving word and sacred conversation — what are they but *rivers of living water, flowing from the body of the Church?* May they be blessed, these rivers, and all who thirst! May our life in faith refresh itself through them — may it flow out again into this one river, which took its rise at the throne of our exalted Head at Pentecost, and found its well-spring in the apostolic congregation." Besser. — **As the Scripture hath said**, — a general reference, not to one special passage, but to many like the following, Is. 44, 3; 58, 11; Joel 3, 18; Zech. 14, 8; etc. — **This spake he of the Spirit**, is the evangelist's explanation for the fuller instruction of his readers. "His meaning is that the rivers are the Holy Spirit; that they who have the Gospel and have received the Holy Spirit are able to comfort, instruct, teach, warn, yea, profit the whole world and help destroy eternal death and obtain eternal life." Luther here calls the rivers the Spirit, and yet, as we see by what he adds, this is not a close identification; the rivers, strictly speaking, are these beneficial and saving effects which the Holy Spirit shall bring forth through the instrumentality of believers. — The Holy Spirit has descended in all his fulness and power upon Christ at his Baptism. But not until the work of Christ was finished on earth and he returned to the glory he had from the beginning, could the Holy Spirit descend and do his work among and in men, namely glorify Christ, take of his and

give to us. At Pentecost the Spirit did descend and has ever since wondrously wrought in the hearts of believers, making them also his agents for blessing others, even the world over.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Simple analysis finds two parts in this text, Christ's word to the unbelieving Jews, and Christ's Gospel invitation to the Temple crowds. The first is law, judgment, and condemnation, the second is Gospel, promise, and salvation. While the two are opposites in the fullest sense of the word, they nevertheless belong together. In analyzing thus what the text obviously presents we must add the pentecostal coloring in the second portion of the text, namely the strong reference to the Holy Spirit. Note too that in the first part of the text Jesus speaks of going to him that sent him, i. e. to the Father from whom he would then send the Spirit. While this is not yet Pentecost, that festival nevertheless already dominates this *Exaudi* text. — Obviously, then, the preacher may split the text as indicated, his problem being to combine the contents of the two text sections under a theme that properly covers both, i. e. covers them so that the split already indicated may be made. A proceeding like this will result in an analytical outline and sermon. Here is an effort in this direction: **Christ's Call to Those That Thirst:** 1) *Met by scoffing unbelief*; 2) *Received by joyous faith*. For the first part we have actual unbelievers and their shameful scoffing. Using that as an example of unbelief generally we may describe 1) the folly of it; 2) the wickedness of it (these scoffers tried to turn the many who believed, v. 31, away from Jesus and the living water); 3) the terrible judgment awaiting it. For the second part the text presents no actual believers to match the actual unbelievers in the first part. We have only the clause: "If any man thirst," which like the rest of this section counts on some actually thirsting and actually receiving Christ's call; and this is quite enough. So we may speak of 1) how Christ causes this thirst; 2) how he satisfies it; 3) how he makes veritable fountains of those that thirsted. A presentation like this may be greatly improved — this outline is merely suggestive. Of course, simple synthesis may reverse the two parts, and speak first of those who thirst, and secondly of those who are self-satisfied and refuse to let their hearts thirst.

But instead of merely pairing the two parts of the text under a proper theme, giving approximately an equal amount

of space to unbelief and to faith, the preacher may use the richness of the second portion of the text so as to give this much more room in the second. Here are two samples:

Rivers of Living Water

- I. *The world an arid desert.*
- II. *God's Spirit the fount of living water.*
- III. *Every believer a well-spring of life.*

Let Us Seek the Lord With Our Whole Heart

- I. *We want to escape the judgment that fell upon the scoffing Jews.*
- II. *We want to obtain the grace that was granted the heathen Greeks.*
- III. *We want to quench our thirst by faith in Christ's living water.*
- IV. *We want rivers of living water to flow out from us.*

A prominent figure in a text always lifts that text out from other texts of the same general type, individualizes it, and thus beckons to the intelligent homilist. It is a mistake to wash out such figures, or other highly distinctive phrases or statements, by resorting to abstractions and generalizations in outlining and in preaching. We should be highly thankful for every distinctive feature in a text, because each feature may offer us the finest kind of help in our task. We have already used one of the figures in the text, in the outline on "Rivers of Living Water." Allied to it is the figure of thirsting and drinking. Not a few preachers will find it attractive. Take, for instance, Jesus own word:

"If Any Man Thirst, Let Him Come Unto Me and Drink!"

This may be elaborated as follows:

- I. *Many still perish with thirst.*
- II. *The Savior still stands and cries.*
- III. *The Holy Spirit still offers his grace and gifts.*
- IV. *Rivers of living water still flow through the world.*

The theme might also be: Christ's Call at the Feast of Tabernacles: Come unto Me, and Drink! The aim should always be to obtain as much coloring as possible from the terms and phrases peculiar to the text. In outlines of this type v. 33-36 will receive less space than in the plain analytical type.

PENTECOST

John 14, 15-21

Outside the account in Acts 2 which describes the Pentecostal miracle historically and in detail, the Scriptures furnish for the most part only prophetic or doctrinal statements concerning the Holy Spirit's person and work, among the very choicest of which are the utterances of Jesus concerning the Spirit in the 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of John's Gospel (see Luther's *Werke*, Erlangen, Vols. 49 and 50) from which the old gospel pericopes as well as the best of the newer pericopes are taken. The theme of our text is the Holy Spirit. But Luther well says that we are not going to discuss minutely now his divine essence or *substantia*, how the name Comforter is a personal designation implying that he is a separate person. To teach correctly concerning the Holy Spirit is to show (of course, on the basis of all that the Scriptures say concerning his person) that he is called *the Comforter*, that this is his nature, office and attribute (49, 149). Now everybody understands what this word signifies, Comfort, Comforter; nothing to shrink from or to be afraid of, but the very thing a miserable, sorrowful heart desires above all else (49, 144). That is Luther's view of the text, and it must be ours. In a masterly way he combines with his chief theme what else the text contains, love and obedience to the commandments of Christ, the inability of the world to receive the Spirit, the blessed consequence of the Spirit's dwelling in us and possessing our hearts completely. Keeping to the key-note, comfort and Comforter — the whole text and chapter being spoken for the purpose of comforting — Luther reveals the *tenderness* that runs

through our text, which the preacher must not miss. "He ever continues, our dear Lord Christ, with friendly, comforting words, that he may prepare and make them able to console themselves with him amid their affliction, sorrow, and suffering, and to draw courage from him against everything that would assail them" (49, 172). It is the voice of the tender parent: I will not leave you orphans. The text must be so explained and applied as to make the Holy Spirit exceedingly dear to the hearts of God's people, and others must feel how blessed it would be to have all this tenderness and graciousness apply also to themselves.

V. 15. Ἀγαπᾶν, not φιλεῖν, the higher **love** of reason and devotion, not only the lower of mere attachment. See John 21, 15 in the text for Quasimodogeniti. — Keep, τηρήσετε, is more comprehensive than obey; it means to retain and cherish as treasures in the heart, and thus, of course, also to carry out in the actions. The future tense, you **will keep** them — there is no doubt of the fact. — Τὰς ἐντολάς significantly defined by τὰς ἐμάς, those of mine. These are not the admonitions of Christ; ἐντολή is not an admonition, it is a commission, *Aufgabe*, an injunction. Christ is not a second Moses, Luther warns us. "Not for nought does he put these words first, If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments. For he (our dear Lord) saw well enough, that when he would be gone, the trouble would begin in Christendom, especially among the preachers and teachers, that they would not remain one, but would cause divisions and factions among themselves. So he took the entire Moses from his Christians, and leaves us unburdened by the unbearable load of the Law. For it will always be thus: wherever one rules by means of laws (especially in the conscience) there is never an end or limit in commanding or compelling, one law produces a hundred others, and the hundred

become a thousand. Therefore (says he), I lay upon you nothing but this, demand and desire only this one thing, that you *faithfully preach concerning me*, have my Word and Sacrament laid upon you, and keep to *love and unity among yourselves* for my sake, and *suffer with patience* whatever on this account comes upon you. These are the brief commandments that are called *my* commandments; which I lay upon you only as you love me and for my sake do them gladly. For I do not mean to be a Moses to drive and plague you with threats and terrors, but I give you such commandments as you can and will keep without commanding, if you indeed love me. For where that is absent it would be in vain for me to command you many things; for they would remain undone" (49, 131-2). In these words Luther sets forth the heart of the matter.

V. 16. The verb ἐρωτάω, **I will pray**, is used of Christ when he prays the Father = request, as one asks an equal, not a superior. Luther inquires why Christ asks the Father and does not say as before (v. 13), I will do it myself. His answer is that at one time Christ speaks as the Son of God, at another as the Son of man: "For when he says just before, Whatsoever ye shall ask that will I do, it is the same one who now says, I will ask the Father; so that ever this article of faith remains certain and clear, that in this person, Christ, there is not utter deity, nor utter humanity, but both, divine and human nature in one person, undivided" (49, 135). — "Ἄλλον παράκλητον, **another Comforter**, the Paraclete; one called to one's aid; in a court of justice it would be an advocate. Demosthenes used the word for friends of the accused who personally urged the judge in his favor; the word was not restricted to courts of law, but had a considerable range of meaning. It does not occur frequently in literature, but seems to have been freely used in

speech, since even the Jews had it in transliteration both in Hebrew and Aramaic, and Jesus himself must have employed it in this form in the present statement. Zahn. Παράκλητος is a verbal adjective, from the passive παρακεκλησθαι, not from the active παρακαλεῖν, as Zahn urges. This passive sense is lost altogether in our translation **Comforter** (after Luther's translation: *Troester*), which gives the sense of paraclete only in a loose and general way. 1 John 1, 2, παράκλητος πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, speaks of an advocate who conducts our case before God "if any man sin." This idea does not lie in our text; here we have ἄλλον παράκλητον, and must add John 14, 26: ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν; and 15, 26: μαρτυρήσει περὶ ἐμοῦ; also 16, 7 and 14: ἐμὲ δοξάσει κτλ. Instead of conducting our case before God the Holy Spirit is here represented as conducting God's case before us. This helps to explain the ἄλλος, for it was Jesus who revealed God to the disciples, in whom they could see the Father, and who led them to the Father. This work is now to be turned over to the Holy Spirit, so that on the basis of what Jesus had done he might carry it forward and complete it. In this connection it is well to observe what Jul. Koegel adds (*Cremer's Bibl.-Theol. Woerterb.*), that it is the Father who **shall give** the Paraclete, δώσει, fut. on the day of Pentecost, and that this Paraclete shall then **be with you forever**, to all future time, a promise embracing all Christians. We see in ἵνα that this is the Father's purpose in giving the Paraclete. The other thing is that although the world as world "cannot receive" the Spirit of truth, v. 17, still, as he is sent from God, he has a duty as from God, not only to the church, but also to the world, John 16, 7, etc. But we need not limit the activity of this other Paraclete to what he does in the interest of the Father, we may well include that he is to do also what Jesus did for his disciples when visibly with them, stand at

their side, defend them and speak for them when attacked (Matth. 11, 17-20). "ἄλλος here may include also what we see on the part of Jesus in the high-priestly prayer, John 17, comp. Rom. 8, 26-27. Zahn has urged the active meaning of παράκλητος, but he does not give weight enough to the fact that neither παρακαλεῖν nor παράκλησις is used by John. Any active meaning put into the word in later Christian use is easily accounted for by the fact that the work of a paraclete in taking up a person's case necessarily brings comfort and encouragement to that person. Godet's idea, that Jesus may have used Goël (really: avenger; and only in this sense: defender, champion) in our passage, is entirely beside the mark; the thought of "another supporter" in this sense is foreign to the entire situation. Nor can we use any old English etymology of Comforter, such as the Expositor's Greek New Test. offers: *con fortis* — **He shall give** refers to a simple act resulting in a permanent possession. Sometimes people and preachers pray for "a new Pentecost," for instance to inaugurate a revival of religion; such prayers fail to recognize what Christ here states, namely that the Spirit once given at Pentecost is always with us; they also usually imply the idea that the Spirit still comes immediately and miraculously from heaven, separate from the means of grace, which is a serious error, for through these very means he abides with us and works in us. *Pentecost is the great day of God's gift of the Spirit for all time.* — **With you,** μεθ' ὑμῶν = among you, in your midst, accompanying you, associated with you; v. 17 παρ' ὑμῖν = at your side; ἐν ὑμῖν = within you. The latter is the most intimate.

V. 17. The Paraclete is here called τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας, **the Spirit of truth.** "A truthful, certain Spirit, who does not deceive or fail." Luther explains that the devil and falsehood also make men bold,

courageous and certain, but falsely so; in the end they find themselves deceived. Not so the Spirit of truth. But there is more in the words. "Of truth" describes the Spirit's character: he belongs to truth and truth is thus his possession and the object of his activity. The "truth" is that which Christ describes when he says: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall *not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak*; and he will show you things to come. He shall *glorify me*: for he shall *receive of mine*, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." John 16, 13-15. This truth consists in realities, saving realities; and here they are joined to the third person of the Godhead. So shall the truth be with us and in us, through the Spirit of truth, who possesses, bears, imparts, work with and through the truth. — The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth, i. e. remaining what it is, world. "Ye are of your father the devil. . . . He . . . abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him." John 8, 44. Just because Jesus told the Jews the truth they believed him not; if he had told them something else they would no doubt have believed — such were their hearts. So it is with the Spirit of truth. — Christ contrasts the world and his disciples: the world **beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him**; they, however, **know him**, and this because "he abideth with you, and shall be in you." Luther asks: "Whence do they know and possess the Holy Spirit, that he abides with them? Only, as I have said, by this that they remain clinging to Christ by faith, love and prize his Word." Compared with the world they are few in number, and the question may well be asked, How is it that they alone have the Spirit, when there are great men and great multitudes

opposed to them? And not only are the Christians few in number, but, few as they are with whom the Spirit is, they have him in weakness, and things are lowly, so that they themselves may well doubt, for the very reason of their weakness, whether they have the Holy Spirit. The answer is simple: "Therefore you must certainly conclude (if you would be a Christian): I have the Holy Spirit dwelling in me, and I shall and must have him, for I know that my Christ with his blood, Baptism, and Sacrament is holy; likewise the Gospel which I preach with the mouth, hear with the ears, believe with the heart is also holy. If I have this I must say the Holy Spirit is in me." The flesh may be weak and afflict us; thousands of councils, popes and bishops may boast that they have the Spirit — we are to remain confident and joyous. Where the *Word* is and *true faith* in the Word, there the Spirit is, and his fruits will appear. — **Beholdeth** = spiritual beholding, since he comes invisibly in the means of grace and invisibly works on earth in the hearts of men; comp. "but ye behold me" v. 19. "World-love sees not what is invisible." Augustine. **Know** = apprehend. "Just as little as the Jews *knew* the Son of God." Besser. This verb reaches farther than "behold," it signifies to receive into the mind, i. e. in saving knowledge. So the disciples know the Spirit, for he abideth with them, and shall be in them. Since thus they "know" they surely also "behold." Right beholding leads to knowing, and right knowing presupposes and includes right beholding. Meyer remarks that "beholdeth" and "knoweth" are *praesentia absoluta*, and the reference to time is only in the last verb which is future, "shall be in you," i. e. after the day of Pentecost.

In v. 18 we meet the height of tenderness: I will not dismiss you as orphans, ὀρφανούς, deprived of something, robbed, orphaned. In the word **desolate** ("com-

fortless" A. V.) the sad condition of the disciples is described as it would be if Christ forever parted from them. They would be orphans indeed, friendless, destitute, without stay and support for their souls — desolate. — Over against this condition stands the promise: **I come unto you.** The context shows it is that constant coming (present tense) which takes place through the Spirit; not then the transient appearances after the resurrection for forty days, nor the final appearance at the judgment (Zahn), but that blessed, continual, ever repeated coming which we enjoy in the Word and Sacrament and which the Holy Spirit mediates. And this is the sweetest comfort for the Christian as he passes on his pilgrimage through the foreign land of this world. "I will not leave you desolate" must not be read in the sense: "I will not *always* leave you so," which would properly be followed by: "I will come to you *on the last day.*" In v. 3 we have *πάλιν ἔρχομαι* in this sense, but here a coming is meant which will altogether prevent their being "desolate"; they are not to be left so at all.

V. 19. The **little while** ended the next day. **Beholdeth me no more,** for like the Spirit he will be invisible to the world, and the world will not admit and honor his spiritual presence in the Church and in the means of grace. Again a contrast: **but ye behold me,** that is truly, with spiritual eyes, the eyes of faith which see better than the world saw when it had Christ visibly before it. Christ explains: ye behold me **because I live, and ye shall live** (preferable to "ye shall live also"). Christ lives, he comes to us, we have him in his Word and Sacrament, his power, grace, and wisdom touch us constantly — he lives; therefore, and in this spiritual way, we "behold" him. And we live; if we were spiritually dead we could certainly not behold, but now we are alive — the life of faith is in us, and by it we are sensitive to

Christ as he comes to us, is with us, and deals with us — we “behold” him. “Shall live,” ζήσετε, pointed, in the case of the disciples, to the Spirit’s coming and to the life they would live by this Spirit; for us now the “shall live” is present, “live.” Burger states that our living depends on Christ’s living, which takes the thought as it is given in the translations. Luther on the strength of these words addresses death: “Do you know how you devoured the Lord Christ and yet had to yield him up, yea, and he devoured you in turn? So you will have to leave me undevoured, because I abide in him, and live and suffer for his sake; though for this I be driven out of the world and be buried in the ground, let it be so; but for this I will not remain in death, but live with my Lord Christ, as I believe and know that he lives” (49, 178).

V. 20. **In that day** = Pentecost. Zahn would make ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ the day of Christ’s final return, and the knowledge it will bring, the heavenly knowledge in the other world; but the time of ἔρχομαι is decisive for “in that day,” and the following verses, especially also 23b, show very plainly that an experimental knowledge of the divine indwelling in this life is meant. A marvelous thing did take place that day, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples so wondrously — then they knew by their own experience (through the Spirit shed abroad in their hearts) that Christ was in the Father, and they in Christ, and Christ in them. For now Christ’s petition was fulfilled, the Father had poured out the Spirit, the Spirit was upon them and in them. Now they knew that the Savior they had once walked with in humiliation, the Savior they had then seen risen in power from the dead, the Savior they had finally seen lifted up into glory on high was indeed true God, one with the Father, or, as he himself had said, **in my Father**. It was a marvelous experience; nothing else could

have given them such wondrous knowledge. It is not given to us in the same manner nor fulness, for the exceptional features of Pentecost are not repeated for us. To us this knowledge comes by the ordinary channel of the Word by which the Spirit's grace and power work in us; so we know God, and the Son of God our Savior, and by the Holy Spirit in our hearts the oneness of the Father and the Son — **I am in my Father** — for the love, grace, mercy, light, comfort, joy, hope and glory as offered and bestowed by the Father and the Son are one. — **Ye in me**, through the Spirit, cleansed, purified, filled with new life and power. What was thus for the disciples at Pentecost is for us now day by day through the same Spirit and his ordinary working in us. By grace we are lifted up from sin, earth, death, and all evil, and placed in Christ. — **I in you**, united with you inwardly, possessing, ruling, governing, blessing you, heart, mind, faculties, members. This is for us like the other. It is the mystic union, which they alone who have it know. It is the work of the Spirit, who makes a place for Christ in us, changing us inwardly to be his habitation and removing what displeases him.

V. 21. **He that hath**, in the heart; and continues to have (ὁ ἔχων); **keepeth**, cherisheth and doeth, continuing in this (καὶ τηρῶν): **he it is**, emphatic, ἐκεῖνος, **that loveth me**. No other, whatever he may profess and claim, loves him. — But this love shall be rewarded with new measures of love. Both the Father and Christ will love him. This is that added love and favor that comes to all the beloved children of God. It manifests itself in all the benefactions and gifts which this love showers upon us as children of God. God's love ("so loved the world") first calls forth our love; then when it comes and rises in strength through the power of the Spirit, God answers it with renewed love. The future tenses, ἀγαπηθήσεται . . . ἀγαπήσω

. . . ἐμφανίσω, point to the day of Pentecost; they are all present tenses now. — **I will manifest myself unto him.** That is love's way, to show itself most fully to the loved one. But not, as has been suggested, in a special feeling of the nearness of Christ, in a consciousness of power (while perhaps the outer man fades away), in direct impressions of Christ's glory, in glimpses of the other world. All these are so subjective that whatever value we may put upon them they are more or less linked with doubt. Surer, more certain and solid is the manifestation which Christ promises his loved ones. Gerhard describes it when he leaves the entire domain of what is doubtful and returns to the *Word*. "That is a salutary, practical revelation of Jesus Christ, when he implants spiritual motions into the hearts of his believers and lovers: as when they receive a living, believing impression of the divine love from the mystery of the incarnation; when they understand the greatness of their sins from the mystery of the passion, heartily lament them and are assured of their forgiveness; when they draw an earnest longing for heaven from the mystery of eternal life, etc. For thus Christ reveals himself to the soul as the most gracious Savior, as the most lovely Bridegroom, as the most faithful Shepherd, as the most mighty King, as the most wise Teacher, as the most ready Physician; and by such revelation faith, love, hope, patience and all Christian virtues are produced in the hearts of the godly and increased from day to day." This is sound and safe, and full of richest blessings beside.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

There should be no trouble at all to supply for a text and festival like this the story of the Spirit's outpouring, i. e. the historical account in Acts 1. It is the fulfillment of the promises voiced in our text. The sermon on a text like ours, of course, cannot dwell at length on that story, its subject is the

Holy Spirit himself as he is here portrayed. Thus the trend of the sermon must be to make the Holy Spirit known just as fully and intimately as possible to our hearers. Nor should we forget that a festival demands a festive sermon, something higher and more stirring than dry didactic expositions. We would not outline thus: The Gift of the Holy Ghost; 1) The condition under which he is given; 2) The nature of his work; 3) The fruits of his presence. This is too cold, also very common and ordinary. — We like this better:

**Open Your Hearts to Receive Christ's Best Gift This
Pentecostal Day!**

So great, precious, intimate, and beneficent is this Pentecostal Gift that we must look at it from various sides in order to grasp it all.

- I. *The Spirit of truth — to fill you with faith.*
- II. *The Comforter — to fill you with consolation.*
- III. *The Creator of love — to fill you with obedience.*

Christ could send you no better gift. — This outline is built on an inner analysis of the text. This in fact is the way most of the best outlines on our text are constructed. One roams too far from the borders of the text when he outlines: The Spirit's Coming: 1) In Jerusalem; 2) Throughout the ages; 3) His presence now; 4) The purpose of his coming. Part four does not match the other parts. And really there is but one coming, that on Pentecost. — Far better is this:

The Paraclete, the Gift Beyond Compare

Splitting on the auxiliary concept "gift," we have

- I. *The Bestowal:* 1) At Christ's prayer, v. 16; 2) From the Father; 3) When Christ's work was done; 4) Wondrously on Pentecost; 5) To flow on in the means of grace from age to age.
- II. *The Richness:* 1) To be at our side like Jesus; 2) To bring us all saving truth; 3) To bring Christ to us, "I come to you"; 4) To make our heart's the abode of God (*unio mystica*); 5) To put us into the possession and enjoyment of the love of the Father and the Son.

One of the few themes that can be drawn directly from the text is that used by Langsdorff: "**I Will Not Leave You Comfortless: I Will Come to You!**" But his division is not attractive:

I. I come in the Comforter; II. In the Comforter I come. Divisions that lie so close together are not good. Pentecost brings us Christ in a new way, namely by the Spirit of truth, by spiritual indwelling, by continuous manifestation (the latter two by means of the truth or Word). This is the direction for the parts under the theme.

See what all the Spirit does for us: He is our Comforter; he is with us forever; he dwells in us; he is the Spirit of truth; without him we are orphans, having him we are children in our Father's house; he glorifies Christ; he makes us partakers of the Father and the Son. O blessed Spirit of grace!

TRINITY SUNDAY

Matthew 28, 16-20

This text fills its place admirably, both as a text for the festival of the Holy Trinity and as a text matched to the foregoing and following texts. Here, and only here, we find the full name of God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, giving this text a distinction all its own when the Trinity is considered. The Savior himself appears here in his exaltation, manifesting forth his divine glory. The heights to which this text rises (Holy Trinity; omnipotence, eternity, omnipresence of the Savior) are crowned with the thought of our salvation — μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. — As the closing text of the festival half of the church year it thus presents once more in a glorious way what the Triune God has done for our salvation. In majesty the Savior who once came in such lowly form in Bethlehem, who once gave himself in such deep humility as the offering for the world's sins, and who then arose in triumph from the tomb and sent down miraculously from heaven "the promise of the Father," the blessed Comforter, appears before his disciples, and as he utters the sacred name, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, links with it the work that shall proceed through the ages for God's eternal glory. The coming Sundays will tell us chapter by chapter the great story of the Marvelous Kingdom of God, and here at the head of them stands this text comprehending all that shall be said in a few all-embracing, heavenly words. The King himself speaks here, the grace and power of this King show themselves, the power and consummation of his kingdom rise like a glorious dawn upon our mortal vision. Ah, that one might do

justice to this text! But every earnest effort in dependence upon the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost shall be rewarded.

V. 16. Matthew mentions only **the eleven**. But it is very probable that this is the occasion referred to by Paul when the Lord "appeared to above five hundred brethren at once." No good reason appears why Jesus should summon the eleven to meet him on a distant mountain in Galilee, when he had already twice met them and, if they alone were concerned, might just as well have met them again, in Jerusalem or elsewhere. The appearance to the five hundred must be referred to Galilee; for even after the ascension we find only about 120 disciples in Jerusalem. Acts 1, 15. In 1 Cor. 15, 5-8 Paul mentions only the appearance to *apostles*, but includes the appearance to the five hundred, among whom accordingly the apostles must have been. The occasion here is also a notable one, it is especially appointed in advance, and is devoted to the promulgation of the Great Commission for all time. It is certainly proper that this meeting should have been a public one, including not merely the eleven as in former private interviews. At the resurrection the angels, and the Lord himself, point to Galilee, and that not only for the eleven, but also for the women ("he goeth before *you*," Matth. 28, 7), A general gathering of Christ's followers must then have taken place in Galilee. Taking all this together we agree with Nebe, Robinson (*Harmony of the Four Gospels*), and others in supposing that Christ made this appearance a very special occasion, summoning the eleven and perhaps also the five hundred brethren for a most important meeting. Here they came together undisturbed by foes, on some fitting mountain height. Previous to it was the appearance to the seven disciples at the lakeside when Peter was reinstated. The exact day is not known. Nebe con-

cludes from the fact that Peter and his companions had gone back to their fishing labors, and that the command and promise here given have the appearance of finality, that this meeting on the mountain must have been toward the end of the forty day period, shortly before the ascension. The theory of a few that "Galilee" signified a certain part of Mt. Olivet is without foundation. Christ appeared in the land of Galilee. — **The mountain**, the definite article in the Greek designating the mountain as well-known, yet it is nowhere named, and commentators have various conjectures to offer, none with much evidence of being correct. It may have been a mountain where Christ and his followers had been before when he taught and wrought miracles. The gathering on a mountain outwardly marks a noteworthy and important event; for on a mountain Christ preached his great sermon Matth. 5-7, on a mountain he chose the Twelve, on a mountain he showed himself in the glory of the transfiguration. On mountain heights heaven and earth as it were meet, and the glorified Savior here spoke of his power in heaven and on earth. With the vast expanse of the sky above him and the great panorama of earth spread beneath him stands Christ in his exaltation and glory — a striking vision indeed. Concerning the particulars of the "appointment" we know nothing.

V. 17. **When they saw him** = when suddenly he stood before them, coming to them from the invisible world. They had come in smaller or larger groups and waited. Then suddenly "they saw him." — The effect was powerful, **they worshipped him**, as the women had done when he appeared to them on the way to Jerusalem, as Thomas had done when he exclaimed, "My Lord and my God." This worship is the recognition of his deity, the adoration of Christ as the Son of God. Only after the resurrection do we

find it, for of all men the Jews were averse to worshipping a creature, and so the act here recorded is proof of their faith in him as God exalted over all that is created. — **But some doubted.** Various commentators refuse to believe this of any of the eleven, preferring to think of some of the five hundred present, who perhaps saw him for the first time. But Matthew's narrative mentions only the eleven, and the context requires that "some," οἱ δέ, be referred only to those mentioned. But how was it possible? That is hard to say except in a general way. This doubting seems to mar the occasion, but the Scriptures tell the plain truth whether it mars the occasion and offends our ideas of what should have been, or not. "So beautiful, so unfadingly beautiful was his appearance, and yet so mild, so entirely human and brotherly; so almighty and powerful, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Conqueror of death and hell, and yet so entirely the Lamb of God, with the marks of the slaughter upon him. The dim eyes of human flesh could not accommodate themselves at once to the blessed vision of the resurrection and the life." Besser. Who will follow the devious windings of human thought, darkening faith with secret, unfounded, foolish, perverse doubt, even in an hour like this when the glorious Savior stood visibly before the eye. There were considerable differences among the eleven, some hearts very receptive, some slow to apprehend, of little faith, easily discouraged and troubled, unable to let go their old notions. Thus some doubted. How they must have felt ashamed afterwards, like every doubter today when the vapor of doubt has been driven away by the shining sun of truth. Nebe thinks that there were gradations of glory in the different appearances of Christ, each shining with greater glory than the preceding. Not that the glory itself developed and grew in Christ, but that he allowed it to manifest

itself more and more fully to their human sight. The Scriptures say and hint nothing of the kind; it is a human supposition. We lack any description of Christ's appearance on this as well as on other occasions during the forty day period. It is quite possible that this was such, in its strangeness and wonderfulness, as to leave room in the hearts of a few to doubt. Not that they doubted the fact of the Savior's resurrection, as once Thomas did. The context does not point to the resurrection itself, but to this appearance, and the identity of him who here stood before them. Was this Christ indeed, or was it not? But while the doubt thus arose in the minds of some, it did not continue, it soon vanished. All that occurred here shows how the doubt was scattered. The rationalist, Strauss, therefore, attempts a vain thing when he endeavors to use this doubting in proof of a denial of the resurrection itself. The very fact that the disciples were not credulous, but had to have their doubts completely and thoroughly removed, proves beyond a doubt that Christ did arise and that he did appear to his disciples as recorded in the inspired record.

V. 18. "These are the words of a Majesty which must be termed Majesty indeed." Luther. Once the tempter had taken Christ to a high mountain to show him the kingdoms of this world and their glory, in order to induce him to flee the cross in obtaining the kingdom. Now Christ himself shows his disciples the kingdom of this world after the cross had been borne, and points out the conquest his sacrifice and love shall achieve through the Gospel. — Προσελθὼν, **Jesus came to them**, reads as if when Jesus first appeared to these disciples he was not in their midst, but rather a little way in front of them; as they fall down in worship he moves forward toward them. — **All authority**, πᾶσα ἐξουσία (not δύναμις) = the active power, the full ability

to do as one wills. Two domains are mentioned, ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς, **in heaven and on earth.** All authority in each. Nothing more comprehensive can be conceived. Who can measure or fathom this utterance of Christ? The kingly authority of Christ embraces heaven, all that lives and has its being there, the angels and archangels, powers, principalities, might, dominion, thrones, and the saints in glory. Not less the evil spirit world whose prince is conquered and despoiled and whose hosts lie in abject submission beneath the Savior's feet. All the powers of heaven are in his hand to do his bidding and will without question or pause. This the disciples are to realize as the Savior sends them forth. Never had a human army such resources behind it. It is the same with earth, its inhabitants, both friend and foe, and all the powers that are in the earth whether of spirit or nature. "The means of transportation wing the passage of his ambassadors, commerce paves the way for the work of missions, the science of language furnishes new tongues for the preaching of the Gospel, the spread of culture helps to break down the bulwarks of heathendom." Nebe. Every foe, however unwilling, must yield his tribute to the kingdom, for Christ reigns supreme. — **Hath been given.** The aorist ἐδόθη narrates a fact that has taken place. "For to quicken, to have all judgment and power in heaven and on earth, to have all things in his hands, to have all things in subjection beneath his feet, to cleanse from sin, etc., are not created gifts, but divine, infinite properties, which, nevertheless, according to the declaration of Scripture are given and communicated to the man Christ (John 5, 27; 6, 39; Matth. 28, 18; Dan. 7, 14; John 3, 35; 13, 3; Matth. 11, 27; Eph. 1, 22; Heb. 2, 8; 1 Cor. 15, 27; John 1, 3)." The remark is added that this communication is to be understood, not as a phrase or mode of speaking, i. e. only

in words with respect to the person, and only according to the divine nature, but according to the assumed human nature. Jacobs, 634, 55-56. "Therefore we hold and teach, with the ancient orthodox Church, as it explained this doctrine from the Scriptures, that the human nature in Christ has received this majesty according to the manner of the personal union, viz. because the entire fulness of the divinity dwells in Christ, not as in other holy men or angels, but bodily, as in its own body, so that with all its majesty, power, glory and efficacy in the assumed human nature, voluntarily when and as he wills, it shines forth, and in, with, and through the same manifests, exercises, and executes its divine power, glory and efficacy, as the soul does in the body and fire in glowing iron. For by this illustration, as is also mentioned above, the entire ancient church explained this doctrine. At the time of the humiliation this majesty was concealed and withheld; but now since the form of a servant has been laid aside, it fully, powerfully and publicly is exercised in heaven and on earth before all saints, and in the life to come we will behold this his glory face to face (John 17, 24). Therefore, in Christ there is and remains only one divine omnipotence, power, majesty and glory, which is peculiar alone to the divine nature; but it shines, manifests and exercises itself fully, yet voluntarily, in, with, and through the assumed, exalted human nature in Christ. Just as in glowing iron there are not two kinds of power to shine and burn, but the power to shine and to burn is a property of the fire; yet because the fire is united with the iron it manifests and exercises this its power to shine and to burn in, with and through the glowing iron, so that the glowing iron has thence from this union the power to shine and to burn without conversion of the essence and of the natural properties of fire and iron." Jacobs, 636, 64-66. Phil. 2, 9;

“God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name,” etc.

V. 19. The Great Commission is referred to, besides our text, in Mark 16, 15; Luke 24, 46-48; John 20, 21; Acts 1, 8. — **Therefore**, οὖν, has a peculiar force here; it draws a conclusion from the gift of all authority bestowed upon Christ; it puts all this power and authority behind the command to evangelize the world. This οὖν shows how what otherwise would be absolutely impossible, now becomes gloriously possible, yea, an assured reality. — Πορευθέντες = “having gone (forth).” This was certainly something new. Hitherto men were welcomed when *they* came to Israel, the people of God, now the people of God are to go to men everywhere. Christ does not command: Go! but links the going to the command: Having gone make disciples! as the regular and natural way of carrying the command into execution. And what going there has been since! Who will count up the miles traveled by the messengers of Jesus? — Μαθητεύσατε = **make disciples of** (in this sense only in N. T. Greek). The word does not express or hint *how* this is to be done; in itself it designates only such an activity as will result in disciples for Christ. It connotes results, not methods and ways. The translation “teach” is therefore unfortunate, and misleading for those who cannot examine the original. This fact should be made plain to our people, even aside from the Baptist argument based on this faulty translation. — **All nations**, τὰ ἔθνη. Note the universality, and in it the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the coming kingdom. Τὰ ἔθνη — one wonders how it sounded in the Jewish ears of the disciples; one thing is certain, God had to give them much additional light and leading to make them go out to “all nations.” “It was not a strange world into which Christ sent his servants, but into the world the Father had laid at his feet.” Besser.

What diversity among the nations of the earth — race, color, location, climate, traits, achievements; yet they are all embraced by this command, for all are sinners, all have souls, all need and are capable of salvation through the grace of God. Here Christ did not overshoot the mark; the nations reached by the Gospel today prove it. A tremendous task — “disciple all nations!” Who would not have recoiled from it — had not Christ first declared his omnipotence in heaven and on earth (“go ye *therefore*”).

The imperative, “make disciples of,” is followed by a present participle, **baptizing**. βαπτίζω, as all lexicographers agree, has a variety of meanings, beginning with dip, immerse, and including especially to wash, lave, cleanse, etc. That the mere etymological meaning cannot be urged for the word as in common use in the New Test. is ably shown by Krauth as quoted in connection with Matthew 3, 1-11 for the Third Sunday in Advent. In estimating the value of any *historical* evidence from church history we dare not overlook the original *Biblical* evidence furnished us in the account of the *Baptism* of the three thousand, the jailor at Philippi, and others, which is decisive on the original mode of Baptism as compared with any later evidence which may be adduced. As regards the three thousand baptized at Pentecost it is proper to conclude that these, having been baptized in some way other than by immersion, as also the five thousand men (plus a corresponding number of women and children) soon added to them in Jerusalem, the practice of baptizing in this other way must have gained the most powerful impetus from the very start, not only because of the large number thus baptized, but also because this was the beginning of the great work in the world under the direct authority of the apostles themselves, thus once for all establishing a custom by its mere example. Baptism in some other way than

by immersion, therefore, goes back to the very day of Pentecost, and, to say the very least, must at once have been recognized and practiced as an entirely proper mode of administering the sacrament. — A fine and thorough explanation of Luther's position is found in Krauth, *Conservative Reformation*, p. 519 etc. On the Baptism of John compare the Third Sunday in Advent, Matth. 3, 6; on Christ baptized by John, Epiphany, Matth. 3, 15. — It is correct to say that Baptism as a rite was not entirely new to the disciples, who had not only themselves been baptized by John the Baptist, but had themselves administered Baptism at Christ's order (John 3, 22; 4, 2); Philippi calls it "*relatively new*," *Glaubenslehre* v. 2, 212. But Meyer goes too far when he claims that Baptism as a Christian Sacrament had already been instituted and was *not* instituted on this Galilean mountain. Practically, in that case, we would know nothing of the real institution of Baptism. But all former Baptisms were in the nature of preparations for the sacrament now instituted. They were therefore limited in scope, being applied to the chosen people as a preparation for Christ, and lacked that full revelation contained in the name Father, Son, and Holy Ghost and in the promise of salvation, Mark 16, 16. The sacrament here is *a means of grace for all time*; by it men become disciples of Christ (are "saved"). Baptism is accordingly commanded for all nations. — **Into the name** (R. V.) is really a wrong translation; in English it must be "*in the name*," and the phrase expresses what Baptism really is, an act placing us in union and communion with the revelation (name) by which the Triune God draws nigh to us. Nebe assails the formula used in our church, "*in the name*," and asserts that it must be "*into*," since the sense is different. Long ago Gerhard has disposed of this objection by saying: "Both formulas are found in the

Scriptures, the former in Matthew 28, 19; 1 Cor. 1, 13, and the latter in Acts 2, 38; 10, 48. But more than this must be said, as we have shown in discussing ἐν and εἰς in the text for Epiphany, Matth. 3, 13-17. In the Greek of this era εἰς has begun to take the place of ἐν in static verbs and even in verbs of being. Robertson's *Grammar*, p. 592 (than which there is nothing better to date), says without qualification: "In Matthew 28, 19, βαπτίζοντες εἰς τὸ ὄνομα, and Rom. 6, 3 etc., εἰς Χριστόν and εἰς τὸν θάνατον, the notion of sphere is the true one." He holds the same as probable for Acts 2, 38: βαπτισθήτω εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν. It is simply a mistake to build upon εἰς as "into," either in the exegesis of this passage, or in preaching upon it. Our old liturgical formula "in the name" was more correct than we knew these many years. Not only on these two prepositions, but likewise on all sorts of other uses and construction, the late discoveries in the ostraca and papyri that were found in such great quantities have shed a wonderful new light, abolishing old suppositions and grammatical explanations that were merely invented by the old learning to dispose of seeming difficulties. Today we are certain on these points, and no longer suppose or invent.

Of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. For Trinity Sunday our congregations should be reminded of the great Confessions of the church which declare its faith in this name and which have grown out of this passage of Holy Writ and others that speak of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Creed of Athanasius (this creed is to be used in Lutheran churches on Trinity Sunday in place of the Apostles' Creed, in the main service — which should not be overlooked); also the Augsburg Confession, agreeing to these general creeds in the words "and that yet there be three persons of the same essence and power, who

are co-eternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And they use the name person in that signification in which the ecclesiastical writers have used it in this cause, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which properly subsisteth"; the Apology repeating this doctrine and adding: "This article we have always taught and defended, and we believe that it has, in Holy Scripture, sure and firm testimonies that cannot be overthrown. And we constantly affirm that those thinking otherwise are outside of the Church of Christ, and are idolaters, and insult God"; finally the Smalcald Articles: "The Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in one divine essence and nature, are one God, who has created heaven and earth," and the following paragraphs. See also Luther's Catechisms. By these Confessions our church sets its face against Unitarianism and every explicit or implicit denial of the Holy Trinity, or of the deity of Christ (John 5, 23), or of the personality of the Holy Ghost (John 15, 26). Any religious practice such as worship, prayer, oath, brotherhood and brotherly obligations in which Jews, Mohammedans, unbelievers and Christians attempt to unite, as in Masonry and other lodge associations, in which this true name of God is and must be omitted and other names are substituted, are to be utterly condemned as subversive of the very fundamentals of the Christian faith. — The Holy Trinity may be pictured to the human mind by a triangle of equal sides surrounding an open eye. The eye tells of the Unity, the three lines of the triangle of the three persons in the one Essence. A Laplander once denied that in the one Essence there could be three persons, whereupon a missionary endeavored to help him by the following visible demonstration: into a basin he first poured water, then laid a handful of snow into it, finally a piece of ice. He now asked the Laplander

whether he could distinguish three things. Receiving an affirmative reply he heated the basin and its contents, and when the snow and the ice were melted he pointed to the water with the words, "Behold, there is but one essence." However, it must constantly be remembered that we can form only the very faintest *illustrations* of the Trinity, and when it comes to *analogies*, none at all; for all analogies that are offered lack the one essential point here needed: that there can be in one and the same identical essence three persons, and yet in each person this entire undivided essence. Analogies of the Trinity ought all to be discarded. — God's revelation of himself as the Triune God is bound up with the things pertaining to our salvation. This is the case throughout Scripture and also in the passage under consideration. Rohnert writes: "By Baptism God gives himself to us; the Father becomes our Father and adopts us as his children (Gal. 3, 26-27; John 1, 12-13; 1 John 3, 1); the Son becomes our Redeemer, for we are baptized in his death and cleansed by his blood to be his own (Eph. 5, 26) and have put on Christ (Gal. 3, 27; 1 Cor. 12, 12-13), so that his righteousness is our glorious dress (Matth. 22, 11; Is. 61, 10) and we are members of his body (Eph. 5, 30; 1 Cor. 12, 13; John 15, 4); the Holy Ghost becomes our comforter and the earnest of our inheritance (Eph. 1, 14; 2 Cor. 11, 22), we become his temple in which together with the Father and the Son he dwells (1 Cor. 3, 10). In this way we assume *a new relation to God* by means of this sacrament of regeneration, our heart and spirit being renewed and pursuing a new direction through the joint operation of the three divine persons." — In administering the sacrament there is every reason for retaining the full name of God as Christ uttered it, and one cannot conceive of a good reason for changing it. Christ's solemn mention of the Name in its fulness,

while evidently not a command always to repeat it in the same way, is nevertheless a requirement that the Name and all it stands for be present in the baptismal act. While one might not insist absolutely that Baptisms for instance in the name of Jesus Christ, in a Trinitarian church, are invalid, yet Gerhard is correct: "It is safest to adhere to Christ's words and not to use a form of words different from the one he prescribed; for he certainly had his reasons for wanting the three persons explicitly mentioned in Baptism, and by no means the least of these reasons was this that each and every person acts in this sacrament and dispenses his blessings. The Father receives the baptized person as his child, the Son as his brother and disciple, the Holy Spirit as his temple and habitation." We must say even more. The thing is like a signature to a note or document. Even a slight change renders the signature doubtful, and may invalidate the document. And let no man tamper with God's own signature.

No "and" connects v. 20 with the foregoing. The sense then is that Baptism makes men disciples of Christ, so that these now are to be taught. Meyer concludes from this that the Lord did not think of children, and that therefore the word "all nations" must not be referred in any way to children; but the very reverse is the proper conclusion as the practice of the Church generally shows when children are baptized in infancy, and thus having been made disciples are afterwards taught, while Philip first taught the eunuch before baptizing him, and the Church proceeds in the same way with adults today. — The teaching is to include all that Christ **commanded**. Peter speaks of "the way of righteousness" as "the holy commandment delivered unto them." 2 Pet. 2, 21; 3, 2. It is the entire way of salvation. John states its essential part: "And this is his commandment, That we should

believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." 1 John 3, 23; comp. John 6, 29; 1 John 3, 11; the previous text. The substance of this teaching is such that it requires more than mere mental mastery; "teaching them **to observe**, τηρεῖν, keep, guard, namely by obeying. A living reception into the heart is meant, an inner assimilation in faith, moulding the character and life. No limit of duration is set for this teaching, it is a life-work.—**Lo** is exclamatory, to rivet the attention upon the great promise. The "I" is placed first—let their eyes and hearts (and ours also!) remain fixed on him.—**Always**, really "all the days," limited only by **the end of the world**, when we shall no longer walk by faith, but forever by sight. Besides the explicit promise that Christ is with his disciples always, there is here the implied promise and assurance that there will be disciples "even unto the end of the world." The Church shall never be destroyed. Ps. 46, 5-6. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early." Did the disciples shrink from the great task Christ had set them? Here he answers every fear, doubt, discouragement, weakness: I am with you, I am not separated from you; you are not alone to work with unaided strength; my might and power shall make you succeed. "These testimonies we do not understand, as though with us in the Christian Church and congregation only the divinity of Christ were present, and such presence in no way whatever pertained to Christ according to his humanity; for in like manner Peter, Paul and all the saints in heaven would also be with us on earth, since divinity, which is everywhere present, dwells in them. This the Holy Scriptures testify only of Christ, and of no other man

besides. But we hold that by these words (the passages of Scripture above) the majesty of the man Christ is declared, which Christ has received, according to his humanity, at the right hand of the majesty and power of God, viz. that he also, according to his assumed human nature and with the same, can be and is present where he will, and especially that in his Church and congregation on earth, as Mediator, Head, King and High Priest, he is not half present or there is only the half present, but the entire person of Christ is present, to which two natures belong, the divine and the human; not only according to this divinity, but also according to and with his assumed human nature, by which he is our brother and we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. For the certain assurance and confirmation of this he has instituted his Holy Supper, that also according to our nature, by which he has flesh and blood, he will be with us, and in us dwell, work and be efficacious." Jacobs, 639, 78-79.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The Festival indicates how the text chosen for it is to be utilized; we are to lay emphasis on the Holy Trinity, making Father, Son, and Holy Ghost the pivot of the sermon. In doing this we are aided by the fact that the text composes a unit, the little narrative is just one piece. So there is nothing to deflect us from the great central point embodied in the Divine Name.— Now one may start right here with a theme like this:

Our Faith in the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and speak on the grounds, the contents, and the blessings of this faith. That would be simple and matter-of-fact.— Again the preacher, moved by the extent of the denial of the true God, may this day send out a ringing call:

Stand by Your Confession of the Triune God!

- I. *There is no other God.*
- II. *There is no Christianity without him.*
- III. *There is no salvation apart from him.*

Part one will touch on idolatry, in heathen and in Christian lands, notably the false god of lodgism; and will then bring out strongly the reality of the true God, the incomprehensibility of his Being, his infinite greatness, etc. Part two will turn on Baptism and the Word ("teaching them" etc.), and thus the one faith which alone makes a Christian; and will expose the fake Christianity so prevalent today. Part three will conclude by showing that all efforts to find salvation apart from the Trinity are absolutely vain; and that there is the promise of salvation only in the Trinity. A sermon like this ought to clarify and strengthen, and mightily stir the true faith in our hearers' hearts.

A closer analysis of the contents of our text, all of course with reference to the Trinity, may result in a sermon of this type:

**The Triune God Opening the Doors of Salvation Through
Jesus Christ to All the World.**

- I. When the Savior's great work was done.*
- II. By appointing special means.*
- III. By sending the apostles to all nations.*
- IV. By receiving sinners into the communion of the Triune God.*
- V. By giving the promise of Christ's saving presence for all time.*

If this could be made less didactic, with a little more of dramatic force added, it would be excellent.

Our text is often used for Mission Festivals, so we add the following. O. Pank has this:

Christ's Regal Words of Majesty

- I. The regal announcement: ALL power is given unto me.*
- II. The regal command: Teach ALL nations.*
- III. The regal assurance: I am with you always.—ALL the days.*

We add another:

The Greatest Work in the World

- I. It has the greatest Founder.*
- II. It has the greatest extent.*
- III. It operates with the greatest means.*
- IV. It produces the greatest result.*

THE TRINITY CYCLE

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THE TRINITY CYCLE

The First Sunday After Trinity to the Twenty-Seventh Sunday After Trinity

This is the grandest cycle in the Eisenach gospel series. All the other cycles are briefer and bring only a few texts under one great head, but in this cycle no less than twenty-seven are combined to unfold before us one grand theme. The usual view of the Trinity section of the church year, as distinguished from the festival half, is that, while the latter centers about the Lord, the former circles about the Church. The old texts in a general way treat thus of the beginning, the development, and the completion of Christian faith, in three sub-cycles. Our Trinity texts keep to this great idea, but individualize it more than the old texts and carry it out far more distinctly and connectedly. Once the golden thread is found in these twenty-seven texts there is comparatively little difficulty in following it step by step through all the long line of texts to the very end. Our whole cycle is like a great continued story, with one chapter ever carrying forward the narrative, until the glorious end is reached. This connection of the texts as one great whole, makes them so attractive to the preacher and to the hearer. In all the different lines of texts the author has handled this Trinity cycle in the Eisenach gospel selections is among the very finest he has found.

The great subject of this whole cycle is found to be **The Kingdom of Heaven**, or The Things Pertaining to the Kingdom of Heaven. In this magnificent and comprehensive theme we have inseparably woven together the objective and the subjective: the Kingdom as a great reality, and our connection with this

Kingdom from the very beginning of that connection to the end. Every text fits this theme and is at once a portion of it and receives added light and beauty from the theme.

We may say that at the head of the whole cycle stands the text for Trinity Sunday, *The Triune God opening the portals of the Kingdom for all the world*. This text, however, is properly drawn into the Pentecostal cycle, or rather into the whole first half of the church year, as the great closing note of that festival half. Yet it points in both directions, forward as well as backward, and thus admirably fits its place. There is no break as we pass from Trinity Sunday into the after-Trinity texts, there is a development and progress.

It will probably be best if we at once group the texts of the cycle into sub-cycles and thus show the main outlines of the development of the Trinity theme. The first text, the one for the First Sunday after Trinity, is a peculiar one and stands apart. It takes up the thought of the Kingdom and tells us that this is a marvelous, a unique Kingdom, unlike any other we have ever heard of. It does this by showing us the *power of the Kingdom*. There is the wonderful mustard seed, there is the silent and pervasive leaven. A text of this kind is admirably suited to strike the first great chord in the symphony on the Kingdom. Now follow five sub-cycles, developing the theme in detail: This marvelous Kingdom of heaven is set before us as follows:

- 1) The sinner and the Kingdom.
- 2) The life in the Kingdom.
- 3) The characteristics of the Kingdom.
- 4) The requirements of the Kingdom.
- 5) The consummation of the Kingdom.

The first sub-cycle embraces five texts, the Second Sunday after Trinity to the Seventh. The first two texts are a pair, showing this is a Kingdom for sinners: 1) *It is intended for sinners* — for Christ calls Matthew and eats and drinks with publicans and sinners. 2) We see: *How sinners get into this Kingdom* — in the example of the prodigal son (conversion — justification). The last three texts are a trio, and in a way belong together, for they show *the new relation which the sinner assumes when he gets into the Kingdom*: 3) a new relation *to the world* — now he is the salt of the earth and the light of the world; 4) a new relation *to Christ* — who now to him is indeed “the Christ of God”; 5) a new relation *to the Father* through Christ — not a disobedient, self-righteous, but an obedient, justified son (text: the parable of the two sons).

The next sub-cycle carries the thought of the Kingdom developed thus far a step higher. We now examine more closely *the Life in the Kingdom*, and this in four texts. Our first text tells us of seed growing mysteriously, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear — 1) *the mysterious birth and growth of the life in the Kingdom*. The second text brings us Christ’s word on who is his mother, brethren, and sisters, and here we have — 2) *the blessed family relation produced by the life in the Kingdom*. The third text is the parable of the treasure and the pearl — 3) *the priceless treasure we have in the life in the Kingdom*. The fourth and last text of this sub-cycle tells of Jerusalem scorning the mercy and the prophets of God — 4) *the terrible danger threatening our life in the Kingdom*.

The third sub-cycle is made to embrace eight texts, from the Eleventh to the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity. Here we have the *Characteristics*, or the

Characteristic Marks of the Kingdom — a beautiful and blessed line of texts. It opens with Christ and the sinful woman in Simon's house; this evidently denotes 1) *Love*. Then comes Christ's word: If the Son make you free — 2) *Liberty*. Third the widow's mite — 3) *Sacrifice*. This is followed by the healing at Bethesda: "Wilt thou be made whole?" — 4) *Soundness*; spiritual health. Then the sad story of Lazarus' sickness — 5) *Affliction*. Like an answer to it comes the word of Jesus: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden!" — 6) *Consolation*. The next text, plucking ears on the Sabbath and Christ's reply to the objecting Pharisees — 7) *Sabbath-rest; freedom from ceremonialism*. And finally, the rich young ruler, and Christ's word on the danger of riches — 8) *Freedom from mammonism*.

To these marks of the Kingdom and the life in the Kingdom is added a line of texts which we sum up under the heading: *The Requirements of the Kingdom* — The Nineteenth to the Twenty-third after Trinity. These are all spiritual. 1) *Enlightened eyes* — the healing of the blind man and Christ's words to the blind Pharisees who thought they were seeing. 2) *Fruit* — the allegory of the vine and the branches. 3) *Child-likeness* — "of such is the kingdom." 4) *Complete Devotion* — the trilogy on following Christ. 5) *Fearless Confession* — "Fear not them which kill the body!"

The last four Trinity texts deal with the *Consummation of the Kingdom*. Here we have the following subjects: 1) *Eternal Life* — "And I give unto them eternal life." 2) *The Resurrection and the Judgment* — with the text: "The hour is coming." 3) *The Eternal Reward of Grace* — the parable of the pounds. 4) *Be Ye Ready!* — "Let your loins be girt!" It is very seldom that an actual church year contains

twenty-seven or even twenty-six Sundays; yet the texts on the Consummation of the Kingdom ought all four to be brought before our people. We, therefore, suggest that a sufficient number of texts from the preceding lengthier sections of the great Trinity cycle be omitted, thus allowing these last four texts to be reached.

To give a condensed view of the whole Trinity scheme of texts we present the following schedule:

The Kingdom

I. *Its Nature.*

- 1) Unique.
- 2) It is for sinners.
- 3) They enter.
- 4) They are changed toward the world.
- 5) They are changed toward Christ.
- 6) They are changed toward God.

II. *Its Life.*

- 7) The growth.
- 8) The family.
- 9) The treasure.
- 10) The danger.

III. *Its Marks.*

- 11) Love.
- 12) Liberty.
- 13) Sacrifice.
- 14) Health.
- 15) Affliction.
- 16) Consolation.
- 17) No Ceremonialism.
- 18) No Mammonism.

IV. *Its Requirements.*

- 19) Eyes.
- 20) Fruit.
- 21) Child-heart.
- 22) Whole heart.
- 23) Brave heart.

V. *Its Consummation.*

- 24) Eternal Life.
- 25) Judgment. •
- 26) Reward.
- 27) Be ye ready!

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matthew 13, 31-35

This text announces the theme of the entire great after-Trinity cycle, *the kingdom of heaven*. In this cycle it sets forth, to begin with, *the power* of the kingdom of heaven. The lines of thought thus worked out for the preacher are quite simple, yet they are wonderfully great. It is a marvelous kingdom into which Christ ushers us, none other like it on earth. But to picture the power of it the divine Painter does not take some great earthly realm built by Cæsar, Czar, or Sultan, and draw out likenesses from the one to fit the other; he uses entirely unexpected comparisons, the tiny mustard seed growing in the garden, the unseen yeast-plant spreading in the meal. The very smallness of these types throws the kingdom they illustrate into relief by contrast — if one has at all a proper conception of it. For the common people there is something very attractive in the homely beauty of this pair of parables. Jesus here steps into the humble farmer's field, where he digs and toils, plants and reaps, and by a few simple words leaves behind him a glorious vision, such as the plodding toiler would never have dreamed of in this place. He despises not the work of the humble housewife beside her kneading-trough and oven; again a few simple words, and the every-day task is lit up with a new, glorious meaning which lifts it up far beyond all the drudgery and care of things that perish, into the heavenly light of things that abide and satisfy forever. A text like this ought to inspire the preacher and leave no doubt as to his reaching his hearers' hearts. — The general theme of the text is an objective

one, the subjective element recedes in it, yet must not be lost. In the sermon the kingdom must not be treated in a far-away, distant manner, it must be brought into close relation to every heart. For this is *Christ's* kingdom and *our* kingdom, its powers are over us and in us, in it we live and move and have our spiritual being. Everything in and about this kingdom concerns us, and the sermon must make us realize and feel this at every turn and so reach its fullest effect.

There is a fine order among the parables as Matthew records them and we may well take it that in that order our parables have the place following that of the Sower and of the Tares, whether actually spoken in connection with them or not. The thought would then be, as Chrysostom and Trench sketch it: "From that of the Sower the disciples may have gathered that of the seed they should sow three parts would perish, and only a fourth part prosper; while that of the Tares had opened to them the prospect of further hindrances which would beset even that portion which had taken root downward, and sprung upward; now then, lest they should be tempted quite to lose heart and to despair, these two parables are spoken for their encouragement. 'My kingdom,' the Lord would say, 'shall survive these losses, and surmount these hindrances, until, small as its first beginnings may appear, it shall, like a mighty tree, fill the earth with its branches — like potent leaven, diffuse its influence through all the world.'" "As Paul speaks of that wonderful work of Christ's love, the Church, in a fourfold way, so the mystery of the kingdom of heaven is here set forth in a fourfold manner: in its *breadth*, for the sower casts his seed to the ends of the earth; in its *length*, for the seed of the kingdom — mixed with the enemy's tares — grows till the final harvest; in its *height*, for the mustard seed grows

into a heavenly tree overshadowing all earthly trees; in its *depth*, for the leaven penetrates the meal of the nations with its all-renewing, spicy power." Besser.

V. 31. **The kingdom of heaven** — heavenly or spiritual in its nature. "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14, 17. It began in its Christian form when Christ came, for the Baptist's message was, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Its consummation is reached when Christ returns at the last day. The kingdom of heaven is the invisible Church, the communion of saints. "The kingdom of heaven is always the domain of grace in which our Savior reigns and dispenses the blessings which he has secured for men by his life and death on earth. We speak of it as coming when Christ comes with his Word, by which he exercises his dominion; we speak of it as present now, when Christ has gathered disciples around him who believe in him as their Savior; we speak of it as future when we look to the consummation of his gracious purpose in the glories of heaven. His kingdom is the Church on earth, the congregation of believers in which he reigns with absolute supremacy over such a people as by his grace he has made his willing and loving subjects; and it is the same Church when it is rendered triumphant over sin and death and has entered into the everlasting inheritance of the saints in light, and when the redeemed shall behold him in his glory and adore him forevermore." Loy, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 30. The kingdom of heaven is viewed in our parable, not as to its inner life, beauty or blessedness, but as to its wonderful manifestation in the world; we are shown here the power of this kingdom as it unfolds itself in a visible manner.

Like unto a grain of mustard seed, ὁμοία κόκκῳ σινάπεως, namely, the garden mustard, *Sinapis nigra*,

for it is here classed among "herbs," not the mustard tree *Salvadora persica*. Who would ever have thought of comparing the great spiritual kingdom of Christ with so insignificant a thing as a grain of mustard seed? The comparison is the more striking when we note that the seed really is Christ himself. Some think not only of the size of the seed, but also of its pungency when reflecting on the choice of this symbol; Irenæus calls it "fiery and austere"; Trench speaks of its "active energy" and quotes an unknown author who tells us how it draws up the face and brow, moves to tears, yet is wholesome for the body. "Its heat, its fiery vigor, the fact that only through being bruised it gives out its best virtues, and all this under so insignificant an appearance and in so small a compass, may well have moved him (Christ) to select this seed by which to set forth the destinies of that word of the kingdom, that doctrine of a crucified Redeemer, which, to the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling-block, should prove to them that believed 'the power of God unto salvation.'"

Which a man took and sowed in his field.

Trench makes the "man" to mean Christ himself, "in that by a free act of his own he gave *himself* to that death whereby he became the Author of life unto many; as he himself had said, 'Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit' (John 12, 24)." But we prefer to take the "man" as referring to the Father, since it is not by any means the death of Christ alone which is here had in mind, but his entire life and work including his death, as he himself has said, "God so loved the world that *he gave* his only begotten Son," etc.; "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." John 3, 16-17. Matth. writes "field," ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ; Luke "garden," εἰς κήπον ἑαυτοῦ. Both may be

taken in the same sense as describing the world (John 3, 16). The world is indeed God's field or garden, for he made it and it belongs to him, though sin has sadly filled it with weeds, briars and stones. Yet a difference may be made, allowing for the fact that Christ repeated this parable: the "field" is taken in the one narration for world, and in the other, "garden" for the Jewish people, for "salvation is of the Jews" (John 4, 22), and God by special cultivation made the chosen people his "garden" on earth. *Took*, λαβών, shows that this wonderful mustard seed came not from the field itself; Christ came from heaven, he was sent from above. The "sowing" signifies the sending of the Son.

V. 32. **Which indeed is less than all seeds** — not absolutely, for the botanist knows more minute seeds, but relatively, the least of the seeds used in planting fields or gardens. Μικρότερον, comparative = "less than," not "the least" as in R. V. What a fine illustration for Christ and the beginning of his kingdom. How small and insignificant the Babe in Bethlehem looked to the eyes of the world accustomed to outward greatness; likewise the work of Christ ending in his death, which to the wordly mind looked exactly like complete failure. But it is God's way to choose the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty, the things which are not, to bring to naught things that are. 1 Cor. 1, 27-28. "What, to the eye of flesh, could be less magnificent, what could have less of promise, than the commencements of that kingdom in his person? Growing up in a distant and despised province, till the thirtieth year he did not emerge from the bosom of his family; then taught for two or three years in the neighboring towns and villages, and occasionally at Jerusalem; made a few converts, chiefly among the poor and unlearned; and at length, falling into the hands of his enemies, with no attempt at resistance on his part or that of his

followers, died a malefactor's death upon the cross. Such, and so slight, was the commencement of the universal kingdom of God; for herein that kingdom differs from the great schemes of this world; these last have a proud beginning, a shameful and miserable end — towers as of Babel, which at first threaten to be as high as heaven, but end a deserted misshapen heap of slime and brick; while the works of God and most of all his chief work, his church, have a slight and unobserved beginning, with gradual increase, and a glorious consummation. So it is with his kingdom in the world, a kingdom which came not with observation; so it is with his kingdom in any single heart; there too the word of Christ falls like a slight mustard seed, seeming to promise little, but effecting, if allowed to grow, mighty and marvelous results." Trench.

But when it is grown, it is greater, etc.

Μεῖζον, "greater," not "the greatest" as in A. V.; Luke 13, 19, "waxed a (great) tree." "Moldonatus assures us, that in Spain he has seen large ovens heated with its branches; often too he has noted when the seed was ripening, immense flocks of birds congregating upon the boughs, which yet were strong enough to sustain the weight without being broken. All this was probably familiar to our Lord's hearers as well, and presented a lively image to their minds. They, too, had beheld the birds of the air coming and lodging in the branches of the mustard tree, and finding at once their food and their shelter there." Trench. "When it is grown," really "when it shall be grown," αὐξηθῆναι (the passive form in an intransitive sense), shows with a prophetic touch that it will indeed grow and reach a great development, and that this development will be visible in the world. — A comparison is made between this growing "herb" and others, of which there are many: **greater than the herbs,** τῶν

λαχάνων; its greatness by comparison is added: **and cometh a tree**, δένδρον. There are earthly kingdoms and empires — but none of them equal to the kingdom of heaven in extent. There are social, scientific, religious growths — but again none so great individually as the kingdom of heaven. “All other religions, heathen, Jewish, Mohammedan, though once they had their time of bloom, are dead or dying; none of them grows, none sends out missionaries to win new souls” (at least not from its own impulse, rather only as an imitation of Christianity); “Christianity alone grows in spite of its being almost 2,000 years old, and will continue to grow, until it has become that tree ‘whose roots embrace the Rock of Ages, whose crown reaches to heaven,’ whose leaves and fruit are for the healing of nations, and in whose shady branches all manner of birds dwell and offer psalms and praises night and day to the great God of heaven and earth.” Pank. “Thus saith the Lord God; I will also take the highest branch of the high cedar, and I will set it; I will chop off from the top of his young twigs a tender one, and will plant it upon a high mountain and eminent: in the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it: and it shall bring forth boughs, and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar: and under it shall dwell all fowl of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken and have done it.” Ezek. 17, 22-24. — The birds coming and lodging (really “tenting”) shows not only the greatness but also the character of the development of the kingdom, it is beneficial and offers shelter. Food and nourishment is not mentioned, but may be added.

In this parable we see the power of the kingdom

of heaven in its *visible* growth. A number of thoughts are at once involved or necessarily attached. The power of this kingdom is *divine*. It is a *living organism* and its life and power are *undying* — all other growths of earth have the blight of decay and death in them. The growth continues *through all time*, which means that it shall extend farther and farther over the earth (“this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come,” Matth. 24, 14). The kingdom of heaven was among God’s people in the Old Testament, but there it was confined; the parable describes *the kingdom of the New Testament* which alone extends to the nations of the earth. While the outward reach of the kingdom is here pictured the idea is not of a grand outward organization as the ultimate development, such as the ideal of Rome. The *spirituality* of the kingdom as a kingdom of grace, as the communion of saints must be held fast, and this is essentially invisible although it manifests its presence and power in many visible ways. As the whole kingdom grows from an outwardly small beginning, so do many of its *parts*. From Luther and his humble work grew the Reformation, from many a missionary’s humble labors have come streams of blessing, visible now to the Church and the world. The parable *stimulates faith*, encourages our *work*, fills us with *joy and hope*. The world still despises the kingdom, but we glory in it, love it, and give our hearts and souls to it.

V. 33. The inner connection between the two parables is so close that the second one was certainly spoken immediately after the first. **Spake**, uttered; above, introducing the first, Matthew wrote “set he before them”; in uttering them this is what Jesus did: set them before his hearers with their interesting imagery and their rich store of truth. — **Like unto**

leaven, ζύμη, probably from ζέω, to ferment, because it causes fermentation. There is no doubt as to the fact that leaven is extensively used in the Bible as the symbol of something evil. It was forbidden in the offerings of the Law, Ex. 13, 3; Lev. 2, 11; Amos 4, 5; although an exception is mentioned Lev. 23, 17. During the Passover week no leaven dared to be left in the house of an Israelite. Christ himself used it in an evil sense: "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," Luke 12, 1; St. Paul, when he urges, "Purge out therefore the old leaven," and "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness," 1 Cor. 5, 7-8; and when he warns us, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," Gal. 5, 9. Some have vainly tried to take leaven in an evil sense here, interpreting accordingly. But Christ's words are plain: ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, *the kingdom of the heavens* is like unto leaven. Though used as a type of evil in many instances, because of its secret, penetrating, fermenting (corrupting) qualities, it may be, and is here, used as a type of something good, for it has the peculiar quality of penetrating flour and making dough light, ready for the baking of wholesome bread. Other images are similarly used in a double way: 1 Pet. 5, 8, the devil as a roaring *lion*, and Rev. 5, 5, Christ, the *Lion* of the tribe of Judah; the *serpent* as a symbol of Satan, Gen. 3, 1, and the serpent as a type of Christ, John 3, 14; the *dove*, as a picture of silliness, Hos. 7, 11, and the *dove* as an image of simplicity, Matth. 10, 16. The leaven in this parable images *the Gospel in its effective, renewing, beneficent power*. The sum and substance of the Gospel is Christ, and so this parable, like the former, points back to the source of all power in the kingdom of heaven, *the blessed Savior himself*. "Without me ye can do nothing." There are other ferments in the world, but all of them

are full of the corruptive power of sin which has invaded every human faculty and effort. None have saving power, most of them at best produce only a slight temporary benefit of relief from some oppressive result of man's folly. — **A woman** — where in the first place Christ set before us "a man." This is like the parable of the Lost Coin, Luke 15, 18. Trench says that by "the woman" the divine Wisdom (Prov. 9, 1-3), that is the Holy Spirit, may be intended since the organ of the Spirit's working is the Church. We see no reason why "the woman" here may not represent the Church directly, since to her the Lord committed His Work and the work of preaching and teaching it among all nations; so also in that other parable (the Lost Coin) the underlying thought is that the souls of God's children are committed to the care of the Church. — **Took**, λαβοῦσα, "having taken," picturesque vernacular, as Robertson calls it. "From elsewhere . . . and even such is the Gospel, a kingdom not of this world, not the unfolding of any powers which already existed therein, a kingdom not rising, as the secular kingdoms, 'out of the earth,' Dan. 7, 17, but a new power brought into the world from above; not a philosophy, but a Revelation. The Gospel of Christ was a new and quickening power cast into the midst of an old and dying world, a centre of life round which all the moral energies which still survived, and all of which itself should awaken, might form and gather; — by the help of which the world might constitute itself anew." Trench. — **And hid**, ἐνέκρυψεν followed by εἰς = the action of a woman mixing the yeast with the flour in preparing to bake bread. The yeast disappears from view, then does its work. Here the *secret* power of the Gospel (or kingdom which centers in the Gospel) is set before us. "This was wonderfully exemplified in the early history of Christianity. The leaven was effectually hidden. How striking is the

entire ignorance which heathen writers betray of all that was going forward a little below the surface of society, — the manner in which they overlooked the mighty change which was preparing; and this, not merely at the first, when the mustard tree might well escape notice, but, with slight exceptions, even up to the very moment when the open triumph of Christianity was at hand. Working from the center to the circumference, by degrees it made itself felt, till at length the whole Roman world was, more or less, leavened by it. Nor must we forget, that the mere external conversion of that whole world gives us a very inadequate measure of the work which had to be done; besides this, there was the eradication of the innumerable heathen practices and customs and feelings which had enwoven and entwined their fibres round the very heart of society; a work which lagged very considerably behind the other, and which, in fact, was never thoroughly accomplished till the whole structure of Roman society had gone to pieces, and the new Teutonic framework had been erected in its room.” Trench. By the one word “hid” Christ describes the real work of the Church which is the quiet and steady mixing of the Gospel with the hearts of men. The Church is not to enter the field of politics, sociology, or public reform agitation of any kind. When she does she usually injures herself and hampers her true work. The Gospel leaven is too slow for some men, so they “take” other means more effective to their notion. Let us keep to the humble housewife work of mixing the leaven with the meal, and trust what Christ has promised.

In three measures of meal, *σάτα τρία*, a *saton* (Hebrew *seah*) being the third part of an *epha*; three *sata* = something over one-half bushel; the quantity used by Sarah when the Lord and two angels visited Abraham, Gen. 18, 6. There is considerable diversity

as to what these three measures stand for. They have been referred to the three parts of the then known world, to the three sons of Noah (Augustine); to the Greeks, Jews, and Samaritans; to spirit, soul, and body (Jerome, Ambrose); they have been taken as simply indicating a whole; or as stating a usual quantity with no special significance (Meyer). For the preacher Augustine's view is probably the best. — **Till it was all leavened.** The aorist indicative with ἐως records an actual past event; the leavening occurred. The wonderful power of the leaven is thus revealed: mingled with the flour it penetrates, touches, affects every particle — and all this silently and secretly. So the Gospel reaches out and works among men. We are not ready to say that the leavening here described denotes only the *saving* effect of the Gospel, for the Gospel of the kingdom does not save all whom it touches, although it affects and changes them, often without their knowing it. Compare any land in which the Gospel has free course with a land untouched by it. It has undermined and overthrown slavery, altered the entire status of woman, lifted children to a plane of importance, altered many barbarous customs, etc. The work constantly progresses, for there is always more to do; its highest success is in conversion and sanctification of God's children, in whom the Word of God dwells richly.

In this parable the power of the kingdom is described as it works *invisibly*. Again this is a *divine* power; hidden from the observation of the senses it is secret, mysterious, *spiritual*. It is always a wholesome, *beneficent* (and saving) power, and it proceeds steadily in its work and *succeeds*. Here we learn what the *Church* is to do in the world, how she must devote herself to the work of preaching, teaching and spreading the Gospel. It is a parable to awaken and

strengthen faith, patience and hope, and to fill us with joy when we see the work done at last.

V. 34. Matthew uses a restriction: "all *these* things," ταῦτα πάντα, i. e., concerning the kingdom of heaven. Besser takes it that this was on a special day, when Jesus uttered many parables. It is not necessary to do this, for the fact of the case is simply this that the main points of Christ's teaching are illustrated by parables or parabolic sayings.—*The Prophet* is Asaph, who speaks in Ps. 78, 2, and is called a prophet (seer) in 2 Chron. 29, 30. Matthew quotes the first sentence from Asaph according to the LXX translation, and the second with an alteration ("of old" — "from the foundation of the world") from the original Hebrew. Asaph took the history of the Jews for the basis of teaching the people of his day, Jesus takes the significant things of God's creation and of human life, since his teaching was intended for all men everywhere. Asaph is a type of Christ, but the perfection of the great Anti-type far outshines the type. It is not said here that Christ meant to hide his doctrine by means of the parabolic form from his ungodly enemies; that thought is found elsewhere. The first object of a parable is to reveal, make clear, especially difficult things. This is what Matthew expresses in the words "utter things hidden from the foundation of the world," i. e., the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are now uttered and thus revealed. It is only because of the inward wilful blindness and hardness of heart that some fail to comprehend this revelation. Luke 8, 10.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

We may of course divide this text horizontally, between the two parables, and then we have two obvious parts. They fit well under the theme suggested by the subject of the text we have already indicated. The preacher may begin thus: During the after-Trinity season the wonderful things of the King-

dom of Heaven. What a glorious theme! Christ has set it forth in those gems of his teaching, the parables; so he does here, making the field (or garden) and the kitchen a preacher of his Kingdom.

The Kingdom of Heaven in Its Wonderful Power

- I. Like a grain of mustard seed in the field.*
- II. Like a handful of leaven in three measures of meal.*

The material for the elaboration may be gathered from the exegetical remarks.— Concentrating a little more, and at the same time indicating how the mustard seed and the leaven are to be used, we get the following:

Our Blessed Kingdom

- I. It shelters us.—II. It penetrates us.*

We may, however, also split perpendicularly down through both parables.

The Kingdom of Christ in Its Power

- I. Its beginnings seem so slight.*
- II. Its development reaches so far, and*
- III. Its penetration is so deep.*

A third way is to gather all the main thoughts together, and then by means of synthesis arrange them freely in an order that will properly unfold the theme that covers them. Here is an effort in this direction:

The Blessed Kingdom of God, Pictured by the Mustard Seed and the Leaven

After saying: I believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, let us add: And in the Holy Christian Church, the blessed Kingdom of God on Earth.

Our Faith in the Kingdom of Heaven

- I. A divine Kingdom.*
- II. An unending Kingdom.*
- III. A world-embracing Kingdom.*
- IV. A soul and life-renewing Kingdom.*
- V. A triumphant Kingdom.*

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matthew 9, 9-13

This text is so clear and plain that the preacher can hardly help striking the right note, even if he pays no attention to the line of thought in which this text is the second link. Yet there is a decided advantage in knowing that this text is the second in a series on the Kingdom of God. Considered in its relation to this grand theme this text plainly tells us the character and purpose of the Kingdom, it is a *Kingdom intended for the saving reception of poor sinners*. Every part of the text fits this thought; for not only is a publican and sinner received here, but Christ is found in the midst of men of this kind endeavoring to save them, yea, he declares this to be his great mission, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," i. e., into his kingdom. This blessed truth is so vital that it is put into the foreground here; after viewing the marvelous power of the kingdom, the very next thing we should have deeply impressed upon us is that it is a kingdom for poor, miserable, wretched, outcast repentant sinners. A blessed kingdom indeed!

V. 9. "From thence" = in Capernaum where a man sick of the palsy had been healed. Jesus **passed** or walked on until he came **by** what we may call the office of Matthew. Here he saw this man busy at his usual work of collecting **toll**, or taxes. The designation **a man**, ἀνθρώπου, is very wide, and frequently connotes weakness, being used in a contemptuous sense, then in contrast to ἀνίη. Matthew gives himself no high name, he is only "a man." No sinner called by Jesus can claim to be more. — **Matthew** = Theo-

dore = gift of Jehovah, the name he bore as an apostle of Jesus, his honor-name. Bengel states that we may well believe he had no pleasure in his old name Levi which was associated with his former sinful occupation. Here he puts down his new name, which speaks of higher and better things, the name by which he has been generally known since. Matthew was the son of Alpheus, who, however, was not the same as the father of James the Less of like name. His greatest work is the composition of the first Gospel, the longest of the four, written expressly for Jewish readers as the many Old Testament quotations and references show. After Christ's ascension (he) labored in Judea, and then, according to various accounts, in foreign lands, one says in Ethiopia, another in Persia and in the region about the Euphrates. There is no certainty. Likewise we have no sure account of his death, the story of his martyrdom being of later origin. — **At the place of toll.** “The publicans, properly so called (*publicani*), were persons who farmed the Roman taxes, and they were usually, in later times, Roman knights, and persons of wealth and credit. They employed under them inferior officers, natives of the province where the taxes were collected, called properly *portitores*, to which class Matthew no doubt belonged. The latter were notorious for impudent exactions everywhere; but to the Jews they were specially odious, for they were the very spot where the Roman chain galled them, the visible proof of the degraded state of their nation. As a rule, none but the lowest would accept such an unpopular office, and thus the class became more worthy of the hatred with which in any case the Jews would have regarded it.” Smith’s *Dictionary of the Bible*. Matthew was a *τελώνης*, a purchaser of tax privileges; the *τελώνιον* was the house where the people came to pay their taxes to the *τελώνης*. — **And he said unto him, Follow me,** ἀκολούθει μοι.

Matthew here states only the simple, striking fact of his call and of his following it. We may well suppose that in Capernaum he had heard of Christ and his preaching and miracles before this, and that he may have come in direct contact with the Savior. From that first influence and contact he may have gone back to his toll-gathering with the resolve to "exact no more than that which is appointed you." Luke 3, 13. We must at least say that he was prepared for the great moment that now came into his life. There are special hours of grace which God sends us; they come as a result of the previous workings of the Spirit, and if properly used, lead to glorious results, as here in the case of Matthew. To the Pharisees Christ could not come and say, Follow me, although they had seen and heard the same things as Matthew, for they had hardened their hearts against the grace that had thus touched them. — **Follow me** here means to join Christ as a disciple or learner, ready to leave all the old work of life and take up the new work Jesus would impose. For the future apostle it meant a complete giving up of the former occupation, whether sinful in the usual practice, like that of a publican, or indifferent like that of a fisherman. — **And he arose and followed him**, ἀναστάς is descriptive. He either closed his office or turned it over at once to others. This prompt decision and action is a notable thing. It is a fine example for us to follow in every Gospel call that comes to us. To vacillate and hesitate is to run the greatest danger. Many diseases prove fatal because the cure was put off from time to time. Lot was too slow in leaving the doomed city. The rich young ruler could not forsake his great wealth, and it is doubtful whether the millstone weight of it was ever taken from his neck. One man wanted to follow Jesus well enough, but first he meant to bury his dead father. Luke 9, 60. Jesus warns him to let the dead bury

their dead. Heb. 3, 15: "Today if ye will hear his voice." There is a hesitation that may prove fatal. How many good intentions pave the way to hell? Remember Felix and the convenient season that never came, Acts 24, 25. Matthew, no doubt, suffered some considerable loss in obeying Jesus' call, but he secured eternal gain in place of it; so does every faithful preacher of the Gospel who gives up a secular career with possibly alluring prospects, and follows the Master's call to work in his vineyard.

V. 10. A notable thing is here narrated, therefore the words **and it came to pass** and **behold**; αὐτοῦ ἀνακειμένου, gen. abs., αὐτοῦ refers to Matthew. — **The house**, not as Meyer for instance has thought, the house of Jesus, in which he and his disciples were eating, and the publicans and sinners merely came in, but the house of Matthew, as Luke 5, 29, plainly states, and the publicans and sinners partook of the feast. Why Meyer should find a disagreement between the evangelists is hard to see. A feast required some preparation. This feast surely was some hours after Matthew's call, possibly the next day. Besser finds in Matthew's reticence about the ownership of the house the humility of the centurion who thought himself not worthy that Jesus should come under his roof. — **Sat at meat**, really "reclined." This was no casual meal, but an important gathering. Matthew and his new Master and friends meet the old friends of his past life. There is no thought of regret on the part of Matthew that he must now leave his former companions; on the contrary, there is joy at the new-found liberty and an earnest desire that many of his old friends might likewise obtain it. Matthew by this feast recommends the physician who has healed him to his many sick friends. — **Publicans and sinners**, here undoubtedly only men. Publicans are mentioned by Matthew together with harlots (21, 31-32), with

heathen men (18, 17), and are spoken of in general as outside the pale of the Jewish church (5, 46-47; 11, 19). It was a new sight for the proud, self-righteous Pharisees to see these outcasts treated with condescension and love. Jesus went very far in this direction, for: many publicans and sinners came and **sat down with Jesus and his disciples.** The inference is that Jesus, who is not mentioned till now, and his disciples, such as had already attached themselves to him, were specially invited and had accepted this invitation. There was no danger, however, of a false impression on the part of the other guests or of Matthew. They know why they came, not because they found in Jesus the slightest excuse for their sins, but because he held out to them the help that would save them from their sins. When Christians and Christian pastors yield to solicitations and allow themselves to be drawn into questionable company and association with men of evil life, they are by no means repeating what Christ did in Matthew's house. Jesus had *complete control* of the situation and kept control, doing his necessary work among sinners. When we can have proper control we may also sit down and eat with publicans and sinners; but where the control is theirs, and we are merely drawn into their company, we allow them to drag us down to their level, instead of our lifting them up to ours. The young and inexperienced have thus frequently been permanently injured, and older people (and pastors) have seriously hurt themselves.

V. 11. We need not speculate on the way these Pharisees managed to see what here took place. Their eyes were sharpened by hate, and they watched Jesus constantly. Their seeing here was, therefore, hardly accidental. They probably watched the gathering of the guests, some twenty or more, at Matthew's house, and then, when the feast was ended and the guests

began to leave, put their evil question to the disciples. "Ἐλεγον, imperf., shows that the thing was repeatedly urged by the questioners. — They spoke to the **disciples**, but Jesus answers for them. Did the Pharisees fear to face Jesus directly? It may have been. Did they want to turn the disciples from Jesus? This, too, is probable. But they do not escape the Master's crushing reply, and instead of really raising doubts in the hearts of his disciples, they only furnish a fine occasion for strengthening their faith. Jesus takes care of his own. Let us not listen to evil conclusions and arguments against our Savior, but keep our hearts and ears open for his own words, which are light, life, and blessed truth.

V. 12. The Pharisees argued after the manner of the proverb: "Birds of a feather flock together," or "Tell me with whom you associate, and I will tell you who you are." This argument is sound and good in its place, only it is not always in place. Here it was not. The case was anything but one of ordinary association. Here were **they that are sick**, and among them **a physician**. This was the true status of both parties; so they had met and only so. It would be ridiculous for a physician to keep himself aloof from the sick; his very business is to deal with them, without contaminating himself, in order to cure them. Jesus as the Messiah is the true Physician, ἰατρός: "I am the Lord that healeth thee," Ex. 15, 26; comp. Jer. 8, 22. We know his power and remedies: the grace of God, the means of grace (Word and Sacrament), his Holy Spirit, his atoning merits, his own cleansing blood. — And these publicans were **they that are sick**, οἱ κακῶς ἔχοντες, those in evil condition. Their disease was sin, the all-pervading poison in our systems. Sin takes many forms, but is always sin and always a deadly disease. Original sin is described as a disease by the Augsburg Confession, Art. II: "without the fear of

God, without trust in him, and with fleshly appetite," and "*this disease*, or original fault is truly sin, condemning and bringing eternal death now also upon all that are not born again by Baptism and the Holy Ghost." The Apology adds: "that Original Sin contains also *these diseases*, viz., ignorance of God, contempt for God, the being destitute of fear and confidence in God, inability to love God. These are the chief faults of human nature, conflicting especially with the first table of the Decalogue." Mark 7, 21-23: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man." Besser takes various sins and pictures them as disease. Thus: inflammation, the tongue-disease, James 3, 6; inflammation of the eyes, 1 John 2, 16; foul fever, Col. 3, 5; cancer, or the love of money, 1 Tim. 6, 9, etc.; consumption or spiritual decline. The diseases of the body often mock the physician's effort at cure; but all this dreadful host of spiritual diseases is fully subject to our heavenly Physician's remedies. Only they die in their sins who refuse to take his remedies. Our Confessions use this passage repeatedly in connection with the doctrine of the Lord's Supper, showing that it is meant for those who are "weary and heavy-laden with their sins, with the fear of death, temptations of the flesh and of the devil," Jacobs, 484, 71; 614, 70.

V. 13, if not directly spoken to the Pharisees, was certainly meant for them. Jesus quotes Hos. 6, 6, according to the LXX, which agrees with the original, compare Micah 7, 18: "He delighteth in mercy." **Mercy**, ἔλεος, in the sense of pity or sympathy with the suffering. God's wonderful mercy embraces us and so wants to fill us with the quality of mercy. "Be

ye therefore merciful, as your Father is also merciful." Luke 6, 36. "Sacrifice," θυσία, the gift itself and the act of bringing it, is put in opposition to "mercy," so the latter must mean human mercy; here the mercy that ought to delight in bringing the true physician and his help to them that are sick. This the Pharisees not only lacked, but failed to understand. To their blind eyes the Scriptures were dark in this vital point, as in so many others. They made their boast and reliance the outward act of sacrifice, and omitted that which could alone make this act acceptable unto God, divinely-wrought mercy and love in their hearts, the reflection of God's mercy to them. They simply scorned and expelled publicans and sinners, and made no effort to reach and help them. A similar disposition sometimes crops out among church members today. We must all keep on with our lesson, **Learn what this meaneth.** — The lesson is easier in every way since Christ has shown us how to learn it, and what it means, as he did here in Matthew's house. — **For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.** The addition "to repentance" should be struck out, as not belonging to the text. The "sinners" are the "sick" described above. "The righteous" are "the whole" who "have no need of a physician." Those who are really whole certainly need no physician. The Pharisees were "whole" only in their imagination; in reality they were sick with the worst of all diseases, the fixed idea of being whole. Christ points out the symptoms of their disease when he reveals their wilful blindness, their stony unmercifulness, which always appears in proud self-righteousness. In silencing their slander about himself he uses an unanswerable *argumentum ad hominem*; he takes them at their word when they suppose themselves whole. But his argument never once grants that they *are* whole, quite the contrary. As

the Messiah Christ is and must be the great Physician. They could hardly avoid the question: Do not we need him also? has he not help for us also? But in refusing to accept his help they force Jesus to pronounce the sentence of judgment upon them: he cannot help them, because they will not accept his help, which is for sinners only — and they dream of being far different from these “publicans and sinners”: “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men . . . or even as this publican.” Luke 18, 11. The argument has another edge; as the Pharisees considered themselves “whole” and “righteous,” so they considered the publicans, etc., “sick” and “sinners”; here Jesus again takes them at their word; he has come to heal, so he must “call” them. — **Call** = invite into the kingdom of God, i. e., with the saving power of grace. This call reaches the heart, sore and stricken with sin, and kindles the spark of faith.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The Kingdom of God, spreading like a mustard tree, secretly winning and influencing like leaven, is doing all this in a world of sinners, which brings us to the most blessed thing that can be said about it, it is intended for poor sinners the world over, to rescue, uplift, and save them.

O the Blessedness of Christ's Kingdom: Sinners Are Called Into It!

- I. *You see it when Christ calls the publican, Matthew.*
- II. *You see it more clearly when Christ eats with publicans and sinners.*
- III. *You see it with fullest clearness when Christ explains his whole mission as the Savior of sinners.*

This outline embodies a simple analysis of the text. — If we keep the idea of the Kingdom from the previous text, we may connect the thought of sinners with that in this obvious way:

The Kingdom of God a Kingdom for Sinners

- I. At its head stands the great Helper of sinners.*
- II. Through its portals none but poor sinners enter.*
- III. In all its domain hosts of pardoned sinners praise God.*

We may also combine the idea of the Kingdom with what Jesus says about the sick:

The Kingdom of God a Place Where the Sick Are Made Whole

- I. The sick that are treated.*
- II. The physician who treats them.*
- III. The remedy provided.*
- IV. The cure effected.*

Certain hymns will come to mind as one ponders over this attractive text. Here is a couplet:

**"Blessed He Who can Believe
Jesus Sinners doth Receive!"**

- I. This was his mission.* The mercy of it — the inconceivableness of it for the self-righteous — the comfort of it for us.
- II. This was his work.* The preparatory work on Matthew, on the publicans and sinners, even on the Pharisees. — "Follow me!" — The life with Christ.
- III. This was his joy.* The feast with Matthew — the feast through the ages since — the joy in heaven through eternity.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Luke 15, 11-32

This pearl of Gospel texts, this crown of all parables, this *Evangelium in Evangelio* deserves a first place among the texts used for regular preaching. A sermon on it will be appreciated by our people who never hear it in the old gospel series. Much might be said in praise of it; here only a word on its position in this series. The burden of the last text was, *that* sinners are received into Christ's kingdom; the burden of this text it, *how* sinners enter the kingdom. In the last text we marveled at the mercy of *the Lord*, we heard his call, saw his condescension, heard the gracious and comforting description of his mission. Now we look closely at the *sinner*, observe the change that takes place in him, hear him speak, expressing repentance and faith, and thus see him received by the Father. Of course, there is much more in the text, and one sermon will never begin to exhaust it. There is especially the section on the older brother and the detailed description of the younger son's leaving the father's house. Both deserve attention, but here only as subsidiary elements. They simply must recede before the grand theme that dare not be slighted, which is *the return of the prodigal*. A strong *subjective* element lies in the text, a heart-touch of appeal that must color the whole sermon. It is a wonderful story, but always *your* story and *mine*, however the preacher tells it. The grand doctrinal content of the sermon will be *Conversion and Justification*, these two bound together. Clothed in the beautiful, touching imagery of this text, which has inspired many a poet, painter, and preacher, and placed in the grand line of thought

on the Kingdom of God, this text ought to produce the very finest of sermons.

The parable of the Prodigal son is a link in that finest line of parables filling the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Luke's Gospel. First the love of Jesus Christ in the image of the Good Shepherd; secondly the work of the Christian Church in the Woman Seeking the Lost Coin; then our parable, the sinner's return to God. These are followed by the lesson on Christian life and stewardship in the Unjust Steward, and by the grand conclusion, the glimpse into the eternal world, in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.

V. 11. **And he said, A certain man had two sons.** This simplicity is the soul of beauty. The Father in heaven is pictured by this earthly father. There is difference of opinion as to who is meant by the two sons. The best interpretation, without doubt, is that which takes the younger as the type of every sinner turning from God and choosing the path of open godlessness or worldliness, and the older as the type of the self-righteous sinner, remaining outwardly in the church, but inwardly without saving faith. Both are lost, both must return. Usually the younger son is taken to refer to the publicans and sinners in Christ's time, and the older son to the work-righteous Pharisees (ch. 15, 1-2).

V. 12. **The younger** — what a warning to youth! Its inexperience, presumption, self-will, dislike of restraint, failure to appreciate Christian home-blessings, all come to mind here. Behind the request of the younger lies the *perversion* of the heart which has already turned away from the father and the father's house. — **Father** — what a different tone and meaning from the same word in v. 21! "He would like to be boss before the time, can hardly wait for the father's death in order to get his portion of the in-

heritance." Luther. — **Give me** — the request as it is made is not in disrespect to the father. According to the Jewish law the younger son received half as much of the inheritance as the older, Deut. 21, 17; and while the older remained at home the younger might ask his portion in order to found a home for himself. What the real intentions of the younger in this case were comes out later; the request as made sounds proper, what all it covered is soon apparent. In applying this part of the parable it may be said that the Father in heaven indeed intends us to have our portion, but, alas, what evil intentions and plans fill the hearts of those who take their portion! — And so the father **divided to them**, διεἴλεν, from διαιρέω. The reason is obvious. The father might have refused, declining to make the division at this time, on a request that lacked further explanation, but having lost his son's heart the father is not willing to hold his body, he will not hold him against his will. So God "divides" to the sinner life, health, faculties of mind and body, earthly wealth, a thousand advantages and among all these blessings ever some that strongly remind the heart of the heavenly Father and the Father's house ("not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Rom. 2, 4; comp. Acts 14, 17). The sinner "desires to be independent of God, to become a god to himself (Gen. 3, 5), and to lay out his life at his own will and for his own pleasure. Growing weary of living upon God's fulness, he desires to be, and believes that he can be, a fountain of blessedness to himself; that, laying out his life for himself, he will lay it out better than God would have laid it out for him. This sin of pride is the sin of sins; in which all subsequent sins are included; they are all but the unfolding of this one." Trench. And this fine expositor of the parable adds that true children of God pray, "Give us this day our daily bread."

V. 13. Jesus knew what was in man, and how it comes out. The son waits awhile; the inward separation always precedes the outward (which, however, does not always come out plainly, as we see in the older brother). At last the breach shows itself in all its terribleness; he turns his back on his father's house, but not to found a home of his own; ἀπεδήμησεν (absent from his δῆμος), he went among strangers, he left home to go elsewhere. Thus the sinner leaves the Church, the Communion of saints. What a sad moment! Many in their time were baptized, even confirmed, and lived for awhile in the Father's house. Where are they now? Ask sad-hearted parents and pastors. — They have left the society of their Father, they have gone **into a far country**, εἰς χώραν μακράν. What country can this be but the "world," of which we read, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." 1 John 2, 15-17. How its glitter, its pleasure, its promise of good things for the flesh attract. So the flame ever attracts the moth — only to burn and blast it. — **And there he wasted his substance with riotous living**, διεσκόρπισεν τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ ζῶν ἀσώτως, he scattered his substance living in a manner past recovery; ἀσώτως (from σώζεσθαι), so that neither his goods nor himself were saved. The Lord gives us no details; they are not needed, the spectacle is ever before us. Neither do we need the salacious descriptions of the stage and of novel-writers, which serve only to gild the corruption and to tempt the unwary. It is the elder brother who describes in an unloving way what the Lord has passed over; "which hath devoured

thy living with harlots." Self-righteous men gloat over the open failings of others, failing to see their own "secret faults," Ps. 19, 13. Sometimes this "wasting" still retains the form of outward respectability; but it always retains its inward mark, separation from God and the delusion that happiness and satisfaction can best be found away from God. So the sinner goes on until his substance is consumed and he finds himself destitute indeed.

V. 14. The hand of Providence is even in the godless world. The **mighty famine** came when the prodigal **had spent all**. Temporal gifts all vanish at last. Sooner or later the satisfaction found only in the creature, excluding the Creator and Savior, comes to an end. — **He began to be in want**, the aor. ἤρξατο marks the point of the beginning, and the pres. inf. ὑστερεῖσθαι the continuance that followed. The latter verb implies that now he was last, where he had been first. The prodigal's "want" had a deeper seat than he thought, for he had not only lost his "portion," but there was nothing left, no inner support and stay, no soul-treasure that cannot fade, no strong, abiding comfort to support the soul in affliction. When men reach this condition the devil often reaps his harvest — they commit suicide. With money gone, pleasure gone, friends gone, they conclude that all is gone, and do the fatal act. But we must not forget that the famine and want often arrive while the cup of earthly possession still flows to the brim; this is when the vanity and emptiness of it all falls upon the soul like a blight.

V. 15. Jesus might have brought in the prodigal's return at this point. Thank God, some do return more quickly than others. But many go on to the limit as here set forth. — What hope was there in this "far country"? For the plenty in his father's house the prodigal now had poverty; for the freedom in his

father's house he is now to have servitude; and for the honor, degradation and shame. — **One of the citizens.** So there are "citizens" in that "far country," men who have completely adjusted themselves to the life apart from God. "With all his guilt the prodigal was not 'a citizen,' but a stranger in that 'far land.'" Trench. It is significant that this "citizen" is described as the owner of "swine," which were an abomination to the Jews. — To such a man the prodigal **joined himself**, glued, attached, ἐκολλήθη, the passive in the sense of the middle; the thought suggested is that this citizen did not care to keep him, hence also the labor the man put him to. This is the association that results from the separation from God. Sin makes man a companion of swine, in more ways than one. — **And he sent him into his fields to feed swine,** χοίρους, shoats, used also of hogs in general — an occupation worse than merely degrading, for it bore the stamp of sin upon it and had the taste of bitterness and shamefulness that results from sin. It cut his pride, but it also cut his conscience. The fancy gilding and deception were all gone, the galling disgrace, the deadly heart-ache alone were left. Still there is a mercy in such bitter experience for the sinner; it is good once for all to end the deception, even if the hour be late; it is good really to see and feel the consequence of sin, while there is still time to repent, for these may bring the sinner to his knees at last.

V. 16. Now comes the final drop in the bitter cup — not only "feeding swine," but feeding himself with swine's food — and lacking even that. The human being thus sinks through sin to the level of the beast. This is whither the devil would bring every man, whom God intended to be in the divine image. — **Husks,** κεράτια, horn-like pods of the carob tree, the *Johannesbrodbaum*, which flourishes in Syria, Egypt, and southern Europe; it bears long, thin sickle-like

pods with small, shiny seeds; these pods were eaten by the poor, but not as regular food, and are to this day used as feed for hogs. "Husks" stand here for all the empty, unsatisfying food offered by the world to the starving souls of men. What are its shows and shams, its carousals and "good times," its lies and dreams (science falsely so called), but "husks"; they fill the belly, but never still the hunger of the soul. — The verb χορτασθῆναι, from χόρτος, fodder, hay, etc., is coarse, but to the point; some codices read γεμίσει τὴν κοιλίαν αὐτοῦ, "to pack his belly full." Καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐδίδου αὐτῷ, even this food was denied him, and the imperf. tense makes this denial continuous. — If you have not reached such a depth as is here described, thank God. His mercy saved you from the degradation. This parable, however, takes in the whole downward range of the sinner in his separation from God, in order that it may hold out hope and help to all, even to the lowest and worst.

V. 17 brings us to the heart of the parable. And this heart of it is the very feature that must stand forth prominently in the treatment of the whole text in this series. *Jesus shows us how the sinner enters the kingdom* — he is *converted*, and, v. 22, *justified!* First the masterly description of conversion. It is all in the words **he came to himself**, εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἐλθὼν; but what that really includes is shown by the detailed description that follows. "He came to himself," that implies that heretofore, in his whole course of sin, he was beside himself, not in his right mind, insane. And it is true, there is neither reason nor sense in sin, but the contrary. It was an insane thing for the prodigal to leave his father thus, to plunge into riotous living, to go on till he ended amid a herd of swine. Conversion thus is to become rational, right-minded, properly balanced again. It is a sound, rational act to turn from sin, its curse and doom, to God, pardon,

and salvation. The real turn is in the depth of the soul. It comes, not without preparation, yet suddenly and in a moment, as here shown in the case of the prodigal. There is much that is mysterious about it; it is like a spark of new life come into the dead heart, a sudden pulse-beat of vitality, where all was lifeless and still before. Just how this is produced God alone knows. The means by which it is produced we easily infer from Jesus' further description; they are the Law to produce contrition, or sorrow for sin, combined with the Gospel to work faith or living trust in God's mercy in Christ Jesus. — **How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish here with hunger!** What a true, sensible, salutary observation! But at the same time what confession and acknowledgment of his own folly, that he should have left his father's house and come to this. Thus the Holy Spirit *enlightens* the sinner's heart.

V. 18. In the story of the parable there is a progress in the return of the prodigal covering some time. The elements in the sinner's conversion are separated by this means and set distinctly before us. In reality, however, there is no such passing of time, especially no interval between conversion and justification. The sinner is pardoned the moment he is contrite and believing. — First then we are shown the *contrition* when the prodigal comes to himself: **Father, I have sinned**, ἤμαρτον, the 2nd aorist acknowledges the terrible fact as such. There is no excuse, no extenuation, but a full, plain confession of sin. While contrition is an inward thing of the heart, its presence is always made manifest by an open and sincere confession; where this is absent, we cannot be sure that contrition is present. — The confession expresses the enormity of the sin: **against heaven**; it states the real essence of sin: **and in thy sight**, namely against

the father, and the veil is thin, behind this father we see the real Father. "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Ps. 51, 4. — It even states what the just negative consequence of the sin is: **I am no more worthy to be called thy son.** Let every sinner learn from this sinner. Here is a sample of what contrition ought to be, and how it ought to express itself in confession. "This willingness to confess is ever noted in Scripture as the sign of a true repentance begun; even as the sinner's refusal to humble himself in confession before God is the sure note of a continued obduracy." Trench. — But the contrition is mingled with *faith*. The faith shines out in the beginning and in the end; it is in the word **Father**, and in the humble petition: **make me as one of thy hired servants.** Its chief element is *trust*. The whole confession breathes it. The humility of it which gives up every claim of its own righteousness, every hope of being received for anything good in self, even the past claims of sonship, is a vital element in true faith, and remains to the end in all saving faith in the hearts of sinners accepted by God. The Canaanitish woman begged only for a crumb and acknowledged herself a dog. Again here let us learn. — "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Ps. 51, 17.

V. 20. In the sinner converted to God this arising and coming is one with conversion; to be converted is thus to arise and come. The whole transaction with the Father is really all in a moment. Besser indeed says: "Between the 'I will arise' and the 'he arose' very likely lay hard battles. . . . The way from the far country to the father's house is marked by many death-signs: how many arise, but never get through!" But he is certainly mistaken. We must guard ourselves lest the notions with which revivalists work in

producing their "conversions" obtrude themselves in our dealing with sinners and in our preaching on conversion; they figure on such "battles," long drawn out, and they with their methods may produce them; but the Gospel does not work so. Yet the story as here told has its counterpart in the sinner as far as the following of a *spoken* confession upon conversion is concerned. This usually occurs. Thus in the malefactor on the cross; there was first the change in his heart, this was followed by the words expressing it spoken to his fellow malefactor and to Christ on the cross, then came the audible absolution pronounced by Christ. So sinners still express their contrition and faith, and receive the audible absolution, the sentence of pardon, the justification through the Word. — How fine and sweet is the description of the Father's mercy! The whole action shows that the prodigal is already pardoned, even as the omniscient and ever present God pardons the sinner the moment he believes. See here the compassion in God's heart, his pity for every fallen wretch (ἔσπλαγχνίσθη), see how he longs to pardon, how he yearns for the sinner's return, and how he embraces the converted soul with his love. What a heart to run thus and to kiss (κατεφίλησεν, kissed tenderly). Jesus pictures the mercy of the Father in such strong colors because it is necessary. The oppressed conscience often doubts that God really is full of mercy to forgive. How this picture must win the sinner's heart! There is no cause in God to make us hesitate, only our own blindness and perversion which does injustice to God. — In this parable the mediatorial work of Christ and his merits are not brought forward. Only a part of the whole blessed story is here told — but what a blessed part! And the rest is easily supplied from other words of Scripture.

V. 21. We have already spoken of this formal

confession: **Father, I have sinned, etc.** "Though God may forgive, man is not therefore to forget." Trench. Before the sinner's lips can frame the words God beholds his heart and knows its sincerity. Men may require an investigation, God never. — The Father breaks into the words of his son ere they are finished. (Bengel). Zahn rightly calls this one of the tenderest touches in this beautiful parable, the son is spared this humiliating petition.

In v. 22-24 we see the sinner *justified and adopted* (received as a son). A similar act of pardon is described Zech. 3, 3-5: "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by." — **The best robe**, *στολήν τὴν πρώτην*, in the place of his vile swine-herd's garments; really "the first," foremost and thus best, with the emphasis on the adjective since it has the article, not the noun. Thus the sinner "puts on Christ," Gal. 3, 27; "he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." Is. 61, 10. This is the "wedding garment," Matth. 22, 11, which stands for the imputation to the sinner of the merits and righteousness of Christ. — **Put a ring on his hand**, *δακτύλιον*, a further mark of sonship. The same blessed truth in other form is found in Hosea 2, 19-20: "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and

in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord." Trench refers the ring to the sealing of the Spirit: "ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," Eph. 1, 13; "who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts," 2 Cor. 1, 22. — **Shoes on his feet**, ὑποδήματα — slaves might run barefooted, not the son. Zech. 10, 12: "I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name." Paul describes the Christian as having his "feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace," Eph. 6, 15. In God's pardoning reception of the sinner he gives him shoes not merely to honor him as a son and heir, but also to show his confidence in the sinner that now he will walk as befits a son and heir. — **Bring the fatted calf, and kill it, and let us eat and make merry**; the final verb a hortative subjunctive, φαγόντες εὐφρανθῶμεν (the passive in sense of middle), now including besides the servants himself and his son. There is no allusion here either to Christ sacrificed for us; nor to the Eucharist. This is the counterpart to the ending of the previous parables: "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Yes, it was true what the prodigal said when sitting among swine in the far country, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare." What a contrast with that "far country," where even the "husks" were denied him, and here without any work he sits down to the full feast of joy. "Thou preparest a table before me," Ps. 23, 5. The food in our heavenly Father's house satisfies and restores; there shall never be a lack to the faithful children. — **For** (ὅτι, because) **this my son** — mark the word! — **was dead, and is alive again**, came to life again, ἀνέζησεν. This is the joy of the Father's merciful heart, and all his "household" share in it. "You hath he

quicken, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Eph. 2, 1; 1 John 3, 14. The life away from God is spiritual death; saving faith is the true life of the soul, and it shall never die, John 11, 26. — **He was lost, and is found.** "As sheep going astray," 1 Pet. 2, 25; "all we like sheep have gone astray," Is. 53, 6. Here this parable meets the two that precede it. "Lost" to God and the kingdom of God is every straying sinner, a prey to the devil; "found" is every converted sinner and lost to Satan. What a world of blessedness in the two simple words "alive" — "found"! — **And they began to make merry;** all was done very quickly. But the feast is not described, nor the conversation that took place during it. The celebration ended with music and dancing. Something that happened while this was in progress is added.

V. 25. Another son is lost, or at least in the gravest danger of being lost. His story is entirely different from that of his brother, as he is lost or on the verge of being lost *in his own father's house*. How is that possible? Through *self-righteousness*. In a masterly way Jesus shows this in the story. — **In the field**, working hard, but like those laborers in the vineyard who worked only to secure the pay, and got that and nothing more. — **Music and dancing** not after the modern fashion with the sexes mingling and embracing. "It would be alien to the manners and the feelings of the East, to suppose the guests themselves engaged in these diversions: they would be but listeners and spectators, the singers and dancers being hired for the occasion." Trench. Συμφωνία is really the music made by several players together, and we might translate: orchestra or concert; the χορός is the choral-dance, with certain gestures and perhaps also steps; the χοροί could be "heard" only through the accompanying music. — **Called to him one of the servants and inquired what these things**

might be; ἓνα τῶν παίδων, *einen der Burschen*, one of the young fellows (of the servants, δοῦλοι). The optative with ἄν in the indirect question is transferred unchanged from the direct; the indeclinable τί is often used as a predicate with a plural subject, here ταῦτα. How aloof this older brother stands; he never took for granted that there must be just cause for the happy sounds he heard; the celebration he characterizes as “these things”; he does not go to the father, but asks a servant. In all this the spirit of the self-righteous man appears. The feast that mercy prepares, the joy of the Father’s heart and all that causes it is strange, foreign, incomprehensible to him. Why? we shall soon see.—The servant makes answer using the words **thy brother — thy father**. But there is no response and echo of love. One may well ask, Are they really *his* brother, *his* father still, in the full sense of the word? or has he become inwardly alienated from them?

V. 28. **But he was angry and would not go in,** ἠθέληεν, imperfect, as if resisting repeated urgings — the very action of the Pharisees! — how different, how totally different from the mercy and joy in the heart of him whom he called father! There are those among church members who are little pleased with the reception of repentant prodigals. But behold a new mercy, fully as great as the one we have already seen: **his father came out and intreated him,** παρεκάλει. The Father seeks the lost, just as the Son, our Savior does. Where this elder brother deserved the strongest rebuke the father meets him with gentle, loving, patient entreaty. Observe the imperfect tense, it denotes repeated entreaty. What a spectacle, the Father *begging* the sinner to come in! — V. 29. But now all the blindness, perversity, and hardness of the self-righteous soul comes to the surface. As with the younger son there was hidden alienation of the heart

that did not come out at once, so with this older one. The occasion has come at last to reveal himself as he really is. Hear his boastful claim: **Lo, these many years do I serve thee**, and his boastful assertion: **and I never transgressed a commandment of thine**. This is rank self-righteousness. It *serves*, δουλεύω — to establish merit before God, a righteousness of its own (“not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law,” Phil. 3, 9, says St. Paul). It dreams of never having transgressed, οὐδέποτε παρῆλθον (“all these have I kept from my youth up,” Luke 18, 21). Yet in the very utterance of the words God’s greatest commandment, that of love, is broken. — For himself the older brother claimed perfection, not so for his father: **thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends** — withholding just dues — **but when this thy son came . . . thou killedst for him the fatted calf** — acting with unjust partiality! So the self-righteous accuse God himself. Note the contrast between ξοῖφον, just any kid, and τὸν σιτευτὸν μόσχον, *the fatted calf*, intended for a special occasion; I, thy faithful son — this thy son, ὁ υἱός σου οὗτος (contemptuous); **thy living**, forgetting that the father had been content to divide and had given the older son the double portion; καταφαγόν, hath devoured, consumed and eaten up in a wasteful manner; **with harlots** — an evil surmise on his part. What a sad condition of heart! What insane blindness and baseness — so like that of the younger son in its inwardness, although this man had not gone from his father outwardly and had not landed among swine. — Might not the father have turned upon him in anger, denouncing his wicked words and heart? He does the opposite, but with firm, unshakable word: **Son**, τέκνον, really: “child,” with a touch of tenderness — if thou be *child* of mine indeed and still; for this is not filial language. **Thou art ever with me**, yea, **with me** — what “friends” can

you have that would require you to turn from *me* to make merry with *them*? — and am I not your best friend? — **All that is mine is thine** — kid, calf, and all the house and field; for had it not been divided to him? And more than all, *the father* was his in the bargain! So Jesus, in whom was the Father, as he uttered these words was truly “intreating” the Pharisees to forsake their self-righteousness. To have the Father as our Father in never-ending mercy — is this not our highest possession? To have all that is his as our own through the merciful adoption as sons, is this not more than all the world besides? — **But it was meet to make merry and be glad**, εἶδει — wonderful meetness! — clear only to him who knows something of the love and mercy that requires joy when the sinner repents. Shall there not be joy when death is turned to life, spiritual death into everlasting life? when the lost is found, the lost soul, for which God gave his only begotten Son, found by the heavenly grace that sought it?

Abruptly the parable ends. There is a purpose in it. First for the hearers (Luke 15, 2, “the Pharisees and scribes murmured”), this ending presented the pointed question to them, Would they, who were pictured by this elder brother, yield, fall at the feet of the heavenly Father, confess their sin and wrong, drop their self-righteous claims and folly, and throw themselves upon the Father’s mercy above? Ah, what joy would that have been — a double finding, a double coming to life! Secondly, for us all, who are ever prone to think self-righteous thoughts, even in our Father’s house; and for us a warning. Oh that we may not get upon this wrong course! We know not how that older brother finally acted and answered. It almost looks as if he turned away for good from his father. No, we will *not* go and do likewise — by the help of God we will not!

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The parable is a narrative, and for homiletical purposes may therefore be divided into its natural parts, just like any other narrative. One might take the simple theme: **The Story of the Prodigal**, and then retell that story in the sermon, part after part, weaving in with each the natural application: 1) *How he left home*; 2) *How he fared in the far country*; 3) *How he came back home*; and 4) *The brother he had left at home*. You may put this into finer shape, dress it up and polish it more, even as the parable is a work of beauty, the idea, however, may be left quite the same. Thus one way is to derive the formulation from the text itself, as we have just done. Another way is to draw the formulation from the use of the text made in the sermon, i. e. from the application decided on. And there is a third way, a combination of the two just described: in formulating combine the expressions of the text with applicatory terms or expressions. Naumann, in his parts, illustrates the second way of formulating: **The Story of the Prodigal**, in the sense: What must we see in it? *I. Here is sin in its wretchedness*; *II. Here is repentance in its sincerity*; *III. Here is grace with the fulness of its comfort*. This omits the brother, which some may prefer to do, since in most homiletical arrangements this portion of the text is a bit difficult to fit in smoothly; it often appears like an appendix. Naumann's theme is drawn from the parable, only the parts are from the application. Here is one in which the theme is applicatory, as well as the parts:

Come, Let Us Go Home!

- I. It is our true home, our Father's house.*
- II. No other place can be home for us.*
- III. Our Father is waiting for us at home.*
- IV. The way home is easy to find.*
- V. How blessed the joy when we all are at home!*

We might combine text and application in this theme, and make it read: **The Prodigal's Return Calls to Us: Come, Let Us Go Home!** — Johann Rump has: "Return, Ye Backsliding Children," derived from Jer. 3, 22. The author is compelled to say that themes of this kind, drawn from other passages of Scripture, are never good. They always sound as if one is preaching on that other passage. They thus sound misleading. Themes of this type, though they persist in homiletical works, are really unnecessary, quite so, because so many other far better themes, far closer to the text and to the ideas of the sermon, may easily

be found. Unless one is told so in the sermon he would hardly know that Rump's theme is from Jeremiah, and when he is told, he will wonder why Rump went that far away to get his theme, so many others lying near at hand. Rump's parts are: 1) to liberty; 2) to peace; 3) to mercy; 4) to humility. Apart from the appropriateness of these terms, one essential is lacking, evidently required by the theme, namely the information how back-sliding children may accomplish this return. In other words, the split should be made on the term "return."

In the following outline there is a synthetic feature in making part three take care of the elder brother: Sinners are called into the kingdom — and here we see one entering in.

The Prodigal: Christ's Wonderful Picture of How the Sinner Comes Into the Kingdom.

- I. *O the folly of the sinner!*
- II. *O the deception of the world!*
- III. *O the delusion of self-righteousness!* (The elder brother.)
- IV. *O the blessedness of the pardon!*
- V. *O the joy of the reception!*

Here the effort is made throughout to combine in the formulation the text thoughts and the applicatory sermon thoughts. The parts corresponding are exclamations, and if their tenor is adhered to in the elaboration the sermon ought to be more dramatic and lively. Anyway, prosy sermons tend to sleepiness.

Looking at our text from the doctrinal standpoint we see that it deals with the sinner's *conversion*, or even more directly and in a more explanatory way with the sinner's pardon or *justification*. This makes the father's action most prominent, i. e. picks up the entire text at this point. In fact we here have a lovely picture of what takes place in the sinner's justification. Perhaps the word "pardon" would suit better for the general imagery here used — that is a separate point to determine. The theme might be:

The Prodigal Pardoned by His Father.

And the parts may be: I. *His sin*; II. *His repentance*; III. *His absolution*; IV. *His reinstatement*. This omits the elder brother. To bring him in is highly desirable in a sermon on justification, because he illustrates self-righteousness which always forfeits

pardon. So it will probably be better to pivot the theme on the father, not on the prodigal directly: What is the finest part in the parable we have just read? Of course, we rejoice in the return of the prodigal son, in his repentance, open confession of sin, and in his happy reinstatement. But undoubtedly the highest thing in this wonderful parable is the action of the father throughout, especially his pardoning grace. Let us look at the heart of this parable, at

The Prodigal's Father,

An Illustration of Our Heavenly Father's Grace and Pardon.

- I. *He longs for his lost son's return.*
- II. *He runs and embraces his wretched son.*
- III. *He cuts short his confession with the word of pardon.*
- IV. *He reinstates him with honor and joy.*
- V. *He goes out and pleads with his self-righteous elder son.*

Doctrine preached in this fashion, by Biblical illustration or Biblical example, is highly attractive to our hearers, and no pains should be spared on a clear and vivid presentation.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matthew 5, 13-16

The progress from the foregoing text to this one is very plain. There we saw how the sinner gets into the kingdom — here we see what he must be after he is in the kingdom. This is the general relation of the two texts to each other. Looking more closely we find that in getting into the kingdom (his father's house) the sinner leaves the world (the far country). The question is, Does he leave it so that he is forever separate from it, without any obligation or duty toward it? This text is the answer. He enters into *a new and striking relation to the world by having come into the kingdom*; formerly its dupe, slave and prey, he is now for it a salt, a light, a city on a hill. These illustrations point not only to the *duty* of those in the kingdom toward the world, i. e., the influence they must exert and the work they must do, but especially also to their *character*, to the kind of people they must be (salt, light, city), in order to exert such influence and do such work. This thought is emphasized by the reference to a possible loss of the essential quality belonging to Christ's disciples, and the sad consequences. The simplicity of the illustrative symbols of the text combined with such great depth and convincing power must ever attract the preacher, and feeling the force of Jesus' words in his own soul he will be enthused to make all his hearers feel it likewise.

Ἵμεῖς ἐστὲ τὸ ἄλας τῆς γῆς, *you*, with emphasis. Who are these people so prominently put forward? Evidently the disciples of Christ who believe in him, as they were gathered there on the Mount listening to his

preaching. And the number is properly extended to include *all believers* everywhere. Some have tried to narrow the word "you" to embrace only the apostles and in further application the pastors of the Church, although the calling of the twelve disciples as apostles is reported much later by Matthew, namely in chapter 10. Tholuck for instance states: "Also according to Luther, Bucer, and Chemnitz properly the office of the ministry is spoken of here. To be sure, the word refers primarily to those who are to season and light the world by being *called* thereto; but to the extent the universal priesthood of Christians is acknowledged these in general have a limited participation in that calling, as notably a comparison of Phil. 2, 15 with v. 14 and 1 Pet. 2, 9 with v. 16 shows." The idea of a *special call* of pastors and of a *limited participation* in it by the laity is nowhere indicated in the text, and no such separation is found in Phil. and Peter. "The fact that, according to our Lord's ordinance, preachers of the Gospel are to receive a special call by the Church before they are authorized to perform the public functions of the ministry and assume the pastoral office, has led some to entertain the opinion that only such as hold this special office are the salt of the earth. There is no reason in the text and the circumstances, as there is none in the nature of the subject set forth, that would justify such a limitation of the powers and privileges and duties of believers in Christ, who are a peculiar people and a royal priesthood and as such have the calling in common to show forth the praises of him who has called them to his marvelous light. The Gospel is given to every believer, else he could not be a member of Christ's kingdom, and the command is given to every one to make known the unsearchable riches of Christ, that others too may enjoy them." Loy, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 76. Dryander in preaching on the text says that many have the hazy

notion, which is a remnant of Romanism, or imported from there, that a certain indefinite something called *the Church* is the salt of the earth. *You* are the Church, if Christ is in you. The text refers to every *individual* believer. — **Are**, not “ought to be,” plainly and directly “are”; and Westcott and Hort accent ἐστέ on this account. This states *a fact*. In preaching we incline to turn the fact into an admonition. This may serve its purpose in the sermon, but even the admonition would be stronger if the solid incontrovertible fact in the case were set forth with more power and positiveness. A believer *is* salt; the nature of the faith in him makes him salt. If he is not salt he is no believer. — **Salt**. A great deal may be said about salt. Thus: “Salt is good,” Mark. 9, 50. It is necessary and indispensable. A symbol of purity for its whiteness and preservative qualities. Used in Jewish sacrifices, while honey and leaven were forbidden, Lev. 2, 13; Ezek. 43, 24; Mark 9, 49, “every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.” Used in cementing covenants, Numb. 18, 19; 2 Chron, 13, 5. Elisha purified the water of Jericho with salt, 2 Kgs. 2, 21. A pinch of salt was put in the child’s mouth at Baptism in the old church, with the words: *Accipe sal sapientiae in vitam aeternam*. The Arab held inviolate one with whom he had eaten salt. Among these many ideas about salt only one applies in this word of Christ: *its power to counteract corruption*. We omit the additional power to render food seasoned with it palatable. Meyer and Stelhorn mention only the first; the latter thus: “Since the fall of Adam and Eve, and in consequence of it, mankind, together with their abode and surroundings, have been in a state of corruption and decay, spiritually, morally, and physically. If it had not been for the seed that God in his mercy and loving-kindness has always been preserving from this mass of corruption, it would long ago have been impossible

for God to bear with it any longer. This holy seed, these children of God, they are the salt that by its divinely given powers, the means of grace and a life in faith and love, prevents the corruption and decay from becoming unbearable to God. And this is their office to the last of the days." Loy indeed gives the wider references: "The purpose of salt is to prevent decay and to impart savor and taste. It is a preservative and a relish. Applied to food it prevents putrefaction, and renders agreeable to the palate what would otherwise be insipid. 'Can that which is unsavory be eaten without salt?' Hence it was ordered to be used in sacrifices. 'Every obligation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt, neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt.' Lev. 2, 13. It was a symbol of purity. The offering should not be putrid or unseasoned. Therefore our Lord commands his disciples: 'Have salt in yourselves and have peace one with another.' Mark 9, 50. And St. Paul says: 'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how to answer every man.' Col. 4, 6." Yet in the application Loy too, holds to the single thought expressed negatively thus: Christians "are designed to be a purifying element in the mass of corruption which mankind has become through the malignant work of Satan"; and positively: "They are the salt through whom, by the appointment and blessing of God, salvation should come to all the ends of the earth." As far as "rendering palatable" is concerned it must be remembered that the corrupt world is never palatable to God because here and there Christians are found exerting their influence; men become palatable to God only when the salt so enters them that they in turn are salt, i. e. believers in Christ. Besser well says that the world would like us Chris-

tians better if we were honey, instead of being salt which is sharp and biting to the taste. Salt, properly speaking, is not a food, and it is a mistake to speak of it as such in a general way in preaching. — **Of the earth**, τῆς γῆς — in the other figure: the light of the world, τοῦ κόσμου. In extent these are alike — a tremendous reach for *all* the earth is meant; and for all of it only *one* salt: YOU! “Earth” is correlated with corruption and decay; “world” with darkness. — The question remains, How can Christ say so much of us? Answer, Because he dwells in us and has made us what we are, and because his grace and mercy are active in us changing us inwardly and making us effective so that he and his Spirit are able to work through us. The kingdom, and the power, and the glory are God’s — only indirectly ours.

But if the salt have lost its savor (ἀναλον γένηται, Mark 9, 50): ἐὰν μωρανθῇ, if it should become μωρόν, tasteless, imagines this as actually occurring, not as merely hypothetical, a case really impossible. Some have sought to verify this in nature, by referring to one or two travelers who claim to have found salt rock the outer crust of which was tasteless. But this is too remote for hearers such as Jesus was addressing. It is far better to remember that in those days the production of salt was not always perfect, with the result that other ingredients, with chemical properties, were mixed with the salt; these might eventually spoil the salt by making it bitter and thus useless for ordinary purposes. It seems best to assume that Jesus had such cases in mind when he spoke of the salt becoming “saltless,” ἀναλον, and μωρόν, tasteless. What occurred then at times with *natural* has occurred ever since and very frequently with *spiritual* salt; it may indeed lose its savor. “Christians may become heedless of their gracious endowments and negligent of their high calling, losing their salt by failing to use it for their

own seasoning and to impart it to others for their spiritual benefit. They may become careless in the use of the means of grace, and cease to meditate on those glorious things which are spoken of Christ and his kingdom and in the possession of which they once found their chief joy. They may grow indifferent to the heavenly truth of which the Savior bears witness and to the holiness by which believers are called and qualified to adorn the doctrine. They may gradually abandon the application of the salt to their own hearts and lives and, neglecting the beauty and blessedness of the kingdom of heaven, return to the beggarly elements of the world that lieth in wickedness. In short, believers may turn away from their blessed Savior and abandon their holy calling; they may fall from grace and lose their saltness, ceasing thus to belong to the blessed company who are the salt of the earth." Loy. — **Wherewith shall it be salted?** The unnaturalness comes out strikingly in this question. If salt be no more salty with what shall we salt it to make it salty again? "There is no salt of salt," Jansen. Having lost its usefulness for the one purpose for which it exists **it is good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men.** "Think of the solemn fulfillment of this word in the dead churches of the Orient which have literally been trodden under foot of the servants of the crescent; think of the terrible judgments that have come upon European Christian nations." Pank. There is something of scorn and derision in the words "under foot," for the world utterly scorns and despises these Christians who should be salt and yet are without the salt savor. A bitter truth lies in the word that a saltless and powerless sort of Christianity makes more unbelievers than all the infidel books that ever were written. But the real significance of this being cast out and trodden under foot is the judgment that inevitably

comes upon those who once were salt and are so no more.

V. 14. **Ye are the light of the world** — ὑμεῖς ἐστέ τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου. Again the **you** stands first. These are the same people as those addressed before. And it is again a *fact* that is expressed concerning them: they **are** the light of the world.—But a new and remarkable figure is introduced: **the light of the world**. Now Christ says of himself, “I am the light of the world,” John 8, 12: “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world,” John 9, 5; “Yet a little while is the light with you,” John 12, 35; and John himself declares, “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” John 1, 9. Compare Is. 49, 6: “I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.” Is. 60, 1, “Thy light is come.” The antithesis of light is darkness, and the condition of the world is described truly as darkness. “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not,” John 1, 5. “The rulers of the darkness of this world,” Eph. 6, 12. “The people that walked in darkness . . . that dwell in the land of the shadow of death,” Is. 9, 2. “Power of darkness,” Luke 22, 53. In and for this dark world not only Christ, but also his believers are “the light of the world,” he in a primary, they in a secondary sense, he immediately, they mediately, he with original, they with derived light, he as the sun, they as the moon with reflected light. This relation of Christ, the light of the world, to his disciples as the light of the world, is expressed, John 8, 12, “he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”; above see John 1, 9; John 12, 36. “While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light”; 1 Thess. 5, 5, “Ye are the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night,

nor of darkness." The word "children" points to a parent from whom their light as luminaries is derived. The same derivation of their light from God or Christ is suggested by the word "lamp" in the next verse of the text, for a lamp does not light itself. — In speaking of the disciples as the *salt* the correlated thought is: the earth is full of *corruption*; so the word *light* implies: the world is full of *darkness*. Do these images coincide, or are there two distinct and separate realms, one called corruption and one darkness? Our answer is that *substantially* the same thing is meant by the salt and the light, by the corruption and the darkness; *formally*, however, when the wicked, unbelieving, godless, and lost world is called corrupt we think more of the *foulness* of sin, the immorality, vice, shame, crime ("the whole world lieth in wickedness," malignant evil, 1 John 5, 19; "the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like," Gal. 5, 19-21; Rom. 1, 23-32); when this same world is called darkness we naturally think more of it as full of *ignorance, blindness, folly* ("having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts," Eph. 4, 18; "deceivableness of unrighteousness," 2 Thess. 2, 10; "many false prophets . . . shall deceive many," Matth. 24, 11). The two circles of thought, however, eventually converge, as when we speak of "the unfruitful works of darkness," Eph. 5, 11, we join the thought of corruption with that of blackness and night. The application then is plain: Christians *are* the salt by having received Christ in faith into their hearts, and they do the work of salt by their teaching and their lives; in the same way they are the

light by having thus received Christ, and do their work as the light by their teaching and their lives. Thus they counteract the filthy, foul, shameful, stinking condition of the world, a portrayal of which is given us every day in the newspapers; and thus they overcome also the ignorance, blindness, deception, falsehood, folly, perversion of the same world. And all this saving and salutary activity of Christ's followers is exerted through the Word and Sacraments entrusted to them, which have made them what they are and constantly produce in them the testimony and life of faith.

Christ uses two auxiliary illustrations bringing out the chief point in the figure of the light: as "the light" Christ's disciple *must shine out*. **A city set on a hill** simply cannot be hid, it will be visible from all directions in the country round about. It is ridiculous to think of hiding it. The mention of "a city" reminds us of Ps. 48, 2, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King"; and of Ps. 87, 3, "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." What a little band they were when Jesus uttered these words in an obscure corner of an obscure country. But he who sat there on the Mount spoke truly, his disciples cannot be hid, as a city on a hill or a mount cannot be hid. — **A lamp**, λύχνος, *lucerna*, a small receptacle for oil, of metal or earthenware, with a handle for carrying; it was usually placed upon a stand, λυχνία (Attic λυχνίον), mostly of metal, whenever it was intended to light up a room. Some old references have been hunted up saying that a bushel *was* at times put over a lighted lamp. But nobody *lights* (καίουσιν) a lamp in order to do this. That would be ridiculous. If the light is not wanted the lamp is simply not lit. The very fact that a person lights the lamp shows that light is

wanted, so the μῶδιον, a little smaller than our peck measure, is not clapped over it, but it is set on the λυχνία, the lampstand, that it may shine unto all that are in the house. — The two figures are really one, doubled for emphasis. Christians must shine; they must illumine the world. They are God's light placed here for that purpose. "A city" suggests a union of many individuals; a "house" with its one "lamp" the individual by himself. In the words, "Ye are the salt — the "light," and "let *your* light shine," this difference, however, does not come out.

V. 16. **Even so** = as a burning lamp on its stand. **Your light**, τὸ φῶς ὑμῶν — you *are* the light, as was said also of John the Baptist, "he *was* a burning and a shining light"; and you *have* the light, as it is put in Christ's words, "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall *have* the light of life." — This light **shines out before men in your good works**, especially, as Luther states, in the confessional works of the first table of the Law, "the three high commandments which refer to God's honor, name and Word," not, of course, omitting the second table and the love to our neighbor with its many works. In our day of humanitarian works and so-called "charity" the chief works by which the faith of Christ's disciples shines out, and must shine out, deserve especial attention. These are the acts of Christian worship, the support of Gospel preaching and teaching at home and afar, the stand against antichristian and unchristian forces and movements, the fearless confession of faith, the loyalty to Christian principles under all circumstances, the readiness to bear ridicule, slander, loss, and persecution of all kinds for the sake of our faith and convictions from the Word of God (this only is the cross). We all need the stimulus of Christ's command λαμψάτω. — And the object of all our good works thus rendered must not be self-glory, which

would vitiate everything, but to **glorify our Father which is in heaven**; purpose: ὅπως ἴδωσιν . . . δοξάσωσιν "Let your religious principles be so strictly avowed and maintained in your conduct, that the honor and glory resulting from your new life may be ascribed by all who witness it to its proper source, to your religious faith which God gave, and to the power of that grace by which *you are what you are* (1 Cor. 15, 10; Eph. 2, 10)." *Luth. Com.* Not all, by any means, who see our good works will glorify God, some will turn in enmity against him and us. But the salt and the light will do its work in some hearts and there will "glorify your Father which is in heaven" in that fullest sense of these word, by themselves turning to God and then joining us in such "good works."

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Whenever we preach about heaven and the blessedness hereafter, men cry out against us that what they need is a message for the life of today on earth. Well, here it is. No accusation against our religion is as false as this that it is impractical and unfit for the needs of this life. While our faith reaches beyond the clouds into all eternity, it stands here on earth, scattering blessings far and wide.

"And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said, bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake." 2 Kings 2, 19-22. Pank applies this narrative to the great cities of our time, pleasant to live in, but poisoned and full of death. The crying need is salt, the Gospel as exemplified in Christian men and women.

As good a way as any to preach on this text is to follow the analytical method of division. Since there are two, even three, figures to be taken care of the theme cannot well be drawn from them, and must thus be formulated to cover what the

sermon is to contain. — After we are in the Kingdom are we to forget the world or flee from it? After we have been received unto our Father's house and escaped from the "far country" are we to think of it no more? Christ gives us answer:

Our High Calling as Regards the World.

- I. We are to be the salt of the earth, counteracting the world's moral corruption.*
- II. We are to be the light of the world, removing its spiritual darkness.*
- III. We are to be a city set on a hill, a magnet and refuge for all the world's wanderers.*

Sommer is satisfied to elevate the "light" into the theme and to subordinate everything else to this concept:

Let Your Light Shine Before Men!

- I. After the example of him, who is the light of the world.*
- II. For the salvation of the world which would otherwise sink in darkness and corruption.*
- III. To the glory of the Father, who gives us light and power.*
- IV. For our own salvation, here and hereafter.*

Where the figures are as pronounced as in this text, one would like to color even the theme by their imagery, though this seems out of the question. Yet to show nothing at all of the figures and to use instead a formulation drawn from a general conception of what the text contains, is hardly to be recommended. So we have little pleasure in an outline like this: Christians are the Hope of the World: 1) Because Christ is in them; 2) Because Christ works through them; 3) Because Christ works to make the children of the world like them. — A brief outline, using the two chief figures, may be formed like this: Show Your Faith! 1) Effective like salt; 2) Far-reaching like light. Other simple formulations on this general order will be easy to arrange.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Luke 9, 18-26

This text takes us an important step farther than the last. There we saw that the sinner by getting into the Kingdom assumes a new relation to the world which he leaves. Formerly its dupe and slave, he is now its salt and its light. But this changed relation extends much farther. Besides the world to which he formerly belonged, and toward which his relation is now entirely different, there are two to whom he now belongs and toward whom his relation is therefore now entirely different from what it once was. These two are Christ and the Father. The next text will deal especially with the Father, the present one sets forth *the new relation toward Christ assumed by the sinner in getting into the kingdom*. Formerly he was like the "multitudes" in Christ's day (and they are so still), who did not know exactly what to make of Christ. They called him John the Baptist, or Elijah, or one of the old prophets risen again. Today they call him a great Teacher of men, the Ideal Man, a great religious Genius; some look at him as a new Moses or law-giver, a stern Judge to be feared and, if possible, placated (Luther before his conversion); others give him baser names and put him, together with his word and work, more on a level with common men. But for the sinner entering the kingdom all this is changed; for him, as for Peter of old, Jesus is now *the Christ of God*. And Jesus himself explains what that means and must mean as regards our relation to him. The Christ of God has suffered and died for us. Our new relation to him is: faith in this Christ and hope of salvation in him alone. Therefore

we deny our sinful self, stand ready to give up everything that may conflict with our faith and hope in him, and confess this our Savior before men everywhere unashamed. Let the preacher set forth this blessed relation of the saved sinner in the kingdom to Christ with such attractive and convincing words — testifying what is at the same time in his own soul — that they who have entered this relation may be confirmed in it with joy, and that others may be influenced and moved to enter it likewise. — Compare the parallel text for *Invocavit* on Matth. 16, 21-26 which sets forth the necessity of the Cross.

V. 18. **And it came to pass**, as so often, introduces a new and important occurrence. Jesus was praying **alone**, as the R. V. translates, but ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν προσευχόμενον . . . συνῆσαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταί reads as if while the praying was going on the disciples were together with Jesus; hence the Am. Com. translates κατὰ μόνας: "apart." As Jesus was praying apart the disciples were with him. He had left the populous neighborhood of the sea of Galilee, where he had wrought and taught so long and faithfully, because of the growing opposition that had gradually developed to a dangerous pitch. First he had gone to the northwest, to the borders of Tyre and Sidon; then we hear of him in the coasts of the Ten Cities, toward the east of the lake; finally he came directly north, working a miracle at Bethsaida, and approaching Cæsarea Philippi where he remained for some while. His work in Galilee was almost finished. The end was approaching, and with this before him he began to prepare his disciples. Compare the author's *His Footsteps*, p. 311-313. Cæsarea — *Cæsar's* city, so named in honor of the emperor Tiberius; and Philip's Cæsarea because rebuilt by him and thus distinguished from the other Cæsarea on the Mediterranean. Its population was largely heathen. Here

Jesus seems to have remained undisturbed, devoting himself to this disciples. — **He was praying**, ἐν τῷ εἶναι αὐτὸν προσευχόμενον is a case of the paraphrastic pres. infin., and conveys strongly the thought of continuance. It is Luke who likes to draw attention to this practice of Jesus in connection with various important acts. One such is the announcement of the cross now to be made. Following Jesus we too will do nothing of importance without prayer. To do a great thing well we must first do that other thing well which may seem little, but which in its way is the greatest of all. — The disciples **were with him**, συνῆσαν, the imperfect tense here points to a continued remaining with him, undisturbed by the crowds that usually broke in on the little circle. — The preparation having been made Jesus asks the question, **Who do the multitudes say that I am?** This question is preparatory; it is asked for the sake of the disciples, for them to focus their attention upon the wrong and uncertain opinions of the multitudes, in order that they might set themselves firmly against them. The same thing must be done today; οἱ ὄχλοι are still about us, and their notions are wrong and uncertain. Our conviction and confession is to be set like a rock against the waves of their false and shifting opinions. The great question is always first the person of Christ, then this work. Instead of Luke's "me" Matthew has "the Son of man." He it is who divides the hearts of men the world over.

V. 19. The answer is readily made. **John the Baptist** — this was the opinion of Herod (Matth. 14, 2) who had killed faithful, courageous John and whose conscience smote him with superstitious fear. Many evidently shared his notion, for the disciples put this forward as the general answer to Jesus' question, adding the remainder for completeness, ἄλλοι δέ . . . ἄλλοι δέ. — **Elijah** — this idea was based on a misap-

plication of Mal. 4, 5, which prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist, Matth. 11, 14; 17, 12. It was only a variation of the former opinion, considering Jesus as only a forerunner of the Messiah, no doubt because men failed to see in him the outward splendor of the great expected King, even the more spiritual missing the works of judgment and destruction of his enemies with overwhelming power. — **One of the old prophets is risen again**, προφήτης τις τῶν ἀρχαίων, "some prophet of those of old," or as Matthew has it (16, 14), "Jeremias or one of the prophets." The notion about Jeremiah was based only on legends, but these still find great credence among those who claim they "cannot believe" the truth. "Our reason, without the light and grace of revelation, will not enable us to receive Christ according to the true faith. They who believe that Christ is nothing higher than a holy man and wise teacher, or than 'one of the prophets,' still walk in darkness, and do not truly know him." Luther. Jesus now asks his second question, and we begin to see his aim.

V. 20. Ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναι; — a question for all men and all ages, and the emphasis is strong on the first word: YOU. For *you* everything depends on who *you* say Jesus is. — **Peter** makes the answer as on so many previous occasions. It is the repetition and yet at the same time the crown of previous confessions, such as that of Nathanael, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel," John 1, 49; of the disciples in the boat, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God," Matth. 14, 33; of Peter himself in the name of the rest when many turned back and forsook Jesus, "Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God," John 6, 69. — **The Christ**, τὸν χριστόν (comp. χρίω). This originally was not a proper name. The corresponding Hebrew word *Messiah*, in the sense of the Anointed One, was given in reference to their

consecration, as an official title, to *priests* (Ex. 28, 41; Lev. 4, 3, 5; 8, 12). In 1 Sam, 2, 10; Ps. 18, 50, *King* and *Anointed* occur as equivalent terms. The spiritual import of anointing is specially indicated in Is. 61, 1, which passage prophetically describes the Redeemer, Luke 4, 17-21. The inspired prophets taught the Jews that they should be delivered from all evils which they suffered, by a descendant of David, whom they described as a *prophet, priest* and *king*. At a later period, all these offices, as combined in the person of the Savior, were summarily expressed in the one Hebrew word *Messiah*, Dan. 9, 25-26." *Luth. Com.* — **Of God**, "whom God has set forth and sent as the *Messiah*," Meyer; who belongs to God, and this in general, embracing not only what pertains to his mission, but also what pertains to his person, his work, his success, etc. This name "the Christ of God" is compact and powerful. The heart of the Gospel beats in it. It is the name of the pearl of great price, of the treasure-trove in the field. It is the inmost kernel in true faith. "In these words the whole Apostles' creed is included," Luther; but not yet in the consciousness of Peter and his companions, although the time is fast approaching when they will be able to confess in St. Paul's later words: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified," 1 Cor. 2, 2 or in Peter's own: "God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ," Acts 2, 36.

V. 21. There is nothing strange about this charge and command when one looks at the reason appended, and when one remembers how little the disciples grasped the essentials of the *Messiah's* work. They were absolutely unready for the task of preaching Christ as the *Messiah*. But in due time, when ready at last, he who ordered their silence now would order their preaching, Go and teach all nations! — Christ

uses his favorite name, **the Son of man**, in the announcement of his coming passion and glorification. It points to his lowliness indeed, but at the same time, as *the* Son of man (with the Greek article) it singles him out and lifts him above all the sons of men. And so the name has here an especial fitness, both when we think of his passion, and when we look at his exaltation in the resurrection. (Luke 17, 22, in the text for the Second Sunday in Advent.) — Δεῖ with the infinitive designates every kind of necessity — **must!** But why “must”? Because of the compulsion of love, and because of the requirements of our redemption, for which no smaller price would suffice. The disciples did not understand it until the work was done. — **Suffer many things** — the whole passion history in three words: δεῖ πολλά παθεῖν. Jesus does not detail the story, he merely summarizes the tremendous fact. — **And be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes.** The verb ἀποδοκιμάζω denotes rejection after examination, the simple verb is used of metals that are tested, the adjective of coins found to be genuine. The Jewish leaders in a strong way had already rejected Jesus, but their rejection would culminate in that irrevocable and fatal act when they would cry, Crucify him — we have no king but Cæsar! The “elders” were the non-clerical members of the Sanhedrim, chosen probably for their standing and political influence; the “chief priests” were the men of high-priestly families; and the “scribes” were the official interpreters of the law and tradition. These, the court of Seventy, were the head and representatives of the entire nation. — **And be killed** — this is the terrible climax. Such really was “the Christ of God” the disciples had just now confessed. If their confession was far above that of the multitudes, Christ’s own concerning himself is far above theirs, or rather let us say fills theirs out as it should be, with

contents of full reality and truth. — **And**, this is the third *καί*, but it is different from the others, bringing in a totally unexpected thing, like a mighty *ἀλλά*. We know how far short of it the disciples in their thought stopped. Yet the “*must*” at the head of the sentence extends also to this declaration: **And must be raised up**, ἐγερθῆναι. Without the resurrection — no Christ of God. — Luke does not report what Matthew and Mark add about Peter’s effort to dissuade Jesus from his passion, but at once proceeds.

V. 23. Luke does not inform us who is meant by **all**, but it is plain that more than the Twelve (αὐτοῖς — v. 21) are meant. From Matthew and Mark we learn there was a break between the foregoing dialog and this dictum of Christ; after the rebuke to Peter, as Mark tells the story, “when he (Jesus) had called *the people* unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them” etc. Ἐλεγεν indicates that he spoke at length. — Θέλει refers to the will. Jesus forces no one against his will, but with his word and grace reaches out to win the will, this center of our personality, so that each one “would come after him.” In the words, **if any man would come after me**, εἰ θέλει, better: “if any man *is willing*,” we have the condition of reality; Jesus is thinking of someone as actually willing; the following imperatives thus are to the point, they are not hanging in the air, dependent on a condition that may not be fulfilled. There is a universal reach, going out to “all” indeed, for τις is any one, without an exception, and ὅπισθι μου ἕρχασθαι is all that anyone need to do to be saved, namely follow and tread in Jesus’ steps as sheep in their shepherd’s. Our invitation and call to come after him lies in the words. — **Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me**. This is what “coming after him” who has just revealed the mystery of his passion and glorification, must include if it is real and true. The three state-

ments are the counterpart to the three things Christ said of his own passion; only these three are not consecutive as those are, but different sides of one and the same act, namely "coming after Jesus." **Let him deny himself** (ἀρνησάσθω, aor., one definite act), as Peter afterwards denied and abjured himself before the soldiers in the high priest's courtyard. Compare the explanation of Matth. 16, 24 in the text for *Invocavit*. This "self" is not merely one or the other sinful inclination or habit, but the entire self as it has lived hitherto, careless, indifferent, apart from God, pleasing the flesh and its desires. A picture of this self is the prodigal in the far country. To "deny himself" means to turn inwardly from this self and all its way, overcome with the conviction that its end must be eternal death. "Be it observed that this is not 'self-denial' as currently understood, a term applied to the denial to self of something or other which perhaps self cares very little about, but something much more radical. It is the denial of self involving as its correlative the giving of the life to God. It is the death of self-will, and the birth of God-will, as the central force of the life." *Exp. of the B.*, IV, 755. — In the place of self which is denied there is to be no blank, but each must **take up his cross daily**; ἀράτω, likewise aorist. The adverbial modifier καθ' ἡμέραν, distributive, "day by day," goes to both verbs; in a definite act day by day whoever means to follow Jesus must deny himself and take up his cross. A strange trade, to give up self and take the cross! The "cross" is every bitterness which the sweet Christ of God pours out for his followers; and "his" cross may well be taken as the particular burden intended by Christ for each individual follower. Let us remember there is no "cross" without Christ, for all the ills and pains and terrors that come upon non-Christians are not crosses, but fruits of sin and unbelief and

thus signs of God's displeasure. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked," Ps. 32, 10, but no crosses. The Christian's cross is a mark of God's favor, as is the Iron Cross formerly given by the German emperor for heroic deeds in war, and the Victoria Cross bestowed by the English Sovereign. *Λαμβάνειν* is best explained by this custom. The soldier does not go and take the cross of his own volition, it is tendered to him and thus taken and worn as a mark of high favor. So it is with Christ's followers, and this "daily," the new relation to Christ, the walk in the light and sunshine of his favor, is marked by continual taking of the cross. Whoever casts his cross away sinks back into the former deplorable state. The cross signifies those hurts which come to us for confessing Christ, hence not the common aches and pains of life. — **And follow me**, *ἀκολουθεῖτω*, present tense, "continue to follow." We might say that denying self and taking up the cross is already to follow Christ; but "follow me" here is plainly an addition to the previous thought; to follow Jesus is impossible as long as we are linked to self and as long as we dread the cross. To follow Christ here means the active life of discipleship, keeping in thought, word, and deed close to Christ's person, will, and word. — But is not all this extremely hard? Let us say it at once, it is utterly impossible — for us and any ability of our own. But it is both possible and is constantly done with success by all those who do not wilfully resist the Savior when his call and grace reach them. The Gospel is "the *power* of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," Rom. 1, 16; and "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. 2, 13.

V. 24. Here is *θέλειν* again, but the condition here is one of expectancy: "whosoever shall will to save his life." Note that in the second sentence there is no *θέλειν*, there is no need, for whoever really follows

Christ indeed "shall lose" his life. Christ speaks paradoxically in order to fasten his words in men's minds and cause them to search and question as to his meaning. The paradox is solved by the double sense in which τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ is taken. Whosoever sets his will to save his life, attempting it in the way of the world, striving for earthly treasures, etc., may indeed succeed, but he will have saved only "his life," ψυχὴν, as it dwells among these temporalities of earth, and having done only that, he has in reality lost it, namely in so far as the eternal things of its existence are concerned. But whosoever follows Christ and thereby ("for my sake") "loses his life" in regard to temporal things, ease, honor, money, friends, perhaps in martyrdom shedding his blood, *he* (note the emphatic οὗτος) "shall save it," in the higher sense of the word, by obtaining eternal blessedness (which alone is true life) here and hereafter. The world is full of people who would save their lives and succeed in their fashion, but lose them eternally. They put all their desires and faculties upon earthly things, business, pleasure, power, success in this life, omitting or relegating to the rear the Christ of God, the means of grace, the Church and all things spiritual; and so they lose their lives in the very act of saving them. The preacher should paint vividly the striking examples before us all on every side.

V. 25. Another *ῥάω*, **for** to be followed by a third, everyone of them ushering in a striking reason to work conviction in the soul. **The whole world** is put last in the first clause, and **his own self**, *ἑαυτόν*, first in the next, bringing them together in striking comparison. Comp. the *Invocavit* text, Matth. 16, 26. "The whole world" is certainly a great deal. No man ever did gain it or will. How little of it we really get — one small corner, one little span of time, one little

round of its good things, and at last one little narrow, cold chamber in the ground! But if one did get it all, what would he have if he lost *ἑαυτόν*? Here Christ teaches the supreme value of yourself and myself, or we may say of the soul. Our gain is supreme and everlasting if we lose no matter what, and save ourselves in Jesus Christ. The rich man in the parable gained a great deal when he dwelt in worldly luxury, but Lazarus in rags, amid dogs, feeding on crumbs gained more. Christ in his own masterly way puts the matter into the form of a question which answers itself; to give any other answer is to utter nonsense and folly. Note, too, that the thought is expressed by means of three participles attached to *ἀνθρώπος*, making the whole of it compact and strong: this kind of man (described by the participles) what does he gain? Nothing; he loses everything. This idea of loss is made stronger by the doubling: "lose or forfeit."

V. 26. A new argument and reason is added, by which at the same time the former two are increased in strength. The construction of the sentence is the same as before, only here there is a return to the form of positive declaration; the thought is of expectancy, *ὅς ἔν* and the subj. followed by the fut. pass., to which is added the temporal clause *ὅταν* with the subj. "Ashamed," Matth. 10, 33: "Whosoever shall deny me before men." See the hymn: "Jesus, and shall it ever be, A mortal man ashamed of Thee!" To be ashamed of Jesus is to know him, and yet not to acknowledge and confess him. The number of those ashamed of Jesus is very great. They fear the ridicule of worldly men; they withdraw from Christ's brethren, because they appear perhaps as a small and humble flock, meeting in some insignificant church building; they hear Christ's Word abused and mocked and fear to defend it; they yield to the demands and sollicita-

tions of unbelieving men, ashamed to show their Christian colors by rebuking what is sinful and Christless. They always find some excuse, but their action is fatal. — Christ in a flash rolls up the curtain of his glorious return at the last day. Ah, that we might always keep our eyes upon that vision of **the Son of man, when he cometh in his own glory, and the glory of the Father, and of the holy angels.** A glimpse of it three of the disciples would have presently on the Mount of Transfiguration. “His own glory” is mentioned in his prayer, John 17, 5, “the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” It is the essential glory of the Son of God, and we shall see it as it fills his human nature completely at that day when he sits on the throne of judgment. “The glory of the Father” shall also be upon him, according to Phil. 2, 9, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,” etc. On that day all who have been ashamed of him whom God hath so exalted shall behold his glory with dismay. The glorious angels of God will come with the Son of man and thus lend their glory to him who created and gave it to them. — **Of him shall the Son of man be ashamed** — just reward and retribution. A word that involves eternal rejection and damnation. But blessed are all who now are not ashamed of the Christ of God; for on that day he shall not be ashamed of them, but shall call them brethren and lift up their heads in eternal glory.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The formula of application will not satisfy this text: as Christ bore the cross — so must we. That would cheapen all that Christ here says of himself. Not even this answers fully: as Peter believed, confessed, etc. — so must we. For this throws Peter too much into the foreground, and leaves Christ too far in the background. Besides, our cross bearing has already been treated on *Invocavit*, and as far as affliction and consolation are concerned these will be treated on the 15th and 16th Sunday

after Trinity. So let us use appropriation. Put Christ forward, and us in relation to him: Christ for us — ours by faith and complete devotion. We may also recall Spurgeon's remark. "Nothing provokes the devil like the Cross. Modern theology has for its main object the obscuration of the doctrine of atonement. These modern cuttle-fish make the water of life black with their ink. They make out sin to be a trifle, and the punishment of it to be a temporary business; and thus they degrade the remedy by underrating the disease." Spurgeon. We have already summarized our text as here setting forth the sinner's new relation to Christ when now the sinner has entered the kingdom. So we preach on a theme like this:

How the Christ of God Captivates the Hearts in His Kingdom.

- I. They confess the glory of his person.*
- II. They trust in his passion and exaltation.*
- III. They take up their cross and follow him.*
- IV. They shall not be ashamed before him at the last day.*

Note how Christ stands out in a sermon of this type. — Here is another:

Our Blessed Relation to Christ in His Kingdom on Earth.

- I. We embrace him as the Christ of God.*
- II. We follow him bearing our cross.*
- III. We shall meet him unashamed at the last day.*

Note the progress in the verbs: embrace — follow — shall meet. All the material of the text finds ample room in these analytical parts. — Still keeping Christ forward, we may preach on

A Study in Eternal Profit and Loss.

- I. All human notions as against the Christ of God.*
- II. The whole world as against the soul.*
- III. A little cross in time as against the glory of eternity.*

So also in the following:

The Real Tests of Discipleship as They Center in Christ.

- I. In his person; II. In his work; III. In confessing him; IV. In bearing the cross after him.*

Christ's Followers Must Grow Christlike.

- I. *By enshrining the Christ of God in their hearts by faith.*
- II. *By keeping his passion and resurrection before their eyes.*
- III. *By taking up their cross daily and following him.*
- IV. *By losing their life for his sake and thus saving it.*
- V. *By looking forward to his glorious appearance unashamed before men.*

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matthew 21, 28-32

A plain and simple text is this parable and its application, recorded by Matthew only. The preacher cannot go far astray from the line of thought in this cycle when he explains and applies this text with its one great thought as he finds it. He will warn against the Pharisee as he is imaged in the second son; he will urge the example of the publican and harlot as portrayed in the first son. What else can he do? It will aid, however, to remember that the text as placed in our cycle has something to say about the kingdom of God, which also is mentioned here by name. If we ask what it necessarily must say, we may make the *negative* side especially prominent and turn the text into the warning, Beware of self-righteousness; or, *Do not become a Pharisee in the kingdom of God!* That would answer very well. But it seems better to the writer to let the *positive* side have the prominence, since that of itself does justice also to the negative, and at the same time takes care of the important words "father" and "son," throwing into prominence also the cardinal question in the text, Whether of the twain did *the will of his father?*

The question, **What think ye?** is a direct appeal to the judgment of Christ's hearers, which judgment the further direct question, "Whether of the twain did the will of his father?" helps to direct to the right conclusion. In this way Jesus repeatedly made his appeal; see Matth. 17, 25; 18, 12. By using a parable whose application is completely veiled at first he enables his hearers to give an impartial verdict on their own conduct, which ought to turn them the more

readily from their evil course. So Nathan did with David. Had Jesus charged the Pharisees directly with their sin they would have resorted to defense at once, but here they are convicted before they can think of defense, in fact, they have surrendered before they know that the parable refers to them. — The parable thus introduced with a question is simplicity itself. **A man had two sons,** τέκνα. The “man” stands for God and his “two sons” for the two great divisions into which all to whom the kingdom of God has come fall. A double grace appears in the simple, affectionate τέκνα. One may well ask, Was the first still a τέκνον, a child of the father, when he answered him, I will not? And when the second “went not,” was he still a child? Nor is the grace that still leaves the endearing word where there would be cause to put a word of far different kind, withheld by Christ in his application of the parable; for he shuts no one out of the kingdom of God, not even the Pharisees, saying to them that the publicans and harlots “go into the kingdom of God before you,” implying that the Pharisees still may come after. — **And he came to the first and said.** In some ancient copies this first is put second, in an effort to make the parable fit the Jew and Gentile, in which case the Jew would have to come first. The reference to Jew and Gentile is not indeed to be excluded, yet the parable goes deeper and farther. — **Son, go work today in the vineyard.** The English renders the Greek *asydeton* ὕπαγε ἐργάζου finely; no καί is needed. This is not a master; it is a father speaking: τέκνον, child, go work! The deepest kind of obligation, that of filial love and obedience, is here involved. Jesus might have used other imagery, but he has a purpose in choosing this, for God shows us indeed *fatherly* love, and we owe him *filial* love, affection, obedience, and service on our part, even if we fail to render it. Our true relation to God,

as thus brought out in the ground-work of this parable, must form the basis of the sermon on this text, and so it will fit well into its place after the sermon on the Christ of God. — There is **work** for God's children on earth. It is **vineyard** work, which recalls other parables of Jesus. The particulars about this work are not made prominent here, but evidently it includes all our proper service to God in his kingdom on earth. But the application which Christ makes of the parable compels us to take the "work" not in the sense of Christian service as distinct from faith, but as combined with it, growing out of it and an evidence of it. The sense in the father's gentle command is, Son, go show thyself as a son today by working in the vineyard! In his application Jesus speaks of those who "go into the kingdom," of those who "believed" John the Baptist. This suggests passages like John 6, 40: "This is the *will of him* that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and *believeth* on him, may have everlasting life." But it would be too narrow an interpretation to make "work in the vineyard" mean only faith as one becomes a child of God; it signifies rather the life as marked by faith and the fruits of faith, after the manner of Christ's saying John 15, 8: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; *so shall ye be my disciples.*" — And this helps to explain the word **today**. True faith and love should ever dwell in the heart, to be called on as needed, and then ("today") it will show itself in work, whatever kind may be required.

The reply plainly describes what sort of "son" this was. **And he answered and said, I will not.** There is a bluntness and rudeness in this answer which is the very opposite of filial respect and love. "He has dismissed even the hypocrisies with which others cloak their sin; cares not to say, like those invited guests, 'I pray thee have me excused'; but flatly re-

fuses to go." Trench. Οὐ θέλω — the *will* was wrong. This is always the case, even when men do not admit it. Jesus says concerning Jerusalem, "how often would I . . . but ye would not." Wilful resistance is the great sin that leads to damnation. We here quote Wiese who makes an application, of course, only an application, with a wide range, of the οὐ θέλω: "What an act of Thomas, when the no: 'I will not believe,' gave place at last to the unshakeable certainty: 'My Lord and my God!' Or of Paul, when the no of his kicking against the pricks and of his discouragement grew silent before the yea of his complete obedience: 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' Go thou and do likewise. Didst thou say no to the commandments of the Holy One in Israel, to the requirement of the divine Son of man: 'This is an hard saying; who can hear it?' — do thou repent and confess: 'Thy truth is better than life.' 'I delight to do thy will.' — Wast thou admonished to become reconciled and friendly, and didst thou say no: 'I will try to forget, but I can never forgive' — let it repent thee, and let the merciful, reconciling love of Jesus overcome thy hard pride. — Wast thou in severe tribulation from above or from below, stumbling because of men: 'No; justice is denied me before God and my prayer is not heard' — repent of thy doubt and thy impatience, and wrestle on till thou reach the yea of the Canaanitish woman and the sacred daring of Jacob: 'I will not leave thee, except thou bless me!' — Was it hard for thee to rely on grace alone to confess thyself a sinner, even with the best of life — come to thyself, deny thy self-righteousness and unholy pride: 'Yea, Lord, I am no more worthy to be called thy son.' — Did it seem unnecessary to thee what is done of vineyard work in the Church of Jesus Christ afar in the heathen world, and at home in inner mission work and among the scattered brethren, and didst thou

turn from the collectors with a cold-hearted no: 'What is that to me'? — repent of thy lack of love and go work in the vineyard by giving and by praying according to thy Savior's word: 'If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.' — In the first son Jesus pictures that class, of which the publicans and harlots stand as representatives, who have thrown off the yoke, openly and boldly transgressing the laws of God, done evil as "with both hands earnestly." — Trench. **But afterward he repented himself.** There was much to cause this repentance. Think of the "father" and the father's love as expressed in the word "son"; of the strong obligation resting on the son, whether he yielded to it or not; of the unnatural wrong and wickedness of his refusal and evil course. The same power of grace still goes out to the sinner in the Word of God, effectually working to turn him from every evil way. "He repented himself," μεταμεληθεῖς, was sorry; not so strong as μετανοέω, yet here in substantially the same sense. — For he **went**, entered the vineyard and worked, i. e. did the father's will. Jesus explains it of the act of the publicans and harlots in "believing" John the Baptist. Luke gives us the fuller statement: "Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you" (3, 12-13). Here is repentance with its fruits, as demanded by John, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance," Luke 3, 8. So it must be with every one who would do the will of his Father in heaven. In fact, this is the way our lives should be from the beginning to the end in the kingdom of God on earth. Every time the will in any way refuses to obey, it must return: "he repented himself, and went."

V. 30. We should not suppose that he came to the second because the first refused, rather that he

came to the second just as he came to the first. He wanted *both* to work in the vineyard; God wants all of us in his blessed work. There is such a thing as one taking another's place, but only because that other refuses to take it himself; if he would take it there would be place enough still for the first. — **And said likewise**, thus showing that both were equally desired. *Aequitas vocationis*, Bengel. The call is not stronger in the one case than in the other, so that either might excuse himself saying, I would have come if the father had asked me as he asked my brother. — **And he answered and said, I go, sir,** ἐγώ, κύριε. Sounds almost as if he were running for the door, catching up spade and pruning hook from the wall. This was ready compliance. So it should be, really be, with every soul among us, Let no one think that the best course is first to decline, then to accept. The best course is never to decline; but it is better to accept at last, than to pretend acceptance while one really declines. The Jews said, I go, sir: "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the Lord." Ex. 19, 8. Matth. 23, 3: "They say and do not." In the κύριε some try to find a hint of the *servile* spirit improper for a child. It is rather a *respectful* word used in contrast to the disrespectful answer of the other. — **And went not.** "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." Is. 29, 13. Pank in applying this text to his hearers asks whether this brother is still alive, and finds that he is. He then refers to those who sing at the Reformation festival:

"And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child and wife,
They yet have nothing won;
The kingdom ours remaineth"—

and then deny their faith and leave their church for a bit of mammon; to the children at the confirmation altar saying in chorus, Yea, Lord, we will serve thee, work in thy garden, root out sin with the sharp hoe of repentance, plant the seed of thy Word, water it with prayer, be content where thou dost place us, in sunshine, or amid thorny briars, and be faithful unto death — and soon forget and leave all undone; to the bridal couple at the altar and their sacred, I will, Lord — and the hard, bitter words, the strife that follows, the disruption of the sacred tie perhaps. Likewise he mentions the vows in the confessional service; that given in private to father, or mother, or preacher, or in prayer to God himself — and how often these too are forgotten again and broken.

The facts having been clearly and succinctly stated Christ now turns to his hearers for their judgment on the case. V. 31: **Whether of the twain did the will of his father?** He asks *did*, ἐποίησεν, disregarding what each at first *said*. The answer was so self-evident that the Pharisees could not evade it, as they had done in the case before. — It may have been with reluctance, certainly it was without catching the bearing of their answer, **they say, The first**. Of course, not completely as he should have done, but comparatively when set beside the other. Mark how these Pharisees pronounce judgment on themselves. So will every man who refuses to do the Father's will utter at last his own damning verdict. Did not David himself do it before Nathan? The case against the transgressor, when viewed in the clear light of truth and reality, will be so overwhelmingly simple and strong, that he himself will either do what the Pharisees did here, damn himself, or what the foolish fellow in that other parable did, remain dumb. — And now Jesus makes his application searching and piercing indeed, "for the Word of God is quick, and power-

ful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." Heb. 4, 12.

A solemn **Amen** opens the application. An authoritative **I say unto you** seals the truth of what is now uttered. Jesus without hesitation names the two brothers as he finds them before him: **publicans and harlots — you yourselves** (Pharisees). So spake ancient Nathan: Thou art the man! And mark you, these are *brothers*. So today the most haughty and self-righteous men are brothers of the outcast and criminal. "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3, 22. Romans 2 and 3 put Jew and Gentile on the same basis as brothers. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy on all." Rom. 12, 32. This juxtaposition no doubt cut the Pharisees deeply, but even more the statement that the publicans and harlots **go into the kingdom of God before you**, προάγουσιν. So Jesus was relegating the Pharisees to the rear — putting publicans and harlots ahead of them! This was bound to offend — namely the sinful pride of the Pharisees. But Jesus is never afraid of the offense thus caused by the truth. It enters as a knife indeed, but it heals the sore boil as a balm. But if men *will* grow angry and resent the truth, they may do so — to their own undoing. Christ is careful not to close the door to the Pharisees. "Go before you" still leaves open the chance to come after. Such is the long-suffering and patience of him who came to seek and to save the lost. His words "set in the strongest light the welcome fact that the salvation of God is for the chief of sinners, for those who have been rudest and most rebellious in their first answers to the divine appeal; and then, while they condemn so very strongly the self-deceiver, it is not for the purpose of covering him with confusion, but in order to open his

eyes and save him from the net in which he has set his feet. Even in that terrible sentence which puts him lower down than open and disgraceful sinners, there is a door left still unlatched for him to enter." *Exp. of the B.*

V. 32: **John came unto you in the way of righteousness.** "The particular habits of thinking, feeling, and acting, or the manner of life, as controlled by any leading doctrine of general principle, is sometimes compared to a *way* or *road* leading in a certain direction (Prov. 11, 20; 16, 31); hence the Christian religion, which is pre-eminently the *way* to righteousness and heaven, receives this general name . . . The sense is: John the Baptist taught both by his precepts and by his example the true way of becoming righteous and of pleasing God." *Luth. Com.* One would think that John, stern and ascetic, would appeal especially to the Pharisees, but it was not so. The reason is not far to seek; because "he preached the Baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," Luke 3, 3. So "the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him." Luke 7, 30. Jesus puts it briefly here: **And ye believed him not,** οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε, the aorist for the fact. In the test that John brought for them they failed utterly. And their boastful pretence only added to their condemnation. — **But the publicans and harlots believed him,** ἐπίστευσαν, note the contrast, and again the fact which could not be denied; and in the word "believe" lies the implication that they made a complete change, a saving turn in their lives. The thing was visible; Jesus can say to the Pharisees: **when ye saw it,** ἰδόντες. Luke describes the visible change: "And all the people that heard him (John), and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the Baptism of John." Luke 7, 29. Yet even this did

not prevail on the Pharisees. The example alone is not meant, but with it the demonstration that here was a power able to change and save great and acknowledged sinners. In spite of it **ye did not even repent yourselves afterward**. Here the same word for "repent" as above, become sorry. **That ye might believe him** — for which, as it were they then had a double reason, namely not only the saving truth as preached by John, but also the example of great sinners saved. And so the very richness of God's grace toward sinners shuts out those who want to enter, remain in, and rise to the highest honors in his kingdom by their own merit without grace. These thinking themselves surely and safely in the kingdom, and in the very best relation to God, are making the most fatal mistake of their lives. They alone are in the kingdom, and in the right relation to their heavenly Father, who do that Father's will, in the Gospel sense of the word.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

This text is aimed at the people who are proud of their Christian respectability and are in danger of forgetting their sinfulness and the necessity of true repentance; not indeed to oust them from the church, but to awaken them and make them truly Christ's own. — When you see sinners going into the kingdom, some of them very great and notorious sinners, then do not turn away and refuse to enter with them; but stop and think: if these can enter, then there must be an entrance for you; and if the Lord allows these to enter he will surely cleanse them, and so you will after all, if you enter, find yourself in the cleanest of company. For only without are dogs and sorcerers and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. Rev. 22, 15. Do not remain without! — The text consists of a parable and its interpretation or application, but no preacher will split the text in this way for his sermon. He will almost automatically split vertically, first the one son, then the other, and combined with each the Lord's application. We may thus arrive at the following:

The Story of the Two Unequal Sons, and the Question Whether They Are Still Alive.

- I. *The son who said, I go, sir, and went not — is he still alive?* The Jewish people as a whole; the Pharisee — he lives in all who merely pretend faith, obedience, service, holiness, etc.
- II. *The son who said, I will not, but repented and went — is he still alive?* Publicans and harlots under John's preaching — all who have turned aside, who repent and return in true faith.

The Unequal Sons—In Which One Am I Portrayed?

- I. *In the one with the wicked yea?*
- II. *Or in the other with the repentant nay?*

A three-part arrangement may be secured by treating the idea of sonship separately, then adding secondly the two forms of disobedience, and thirdly the true obedience.

Our Relation to the Father in His Kingdom.

- I. *It ought to be that of true sons to their father.*
- II. *It cannot be that if either we refuse obedience, or promising it omit it.*
- III. *It can be that only if by believing we do our Father's Gospel will.*

The parable itself presents only two sons, and the application also is only dual. Yet each son does two things. So we may arrive at a four-part division, under the question:

Are You Doing the Father's Gracious Will in His Kingdom?

- I. *There are some who refuse to do it and never change.*
- II. *There are some who pretend to do it and do not.*
- III. *There are some who refuse to do it and repent.*
- IV. *There are some who consent to do it and do it.*

Two other possible arrangements offer themselves. We may lift out one of the two sons and from the one reach out and cover also the other. Here is an effort based on the second son:

The Son Who Said, I Go, Sir!

- I. *Fine, but in this case false. Lots of mere talk like that in the church.*
- II. *Always deceptive and dangerous.*
- III. *Confession confirmed by obedience alone safe.*

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Mark 4, 26-29

In this text a new turn is taken in the great theme of our after-Trinity cycle, the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. It is seen at once when we observe that this text speaks of *life and its unfolding in growth unto maturity*. Looking back, we will see the progress in the line of thought traced so far: the great kingdom of heaven on earth is for sinners, and coming into it sinners assume a new relation to the world to which they once belonged, to the Savior whom they now confess and follow bearing the cross, and to the Father whose obedient children they now are. Here our text follows, and points to that wonderful thing in us by which all this change has been brought about — *the new life in the soul*. It is the mark of every sinner in the kingdom. And more shall be said of it in the coming texts, namely how by it we shall become true relatives of Christ; how Christ, who is this our life, is a priceless treasure for us; and how there is ever danger that our life and treasure may be lost. But here the life itself with the mystery of its being and the wonder of its unfolding is traced out for us.

V. 26. This simple parable is recorded only by Mark. We cannot accept the speculation of those (Weiss, Pfeiderer, Holtzmann) who think that this is Mark's abbreviated version of the parable of the tares; it is a distinct and independent parable with its own scope and lesson. — **And he said**, the descriptive ἔλεγεν, he was saying; a simple introduction which states neither time, nor place, nor circumstance. The parable, then, is to bring its meaning to us simply as spoken by Christ and here recorded. — **So**, οὕτως,

emphatically put forward; positively *so* is the kingdom of God, and not otherwise. This οὕτως is followed by its correlative ὡς, which here, as in Gal. 6, 10, has the subj. without ἄν: ὡς βάλῃ . . . καθεύδῃ καὶ ἐγείρηται . . . βλαστῇ καὶ μηρίνηται. Robertson correctly accepts this futuristic subj. without ἄν as permissible in the Greek of this time, against Blass who declares this construction "impossible." Christ is speaking of that *spiritual kingdom* which he came to found, and which grew so wonderfully through the power of the Holy Spirit; it is the Christian Church on earth which consists of the communion of all the true believers in Christ. If we ask whether this parable treats of the whole kingdom as a unit, or of the individual members one by one, the parable itself makes answer: every individual "seed" is meant, as it is cast, grows, and comes to fruit, and in this manner the whole grain-field where all this "seed" grows together is meant. This directs our attention to one of the beauties of the parable, namely the mastergrasp the divine speaker had of the whole inwardness of things spiritual and things natural. Our thoughts only stumble after him where he moves serenely, loftily forward. — Of course, only one grand feature of the kingdom is treated in this parable, as is the case in others; we may say that *in a certain respect* the kingdom of God is "so" as here set forth. The kingdom is not likened to a seed here. Christ says it is so, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth, and should sleep and rise, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The likeness is in the whole action and result as here sketched out. There is the seed, the casting upon the earth, the man's sleeping and rising without doing anything further to the seed, and the mysterious development of the seed till it reaches fruitage and comes to the sickle of the harvest. Trench sums it all up tersely in the caption "the seed

growing secretly.” — The **seed** (τὸν σπόρον with the article = the particular seed) is undoubtedly the living Word of God, as in the other parable of this chapter of Mark, “A sower went forth to sow.” Here, however, the *life* that is in the seed is the feature that is dwelt upon, a life which has the *power* of growth and development unto maturity in itself. What a wonderful thing seed is! Yet how thoughtlessly men handle it when they sow it, when they see its growth, and when they gather in the harvest — thousands and millions of seeds again — at last. It is a miracle in nature taking place before our very eyes, and yet so seldom appreciated as it deserves to be. This natural miracle with its mystery is set vividly before us by Christ’s application of it to the kingdom of God. — By **the earth** human hearts are understood; they are the soil for the Word. The difference that is found in the soil is not dwelt on here, and should not be brought in; it is treated in another parable. A good many commentators lay too much stress on the part the soil plays in producing growth. Bengel has well said (in connection with αὐτομάτη) that neither the cultivation nor the rain and sunshine of heaven is excluded in the parable, but is taken for granted. In the same manner “the earth” is taken merely as the medium in which the seed grows. It has no life and can produce no life. So is the natural human heart. There is no synergistic or semi-Pelagian basis in this parable, but the contrary. When the living “seed” falls into “the earth,” then the earth has life in it, and then only. And the earth only receives the fallen seed, it does not reach up or out to get it, it simply lies there. So is the natural human heart, it receives the living seed of the Word, and when this is cast into it and lodges in it, through the preaching of the Word, then it has life. In this way *regeneration*, i. e. the planting of spiritual life in the soul, takes place. All

that follows belongs to another chapter, that of spiritual growth, for the seed at once begins its life-development. We, therefore, decline to use interpretations that bring in the "moral self-activity of the human heart" and speak of "two factors," the seed as "the divine working of grace," and the earth as "the moral self-activity of man." It is the seed alone which has the life and grows, not the earth; the seed merely grows *in* the earth. It is the divine Word alone which has life and imparts it to us that it may grow in us; our hearts are but the soil, nothing more. — But who is to be understood by **a man**? Bengel says simply: God or Christ. It is best to stay by this interpretation. In a former parable Christ too is the sower, although he uses the preachers of the Gospel to do his sowing. So here. The activity of the ministry is to be viewed as an agency of God or Christ. The end of the parable is thus well taken care of: *he putteth forth the sickle,*" namely God or Christ, and we may add as regards the great final harvest that the angels are his agents and helpers.

The difficulty in the words, as applied to God or Christ: **and should sleep and rise night and day**, is by no means insuperable. God indeed never really slumbers or sleeps; "behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," Ps. 121, 4; but in this parable God is likened to a man who casts his seed into the ground and does no more, sleeping and rising night and day, i. e. attending to his rest and to his other labor, since he has done all that is necessary and possible as regards the seed. This is a true picture of God's work as regards the seed. When Christ ordered his disciples to preach the Gospel, to teach all nations, i. e. when thus he made provision through them to cast the seed into the earth, he rested content with this. He ordered and provided nothing else; no more was necessary or possible. He indeed prom-

ised to be with them to the end of the world, but this, as far as their casting seed into the earth is concerned, means that he would be present with them in this their work, which was his own work done through them. — We must not, however, restrict the casting of the seed into the earth to the *first* impartation of the Word to a human soul, nor to that first impartation by preaching and teaching which results in the reception of the Word by faith. All the Word is seed, living seed, and *every preaching* of it is as if a man **should cast** seed in the earth, and every reception of the Word is reception of living seed, even if life be already in the soul through previous preaching and teaching. We might be inclined to speak rather of sunshine, rain, etc., fostering the seed once planted, thus viewing the renewed impartation of the Word as edification building up what has been begun. But the imagery of this parable, as far as the seed and what is done to the seed is concerned, does not provide for this. The Word is the seed and nothing more; it is not here pictured also as sunshine, moisture, the tilling hoe or cultivating tool, or anything that aids the seed in growing as in nature. — **And the seed should spring up and grow.** The wonderful, mysterious life-power of the seed is here vividly brought out. Silently, steadily the seed develops. It sprouts; it stretches upward, *μηρύνηται*. *And it does this itself.* That is the marvel of the life that is in it. How wonderful even as we see it in nature! — **He knoweth not how,** *αὐτός*, emphatically at the end; — a word as true of the scientist who spends hours and days with instruments and cunning skill and wisdom to find out what the life is that does these things, as of the unthinking farmer who casts his seed in the earth and then cares no more, goes to sleep after his day's labor, works at other things the next day, knowing the seed will take care of itself. Because proud spirits,

for instance Haeckel and his pupils, with little real knowledge and great boast of lofty science sometimes trouble the faith of our people, the preacher should emphatically bring out the *ignoramus et ignorabimus* of the highest real science in this domain of natural life, what life really is, and what this power of life-growth — in a germ of wheat for instance — really is. But if it must be said concerning the earthly “he knoweth not how,” it surely must be said much more concerning the spiritual. What is this life that is in the divine Word? No dissecting human hand can lay it bare. What is this growth-power in it, that when it falls into a sinner’s heart it reaches out its rootlets, shoots up a blade, a stalk, an ear, i. e. regenerates, renews, and sanctifies the man? It is beyond our grasp of comprehension. Yet the blessed reality is before and within us, we are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which abideth for ever. . . . And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.” “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.” Jas. 1, 18; 1 Pet. 1, 23 and 25. “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” 1 John 5, 1. Also John 1, 13; 3, 7-8. In this let us rejoice, both we who have the seed of life growing within us, and we who have this and the special call besides to keep on as God’s servants in sowing it. There are many who have lost faith in this seed and sow other seed of human hybridizing. They will never have anything but weeds as the result of their sowing, fine weeds perhaps, but only weeds after all. We must not follow them. And some grow over-anxious when they preach the Word, fearing it will not do its work unless they in some manner keep helping it on. Let us learn absolutely to trust the divine seed, and sowing that steadily and faithfully as the Master has bidden us, let us there-

with be content. "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain." Jas. 5, 7. — Trench finds a difficulty in the words "he knoweth not how" when referred to God. He solves it, after a manner by combining God as the sower with the preachers of the Gospel as the human agents in the sowing, taking the words "he knoweth not how" as referring only to these human agents. Trench is right in not referring the words to God, but he ought to refrain from doing it for a different reason than the one he indicates, namely because he would thus leave the bounds of the parable. The parable reduces the great things in God to a human form, in order that we in a way may apprehend them, for our salvation. God himself made the Word, created the living power in it, and therefore knows all the mystery of it. Man did no such thing with the wheat or grain which he casts into the ground; therefore "he knows not how" it germinates and grows, and yet God compares himself to such a man and the ignorance that limits him. But all this is really outside of the parable and must not be brought in to create a perplexity. Other commentators pass it by entirely. "He knows not how" describes only *the mystery of the life-germ and growth* which is beyond us.

V. 28. Ἀὐτομάτῃ is placed first. *Automatically* the earth yieldeth fruit. **Of herself**, in the sense of automatically, after what has been said of the seed, certainly does not ascribe the life-power and growth-power to the earth. The earth merely "beareth," or "yieldeth" fruit. It is the medium in which the seed does its wonderful work. So our hearts automatically yield fruit; which signifies that the divine seed once placed into them grows in them and reaches at last its fruitage. All this, of course, only when we receive and retain it; the seed may be snatched away again,

or be blighted, uprooted, destroyed, but all these considerations are here omitted where only the one thought of successful growth is sketched out. — **First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear** — a word often quoted and variously applied, but here used to describe one thing, namely *the progressive course of the spiritual life*. It cannot mean, first regeneration and conversion, then an increase of faith, and finally good works. Faith is always productive of good works, as Starke has well said, “Where God’s Word is rightly sown and accepted it never remains without fruits of faith and godliness.” “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it.” Is. 55, 10-11. There is a sense, then, in which the spiritual life produced by the Word can be said to be always with full corn in the ear. Even when God calls little children away by death he does not harvest partly grown grain. Here we might make the difference that those ripe in years as well as faith come to their graves in a full age, like a shock of corn cometh in in his season, Job. 5, 26; and those who have passed through years of trial, going forth and weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them, Ps. 126, 6; while those of younger years, when they die early, bring indeed their ripe grain, but not such large shocks or so many sheaves. The description in the text, “first the blade,” etc., does not refer to this difference but speaks of *the progressive development of all that is spiritual in man*. Is it faith? that grows from a blade, to an ear, and to the full corn in the ear?

Is it love — hope — patience — knowledge — any Christian virtue? all of these grow likewise. As having been produced by the Word they are all “fruit” at any stage, or at any time of life; the text does not, however, view them thus. It views them rather as developing until a certain ripeness and maturity is reached. — As the blade is not the wheat-grain itself that was sown, but the living growth from it; so is faith, etc., not the Word itself, but the living, spiritual growth from it in our hearts. And ever as more of the Word of God is sown into our hearts more spiritual grain starts to grow. Some commentators and preachers make the “blade,” *χόρτος*, mean the faith and spiritual life of children, the “ear,” *στάχυς*, the faith etc. of young people; “the full corn in the ear,” *πλήρης σίτος ἐν τῷ στάχυϊ*, the faith etc. of men and women and old people. They usually quote, John 2, 12, etc., where the apostle addresses “little children,” “young men,” and “fathers.” The objection to this is that it brings in the thought of different human ages which so often does not tally with spiritual development. Most children are indeed immature in the spiritual life, and some old people are mature, yet many of all ages are still in the “blade” stage, if we look to their whole spiritual condition, and some very youthful ones are like “full corn in the ear.” Also we must avoid teaching any old person that he has already reached the fullest development, “the full corn in the ear,” lest a fatal feeling of security be the result. Rather let us keep in mind that the Word is ever the seed for all ages, that there are ever new sowings, that while some of these sowings are like the stalk coming into the ear and full corn, others are still like the blade. But wherever the Word is in the heart there is life, and where life is there is growth, and where growth proceeds as it should there in God’s good time will be “the full corn in the ear.”

Παραδοῖ is the aor. subj. from παραδίδομι. The verb here appears to be intransitive (Keil, also Robertson), with neither σῖτον (so Wohlenberg) nor ἑαυτόν as the object. The sense "permit," or margin "allow," does not seem to be assured; the translation: **is ripe** conveys very well just what is meant, though without solving the riddle of παραδίδομι without an object. Ἀποστέλλει τὸ δρέπανον (not the reapers) is like the Greek of Joel 3, 13, and Rev. 14, 15: he sends forth the sickle. "The full corn in the ear may have ripened slowly, one ear after another —: wherever it is given to a man to say in humility, I stand in faith and know how precious my faith is; wherever a man has discovered in humility that this faith in him has become a power to tread under foot sin, wrath and passion, casting off what is objectionable to God, and putting on what is pleasing to him; wherever a man by this faith of his overcomes the cares and lust of the world and bears within him a peace which the world neither gives nor takes, and where by virtue of his faith he grows into heart-humility and love — there is the living spirit-fruit of the kingdom of God. And the great Lord of the harvest lets none of it spoil. He gathers it for the harvest of his kingdom. Yea, he turns it into a new sowing of his kingdom and makes more new fruit of sanctification grow from it, until the last harvest begins and with it the consummation of the kingdom in glory. Then all the hidden growth of the kingdom of God will become visible, and also all apparent resting; and all painful cessation and upward striving will resolve itself into blessed praise." Dryander. Under a different image Paul describes the growth that reaches ripeness at last: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come

in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a *perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ*: that we henceforth be no more *children*, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may *grow up into him in all things*, which is the head, even Christ." Eph. 4, 11-15 — Those who refer the parable principally to the kingdom as a grand unit, interpret v. 29 of the harvest at the end of time (Meyer, Trench, Keil); others refer it to the individual members of the kingdom, and interpret the last verse of the end of life. God alone knows **when the fruit is ripe**, for he sees the heart and life, and all that is in it without a veil, we see only indirectly and imperfectly. **The sickle** these latter take as signifying death, and **the harvest**, ὁ θερισμός, as the time for gathering into God's heavenly garner.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

This is one of those compact texts which offers no obvious points of division. We need these texts — they are invitations for us to stop and think. As we meditate over this text thoughts like these will come to us: All are beautiful in turn, blade, ear, full corn in the ear. God is willing to wait — why be like children looking for a harvest the day after planting? How little corn in the ear did Jesus see when he had finished his labors? Some want to remain in the blade stage forever — do they not know that when the blade stops growing something is the matter with the plant, either a worm at the heart or a blight over the entire plant? There is joy in a field green with many blades, but far greater joy in the full sheaves. All such thoughts, however, will revert back to this astounding and incomprehensible life-mystery in the grain we see growing as in the spiritual life we see unfolding from seed to harvest. — In presenting what the text offers us we can only try inner analysis. Most obvious are these three: seed — growth — harvest. Let us use them:

The Powers of the Living Seed in the Kingdom of God.

- I. *It brings us spiritual life.*
- II. *That life develops in spiritual growth.*
- III. *That growth produces a spiritual harvest.*

This is the so-called chain arrangement. It requires at least three parts. Either the last member in part one is made the first member in part two, and the last in part two the first in part three, and so on; or the first in part one appears as the second in part two, and the first in part two the second in part three, and so on. These arrangements are always attractive. — The parable presents *the mystery* of the seed and its growing, which is also the mystery of the Word:

The Mystery of the Seed—Growing We Know Not How.

- I. *Cast it — that is all you can do.*
- II. *Watch it — what now it will do.*
- III. *Trust it — the Lord is back of the little you do and the great thing the seed will always do.*

We may put it more compactly:

The Living Word.

I. It germinates; II. It grows; III. It ripens for harvest. Of course, this leaves all the details of the application to the elaboration. If one prefers he may allow this to show in the outline itself:

God's Living Seed.

- I. *It comes from the hand of God.*
- II. *It is cast into the soil of human hearts.*
- III. *It grows with mysterious power.*
- IV. *It produces a wonderful harvest.*

If still more of the application is desired something like this may answer:

The Wonderful Seed God Made For Our Souls.

- I. *His Word full of life and power.*
- II. *We sow it by teaching and preaching.*
- III. *It brings forth faith, love, virtue.*
- IV. *Till the Lord reaps the full ears for heaven.*

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matthew 12, 46-50

The connection of this text with the foregoing, and its general purpose at this place in the Trinity cycle, are not difficult to determine. The former text set before us the spiritual life that springs up and grows in the soul from the Word of God; this text tells us *what the spiritual life really makes of us: true relatives of Christ, living members of his spiritual family*. The image is changed from that of the former text, but the thought of life is retained and unfolded with new and greater richness. — There is in the whole text a reference also to human relationship, which may well be used, but not, we think, as the main subject here. That must ever be *the spiritual relationship*, and it should be adequately treated whether the human is fully entered upon or not. “He is my brother, and sister, and mother” points in an expressive way to *individual* relationship, the peculiar affection of each heart as bestowed upon Christ; at the same time it gives us the thought of a circle of relatives, or a *family*. All who have the new life in them, or (as this text has it) who do the will of the Father, by being joined to Christ as his brothers, sisters, and mothers, are themselves also joined together and become one family in Jesus Christ. This application is of great value when we consider the many wordly and dangerous entanglements which invite ourselves and our fellow church members today; against them all this tie must be set. The treatment Christ here accords his mother, so different from what the Romish ideal would lead us to expect, is also noteworthy and may be brought out if necessary in the sermon.

V. 46. When Jesus was in the midst of his arduous labors, taxing his strength to the utmost, we suddenly come upon his mother and his brethren attempting to turn him from his stupendous task. Robinson's *Harmony* follows Matthew's chronology in the twelfth chapter. **While he was yet speaking to the multitudes** thus connects our text with the incidents preceding. "Accordingly this conduct of Christ's family is an indication for him of the altered opinion concerning Jesus at that time among the people. Their conduct is evidently a result of the suspicions scattered by his opponents, though softened down by his relatives into the assumption that he is beside himself." Noesgen. The Jewish leaders were apparently successful in discrediting Christ and his work even among the members of his own family; these proceed to take measures of their own to stop his further career in the direction he had chosen. In a way they meant well enough, but how utterly they misunderstood their great relative! They came upon him thus "speaking to the multitudes" — τοῖς ὄχλοις, the crowds, as distinguished presently from the μαθηταί, the circle of his faithful pupils. — **Behold** marks the incident of their coming as something strange. Really the occurrence is a painful happening, especially because **his mother**, but also because of his **brethren**, coming here in this way and publicly revealing that they too are not in harmony with him, even if their disagreement is tempered by their natural love as his kin. Humanly speaking it was a trying situation for Jesus, but he handled it with perfect mastery. Let us note the wondrous patience with which he bears this false move of his relatives, even of his own mother who should have known better. Then also his absolute truthfulness in not creating the least false appearance either before his relatives or before the people generally. Finally, the perfect mastery with which he

utilizes this untimely and ill-inspired interruption in defining and impressing a momentous truth. — One may well ask how **his mother** could be party to this expedition “to lay hold on him,” Mark 3, 21. She is mentioned first, probably because the others put her forward, and because the people were especially quick to note her presence on an errand like this. But she was hardly the instigator of this proceeding; “she permitted herself to be drawn along by the fears of his other relatives, who very likely led in the foolish undertaking.” Lenski, *His Footsteps*, p. 231. One thing is certain, “her participation in this attempt to draw Jesus away from his Savior work reveals to us in the mother of Jesus a personality far different from that of the legendary image of the Mother of God in the medieval and Romish ecclesiastical tradition. In all likelihood, like the brethren of Jesus, she too came very gradually to a realization of the greatness of the Son so wonderfully given her, who was more than Jonah and Solomon.” Noesgen. — The question who **his brethren** were has received different answers. There are three views: 1) They were sons of Joseph and Mary born later than Jesus. This is the view of a considerable number of modern commentators. 2) They were sons of Joseph by a former marriage. Noesgen remarks in favor of this view that Jesus is called “the son of Mary” in a very marked way, Mark 6, 3; comp. John 19, 26, etc., as if the inhabitants of Nazareth took him to be this in a special sense, as they would if his brethren and sisters had been Mary’s step-children — an assumption contradicted as little by John 7, 5 as by Acts 1, 4. The idea of their being older would well explain their unbelief in the Messiahship of their younger brother. 3) The sons of Clopas, a brother or brother-in-law of Joseph, and thus cousins of Jesus. This is the view of the Latin Church since Jerome, and of the older Protestant theologians.

Personally the author also inclines to it. Those who fix their attention primarily on the word as it stands in the sacred record and shut out other considerations take the first view. Those who incline to give weight also to other considerations as presented by the Scriptures usually take one of the other views. In John 7, 5 we are informed: "Neither did his brethren believe in him." There seems to be no way to settle beyond doubt the question exegetically. — Some think **without** can only mean "without the house," so that the scene took place in a house. Noesgen remarks that the word ἔξω is variously used, and signifies here "without the press" of the multitudes, the scene thus being laid in the open. There is no mention of a building, and the narrative as Luke gives it favors Noesgen's interpretation.

While v. 47 is omitted by a few codices there is no necessary reason for rejecting it as spurious. Jesus could not see his relatives, and they could not reach him. A bystander may have voiced their efforts to get to him by calling out. Ebrard's notion that some one wished to interrupt the severe censures Jesus was uttering, by calling attention to his relatives, is unfounded. The perfect ἐστήκασι has the usual present meaning; ζητοῦντές σοι λαλήσαι does not reveal the intention they had in desiring the interview, but Christ undoubtedly knew sufficiently without its being stated.

V. 48. Instead of turning to his relatives Jesus turns to the man who had told him of them. For the slight service this man tried to render Jesus he renders this unnamed man a great service indeed by setting an everlasting truth vividly before him. — The usual circumstantial participle ἀποκριθεὶς precedes εἶπεν. Jesus asks a question: **Who is my mother? who are my brethren?** One commentator finds a surprising amount of thought in this question; namely that the divine Christ is lifted up far above the natural order

and limitation of family and human life in general; that he is conscious of himself as the Son of God and Savior who is no longer a son of Nazareth, or of his mother, or an Israelite; that this feeling of filial attachment is wrestling with his Messianic feeling of duty; etc. But this is certainly loading the simple question of Jesus too heavily. The question does just what this commentator says it cannot do, namely fix the attention of the man addressed and of all who hear the dialog upon the thing Jesus asks. They are to pause and think — who really is Christ's mother, who his brethren? The dramatic question form gives it a deeper significance than any common or casual inquiry can have. Involuntarily the hearers must have sought for a deeper meaning in the words "my mother," "my brethren." And this is the object of the question, which, of course, is far more than merely a rhetorical form. While men's minds are still inquiring, Christ himself gives the terse, striking, perfect answer, and the more his question has opened and stirred men's minds in seeking an answer, the more Christ's answer when given penetrates and fixes itself.

V. 49. First comes the illuminating gesture, the extended hand, with its motion indicating the μαθηταί, the disciples and separating them from the ὄχλοι the crowds. It is symbolic of the action which shall at last forever separate the disciples (believers) from all others, no matter who they may be. But did Christ exclude his own mother here from his spiritual family and relationship? The text does not say so. The following "whosoever" includes all believers. — **Behold, my mother and my brethren!** This already is an answer, but one with the question still in it, namely, *Why* does he call his disciples his mother and his brethren? Christ speaks dramatically, as in uttering his first question. He holds the minds of his hearers open so that his answer may sink into them more

deeply. — The disciples were men, yet Christ's word includes his mother. "Mother" and "brethren" are thus thrown together and have essentially the same meaning. This already helped Christ's hearers to perceive that he was speaking of a higher relation than that of blood-ties.

The climax of the whole is in v. 50, and is so perfect that it satisfies fully and leaves nothing more to be desired. Now the question is answered indeed. — **For** states why the disciples are called Christ's mother and brethren. Only this one thing which Christ now mentions makes them such. Christ here confesses his disciples before men. It must have been exceedingly sweet and satisfying to their ears to hear this public acknowledgment from his lips. It was the prelude to that confession which he will make at last before his Father and the angels of heaven. — **Who-soever** — **he**; ὅστις — αὐτός; universal — yet particular; opening the blessed relationship invitingly to all and excluding none ("whosoever") — yet embracing only those who at last are spiritually his ("he"). So the Scriptures record God's *antecedent* will: "Who will have *all men* to be saved," 1 Tim. 2, 4; "God so loved the world." Then they set beside it the *subsequent* will: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Hoenecke, Dogmatik, II, p. 130, rejects this distinction of our old dogmaticians (for instance Gerhard) and endeavors to cast upon it the stigma of Socinianism, semi-Pelagianism, and Arminianism, but he strangely omits to explain why the Scriptures contain the distinction in the clearest Gospel utterances. — Ὅστις ἂν ποιήσῃ, indefinite relative clause, with the futuristic subj.: "whosoever shall do," and the aorist views the doing as one comprehensive act; τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρὸς μου τοῦ ἐν οὐρανοῖς = the gracious will of God, as revealed in the Gospel, the will which itself furnishes the power for its doing. Bengel: "The will by which

we are regenerated, James 1, 18": "Of his own will begat he us" etc. His will is that we "should come to repentance," 2 Pet. 3, 9, and "unto the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. 2, 4. The fact that the disciples were only beginners in doing this will of the Father does not debar them from the spiritual family of Christ. But let us remember that they grew in faith and reached "the full corn in the ear." — **He is my brother, and sister, and mother.** The αὐτός is positive and emphatic: he, and only he. Christ reverses the order, putting brother first and mother last, and inserting sister. This is a climax. Like the previous sentences it places the mother into prominence. There she was named first, because it was remarkable that she should have come in such a manner to her Son; here she stands last, symbolizing the tenderest spiritual relationship. Jesus adds **sister** to "my brother," and "mother." Matth. 13, 56 we are told that the people of his own country said, "And his sisters, are they not all with us?" We take them all, brethren as well as sisters, to be children of Clopas, thus really Christ's cousins. Jesus mentions three members of a family — the one in which he had lived so long — in order to bring out the fact that he is speaking of his *entire* spiritual family relationship. Essentially there is no difference between brother, sister, and mother, for the spiritual link which binds to Christ is *one*, and only *one*, faith. So Chrysostom writes of Mary that she became Christ's mother by faith. Bernhard says, "You know the will of God: be one with him, then you receive Christ, and having received him you are his mother." Luther has the same thought:

"Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee."

We know how tenderly Christ remembered his mother when he committed her to the care of John ere he died. Never did Jesus lack in filial piety. Every heart that receives Christ by faith holds him as a mother holds her darling child. Yea, the love of the soul for Christ is to be fairer, purer, higher, stronger, deeper, more intense, lasting and holier than any natural brother's, sister's, or mother's love ever was. — All these of whom Christ speaks, having the same spiritual relationship toward him, are thereby themselves joined in one and belong to the "household of God," Eph. 2, 19; "the household of faith," Gal. 6, 10. To them all others are "strangers and foreigners," having indeed now the possibility of becoming brothers and co-heirs with Christ, but if remaining as they are, sundered forever from the divine family of believers. Yet too many honor the tie of blood and family in the lower sphere, and fail to honor it in the higher. There is a call here for every believer to set the spiritual tie above every other; especially for pastors when they reflect on their work for their great Brother. Let them never love wife or child more than him; for "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Matth. 10, 37.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The text is one of those narratives which cannot be split as a narrative, its brief story rising in one straight line to the climax at the close. Even the side thoughts about Mary and the brethren and their attempt to stop Jesus' work are quite minor to Jesus' own final word. The text-story is really a frame for this beautiful and important final word. — And the vital statement in this final word is simply, "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven." We may say, this is what forms the tie in the family of Jesus Christ:

The Kingdom of God as the Family of Jesus Christ.

- I. *The family tie in this kingdom.* Not of blood or marriage, but tie of souls; binding to Christ and the family in heaven and on earth; formed by doing the Father's will (faith).—The idea of this tie, however, leads us a step farther.
- II. *The family life in this kingdom.* The tie involves association, fellowship, intercourse; the faith forming the tie, mediated through Word and Sacrament, in a Christian congregation with its worship and work.—And so the tie and the life lead to another step:
- III. *The family duty in his kingdom.* To remain in this family, and to prize our place in it; to form no antagonistic tie, and to let no other tie interfere; to use every means for strengthening and deepening this tie; to render all the service it requires toward Christ and his family; to bring others in, especially earthly relatives.

This is an inner analysis of the central words of Jesus concerning his brother, sister and mother.—Instead of using the figure of the family, we may speak of our

Spiritual Relationship with Christ.

- I. *The bond that forms it;*
- II. *The honor bound up in it;*
- III. *The hopes that center in it.*

The text itself offers a colorful theme:

"Behold, My Mother and My Brethren!"

- I. *This shows what Christ is to us;*
- II. *This shows what we are to be to Christ.*

K. Gerok tries to get into the text from the point of human earthly ties, making his theme: Ties of Blood in the Kingdom of God. This, however, hits the text obliquely, for it is far less a text on ties of blood than on ties of the spirit. So the parts are not radiations from the central thought of the text, when Gerok preaches 1) on sanctifying the ties of blood; 2) on disregarding them under certain circumstances; 3) on possibly displacing them entirely. What we want is an exposition on the spiritual tie. We thus find ourselves narrowed down to this central idea, and, as the outlines given indicate, about all that the parts can

do is to display the different sides of this one central thought in one way or another. We may make the theme (note the exclamatory form):

Relatives of Christ!

The parts will have the same tone:

- I. Think what this means!*
- II. Prize what this bestows!*
- III. Do what this involves!*
- IV. Be happy in what this promises!*

Intro.: It is a grand thing to be a king's mother, or brother, or sister, even in an earthly family. What all it signifies when that king is the King of kings! That's your position today; that at least is the position you may enter on today. Do not let the lowly outward position of this great King's family mislead you now. Think how all these relatives of the King will shine at the last day. So learn to thank God that we are relatives of Christ. Yes

Relatives of Christ!

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matthew 13, 44-46

Trench compares the parables of the hid treasure and the pearl of great price with two others, the mustard seed and the leaven, and finds in the former the thought of personal appropriation, which does not occur in the latter. In the text as it stands in our series this thought cannot be made the distinctive feature. The theme of our sub-cycle is the life in the kingdom, and throughout, in every one of the texts, this life is viewed as something personally our own when in the kingdom. This is the case especially in the foregoing text in which Christ tells us who really is his mother, his brother, and his sister. We, of course, retain this thought of personal possession as our present text presents it. We must *get* the treasure, we must *get* the pearl, and we must *keep* both. But the treasure is here presented to us as a *treasure*, and the pearl as a gem of *great price*. The obvious idea, therefore, is one of *supreme value*. It is this which makes the treasure and the pearl so desirable; we have here more than the thought of personal appropriation — which, in fact, is taken as a matter of course, — we have the true cause for the personal appropriation, which is none other than the incomparable value of the life (our treasure and our pearl) in the kingdom. While neither the word “life,” nor any other term or descriptive statement equivalent to “life” occurs in our text, the two images of the treasure and the pearl must be interpreted so as to include this life. Trench calls the treasure “Christ in the heart,” and the pearl “the kingdom of God within a man,” or “the knowledge of Christ,” or “Christ himself” — each only a different

way of stating the same thing. Our great spiritual treasure and possession in the kingdom of God is the spiritual life made ours in this kingdom. And in this text this life is held up before us as a *priceless treasure*, supreme over all others, and therefore infinitely desirable.

The beginning of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew shows us Jesus speaking by the seaside. Here he uttered four parables. V. 36 tells us that Jesus left the multitude and spoke to his disciples privately in the house. After interpreting one of the parables spoken at the seaside Jesus proceeds by speaking three additional parables, the first two of which constitute our text. There is evidently a relation between the seven parables thus put forth by Jesus. See on the parable of the mustard seed, Matth. 13, 31 etc., the First Sunday after Trinity. It is impossible to tell positively whether all seven parables were spoken by Jesus the same day, or whether it is Matthew who has placed them together as forming one great chain. However this may be, the two parables constituting our text fit in well after the preceding four and before the final one which describes the separation of the good from the bad fish. In the first four parables we have the work of spreading the kingdom of God set beautifully and instructively before us, in the two of our text we have the description of the preciousness and desirableness of this kingdom and its treasures and in the final parable, the division which ultimately ensues between those truly belonging to the kingdom and those that are cast away. Since our two parables, it seems, were spoken to the disciples alone, we may say that for them, and for people like them, namely beginners in the faith and followers of Jesus, these two parables set forth vividly what should make them hold fast the gifts of the kingdom. Yet we cannot say that either of these parables, or even the final one, is

of a kind unsuited to the multitude, since it is plain that men in general ought to hear and know both about the value of the kingdom and about the judgment to come. — V. 40. **The Kingdom of heaven** has been spoken of before; see the texts for the First Sunday after Trinity, Matth. 13, 31-35, and for the Seventh Sunday after Trinity, Mark 4, 26-29; also for the Second Sunday in Advent. As in these other parables, so in ours the kingdom of heaven is described not in general, or in all respects, but in a certain respect. One great characteristic is brought out clearly. There is a likeness between the kingdom and a treasure, and this treasure hidden and found and secured by someone. Both of our parables deal with *valuable* objects, in fact, objects of the very highest value. — The kingdom of heaven is like unto **a treasure hidden in the field**. Besser remarks that this likeness includes three features: there is likeness to a *treasure*, a *hidden* treasure, and a treasure hidden *in the field*. But we must add that the likeness includes also *the finding* of the treasure and *the securing* of it by the finder. The image which Jesus thus employed was one familiar enough to his hearers. “The circumstance which supplies the groundwork of this first parable, namely the finding of a concealed treasure, is of much more frequent occurrence in an insecure state of society, such as in almost all ages has prevailed in the East, than happily it can be with us. A writer on Oriental literature and customs mentions that in the East on account of the frequent changes of dynasties, and the revolutions which accompany them, many rich men divide their goods into three parts: one they employ in commerce, or for their necessary support; one they turn into jewels, which, should it prove needful to fly, could be easily carried with them; a third part they bury. But as they trust no one with the place where the treasure is buried, so is the same, should they not

return to the spot before their death, as good as lost to the living (Jer. 41, 8), until, by chance, a lucky peasant digging in his field, lights upon it. And thus, when we read in Eastern tales, how a man has found a buried treasure, and, in a moment, risen from poverty to great riches, this is, in fact, no strange or rare occurrence, but a natural consequence of the customs of these people. Trench. It is certainly a misconception as well as a belittling of the whole parable to imagine the "treasure" to be a gold coin, discovered by plowing or digging in the field. Such a coin the finder would simply have picked up and gone away with. The whole proceeding of the man pictured in the parable is such that we must assume a treasure which could not be taken away easily. There may have been some sort of chest or other receptacle, containing a treasure-trove of great value. In this parable especially, where the kingdom is directly compared with a treasure, this treasure must be one of enormous greatness. In all the world there is no treasure so great as the kingdom of God and what it contains for us. What that feature of the kingdom is which Christ here calls "a treasure" (θησαυρός, without the article), we are left to conclude ourselves from the entire parable and its mate. The question is somewhat complex, because the likeness is not between the kingdom and the treasure alone, but between the kingdom and the treasure as here pictured, hidden, found, and secured by the finder. The question is not: In what respect may the kingdom be likened to a treasure? but: In what respect may the kingdom be likened to *such* a treasure? The answers given vary somewhat, as indicated in our introductory remarks, yet in the main they are correct. Christ is called the treasure; or salvation in and through Christ. If we look for a hint in the context, we may take v. 43 as pointing to that which makes us righteous before God — Christ

our righteousness. Or we may take descriptions like Rom. 14, 17: "The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." In so many of "the fields" of human endeavor men look merely for "eating and drinking," for ordinary earthly treasures, but the kingdom of God is like a field in which there is more than labor for the obtaining of a day's wages, more than the product of the soil in grain and vegetables, — a priceless treasure which, just to look at the field, no one would have expected.

Hidden in the field; *κεκρυμμένω* has the common force of the perfect; having been hidden and thus lying hidden now. — So the precious, saving truth of Christ was hidden from the wise and the prudent, and revealed to babes, Luke 10, 21; as our Gospel is hid to them that are lost, and remains so, because they have allowed the god of this world to blind them, Col. 4, 3-4; as the things that belonged to her peace were hid from the eyes of Jerusalem, Luke 19, 42. How the treasure was placed in the field is not told us, but the impression conveyed is that God himself placed it in the field as a good hiding-place. Of course, God does not want his treasures to remain hidden from men, else he would have selected a hiding-place so far away in the heavenly fields that no man would ever have come near the treasure. God takes a field for this hiding-place for a twofold reason, which the Scriptures plainly indicate: first, that the treasure may be where we can indeed find it; secondly, that it may be in a place where those too proud and haughty to accept it shall not find it. In this choice of the field for the depositing of God's great treasure we have an illustration of God's plan: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things

of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." 1 Cor. 1, 27-29. And his purpose in doing this we have in v. 22-25: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." Ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ, **in the field**, has the definite article, which points to a certain field; others, however, take it in the generic sense: in the field, not elsewhere; Blass-Debr. simply calls it "incorrect," and insists that we read ἐν ἀγρῷ, as one codex has it. The generic sense at least is sufficient to justify the article. Two interpretations of "the field" are offered, namely the *Scriptures*, and the *Church*. There is something about both which indeed makes them suitable hiding-places for God's treasure, like a field for some treasure of man. Both look plain, ordinary, unlikely to men in their pride. But in deciding between the two we prefer the former, for Christ himself said, the treasure is there: "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have *eternal life*: and they are they which testify of *me*." John 5, 39. This passage shows, too, that the treasure is both Christ and eternal life, as also Christ calls himself the life. The objection that the field is *bought* by the finder of the treasure is certainly no reason for saying that in the parable "the field" is only an auxiliary image without a definite meaning. Why should "the field" be that, any more than for instance the "buying" itself? Trench decides for himself that "the field" = the Church, since no one can have Christ except in his Church; "none but the golden pipes of

the sanctuary are used for the conveyance of the golden oil (Zech. 4, 12)"; and no one can have Christ in his heart, and at the same time separate his fortunes from those of Christ's struggling, suffering, warring Church. Yet the buying befits the Word better than the Church, however true in themselves the remarks of Trenchard are. Many a man has glanced into the Scriptures and found nothing there; he has passed on and left "the field" to seek his satisfaction elsewhere. But he who finds the treasure there, he appropriates the Scriptures in a way the other never thinks of, making them his very own. Koegel combines the idea of the Church and the Word as represented here by "the field": "Do you know this unnoticed field with the hidden treasure of the kingdom of heaven in it? It is the Church in her unpretentious form; she bears and shelters the treasure of all treasures, but hidden under cover of the unpretentiousness of her Word and Sacrament. You yourself perhaps knew her, the Church with her means of grace, for years and since your childhood days; you went past the field, over the field for twenty, thirty years, without seeing the treasure or dreaming of it — until one day an invisible hand took away both, the covering from your eyes, and the covering from the treasure in the field, and the treasure then shone before you in undreamed of, wondrous, increasing beauty." He then instances the woman at the well, the brethren of Jesus, and Saul.

Which a man found. ἄνθρωπος — here is a word full of comfort for us all — this person who found the treasure was just "a man." He is not distinguished in any way; he is not a man of special attainments or qualifications, he is not even represented as a seeker. "A man" reminds of the word "whosoever" — that *whosoever* believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. The treasure was there, and the man was there; and it was God's intention to unite the two,

for each was made for the other. — The man **found** the treasure, as the first disciples found Christ and in him eternal life, John 1, 41, etc. What was the man doing in the field? Was he just passing across it? was he laboring there? No matter — he was in the field, and so he “found” the treasure. Luther speaks of the Jews who had the field of the Law, but failed to find in it the end of the Law, namely Christ; and then he speaks of the Gentiles who found Christ in the Law, went and sold all they had, and bought the field with the treasure in it. “In the field of the Law and promise the treasure Christ lay buried, but they who tilled the field in order to be justified and saved by the wages of their labor, did not find the treasure (Rom. 9, 13); it was found, however, by the publicans and sinners who despaired of their merit, and by the Gentiles for whom Christ was an unexpected find of grace (Rom. 10, 20).” Besser. The little world “found” excludes all human merit in securing eternal life. We neither make the field, nor the treasure; nor do we by our exertions secure the treasure. We just *find it*. God puts it there, God leads us to it, God lets us happen upon it — as a man digging in a field hits something hard with his spade, uncovers a treasure-chest, and is rich for all his life after. But here we must not forget, that God has intended this treasure for all men, yet all do not find it, because some will not even let him bring them near the treasure where it lies in the field, others spurn it when they come upon it and keep on with their hoarding of transient earthly treasures. Every one who “finds” the treasure and is made truly rich by it, is bound to praise solely the grace of God. — **And hid**, ἔκρυψεν, the aorist, though followed by present tenses, ὑπάγει καὶ πωλεῖ . . . καὶ ἀγοράζει; Robertson and Blass-Debr. call this the gnomic aorist which is used in parables and sayings, with or without following present tenses, and is considered to be

timeless. The hiding of the treasure on finding it is a touch true to human nature, both in regard to earthly as well as heavenly treasures. A man finding a great treasure in a field hides it in order to secure it the more certainly and completely. Someone might interfere with his removing it, if he went about it at once. In the parable we may suppose that there were others working in the field besides the one who found the treasure, and so he hastily covered up what he had discovered. But also in the spiritual field, the first finding goes together with a tremulous secreting of the treasure. Trench: "If he hide the treasure, this hiding will be, not lest another should find, but lest he himself should lose it. In the first moments that the truth is revealed to a soul, there may well be a tremulous fear lest the blessing found should, by some means or other, escape from it again, the anxiety that it may not do so, the jealous precautions for this end taken, would seem to be the truth signified by this re-concealment of the found treasure." — **In his joy** — he was a changed man. His own life, and all that was in it, now had a new look. This "joy" is something the world does not understand when it looks upon the followers of Christ as a dreary, joyless people since they spurn all sinful worldly joys. Compared with the new joy born of finding Christ all sinful joys of the Christless, worldly life are like poisons and bitterness. — Note now the present tenses: **he goeth and selleth . . . and buyeth.** It is as if with these brief strokes Christ paints the picture before our eyes. One can almost see the man hurrying on to execute the purchase of the field. "Buyeth that field," ἐκείνον — that one distinguished above all others. For the second time the "field" is mentioned, and here emphatically so, which certainly does not look as if Christ meant nothing especial by the field. The situation is plainly this that the treasure cannot be secured

without obtaining the field itself. Christ and the Scriptures cannot be separated; you cannot have Christ and discard the Word which testifies of him. The same is true of the Church. — The moral aspect of this purchase of the field has been criticized. Was it not wrong for this finder to buy the field while withholding from the owner the knowledge that it held a treasure? Secondly, was it not wrong for Christ to use an act morally questionable, in illustrating the truths of the kingdom? Usually the fact of there really being something questionable about the purchase of the field is admitted, and then the solution is offered, that this is a parable like that of the unjust steward, where the wisdom and prudence is commended by the Lord, not the wrong transaction. This, of course, answers. But in our present parable, it will be hard to demonstrate any moral wrong in the purchase of the field. To whom did the treasure in the field belong? Trench and Olshausen seem to think, to the owner of the field. That is by no means established; in fact, it is impossible of proof. As far as the parable goes the only person to our knowledge who had a moral, if not a legal, claim to the treasure was the finder. The owner of the field had paid for that treasure as little as this finder. We must assume that the real depositor of the treasure was long dead and gone, and that there were no heirs of his known. For years the treasure lay buried and unknown. Now that it is found, the finder is the one who ought to have it. In stating that he "bought" the field Christ plainly indicates two things: first, the man does what is legally right to secure the field and the treasure — he does not come back at night secretly to lift it; secondly, he indicates that the treasure is so great that no ordinary owner of a field or two could have deposited it there. In order words, there is sufficient reason to maintain that this transaction was entirely honorable. The

finder is a poor man, for the purchase of this one field takes **all that he hath**, ὅσα. — Two questions remain in regard to the interpretation. How can one sell all that he has and therewith buy? and how can one buy this field which is the Word? Luther: "What it means 'to sell' learn of Paul, who writes, Phil. 3, 7: 'But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.' Yea, and not only for loss, but I count it all as dung and rubbish, and my highest joy and best comfort is, that I be found not having my own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. I, indeed, thought myself a great saint in stiffly and with all diligence keeping the Law, and considered this my highest treasure and greatest gain; but when I heard of this brotherhood and inheritance of the Lord Christ, oh, how all my pride and boasting in my righteousness fell away, and I am frightened at it and do not like to think of it." There are two ways of buying in the Scriptures unknown to ordinary commerce and trade: one is, to buy without money or price, Is. 55, 1; Rev. 21, 6; and the other is to give up for the eternal treasure of God all that would prevent our possessing them. This second kind of selling and buying is here meant. There is no idea of taking anything of our own works, merits, or the like, and offering it as an equivalent for what we buy of God. To buy of him is always to accept his gifts, but in order really to accept them we must cast away the follies, delusions, and deceptive treasures which this world would press upon us. — Christ speaks of our buying the field, not the treasure. Plainly, the finder of the treasure cannot think of buying the treasure. Both the price which that would require, and the circumstances that the treasure now has no real owner, preclude buying the treasure. But the field may be bought, and so the treasure secured. You may indeed secure the Word,

and thus Christ. Of course, you can buy the Word only as you buy of God, but he has so placed Christ and eternal life in the Word, that, heavenly and divine though they are, you can obtain them by means of the Word. You buy the field, then, when you give up every self-made, human doctrine and philosophy, however shallow or deep it may seem, and cling only and wholly to the Word in true faith.

V. 45. **Again** introduces another picture of the kingdom, and a glance shows that it is intended to amplify the one already set before us in the first parable. — What surprises us in this second parable is the change, comparing the kingdom no longer to a valuable treasure (here a pearl), but to a person, the **man that is a merchant**. We must observe, however, that the comparison embraces not merely the man as such, i. e. as a merchant, or as a merchant seeking goodly pearls; it embraces all the good fortune that befell him, when he found the one pearl of great price, and all that this finding moved him to when he sold all that he had and bought that one pearl. In likening the kingdom to a great treasure found and appropriated, our attention is fixed primarily upon *Christ* and the life and salvation in him as made our own; in likening the kingdom to a merchant finding and securing the pearl of great price, our attention is fixed upon the person thus enriched, *the believer* who has secured life and salvation. Thus in speaking of the kingdom we must ever combine the two: that which enriches; and they who are enriched — the kingdom is *life and salvation* in Christ, infinitely precious; and the kingdom is, at the same time, *the persons who have this life and salvation*. — **Merchant**, ἔμπορος, ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἔμπορος = one who travels (ἐν and πῶρος); who takes passage on a ship in order to go to foreign parts to buy; and thus a wholesale merchant. And this was a pearl-merchant; his business was **seeking goodly**

pearls, in order to buy them as an investment. "It makes much for the beauty of the parable, and the fitness of the image used to set forth the surpassing value of the kingdom of God, that we keep in mind the esteem in which pearls were held in antiquity, sums almost incredible having been given for single pearls, when perfect of their kind. There were many defects which materially diminished their value, as for instance, if they had a yellow or dusky tinge, or were not absolutely round or smooth. The skill and wariness which the pearl-merchant therefore needed, if he would not have a meaner thing imposed on him in place of the best, will not be without its answer in the spiritual world." Trench. Evidently there is a difference between the two persons placed before us in the two parables. One is simply "a man," with nothing whatever to distinguish him. With this "man" in some way connected with "the field," we may assume that he is altogether an ordinary man, a peasant, a common laborer, such as the world is full of. In the pearl-merchant we have a man also, but one on a higher plane of earthly life, not, of course, higher spiritually. By the **goodly pearls** in which he invested, we must understand high aims and noble occupations from the wordly standpoint. This merchant is the type of those who strive for the ideal things of earth — men who make wisdom their aim, who mean to benefit their race by deeds of philanthropy and kindness, who devote themselves to science and art, the promulgation of peace, moral living, betterment of social conditions, etc. In the **seeking** we see pictured all their earnest, devoted efforts, their willingness to give up their ease, their zealous work, and the like. The number of men of this stamp is not very great in the world, since most of us are sordid and mean in our aspirations. It is the more notable that Jesus should single out those with the higher aspirations.

But we must never overlook two things: one, that this merchant did not seek the pearl of great price — in fact, knew nothing of its existence; the other, based on the first, that his finding that pearl was not due to his seeking. The truth is that, as thousands pass over the field, dig and work in it all their lives, and never find the hidden treasure, so the great majority of merchants are satisfied with “goodly pearls,” such as they find again and again in the treasuries of their kind, and even deny that there can be any one pearl absolutely superior to all others, and should they perhaps light upon it, imagine it to be a fabrication, an imitation fit for children to play with, but not for sober, solid merchants to place amid their stores. “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.” 1 Cor. 1, 26. Not many, yet some. All are indeed called, but not all accept the call. There is a pride which often goes with this dealing in “goodly pearls” of earthly growth, which blinds the eyes to the pearl of great price. How many great poets, philosophers, literary lights of all kinds, philanthropists, artists, etc., steadily pass the pearl of great price by. Thank God, not all. — This merchant in the parable, **having found** what he did not seek, what he did not even know existed, namely **one pearl of great price**, ἓνα πολύτιμον μαργαρίτην, went and sold all that he had, and bought it. The point of the parable is again in this remarkable *finding*. The pearl thus suddenly discovered is **one**, not a *pearl*, but one absolutely unique, transcending all others in all its qualities. Since pearls are always valuable, the exceptional character of this one pearl is expressed by a word signifying value, πολύτιμος (πολύς and τιμή = great value). The finding of this pearl includes the recognition of its quality, and, therefore, of its great value. What the pearl signifies

is not hard to say. It is the same thing as the treasure in the other parable; it is Christ, or the life and salvation prepared for us in Christ. In order to clothe this heavenly gift of God in words of human imagery, we must say that Christ had to cheapen the gift. "Great price" is really less than the true worth of this pearl; it should be: "of infinite price." But this would destroy the imagery of the parable, and so we must be content with "great price." Who will figure out the true value of this divine pearl of salvation? To have it as our own is to be immeasurably rich for time and for eternity. — **He went and sold all that he had and bought it.** Ἀπελθὼν, "having gone," is followed in the regular way by the aorist ἠγόρασεν; between the two we have the perfect πέπρακεν, which lends a dramatic touch to the narrative and appeals to the imagination (Robertson 897): see, "he has sold." We can render the latter in translation only by our prosaic past tense: "sold." The selling is the same as in the previous parable; compare Is. 55, 1; Matth. 25, 9-10; Rev. 3, 18; Prov 23, 23. "Sold all that he had" — and he was a rich man to be able to buy "goodly pearls" at all — does not necessarily mean that he gave up and dispensed with all the "goodly pearls" he had, i. e. dropped every ideal earthly treasure he possessed. It does mean this, however, that having found Christ, and in him life and salvation, his heart inwardly turned from all treasures and ideals of earth, no longer finding true satisfaction in them, and making Christ alone his one and all in life and death. In the former parable the treasure, far from being a single gold coin, consisted "of gold and of gems" (Bengel) — many single jewels and precious pieces; in this second parable we have only "one pearl": thus Christ is in one way the treasure-chest full of precious things (think of all the doctrines of salvation, and of all the blessed-

ness of what Christ is to us, justification, peace, light, joy, comfort, hope), and in another way he is just one supreme, all-embracing pearl. The man in the first parable secured all the gems; the merchant in the second the entire pearl. The "goodly pearls" the merchant sought may remind us of the many things with which Martha cumbered herself — none of which, and not all of which combined, can bestow lasting and complete satisfaction. One thing is needful — and here the one thing is set before us as the "one pearl of great price." There is but one such pearl, but this does not mean that only one man can possess it. In our parable there is, therefore, a notable omission. We have nothing mentioned to correspond with "the field" in the first parable. This does not indicate that "the field" has no special meaning; it rather indicates that Christ could not mention some gem-collector as the one in whose possession the great pearl was found, since that would have meant that he, selling the pearl, could not himself have it any more, and the owner of the pearl could, of course, not be bought. So Christ omits this or any similar feature. The one merchant stands as the model for us all. Let every one of us become, as we may indeed, a possessor of the pearl, for *beati sunt possidentes*.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

There are two brief parables, and most preachers, especially since so many of them deal only in common analysis of texts for their sermons, will attempt to make two sermon parts here, one parable for each part. But this is not easily done, as a little effort will show. Other methods will therefore be tried. Probably the easiest is to divide vertically through both parables since several identical features appear in both. Here are two outlines of this type:

The Wonderful Story of the Treasure and the Pearl.

I. Hidden; II. Found; III. Secured.

Christ, the Priceless Treasure in the Kingdom of God.

I. Priceless indeed! II. Found by you and me; III. Made your own and mine.

Next to *the treasures* mentioned in the two parables is the wonderful *finding* in both. We may pivot the sermon thus:

There is Only One Way to Get the Heavenly Treasure of Life in Christ: Find It!

- I. God has placed it somewhere where we can find it.*
- II. God is leading us so that we may come where we can find it.*
- III. God is extending to us his grace so that we actually can find it.*
- IV. God is showing us that on finding it we must make it our own.*

Intro.: Christ, the Good Shepherd *finds*; the Church, with broom and candle, *finds*; the prodigal son is *found*; we ourselves must *find*.

Blessed Are They That Find!

- I. The treasure God prepared.*
- II. The treasure Christ bought.*
- III. The treasure intended for us to find.*
- IV. The treasure which enriches for eternity.*
- V. The treasure easily secured when found.*

Koegel describes how the treasure is still found in the field: "Has not many a one come into church with nothing farther from his thoughts than to find something noteworthy there; and like a flash of lightning, in hearing the Word, something went through his soul — and the treasure of all treasures glowed with increasing brightness before his eyes. Or the hand of God led him in his life into some godly family, into a circle of Christian friends, or to the side of some death-bed — and what he never dreamed of, suddenly his surprised eye beheld: the treasure hidden within true disciples of Christ. Or when the plowshare of trouble drew sharp furrows across his own field, on the sick-bed, beside the grave of his best-beloved, at the burial of his hopes, he found the royal treasure of faith and learned to say with Asaph, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee!' and to confess with Paul, 'For me to live is Christ!' " — Now, to finish with, we may consider the two part division, one

parable to each part. We may do it by drawing attention to the fact that in the first parable the kingdom is compared to a *treasure*, and in the second parable this kingdom is compared to a *man*. How shall we tie the two together? By means of the *finding*.

The Secret of Finding in the Kingdom of Heaven.

- I. There's a treasure — God intends the finding of it.*
- II. There is a man — God intends that he be the finder.*

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matthew 23, 34-39

This text rounds out and completes the general thought presented in the three foregoing texts. The theme of this sub-cycle (the Seventh to the Tenth after Trinity) is The Life in the Kingdom. We have had first its mysterious birth and growth; secondly, the blessed family relation which results; thirdly, the priceless treasures thus made ours; and finally, in the text before us, we are warned of the ever present danger threatening our spiritual life. This is the burden of the text for our hearers. In the connection thus presented a mighty warning is given against the blind and false security which, like a deadly sleep, may fall upon us. A brief analysis reveals the danger in detail. The Jews disregarded and rejected the messengers of grace God sent unto them (v. 34); they failed to understand the time of grace in which they lived (v. 37: "how often would I have gathered" etc.); and they wilfully resisted the gracious will of God which sought their salvation (v. 39, refusing to receive the Savior with the cry of faith, Blessed is he, etc.). No more terrible mistake can be made. In presenting this warning to our hearers we, of course, speak to them as God's people. We are not facing the foes of Christ and his kingdom, as did Christ when he uttered his awful woes against the hypocritical Pharisees, the climax of which are the words of our text, although in our preaching on this text there will necessarily be the deep undercurrent of judgment for all the foes of Christ and the contemners of his grace. Our task is to warn God's people of today, lest, like the people of God in olden times, they, too, lose God's grace,

sink into spiritual death, and thus fall at last beneath the fearful penalties of his judgment .

This text resembles the regular Gospel text for this Sunday, both announcing God's judgment upon the obdurate Jews. A few of the Eisenach Gospel texts are parallels of the older Gospel texts, yet each is selected, not merely to serve as a parallel, but to constitute a true link in the chain of thought, the resemblance to well-known older texts merely serving as an added charm. The one verse in the text before us, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," etc., makes it a memorable text indeed. Christ's seven woes precede our text. In all the Gospels there is nothing so terrible from the lips of the Savior as these words of burning denunciation. They reveal the consuming wrath of the Lamb (Rev. 6, 16), showing forth his fiery indignation. The connection of our text with what precedes it must be borne in mind. This public and detailed denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees as hypocrites is Christ's final word to them. His special work as far as they are concerned is finished; he has done all that can be done for them. Our text is the closing passage of this final scathing address.

V. 34. Three powerful words usher in this closing section: **Therefore**, διὰ τοῦτο; **behold**, ἰδοῦ; **I**, ἐγώ. "Therefore" = because these serpents and offspring of vipers shall not escape the judgment of hell. The scribes and Pharisees were not merely *like* their forefathers who slew the prophets; they were worse, for they had the evil example of their fathers as a warning before them, yet did not only what once their fathers did, but went far beyond in the same line of wickedness, rejecting and killing the very Son of God and the last messengers of grace he sent unto them. — **Behold!** = see this monstrous thing! — worse than the other, as we have just said. — **I** — here the majesty of God's Son comes out. He in his own person sends

these last messengers. In Luke 11, 49: "Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets," etc., this majesty still veils itself. Now, however, it emphatically draws attention to itself. — **I send**, ἀποστέλλω, present tense, followed by the futures: "ye shall kill and crucify," etc. The Jews' action (expressed by the future tense) is thus a sure result of Christ's (present tense). As certainly as Christ sends, they will kill and crucify, etc. And Christ's messengers are so nearly ready that he can speak of sending them in the present tense. The verb ἀποστέλλω is descriptive of the office and work of those sent, they are commissioned as apostles, i. e. as men bearing a special message. The thought, however, is not restricted to the Twelve who are usually called "apostles," but includes all whom the Lord sends. — **Unto you**, because unto all nations, all creatures. This sending unto the Jews is clearly stated in Christ's command to his followers at his ascension: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both *in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.*" Acts 1, 8. It is also pictured in the parable of the King's Wedding Feast: "Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell *them which are bidden, Behold,*" etc. — **Prophets, and wise men, and scribes.** These are the messengers mentioned in Eph. 4, 11: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers"; although here they are spoken of as sent to the church. It is evident, however, that their work is also to extend the Church, and thus to reach out to those still outside the Church. Some commentators take the words of Christ to include the sending out of all the Old Testament prophets. Meyer rightly opposes this interpretation by pointing to the future tenses which follow: "some of them ye *shall kill and crucify.*" The "prophets," etc., here mentioned

are clearly those of the New Testament, with whose rejection the Jews filled up the measure of their fathers (v. 32). Christ will send *all* these prophets, wise men, and scribes. Luther makes the following distinction: "*Prophets* here designates those who have received the Word immediately from the Lord, not getting it out of books or by the assistance of men. Thus the apostles received it; therefore the twelve apostles are here meant, who heard the Lord himself, Gal. 1, 11-12. Like this also were the prophets, Moses, Isaiah, Amos, David, and others, who all wrote what no other man taught them. The Law indeed they heard (from others), but this wisdom of the Gospel they have through the revelation of the Holy Ghost, 2 Pet. 1, 21. *Wise men* are those who have it not directly from God, but from the writings of men who are taught by the prophets. They were the scholars of those who had received it from the Lord (comp. Ex. 4, 15-16). *Scribes*, or writers, are those who were instructed by the writings of the apostles." Christ calls some of his messengers prophets and thus puts them before his hostile hearers as the true successors of the prophets whom their fathers killed; he adds wise men and scribes (in striking contrast to what he had just called his hearers, "fools and blind," v. 17) and designates them as the true teachers of the divine wisdom (*Chokma*) and interpreters of the law and the prophets. — **And some of them;** ἐξ αὐτῶν is the object, a case of the partitive use of ἐκ, with τινές understood. Some — not all. Yet this will not lessen their guilt, for they would have destroyed all, if God's gracious providence had not shielded some. — **Shall ye kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city.** Ἀποκτενεῖτε, shall ye put out of the way, as was James whom the Jews beheaded, and Stephen, whom they stoned to death; σταυρώσετε, the most shame-

ful Roman method of execution, inflicted upon Peter, and upon a son of Cleopas, Simeon by name. In the year 107, when 120 years old, he was accused by the Jews and crucified by the consular legate Atticus. Eusebius 3, 32. Although this martyrdom occurred after the destruction of Jerusalem, it is part of the blood-guilt resting upon the Jews. The early history of the Church is meager; we do not even know how all the apostles died, to say nothing of many others. *Μαστιγώσατε*, ye shall beat with rods, which was the Jewish mode of scourging, suffered by Paul: "Of the Jews five times I received forty stripes save one." 2 Cor. 11, 24. Even the Christian "scribes," these humblest teachers of the Gospel, would be persecuted by the Jews unto death, showing the extent to which their hostility would go. Besser points out that the infliction of these Christian martyrdoms was a far greater crime than the killing of the Old Testament prophets, because between these two stood the open tomb of the risen Savior.

V. 35. — *Ὅπως* with the subjunctive = in order that, so that; and expresses the divine intention. God indeed would have all men to come to repentance and be saved, but when they completely frustrate his saving will by hardening their hearts in impenitence and wickedness, he gives them over to their punishment. In this way he intends it. Moreover, there is such a thing as an accumulation of sin and guilt, a piling up of crime upon crime, causing at last an avalanche of punishment to fall upon the wicked perpetrators. Each individual and each generation of evil-doers will indeed receive the due reward of their deeds, but when one generation follows the wicked course of another in spite of all the warnings of God, there comes at last a final doom, when the pent-up wrath of outraged justice breaks forth with unrestrained intensity. The divine justice is not so superficial as ours; it demands

more than a reckoning for individual and separate crimes. Each crime when re-enacted in new instances, and these perhaps worse than the ones that went before, involves a guilt that reaches back to the beginning. These last acts really "allow," or sanction, all the former of the same sort and so involve a guiltiness for all. In this way there came upon the last generation of the Jews **all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from Abel on to Zachariah**. It is called **righteous**, αἷμα δίκαιον, because the persons involved were righteous before God, and their blood was shed innocently. "*Ter hoc dicitur uno hoc versu, magna vi.*" Bengel. **Shed**, ἐκχυνόμενον, really poured out, i. e. in penalty; ἐκχύνω a later form of ἐκχέω. The present tense strikingly describes the blood as still in the act of flowing. — The first righteous man whose blood was shed innocently was **Abel**, and his death is mentioned on the first pages of the Bible. The last notable representative of righteousness who suffered such a fate was **Zachariah**, mentioned in the last book of the Hebrew Bible, 2 Chron. 24, 20-22. Both are eminent examples. Abel is emphatically called **the righteous**; and Zachariah's martyrdom is a murder so terrible that even the Talmud deplors it as one of the most heinous of Jewish crimes against God's servants. When Zachariah died he exclaimed: "The Lord look upon it, and require it." This dying call for just retribution makes Christ's reference to Zachariah the more effective. Historically the martyrdom of Urijah (Jer. 26, 23) occurred about 200 years later than that of Zachariah, but that of the latter stands last on the sacred Old Testament pages, and is therefore mentioned by the Savior in preference to the other in summing up the Jewish guilt. — **Zachariah son of Barachiah**. "Zachariah" signifies: Whom Jehovah remembers. Meyer, Zahn, and others admit, without compunction, a lapse of memory on the part of the

evangelist, taking it for granted that he confused Zachariah son of Jehoiada (2 Chron. 24, 20), with one of the minor prophets, Zachariah, the son of Berechiah (Zech. 1, 1). This we are absolutely unable to do. At most we would consent to admit with Kuebel that we have here an unsolved difficulty. Noesgen remarks that a lapse of memory cannot be thought of here, because the evangelist purposely added the second designation (son of Barachiah) to distinguish this Zachariah from others; and this observation is certainly correct. The simplest explanation, and to our mind the best, is Luther's, namely that Jehoiada had two names: "Jehoiada with the added name Barachiah." Jehoiada signifies, Whom Jehovah knows; and Barachiah, Whom Jehovah has blessed. The giving of new or additional names was nothing strange among the Jews. The son of Joash, for instance, is called both Jerubbaal and Gideon, Judges 8, 29 and 32, comp. 6, 32 and 7, 1. Another explanation is that Jehoiada was really the grandfather, and Barachiah the father. This is possible when we remember the great age of Jehoiada, 130 years, and when we recall his great deeds, making it very creditable to be called his son. In this theory Zachariah would be named after his grandfather in Chronicles, but after his father in Matthew, the father's name having been preserved by Jewish tradition or genealogical records. Still other solutions have been offered, but they lack probability. — **Between the sanctuary and the altar** designates exactly the same spot as "in the court of the house of the Lord," 2 Chron 24, 21, only is more explicit, and no doubt was so handed down by tradition. The effect of this exact location of the crime — Christ may have pointed to the very spot when he spoke the words — must have been powerful indeed. The hearts of his hearers must have been adamantine not to be crushed by these words, and their faces like

steel not to be blanched by the thought of the blood shed so close to where they all stood.

V. 36. **Verily** — here is absolute truth, and the terrible story of Jerusalem's destruction attests it. **I say unto you** — here is absolute, divine authority and prophecy, which cannot fail. Ταῦτα πάντα = all these bloody deeds, every one; **shall come**, in penalty; **upon this generation**, extending to the destruction of Jerusalem. These words are like God's final seal affixed to the prophecy of Jerusalem's doom.

The entire 23rd chapter so far has been one terrific outpour of denunciation — calm, measured, irresistible, fortified with absolute proof at every step, final. Now at last the note of tenderness breaks into that of stern judgment, and the hope that still holds out to the last sends forth a ray of light to penetrate the midnight gloom.

V. 37. **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem** sounds like the reverberating thunder of the approaching storm. Besser finds in the words the cry of the mother-heart for its perverted and lost child; and this is nearer the truth. The very form Ἱερουσαλήμ, Hebrew, instead of Ἱεροσόλυμα, together with the sad repetition of the word, is full of deepest, sincerest pathos, recalling in its way all the cries of the old martyred prophets and their vain appeals to this city, called the city of peace, but ever forsaking the ways of peace. The name of the city stands for the people in it, and as the capital of the nation for the entire nation. Calov explodes the distinction that some would make between "Jerusalem" = the rulers and authorities, and "thy children," or the children of Jerusalem = the common people, as though Jesus meant to gather only the latter. He points out that the very ones whom Jesus would have gathered, themselves would not be gathered — rulers and people alike. — **Which killeth the prophets, and**

stoneth them that are sent unto her — what a description for a city of peace! Here is summed up all her guilt. She putteth the prophets out of the way, and stoneth to death the messengers sent unto her. The present tense in the participles ἀποκτείνουσα and λιθοβολοῦσα marks this her conduct as characteristic and constant; such is Jerusalem at the moment Christ speaks, in two days she will prove it again, more terribly than ever before, by killing the Christ himself. “Unto her” instead of “unto thee” is required by the participles which present the subject they modify in the third person. — **How often**, ποσάκις — not once, but many times Christ did his utmost for Jerusalem, as John’s Gospel especially describes at length. The persistence of divine grace is here illustrated, and it still persists in making use of every opportunity and means to win the sinner from his way. But *all* Christ’s efforts were fruitless as far as the bulk of the nation is concerned. This is what fills his heart with tears. The same sadness comes over God’s servants now when they meet the same experience in the perverse and obdurate people of today. They, too, lament: How often, how often — yet all seems to be in vain! — **Would I have gathered**; ἠθέλησα states the earnest and gracious will of Christ for the salvation of Jerusalem. Stelhorn writes on this passage: “Christ’s willing was a sincere and positive one, not a mere weakly wishing. This is shown by the word in the original (θέλειν), just as it is indicated also by his weeping and lamenting over Jerusalem. . . . (Luke 19, 41). But to this positive willing on the part of Christ the inhabitants of Jerusalem opposed an equally positive and decisive non-willing, and thus rendered Christ’s intention fruitless, since his earnest, gracious will was not, and is not, irresistible. Their resistance was a wilful one, which they might have given up; and this explains why, in spite of the gra-

cious will which embraced them also, they were not converted and saved." *Der Schriftb. des Luth. Kat.* Calvin's distinction between the will of God as expressed in words, and the mystery of the secret will of God, imputes a duplicity to God, which is not only false and utterly unworthy of him, but horrible even to contemplate. Even in thinking and speaking of eternal election "we should accustom ourselves not to speculate concerning the mere, secret, concealed, inscrutable foreknowledge of God, but how the counsel, purpose and ordination of God in Christ Jesus, who is the true book of life, *has been revealed to us through the Word.*" *Formula of Concord*, 652, 13. "And this call of God, which is made through the preaching of the Word, we should regard as no delusion (*Spiegelfechten*), but know that thereby God reveals his will, viz., that in those whom he thus calls he will work through the Word, that they may be enlightened, converted and saved." (654, 29) — Especially touching and beautiful is the simile which Christ introduces: **even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings.** "ὄρνις, bird, used also of a hen; a descriptive figure frequently used by the Rabbis with reference to the *Shechinah*, as the gathering-place of the proselytes. Similar figures, Deut. 32, 11: "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord," etc.; Ps. 17, 8: "Hide me under the shadow of thy wings"; 61, 4; Is. 31, 5. Luther dwells on this loving image as follows: "See, what the ordinary clucking hen does. There is hardly a creature which is so careful of its young. She changes her natural voice and assumes a plaintive and mournful tone; she searches, scratches, and calls to her chicks; if she finds anything, she does not eat it, leaves it with entire earnestness for her chicks; fights, and warns them with a cry against the hawk; spreads out

her wings willingly and lets the chicks pass under her and upon her, loving them so well; and is ever a fine and lovely image. Thus Christ also assumed a plaintive voice, mourned for us and preached repentance, showed every one his sin and woe, with his whole heart. He stirs in the Scriptures, beckons us in and lets us eat, and spreads his wings over us with all his righteousness, merit, and grace, and takes us so lovingly under them, warms us with his own warmth, that is his Holy Spirit, who alone comes through him, fights for us against the devil in the air." Let the preacher not forget that this image of the hen applies also to his office. Chrysostom has well said: "The more your voice is like the call of the clucking hen, the more truly will you preach the Gospel." — A second image is hidden in Christ's simile: he would **have gathered**, ἐπισυναγαγεῖν, — his will was to be gathering together to himself, for protection against the foe. That foe was already hovering over the wicked nation, "as the eagle flieth," Deut. 28, 49, the messenger of God's righteous wrath. Alas, Jerusalem's children saw not the danger and would not accept the proffered shelter. — **And ye would not**, καὶ οὐκ ἠθελήσατε, states the simple, terrible fact. Note well the awful clash: I would — ye would not! The trouble is in the will, which has the fearful power to set itself obdurately against the saving will of God. All who are finally lost, are lost because they would not be saved. Theirs is the blame, and their knowing this at last, and the resulting self-accusation, will be one of the chief elements in their endless misery. "Few receive the Word and follow it; the greatest number despise the Word, and will not come to the wedding (Matth. 22, 3 sqq.). The cause for this contempt of the Word is not God's knowledge (or predestination), but the perverse will of man, who rejects or perverts the means and instrument of the Holy Ghost, which God offers him through the call,

and resists the Holy Ghost, who wishes to be efficacious, and works through the Word, as Christ says: 'How often would I have gathered thee together, and ye would not.'" *F. C.*, J. 657, 41. "A master of music has laid all the power which his art gave him into this lament of the Messiah, and he into whose ears has once been sung 'And ye would not!' will never forget this heart-penetrating music. What? shall the art of music do more than the voice of eternal love speaking from heaven? No; let it penetrate our hearts when Jesus calls to us: 'How often would I have gathered you even as a hen her nest under her wings — and ye would not!' Then we shall will what he wills, our salvation, and shall flee from the judgment of Jerusalem, which scorned the wings of the hen and fell into the talons of the eagle (Matth. 17, 37)." Besser.

V. 38. "Ye would not" — then must the terrible consequences follow, and they merit the exclamatory **behold!** Calvin, Hofmann, Lange and Besser take **your house**, ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν, to mean the Temple. Besser describes how God had chosen him a different habitation, namely the body of his Son, which temple the Jews destroyed, but Jesus himself restored by his resurrection from the dead, and into which all believers are now incorporated — while the old Jewish Temple was given over to destruction. The context, however, does not point so directly to the Temple, but to the city of Jerusalem (Meyer, Zahn) which naturally includes the Temple. Your house, Jerusalem, is left unto you; deprived of the loving care and sheltering hand of God it would soon be desolate enough. — **Desolate**, ἔρημος, is not found in some old manuscripts, but it truly describes the outward and inward results of Jerusalem's obduracy, when God now abandoned her. The outward are seen in the fearful catastrophe of Jerusalem's destruction and the fate of the Jews ever since. The inward,

Luther describes well when he says, *desolate* means to be without the divine Word and Sacraments. "God has let the Jews go for 1500 (now approaching 1900) years without preaching, without prophets, has taken from them his Word, and folded his wings tightly. And thus their house is desolate, their soul no one cultivates, and no God dwells among them." Referring to Is. 5, 5-6 he adds: "What is this that the clouds shall not rain upon them, but that they shall not hear the Gospel? They are not to be pruned and digged — what is this but that no one shall rebuke their error and heal their infirmities? Hence their vineyard bears only briars and thorns, that is work-holy people, who are without faith, bear no fruit of the Spirit, and only grow to be cast into eternal fire."

V. 39. The question of the final conversion of the Jews as a nation will decide, in most cases, the interpretation of this passage. Those who look for such a conversion will find it referred to here. We cannot go into the question of the conversion of the Jewish nation here. Luther in his last utterances and most of the old Lutheran theologians did not expect such a conversion; they held that only a certain number of Jews would come to faith through the preaching of the Gospel from age to age. This is the author's position also. Later exegetes looked for a final conversion of the nation as such, some mixing it with Chiliasm; but the most recent tendency is back to the old Lutheran interpretations. — Γὰρ introduces the reason why the "house" shall be left desolate: Christ will leave, and they shall not see him. The pronoun ὑμῖν and the verbs ἴδητε and εἴπητε have to be severely pressed to make them refer to the Jews as a nation. The former is the futuristic subjunctive, with the strong negative οὐ μὴ: "in no wise shall ye see"; the latter likewise futuristic, ἕως ἂν εἴπητε, "until ye shall say," and the thought is an expectation that they shall.

Every individual is included, throughout the course of the ages, who finally comes to say, "Blessed is he," etc. There is absolutely nothing in this text, or in the original in Ps. 118, 26, or in the greeting as used on Palm Sunday during Christ's entry into the city, to indicate that the greeting, "Blessed is he," etc., ever would be forced from unwilling and unbelieving lips. Meyer and others carry such a notion into this verse. Ps. 118, 26 adds to the greeting the following words: "We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord." This is really the other half of the greeting, and can only be put into the mouth of believers. On Palm Sunday the foes of Christ resented the greeting which his friends gave him. We decline to accept the idea that a grand conversion of the Jewish nation is promised for the time shortly before Christ's judgment. The words of Christ, while not directly saying that any, or many, or all Jews at any particular time in the future, will greet him as blessed, do contain the expectation that some will. And whenever any or many do so (ὡς ἂν εἰπῆτε), namely by faith, they will see him, not indeed at once with the eyes of the flesh — for so no Christian sees him now, although he is with us always, and we are therefore by no means desolate, — but with the eyes of the spirit.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

This text is a warning against unbelief. In its very nature it is negative. The preacher must know how to handle a *negative text*. It will not do to preach a negative sermon on it. Only a preacher built on abnormal mental and spiritual lines would think of doing this. The consensus of all well balanced students of preaching is, and ever will be, that the sermon must be at least in great part positive. They would say, the general effect must be positive. But shall we then discard negative texts? In other words, are the negative parts of Scripture unfit to be used as texts? That might simplify matters, but it would be going too far. The finest pericope systems show an occasional negative text. Nor is the way out

this that we deal loosely with the text, take liberties, go beyond it, and thus achieve a positive sermon. — Let us remember all truth has a double side, one positive, the other negative. To say truth, means to say the opposite of lies; to make life plain contrast it with death; to impress right, condemn wrong; and so all along the line. Now reverse the operation. Sin is made plain by setting righteousness against it; hate, by contrasting it with love; judgment, by setting it beside grace, pardon, justification. All preachers, many of them perhaps unconsciously, thus operate with the two natural and self-evident sides of the truth. Texts wholly positive seem to afford no difficulty — the preacher supplies the implied negatives. A text demanding love is easily expounded as thereby shutting out hate. Well then, why cannot we reverse the operation? A text that warns against unbelief certainly urges faith upon us. That is how to stick to a negative text, and at the same time preach a sermon sufficiently positive in tone. — A few texts are completely negative in statement; but most negative texts, like ours, have some positive statements, and this makes our task easier. Moreover, let us not forget that we are not preaching today to the wicked Jews whose fate was sealed, but to Christian believers, who indeed need warning, but whose judgment we are not pronouncing.

According to these proper principles we decline the outline of Langsdorff: Jesus Bids Jerusalem Farewell: 1) With a bitter lament; 2) With a fearful complaint; 3) With a direful prophecy. This is blank negation. — Here is one with a more positive ring:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! — the Lord's Constant Call to the Church!

- I. It throbs with the heart-beat of his love.*
- II. It rings with the seriousness of his warning.*
- III. It echoes with the thunders of his judgment.*

Here is another, still more positive in tone, yet not losing the negations in the text:

The Infinite Love of Jesus Toward Those Who Refuse to Accept It.

- I. He continues his saving efforts in spite of the hatred and opposition he meets.*
- II. He mourns, as a mother for her lost children when his efforts prove in vain,*

- III. He announces his judgment, if possible at last to turn men to his grace.*

A simple way to handle a text like ours is to place the positives right alongside the negatives. This simplifies the elaboration which will place under each part a positive and a negative sub-part.

Jerusalem: A Signal Warning for All Who Are in the Kingdom.

- I. Hear the call of grace — do not grow deaf.*
II. Use the time of grace — do not grow hard.
III. Embrace the gift of grace — do not grow indifferent to the warning of judgment.

The Fall of Zion of Old a Warning for Zion Today.

- I. They would not, when Jesus would.*
II. They added to their fathers' guilt, when Jesus would have freed them from all guilt.
III. Their house was left desolate, when Jesus would have filled it with blessedness.

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Luke 7, 36-50

This text ushers in a new sub-cycle in the Trinity series, embracing in one group the texts from the eleventh to the eighteenth Sunday after Trinity. The general theme of these texts is: *The Characteristics of the Kingdom*, or: *The Characteristics of the Life in the Kingdom*. These are, briefly stated, the following: Love; Liberty; Sacrifice; Soundness; the Christian's Cross; Consolation; Worship (the Sabbath question); Complete Devotion (the money question). These are all characteristics of the Kingdom itself, as well as of the life in the Kingdom. The series is exceedingly rich, and the choice of texts is often very striking. By keeping the general trend of these texts well in mind they will not only be linked together as so many pearls upon one string, but each will also gain from the other a measure of beauty and attractiveness.

The first of these texts is especially rich and fine. Its one great theme is *Love*. Of all the marks of the Kingdom, and of the life in the Kingdom, this is the first, the greatest, the highest, the most comprehensive and vital. For this reason it heads this sub-cycle. Frommel has said of this text: "This is a golden page of Holy Writ, and one can well understand that a preacher in a former century wrote twenty sermons on it. Whether we picture the Pharisee and his company, into whose midst Jesus was invited as a guest; or speak of the unbidden guest, who suddenly caused such a commotion; or of Jesus, the gentle host, who refreshed both with his seriousness and his mercy — everywhere there lies a wealth of thought. Or, whether

we take the Savior's word, Simon, I have something to say unto thee, and drive it as an arrow into the heart of the self-righteous; or lay upon the hearts of all women, too haughty to receive their sisters fallen into sin and shame, the pathetic question of the Lord, Seest thou this woman? or place before those merciful women who do Magdalene-work this one sinner whom the Lord granted so gloriously the absolution from sin, as a consolation that their work is not in vain — we can well understand that more than one sermon may be preached on this text." But whatever feature we may wish to put forward, it will ever be love which constitutes the heart of our theme. And to bring this out the preacher himself must both have tasted fully of this love and learned, in a measure at least, to return it. That is the blessedness of Christ's kingdom — it is filled with love, and all who are in it know something of the wonders and glories of this love. — The anointing narrated in this text dare not be identified with the anointing reported by the other evangelists, Matth. 26; Mark 14; John 12. The two differ in regard to time, place, the owner of the house where the act took place, the moral character of the women who anointed the Lord, and the conversation connected with the act.

V. 36. Ἠρώτα is descriptive, the man was desiring or requesting Jesus; ἵνα with a verb like ἐρωτάω is sub-final, almost an object clause, Robertson 993. The story opens with considerable abruptness. There is no apparent connection with anything preceding, unless we take Christ's acceptance of a Pharisee's invitation as an illustration of his own saying in a previous verse of this chapter, that the Son of man came eating and drinking and was accordingly slandered as a glutton and a winebibber. The Pharisee concerned is afterwards incidentally named Simon, a very common name, as can be seen by the number of

Simons mentioned in the New Testament. Beyond the name and the Jewish sect to which this man belonged we know nothing about him, save that the story itself pictures him as in character and heart one of Christ's antagonists. We rightly infer that the desire that Christ dine with him was not a true act of friendliness at all. Some suppose that there may have been an unrest in his heart, drawing him to Christ, or a feeling of sorrow for some particular sin; but this is wholly imaginary, and not probable. It is rather to be supposed from the text that this Pharisee, as a true Pharisee, used the form of a friendly invitation with a heart and purpose not friendly at all. Christ was fully aware of it; nevertheless he accepted the invitation, yet on his part there was no return of unfriendliness, veiled like that of Simon under a thin veneer of politeness, but rather true love even for this sinner, and others like him, and a true desire if possible to reach his heart by saving love. This the whole account makes plain, revealing for one thing the slights put upon Christ by Simon, and over against them the patient nobility of Christ in bearing them, and, in spite of all the hostility he knew to be in Simon's heart, the loving effort to save this Pharisee's soul. There is a lesson here, much needed by us all, that we should always be sincere and true in using the forms of politeness which each other. There are too many invitations extended and accepted in the spirit of Simon, "one of the Pharisees," when every one of them should be in the spirit of Christ, loving, long-suffering, truly kind, and sincere. — "And having entered into the house of the Pharisees he reclined" (*κατεκλίθη*) at table. No mention is made of any attentions between his entrance and his reclining to dine — a significant omission. The custom of reclining upon couches while eating was usual among the Jews at this time. Each man rested upon his left elbow, his feet

extended away from the table, several persons thus occupying one couch. Some artists have painted Jesus as seated upon a chair at table: they have conventionalized the scene.

V. 37. An unexpected, a remarkable thing occurs, giving the entire visit of Christ at this Pharisee's house a significance of its own — ἰδοὺ, behold! — **A woman**, no name given, none necessary. One has well said, Put your own name down for hers. Roman Catholic exegetes, especially the older ones, and also the older Protestant theologians, identify this woman with Mary Magdalene. But there is no Biblical evidence for this identification. Mary Magdalene was a demoniac, possessed of seven devils, which Christ drove out. There is no hint that she ever led a dissolute life. This woman was a prostitute. It is unfortunate that she of Magdala has been compelled to lend her name to repentant fallen women ("penitent Magdalene"), and that the A. V. in its chapter heading to Luke 7 countenances this error. — **Which was in the city, a sinner.** A sidelight is cast by the presence of this woman on the moral condition of that Jewish "city," and of the Jews themselves, when we remember the stern laws of Moses against sins of this character. The word for "sinner" is descriptive ἁμαρτωλός = one who has missed the mark. How many ἁμαρτωλοί there are, missing now this, now that mark set for them in God's Ten Commandments. The word "was," and in v. 39 "is" a sinner, states her reputation among the people. That a great change has taken place within her heart is evidenced by her present action. — Four participles describe the woman's movement in coming publicly to Christ: **when she knew**, ἐπιγνοῦσα = "having come to know"; **she brought**, κομίσασα = "having brought"; **standing**, στᾶσα; **weeping**, κλαίουσα — and every one of them is important, because they depict not only the outward conduct, but

also the inner spiritual condition and action of this sinner. Altogether, since they are modifiers of the subject, they paint a picture of this woman as she appeared in Simon's house: she had known, had brought, had placed herself, was weeping. The first two show that she inquired and made ready. What caused her to do so? Meyer makes her sole motive one of gratitude. The "standing" and "weeping" might have corrected him, for evidently they show that her sense of sin and the sorrow of repentance are still strongly upon her. Undoubtedly she had heard of Christ and his pardoning love, had perhaps stood among some multitude listening to the words as they fell from his own lips. These had entered her heart, and she had applied their balm to her hurt. A great resolve then sprang up in her bosom: she would throw herself at Jesus' feet! There was the certainty within her that this gracious Savior would be true to his word and in no wise cast her out; and thus she ventured to take the **alabaster cruse** with her when now she learned where he could be reached. But will he really accept her? will he not turn against her like these proud and heartless Pharisees? As she enters the place, for a moment this thought causes her to **stand** and pause, shrinking and hesitating within her heart. But while the disapproving looks of the Pharisees speak plainly what they think of her, Christ's silent kindness encourages and draws her forward. And now, in the very moment, that she feels herself accepted indeed, the thought of her utter baseness and unworthiness overpowers her — she **weeps**; *κλαίω* signifies loud, unrestrained weeping, a burst of tearful grief. Mingled feelings fill her breast: shame and deepest contrition, incipient faith in the Savior's pardon, joy and gratitude to find herself accepted. Let us remember that true contrition is not a passing act, which can be finished and left behind to

give way altogether and in a moment to joy and gratitude; it rather continues and is strong in the very moment when pardon is assured and faith embraces it. Trench helps us in understanding her entrance into a room full of dining guests, by describing instances of the oriental custom of permitting people to come in, sit down, and converse with those at table, especially when an entertainment was in progress. Our usual privacy is entirely different. As we see this woman breaking through every consideration that would bar her from throwing herself at Jesus' feet, let us remember that hesitation and delay in the critical moments of our spiritual life are always dangerous and often fatal. May no obstacle withhold us from pouring out our repentance, faith, and gratitude before the Savior.

V. 38. **She began to wet his feet with her tears;** ἤρξατο, an aorist, marks the point of beginning, βρέχειν, pres. inf., the protracted action that thus began. The tenses are significant throughout: ἐξέμασσεν, she continued to wipe, κατεφίλει καὶ ἤλειφεν, likewise to kiss and to anoint. The tears are first, precious tears! — the ointment last. Standing at the outer edge of the couch her tears naturally fell upon Jesus' feet as they lay before her. These feet, bare and unsandaled now, had not been bathed by a servant in Simon's house — significant slight. Bengel calls it an "exquisite veneration" when this woman wipes the tear-stains from those sacred feet **with the hair of her head**. The sinner's head belongs at Jesus' feet. The hair is woman's crown and glory, often enough abused in vanity and pride, but here used in deepest humility and devotion. Our highest and best belongs in the dust at Jesus' feet. The woman acted instinctively, not reasoning about her action as we do now in contemplating it, but her instinct, led by the Spirit was right. Κατεφίλει, she **kissed**, again and again, ardently, showing the intensity of her devotion and love. Simon

had omitted any such sign of friendship. The μύρον, sweet-smelling oil or perfume, was enclosed in **alabaster**, not our gypsum, but the far more costly oriental material, which was translucent and streaked beautifully with red, yellow, and gray markings. This is the woman's offering of gratitude. It is poured out freely, without stinting, upon Christ's feet, she presuming to approach only these, and feeling herself unworthy to touch even these. Simon had omitted the anointing of his guest, withholding what was a common mark of honor at feasts. All that this woman brought was accepted by the Savior. In spirit thousands have followed her example. And even where there is true contrition and faith, there will be besides the tears an offering of gratitude, rich and sweet with love, the best it is able to find for him.— Luther brings out the two parts of *true repentance* in this woman's and in every sinner's heart: "Behold, this is *the beginning of the right kind of repentance*, that first of all the heart is terrified at the wrath of God because of its sin, and earnestly longs to be rid of it, and begins to leave off the sin, whereupon a new life is bound to follow. For it is impossible, when contrition is really in the heart and you are sorry, that you should sin against God as heretofore, that you should willingly yield yourself into such sin again. This contrition, however, man cannot make himself; it is the work of the Holy Ghost, produced by him through the Word of God, which first of all uncovers *the sin*, and then shows *the penalty* of sins, eternal death. This is a penalty which will not allow itself to be despised, but so presses and drives the heart that it does not know whither to go and is hardly able to draw breath for terror. This is what here brings such heartfelt weeping to the poor woman and the sincere change of her whole life, so that she no more follows the young men, does not as before seduce with her eyes, does not make

a prideful display of her hair, but uses all this so that one must see she is heartily displeased with her former life and means to amend and be more godly. But this does not complete repentance; for your sins are not forgiven you because you are sorry for them. This must be added, that with the woman you *run to the Lord Christ* and seek forgiveness of sins from him, yea, that you have the hearty confidence in him that for his sake your sins are forgiven you, without any merit of your own, by grace alone. For this that she lies at his feet, dries the feet, which she wet with her tears, with her hair, kisses them, pours precious fluid over them — all this is a sign that she heartily trusts and loves the Lord Christ; which impels her to seek comfort and help of him. This is the proper part which completes repentance and obtains the forgiveness of sins, that we put our confidence upon the Lord Christ that through him we have the forgiveness of sins.”

V. 39. “Having seen,” ἰδών — no need to say what, therefore no object is stated. The Pharisee, being a Pharisee, **saw**, but his eyes were blind with the false vision of self-righteousness. He “saw,” yet failed to see; the true inwardness of the scene was hidden from him, hence the loving effort of Jesus to show it to him by means of the parable and its application. Because Simon saw so little, and this all in a false light, the conclusion he draws is utterly wrong. He puts Christ mentally, as Trench points out, into a dilemma: either he does *not know* the true character of this woman, in which case he lacks the discernment of spirits which pertains to a true prophet; or, if he *knows*, and yet endures her touch, and is willing to accept a service at such hands, he lacks that holiness which is no less the note of a prophet of God. In either case Christ seems to him no prophet; and a third possibility there does not seem to be. But he

will quickly find that Christ does discern the inwardness of men's hearts as a true prophet (Is. 11, 3-4; 1 Kings 14, 6; comp. John 1, 47-49; 2, 25; 4, 29); also that there is a holiness joined to grace, of which he had never dreamed. So his dilemma dissolves into thin air. Εἰ ἦν, . . . ἐγίνωσκεν ἄν, the condition is taken to be unfulfilled, and the time is present: "if he were, he would know" (now); "would have perceived" must be taken in the same way: now. Robertson: "The form of the condition reveals the state of mind of the Pharisee, not the truth about Jesus' nature and powers. As a matter of fact it is the Pharisee who is ignorant." Though ἐγίνωσκεν is a secondary tense, the following verbs are primary, because *oratio recta*. Οὗτος, slightly; ποταπή, later form, = ποῖος; ἄπτεται, the same word as when Mary Magdalene sought to "grasp" the feet of the risen Savior when he first appeared to her (John 20, 17), which he then forbade. The love of Jesus has lighted the world these many years, but there are still those who see in repentant sinners at the feet of Jesus no more than Simon the Pharisee saw. That *she* is a sinner, that *they* are (?) holier (in their own conceit) than she, is all they see.

V. 40. One must vividly imagine the scene to feel the dramatic element in it — not a word had been spoken since the woman entered and began her demonstration, which also was silent expect for her weeping. The surprise was followed by a strain, an increasing tension, as the guests at table began to turn their disapproving eyes more and more from the woman to Christ. At the proper moment Christ **answered**. He turns directly to Simon, showing that he read the very thought in his heart. **Simon . . . unto thee!** — and has he nothing to say to the Pharisee in your heart and in mine? Διδάσκαλος is Teacher, a title of respect.

V. 41. This is a Nathan's parable. God is the

creditor, men the debtors, sin the debt. We must note that the difference between 500 and 50 pence is a far different proportion than between 10,000 talents and 10 pence in the parable of the Unmerciful Servant. Your sins and mine against God never vary so much in proportion as my sins against God and your sins against me. 500 pence is about \$70, and 50 pence about \$7 in our money. But does it not seem as if Christ said, the more we sin against God, and consequently the greater his forgiveness is, the more will we love him — putting, as it were, a premium on the quantity of our sins? The difficulty vanishes when we observe that Christ describes the debt of sin, not *objectively*, but *subjectively*, — not as so many outward transgressions and outbreaks of evil, but as so much consciousness of sin; which we know is nowise in proportion to a man's actual and positive violations of God's law (Trench). Often they have the strongest sense of their sinfulness who have least fallen into open sin and shame; while he who feels that but little is forgiven him, simply fails to see how deeply such sins as pride, self-righteousness, hypocrisy, and unbelief sink a man into the condemnation of God. Neither debtor is able to pay, "hence the debt could not be cancelled by subsequent love and a willing mind." Bengel. — The parable itself is finely retold in the following sketch: Both debtors were deeply in trouble. The nearer the day of settlement came, the darker grew their brows, the worse their appetites, the more aggravated their sleeplessness. He who owed 500 pence was especially filled with dismay. O God, what shall I do? he sighed day by day, and as far as he was concerned the sun would not need to have risen. What shall we do? his pale wife sighed, as she pressed her youngest child to her breast, while the older children with a bread-rind in their hands slunk away into the street, yet did not care to play. It was fortunate that

the money-lender was a godly, noble-minded man; when he discovered the trouble of his two debtors he was moved with pity. Perhaps it was just when his birthday came that he said, Now I am going to prepare a special joy for myself, by freeing these two of their anxiety! Yes, do so, dear husband, said his good wife whose thought was mainly upon the pale wife of the debtor and her many hungry children. The man had them both called. Dear friends, he said, let your worry come to an end, I herewith cancel all your debts. O how their faces lit up at once! He to whom the 500 pence had been presented beamed especially, and was ready to kiss the good man's feet. He ran rather than walked home. Just think, he cried to his wife who was anxiously watching for his coming, Just think, he has cancelled the whole of it, the whole 500 pence, not one do I need to pay any more — the whole 500 pence! And now his wife joined in the rejoicing, and the children came joyfully capering in. After this not a day passed in the house in which the kind man was not in some way praised. To be sure the other man also rejoiced, but finally he and his wife concluded, well, 50 pence, the sum wasn't so terribly great, and it was a small thing for the man to cancel it. — The freshness and force of many of the parables is lost for us by their frequent repetition; it is a fine homiletic art to retell them so that their power comes out vividly again. Note how careful and wary Simon is in his reply: ὑπολαμβάνω — as if he suspected something.

V. 44-46. Perhaps Simon had ostentatiously turned away from the woman, Christ bids him regard her, the more deeply to impress the words, now uttered, upon his heart. In applying the parable Christ brings out two chief thoughts: what Simon had failed to do, this woman had done; and she had exceeded all that Simon could have been expected to do. Simon gave him no water for his feet (Gen. 18, 4; Judg. 19, 21),

offered no kiss of peace (Gen. 22, 4; Ex. 18, 7), brought no oil, as was the custom at festivals (Ps. 23, 5; 141, 5; Matth. 6, 17). For water the woman gave him tears — the blood of her heart (Augustine), of all waters the most precious (Bengel); for a towel, the glory of her head, her hair; instead of a kiss of friendship and welcome, a shower of kisses of abject devotion, upon his feet; instead of ordinary oil for the head (ἔλαιον), the far more costly ointment in alabaster (μόρον) upon his feet. The phrase ἀφ' ἧς, "since," is hardly derived from ἀφ' ἡμέρας ἧ (Robertson), but from ἀφ' ὧρας ἧ (Blass). By looking *thus* upon the woman Simon was to see himself in the proper light. Let us look upon her so that we see ourselves as we should; asking, What have we done for this Savior? Where is our love for these feet that trod so many a hard path for us, bearing the cross at last to Calvary?

V. 47-50. The **wherefore** is connected with **I say**, not with "her sins are forgiven." The R. V. punctuates correctly; but both Westcott and Hort, and Alex. Souter, punctuate so as to draw the phrase to ἀφέωνται. "Wherefore," οὐ χάριν = for which sake; χάριν used as a so-called adverbial preposition. The form ἀφέωνται is a Doric perfect passive: "have been (and thus are) forgiven"; Robertson calls it a Doric Arcadian perfect. — **For**, ὅτι, does not state the *reason* why her sins were forgiven, but, as the whole context (the parable and v. 50) demand, the *proof* for the forgiveness of her sins. It will not do to take ἠγάπησεν, **she loved** in the sense of faith, or love including and really meaning faith, as Trench does; or as Oosterzee does: because by her love she demonstrated that she had faith. We are reminded of the old illustration, showing the difference between the *reason* for a thing, and the *proof* for a thing: It has rained, *for* it is wet. The rain *caused* the wetness, not the wetness the rain;

but the witness is *the visible proof* for the fact that it has rained. So the woman's love is not the reason or cause of forgiveness, but her having and showing this love *proves* in a visible manner that her sins are forgiven. This disposes of the exegetical claim of the Romanists who use this passage as a *locus classicus* for their doctrine of the *fides formata* and the forgiveness of sin merited by human works. In the Apology (Jacobs 108, 31, etc.) Melancthon writes: "Christ says: 'Her sins which are many are forgiven for she loved much.' For Christ interprets this very passage when he adds: 'Thy faith saved thee.' Christ, therefore, did not mean that the woman, by that work of love, had merited the remission of sins. For he says clearly on this account: 'Thy faith hath saved thee.' But faith is that which freely apprehends God's mercy on account of God's Word. If any one denies that this is faith, he does not understand at all what faith is. And the narrative itself shows in this passage what that is which he calls faith. The woman came with the opinion concerning Christ, that with him the remission of sins should be sought. This worship is the highest worship of Christ. Nothing greater could she ascribe to Christ. To seek from him the remission of sins, was truly to acknowledge him the Messiah. Now thus to think of Christ, thus to worship him, thus to embrace him, is truly to believe. Christ, moreover, employed the word 'love,' not with respect to the woman, but against the Pharisee; because he contrasted the entire worship of the Pharisee with the entire worship of the woman. He reproved the Pharisee, because he did not acknowledge that he was the Messiah, although he afforded him the outward offices due to a guest and a great and holy man. He points to the woman and praises her worship, ointment, tears, etc., all of which were signs of faith and confession, viz. that with Christ she sought the re-

mission of sins. It is indeed a great example which, not without reason, moved Christ to reprove the Pharisee, who was a wise and honorable man, but not a believer. He charges him with impiety, and admonishes him by the example of the woman, showing thereby that it is disgraceful to him, that while an unlearned woman believes God, he, a doctor of the law, does not believe, does not acknowledge the Messiah, and does not seek from him remission of sins and salvation." Luther writes to the point: "The Lord summarizes very exactly and beautifully: I say unto thee, her sins which are many are forgiven her. *This is proved by that she loves much.* But to you and your companions the sins are not forgiven; on the contrary, ye are sticking in them above your ears, and will die in them and perish. *For one discovers no proper love in you,* which love would necessarily follow, if you deemed yourselves sinners and believed that through me you would be free therefrom." — **To whom little is forgiven** does not contain the thought of a partial forgiveness, which is just as foreign to the Scriptures as the forgiveness for the sake of love or works, but is said with reference to Simon's appreciation of himself as so much less a sinner than this woman. We all, the Lord knows, have sins enough — if only we knew it like that woman in Simon's house, and understanding and realizing the greatness of our forgiveness, would show love accordingly. — Having finished with the Pharisee Christ turns to the woman and says to her what he had said of her. **Thy sins are forgiven,** ἀφέωνται σοι αἱ ἁμαρτίαι. This is the absolution from the Savior's own lips. That, through his Word and Sacrament today, is altogether the same. "And he that believes these words, has what they say and express, even forgiveness of sins." Bengel says that remission was not given to the woman now for the first time, but was now confirmed to her. The

moment the first spark of faith is created by the means of grace in the heart is the moment of justification and forgiveness before the heavenly judgment seat of God. — The astonished Pharisees now became aware that Christ was exercising the divine prerogative in forgiving sins — *καί* = even, implying other great things as also assumed by Christ. A sudden new light falls on the parable which Christ had just spoken, for Christ's action in absolving is the interpretation that a **certain lender** who had two debtors, is none other than he himself, namely as the Son of God. The implied charge of blasphemy against Christ is not pressed here, and so the Lord silently passes it by without refuting it. — The thoughts in the hearts of those at table with Christ ring loudly in his ears, but he calmly finishes his work with the woman. To the one word he adds another: **Thy faith hath saved thee**, *σέσωξέν σε* — saved thee from thy sins, and from all the direful consequences which they threatened. This salvation Christ ascribes to faith, not to love, not to any work of hers. Simon was directed to look at her love as it showed itself so magnificently before his eyes; by it he could know the invisible root, faith. But Christ himself looks with all-seeing eyes upon the faith. This **faith** is not an idle opinion, nor is it itself a good work to merit grace; in neither case would it avail for forgiveness. As forgiveness is an unmerited, underserved, gracious gift, faith is the reception of that gift, the open beggar's hand into which the Lord lays the prize for which he himself paid the bloody price. The Bible is never afraid of ascribing too much to faith, because it always understands what faith really is, the divinely wrought reception of Christ, without a shadow of human merit. We may, yea must, speak of faith in the same way, no matter what objections some with wrong ideas may raise. — **Go in peace**, *εἰς*, but not in

the sense of *into*, but simply *in*, since the peace was not the goal, but a possession during the entire going; comp. the discussion of εἰς and ἐν in connection with Baptism, text for Epiphany. Peace is the certainty that all is well between God and the soul. True peace can follow only as the result of divine forgiveness. But in thus following, it opens a path before us that leads on through green pastures and beside the still waters, for the peace of God passeth all understanding, every enjoyment of it will show that there are still untasted pleasures beyond. What a change for this woman: once there lay before her the burning waste of sin's course unto damnation; now — the path of peace that leads upward to God. No wonder Paul wrote so joyfully: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Rom. 5, 1. For myself I want no more than Christ gave to this woman — the words:

Ἀφεόνται σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι —
 Ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε —
 Πορεύου εἰς εἰρήνην.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

If we follow the cue given us in the exegetical discussion, that this is a text on *love* as one of the characteristics of the Kingdom, there will be no difficulty at all about arriving at a satisfactory outline: Of all the blessed things that can be said of the Kingdom the most blessed is:

Christ's Kingdom a Kingdom of Love.

- I. *The love of the Savior.*
- II. *The love of the saved.*

Under part one we, of course, have the Savior's love as exhibited to the sinful woman, to the Pharisee, to you and me; a love that receives us, pardons us, blesses us after we are his — no love so great. And under part two, the love that springs from faith, appreciates the Savior's love and gifts, is measured by our gratitude, and is itself a heavenly blessing to possess, feel and

exercise. Thus the entire text is easily covered, by a synthesis of its inner contents. — Here is another, along the same lines: This world is always looking for greater things, and so constantly misses the greatest of all.

Why is Love the Greatest Thing in the Kingdom of God?

- I. Because it drew Christ down to the sinner, the Pharisee, you, and me.*
- II. Because it is able to lift the sinner, the Pharisee, you, and me up to Christ.*

Instead of a parallel arrangement between Christ and the sinner, we may put the sinner forward, and so get the contents of this text. But note well, that in each part, as it is made to unfold, the Savior stands beside the sinner:

The Sinner in Simon's House.

- I. The burden of her sin.*
- II. The sincerity of her contrition.*
- III. The blessedness of her pardon.*
- IV. The intensity of her gratitude and love.*
- V. The sweetness of her peace.*

One of the distinctive things in this text is the striking parable which Christ used in regard to sinners. We may thus put the sinners forward as Christ himself did:

The Two Debtors in Simon's House.

- I. They had the same creditor.*
- II. They were alike bankrupt.*
- III. They could have made equal settlement.*
- IV. They could have obtained the same eternal wealth.*

There is a hymn which fits this text in a striking way, some of the lines using language that may be used also for the parts. It is so well known that the lines are easily remembered when used in an outline:

"Jesus, Lover of My Soul, Let Me to Thy Bosom Fly!"

- I. "I am all unrighteousness,
False and full of sin, I am."*
- II. "Plenteous grace with Thee is found,
Grace to cover all my sin."*

- III. *"Let the healing streams abound,
Make and keep me pure within."*
- IV. *"Safe into the haven guide,
O receive my soul at last!"*

The three words spoken by Christ to the woman near the end of the text really cover all that is in it. They are so short, striking, and rich that they deserve our fullest attention.

The Heart of the Gospel in the Three Words Which Christ Spoke to the Woman in Simon's House.

- I. *"Thy sins are forgiven."*
- II. *"Thy faith hath saved thee."*
- III. *"Go in peace."*

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

John 8, 31-36

The general theme of this text is so plain that the preacher will find it without effort. We have here Christ's great word on Liberty. This is indeed one of the great characteristics of the Kingdom of God — it is a free kingdom, and it makes free all who enter it. — What a rallying cry the word "liberty" has been and still is among men! We can readily imagine the haughty lifting up of heads when the Jews boasted to Christ that they had never been in bondage to any man. How we Americans love to boast of our great political liberty! One of the great blessings Luther's work has brought us and others in many lands is liberty of conscience, or religious liberty. Men have fought, bled, and died for liberty. Even now we grow sensitive when we think our liberties are endangered; we resent laws and regulations restricting unduly our personal and social liberty. But all these forms of liberty, even when full and complete, are "liberty" only in a limited and narrow sense of the word. True liberty goes much farther and deeper. Koegel has well said: "Just as there is a liberty swindle bearing as its symbol the leafless, rootless liberty tree with neither shade nor fruit, so there is but one true liberation and deliverance, and its symbol is the *cross*, not the cross that remains empty, that has been made bare, nay, the tree of life, bearing Jesus with the promise, Abide in my Word, the truth shall make you free." — Rejoicing himself in the liberty of the children of God, the preacher's task is to set before his hearers the whole story of that liberty, and the blessedness of the Kingdom in which this liberty rules. For those still

bound this message must be the testimony of a freed-man concerning his own sweet liberty to slaves longing to be set free, yea, the very character of liberty for these slaves also, striking off their chains and setting them free likewise. And for all who are free this text and the sermon on it must open up more fully the divine foundation of their freedom ("the truth," "the Son") and the true inwardness and blessedness of this freedom ("ye shall be free indeed").

V. 31. The imperfect ἔλεγεν is descriptive. John always uses οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, the **Jews**, in the sense of enemies and opponents of Christ. But he labored with them none the less, if possible to save some of them. And v. 30 reports a partial success: "As he spake these words, many believed on him." Their number was not small comparatively. These now **which had believed him**, πεπιστευκότας, Jesus addresses in particular, following up his success, and pointing out to them what is necessary to carry forward this beginning in a proper development. Hence the οὖν, which refers back to v. 30 and shows why Jesus speaks now as he does. In v. 30 we read that many believed εἰς αὐτόν; v. 31, that they had believed αὐτῷ. The one expression defines the other: believe on him = believe him. We may say that to believe on him is more than to believe him, i. e. his Word. Yet here, if they had not believed on him, they would not have believed his Word. Jesus accepts this incipient faith, small, weak, faulty, germ-like though it is. This is a great comfort to us and all beginners in the faith. But Jesus is not for a moment satisfied to leave this new-born faith in its infant stage, lest it fade and disappear again like the blossom of an hour. — These young believers must advance to such a stage that it can be said of them, **Ye are truly my disciples**. This does not say that they are in no way his disciples now, for every believer, no matter how small his faith, is Jesus' dis-

ciple. The term μαθητής signifies a learner, but in relation to Jesus a learner attached to him in faith and thus receiving his instruction. Really the word means more, it means one who has learned, has imbibed the teaching and the spirit of his Master. The word "truly" points to the doubt that attaches to these learners as new and weak beginners in believing; just as the *if*, ἐάν, does. It is still a question whether they will continue in the faith, and be truly μαθηταί, by allowing their faith to develop into strength and endurance. — When are they now truly Christ's disciples? **If ye abide in my word.** The emphasis is on ὑμεῖς = *if you on your part* abide. This singles them out from all the Ἰουδαῖοι who had no beginning of faith in their hearts. What Christ says applies only to the believers. They must μένειν ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ ἐμῷ. The word of Christ, λόγος, is his teaching, the Gospel, whether spoken by himself directly or by others at his behest; this is emphatically *his* word, and this must be the sphere in which these new believers now live and move. The necessity for this is seen at once when we remember that his word is spirit and life; that he himself is the substance of it, namely as our divine Savior; that he fully identifies himself with his word, when he declares, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you," John 5, 7. Christ's word, the Gospel, always leads to Christ and brings us Christ; it is his vehicle. He tells the Jews to search the Scriptures, for these "testify of me," John 5, 39. We have an example of this abiding in his word in the three thousand who came to faith on Pentecost in Jerusalem, "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." The admonition to abide or continue, is often repeated: "Continue in the grace of God," Acts 13, 43; "if ye continue in the faith," Col. 1, 23; "if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," Heb. 3, 14; "and now, little children, abide in him,"

1 John 2, 28 (it is John who loves this word "abide"); "whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son," 2 John 9. To abide in Christ's word is not only a mark of true discipleship, it is more, it is that which constitutes discipleship. For faith in its progress may be defined as abiding and living in the Word of Christ.

V. 32. Why this μένειν is so necessary Christ himself explains by stating first the proximate and next the ultimate result. The former is: **and ye shall know the truth**; the latter: "and the truth shall make you free." The "truth" is the contents of his Word. In his high-priestly prayer Christ says, "I have given them thy (the Father's) Word"; and he pleads, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy Word is truth." The Word is the truth, no part of it anything but the truth of God. They who are ἀληθῶς disciples of Christ must needs have the ἀλήθειαν in their hearts. This is not a philosophic term, so that the language of philosophy could in any way define it, but a religious term. It stands for the totality of what Christ means to convey to our minds and hearts by his Word. All this centers in and circles about him, so we may say that he himself is the truth, the more as presently he adds that the truth shall make free, and after that that the Son shall make free. Besides, we have the direct statement, "I am the way, *the truth*, and the life," John 14, 6. The truth is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, every part of which is a glorious divine reality. — We might expect Christ to say, And ye shall *believe* the truth. But instead he says, Ye shall *know* the truth, γινώσθε. To know is to receive into the mind. The mind is the gateway by which the truth, brought constantly to us when we abide in Christ's word, enters our heart. If it enters thus it will soon enough permeate not only

the mind, but every part of our being. It is an impossibility to lock up the truth in the mind only; the attempt to retain it only in the mind will be a failure — either it will go farther, or the mind will hold the truth only apparently, a mere shadow of the truth, not the truth itself which is the power of God unto salvation. — This penetration of the truth into a believer's being Christ himself implies when he states what the truth will do. Its effect and work will be: **and the truth shall make you free.** It cannot do this as long as its influence is restricted to our intellectual faculties; it can do this only when, entering by the gateway of the intellect, it reaches also the will and the heart, the very center of our being. Here, and not only in the mind, are found the shackles that bind us. And Christ virtually declares there is such a bondage. Our Augsburg Confession speaks of it in Article XVIII. Man's will "has no power to work the righteousness of God, or a spiritual righteousness." Nature "cannot work the inward motions, such as the fear of God, trust in God, chastity, patience, and such like." This is our bondage. And it is twofold. For not only are we so bound by the power of sin in us that we cannot work the righteousness of God, but by our failure to work this righteousness of God we are also guilty before God and are bound by the curse and condemnation of God, from which it is impossible by our own efforts to escape. This double bondage "the truth" breaks when it enters our hearts with its liberating power. One part of this truth is the Gospel of pardon through faith in Jesus' blood. When this becomes ours, it removes our guilt completely, justifying us before God. The other part of this truth is regenerating and renewing power, giving us a new heart, implanting and unfolding a new life within us, which is able really to love God, to fear and trust in him and to work his righteousness, not indeed perfectly in this

life, yet with increasing fullness and strength. And this is how the truth "shall make us free," ἐλευθερώσει ὑμᾶς — with the emphasis on the last word.

V. 33. There is a dispute among commentators as to the persons who thus answered Christ. Some think that the unbelieving Jews made this answer, while the believing Jews were silent. Others, that while certain unbelieving Jews answered so, a number of the believing ones spoke likewise. And still others that this answer came only from the believing Jews. The text agrees perfectly with this last view. **They answered**, the ones Christ was speaking to and had marked so plainly by the last ὑμᾶς, the believing Jews. The Jew nature was still exceedingly strong in them — ample reason why Jesus should desire to have them freed from its blasting tyranny. The mastery of Jesus is in this skill and directness with which he touches the fetters that hinder the development of their faith. These young believers must get entirely into the reach of his liberating truth, or their faith, so young and tender, will be smothered by the old bondage which is still so powerfully over them. It requires a struggle to set them free, and their Jew nature reacts against the truth which, even as Christ speaks, takes hold more and more upon their hearts. Besser paraphrases the reply very finely: "If the truth you speak of is beneficial only for *slaves*, do not trouble us, *Abraham's seed*, with it! We are a free-born, royal nation (Gen. 17, 6-7; 22, 11), and acknowledge no one as our master save God. To him we belong as children (Deut. 14, 1), and to no one else. This is the *truth* which makes us free!" There is no assertion here of *political* liberty. The claim of being "Abraham's seed," which heads the reply, does not point to anything political; or social (as some think, namely that slavery was unknown among their nation). It ushers in their *religious* boast, as free children of God, com-

pared with whom all others are slaves and dependents. **How sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?** — an indignant question. Note the scornful emphasis on *σύ*, and the *ἐλεύθεροι γενήσεσθε*, free men ye shall be, in place of Christ's *ἐλευθερώσει*, shall free you, showing that they feel that indirectly they are being called bondmen. The fancy of the Jews that they needed no freeing is found in all the proud children of Adam, not to say of Abraham only. They boast of their advancement, civilization, education, culture, social standing, respectability, good name, perhaps also of their outward connection with the church, their Baptism, confirmation, Bible knowledge, charities, philanthropies, and the like, overlooking meanwhile the terrible fact that underneath all such vaunted excellence there may exist the hidden bondage of sin. This must be seen and felt, and contritely acknowledged, if true spiritual liberty is to be attained and permanently acquired.

V. 34. Calm, quiet, direct, crushing in its simplicity and force is the answer of Jesus. The double **verily** is the seal of its truth; **I say unto you**, the voice of unanswerable authority based on absolute knowledge and truth. The three brief sentences which follow are so many axioms, needing but to be clearly stated and apprehended, in order to convince and convict the hearer. *Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν* = every one practicing sin, *δοῦλός ἐστιν* = is a bondman (slave). The present participle *ποιῶν* = engaged in doing; *ἁμαρτία* = that which misses the mark (set of God). The axiom is universal, it applies to all men everywhere and at all times: every one who commits sin is sin's slave. This effect of sinning is always the same; it is as certain as the mathematical law that two and two equal four. Christ does not say directly that *all* men are sinners and consequently slaves, but he implies it in the application he makes to his Jewish hearers. "Doing sin" is here to be taken in its widest sense, it means

sin in any form or manner. The effect is the *condition* of bondage or slavery, with sin as the master. Cain was warned of God to rule over sin. Gen. 4, 7. Ahab "sold himself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." 1 Kings 21, 20. The wicked "promise liberty," but "they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome of the same is he brought in bondage." 2 Pet. 2, 19. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey?" Rom. 6, 16. Besser points out these Biblical references and adds a few testimonies of heathen writers: Seneca, who says that no bondage is harder than that of the passions; Plato, that shameful lusts are the worst tyrants; Epictetus, that liberty is the name of virtue, and bondage the name of vice. "Let the poet dream that man is free though he be born in chains—the Word of God declares: He that committeth sin, is not free, though he wear silk and purple. Thou violent-tempered man, how doth sin drive thee to excess! Thou greedy man, what fetters money puts upon thee! Thou lustful man, into what shame, into what bogs of filth hast thou cast thyself! Thou untruthful man, how mercilessly one falsehood drags thee on to another, so that thou canst not do as thou wouldst! Thou selfish man, ever straining to make all things serve thy honor, thy advantage, thy enjoyment—what a slavish life is thine, enslaved by thine own little self! Thou hast not sin, sin hath thee." Koegel. — V. 35. Another axiomatic statement follows, and it comes with a sort of surprise in suddenly and vividly opening up what lies in the word "bondservant": **And the bondservant abideth not in the house forever.** This is the result of becoming a slave by committing sin—the slave is not a member of the family, he is only outwardly attached to it, he may be sold at any time. But the image in Christ's mind has changed slightly: in the

previous statement sin is the slave's master, here the master is the head of the family (God). Behind this change there lies a fine reference to the position of the Jews. They were indeed outwardly in the house of God, and thus imagined themselves to be the true children (seed of Abraham), but they deceived themselves, they were merely bondservants in the house, and as such could not hope to abide in it forever. The time of their removal would surely come. — **The son abideth forever.** Again an axiomatic, general statement. A son belongs to the family, he is the father's offspring and heir. He therefore differs from the slave in this essential respect; he is not sold or removed, he abides in the house. The εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα goes beyond the illustration as such and describes what is illustrated. So also ὁ υἱός is intended to point to the *one Son* in the great house of God, namely Christ. Besser brings in the reference to Ishmael and Isaac, which Meyer rejects. Meyer is right insofar as the text itself contains no allusion to these two; but Besser is right in that the two furnish a historic parallel. Ishmael was also of the seed of Abraham physically, but he was the son of the bondwoman and bore her spiritual character; thus he was cast out. The Jews bore the inward stamp of Ishmael, they were of the seed of Abraham, but only after the manner of Ishmael; in his expulsion their own was truly pictured. — V. 36. Another statement follows, striking also, and incontrovertibly true: **If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.** Here we meet the gracious climax to which the previous statements are meant to lead. The word concerning the slavery of sin, and that concerning the sad position of the slave, might seem to cut off all hope, but this is not so. By a masterly turn Christ lets the light of hope shine forth again. He goes back to his first utterance concerning his true disciples who shall be

set free from bondage. He even combines the two words, the one he had used, ἐλευθερώσει, and the one the Jews had used in their reply to him ἐλεύθεροι — ἐὰν ὁ υἱὸς ὑμῶν ἐλευθερώσῃ (shall have freed; expectancy), ὅντως ἐλεύθεροι ἔσεσθε (truly freemen ye shall be). What he said of the truth above he here says of himself, the Son, who is the embodiment of the truth. In his Father's house he is the great Liberator. For not only is he and the Father one, but into his hands the Father has laid the great work of redemption. To be really, ὅντως, freemen is here put in contrast to imaginary freedom, false freedom which is really bondage, as in the case of the Jews. The liberating act of the Son, whom the Father hath highly exalted, is more than the setting free of a bondman in the house. Even this fine figure is too weak to picture all that Christ would do for the Jews and for us. When Christ sets the sinner free, he is free indeed — free as an adopted son who is made one of the family or household of God. This is the freedom the Psalmist sings of: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Ps. 27, 4. And he knows his desire is fulfilled: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Ps. 23, 6. — What lies in the words, **Ye shall be free indeed**, is finely pictured by Roffhack. "From the moment of forgiveness on sinners cease to be debtors of God; and with the removal of their guilt all their other fetters of conscience, mind, and will disappear of themselves, so that they find themselves placed in an entirely new, wonderful state of life and liberty. The prince of this world has lost his power over them, because they are now the property of another, namely of Christ their Redeemer. The fear of death, to which sin gave the sting, and because of which they were all their life-time subject to bond-

age, to serve vanity and to forget eternity, now gives place to a lively hope, to which they are begotten again by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The law, the strength of sin, has no more demands upon them, and finds nothing more in them to condemn. Clothed in the righteousness of God's Son, they receive the right of sonship to come boldly unto the throne and heart of the Father, and together with this right the spirit of adoption, which as a new and willing spirit of love, of power and of discipline works in them the sanctification of body, soul, and spirit, which the law with all its rebukes and threats could not produce in them. This can be called liberty indeed, the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And this liberty is but a beginning and pledge of that perfect liberty in the kingdom of glory." Ἔσθε is put in contrast to the γενήσθε of v. 33; we are not merely to hope for freedom, we are to be free.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

To preach properly on this text the preacher must know thoroughly the doctrine of the Bondage of the Will. See the Lutheran Confessions.—The subject of the text is plain—*liberty*. Our lining up of the group of texts in which this subject appears automatically furnishes us the theme:

Christ's Kingdom a Kingdom of Liberty.

We need only to gather and group from the text what it presents in regard to this spiritual liberty: 1) *The bondage*; 2) *Sham liberty* ("we are Abraham's seed"); 3) *The Liberator*; 4) *The liberating means* (Word—truth); 5) *The liberty*.—This presentation is objective throughout, hence the elaboration should take care of the subjective side—a thing that dare not be overlooked. This liberty is *to be made ours*, and it is *to be ours*. We may put the subjective idea into the outline itself:

What is Your Position in the House of the Father?

- I. *Are you only a bondservant?*
- II. *Or has the Son made you free?*

Christ's prominent appearance in the text is an invitation to build the entire sermon around him:

The Greatest Emancipator the World Has Ever Seen.

- I. He frees from the direst bondage.*
- II. He grants the most blessed liberty.*
- III. He employs the most perfect means.*
- IV. All this he does because he alone is the Son in the heavenly house of eternal freedom.*

There is another way to do this, namely to stress the liberating power in Christ, the Son:

The Mighty Power It Takes to Set Us Free.

- I. Greater than ancestry, heredity, blood, or human effort.*
- II. Greater than sin and its curse.*
- III. As great as God's Son and his word and truth.*

There are two pithy statements that may pivot the sermon. Being from the text itself they are rich in color:

"My Disciples Indeed!"

- I. "Continue in my Word!"*
- II. "Shall know the truth!"*
- III. "Shall be free indeed!"*

"The Truth Shall Make You Free!"

- I. The truth which produces freedom.*
- II. The freedom which results from the truth.*

In these parts, we have what is called inversion: we first go from truth to freedom; then we go from freedom to truth. In other words, we first fix our attention on *the truth* as the cause; then on *the freedom* as the effect. Thus the sermon is balanced between these two pillar concepts of the text.

A simple analysis, with a strong subjective turn, gives us the following:

Do You Really Want to Be Free?

- I. Fulfil the one condition (abide in my word).*
- II. Fear the one hindrance (committing sin and becoming servant of sin).*
- III. Trust the one Liberator (if the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed).*

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Mark 12, 41-44

The message of this text is as plain as that of the two foregoing ones in the sub-cycle. We sum it up in the one word *sacrifice*, in the sense of the German *Opfer* or *Opferwilligkeit*. This is as true and distinctive a mark of the Kingdom and of those who are in it as is love and liberty. — A revelation of how some narrow-minded and hard-fisted people manage to escape the force of the lesson here taught was received by the author one day, when a penurious brother dropped the remark, that the widow could not have done anything for herself anyway with the two mites she gave. He forgot altogether the words of Jesus concerning the true value of this widow's offering. Many a man does infinitely less for himself with all his wealth than this widow did with her two mites. — The French Catholic artist Tissot has pictured the widow in the act of dropping her offering into the treasure chest; he places a little child upon her arm, adding thus the thought of motherhood to that of widowhood, and making the faith and trust behind the gift of "all her living" shine out the brighter. — If it should seem to some like laying too much stress upon giving to put this text immediately after the great ones on love and liberty, let them remember the prominence which St. Paul gives the collection for the benefit of the Jewish famine sufferers in his two epistles to the Corinthians and the fervency of the language he there uses. It will be well to read in connection with our text 1 Cor. 16, 1-4 and 2 Cor. 9, 1-15. — This text seems to differ from the two foregoing ones in this sub-cycle in that it shows the characteristic

feature, which is here to be brought out, only in the widow, not in Christ; whereas the text on love shows besides the love of the sinful woman in Simon's house the far greater and altogether perfect love of Christ himself, and the text on liberty, besides the liberty of Christ's true disciples, the absolute and perfect liberty of our great Liberator, the Son in the Father's house. But this only seems so, for the moment we observe what a commendation Christ *gives* to this widow we behold the greatest and most perfect Giver the world has ever seen; and in our preaching on giving and the sacrifice due him on our part we must not fail to proclaim that this Giver and all his boundless gifts to us must stand behind all our giving.

The occurrence set forth in this text took place on Wednesday of the last week of Christ's earthly life. (Robinson, *Harmony*, p. 110.) The incident according to both Mark and Luke (21, 1-4) followed hard upon the clashes Christ had with his enemies in the Temple courts, and immediately after his severe characterization of the scribes. Among other things, he had just held up against them their unholy greed: "Which devour *widows'* houses, and for a pretense made long prayers: these shall receive greater condemnation." With this word about widows fresh upon his lips he beholds a *widow* bringing her offering unto God. Though the scribes, ripe for condemnation, rule the Temple, some true worshippers are still left, and this widow is one. As Abel's offering of old was acceptable to God, while Cain's was not, so this widow's little gift is a sweet-smelling savor of love, while the showy gifts of the scribes, gotten in part by devouring widows' houses, are a stench in the nostrils of God. So much for the context and its suggestions.

V. 42. What a man! exclaims Stier. The wealth of his holy love is never exhausted, his imperturbable soul never one-sidedly agitated or disturbed. Right

after a speech like the one just uttered he is full of calmness, anxious and delighted to find the smallest good. So he was in the flesh; how must he look down now upon the gifts and offerings in every little church and congregation, upon all the giving and doing in all the world, testing its worth or lack of worth, and never overlooking what is small; in order that he may declare to each church: I know thy works! even as at last he will declare from his judgment throne: This ye have done; that ye have not done. — **The treasury** = τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον (Luke has the plural) = the treasure chamber. There were various receptacles at the Temple. The term is here applied to the thirteen trumpet-shaped metal receptacles (*Schapharoth*), each marked by a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, in the court of the women, for the gifts of the worshippers for the benefit of the Temple, and for the Temple tax. Mark speaks of them as one treasury, Luke has in mind the number of chests. Near them Jesus sat down, possibly upon the steps that led from the court of the women to that of the men. — The word **beheld** indicates that the eyes of Jesus rested upon the worshippers and their offerings with a purpose; his beholding was not accidental. The imperfect ἐθεώρει denotes continuation — he beheld for some time “how the multitude cast money into the treasury.” — **The multitude** did this as a general custom. The Jews gave freely, besides the tithe, for the support of the Temple and its worship, a fact worthy of mention especially now when in some churches many allow the collection plate for offerings to pass without a gift from their hands. Ὁ χαλκός, copper, or bronze, and thus coins, or money. — Attention is drawn especially to **many that were rich**, πολλοὶ πλούσιοι, who had far beyond their need. It is said that at this time the city was in a flourishing condition. The sons of Jacob have generally known how to increase their substance. — These

cast in much. The imperfect ἔβαλλον, “were casting in,” goes together with ἐθεώρει; they were doing this one after the other. They certainly differ from those of today who spend their wealth freely on all manner of luxury, and forget the Church and its needs. Many a preacher might say what one is reported to have said: When I look at the finery of my people as they sit before me in their pews I think I have a rich congregation, but when I look at the collection as the deacons bring it forward to the altar I know I have a poor congregation — rich in money, poor in spiritual wealth. “The Story of a Nickel” deserves to be recalled. It pictures a wealthy worshipper, his costly cane, rich gloves, fine silk hat, diamond ring, etc.; finally his offering when the plate reached him — a miserable nickel, upon which presently the quarter of a poor washer-woman fell, hiding the nickel, but not the shame of it. These rich Jews casting in much may serve to point a lesson to many rich men as far as the “much” is concerned, but this should be only incidentally, because the giving of our rich men, as well as of all others, is to be patterned after that of the poor widow, not after that of these wealthy Jews. The showy, spiritually empty benevolences and philanthropies of many rich men have been a detriment to the Church instead of a real help. Our aim in preaching on this text goes far beyond the production of more men who simply cast in much of their superfluity. The text does not mention any givers in ordinary circumstances of life. No doubt Jesus beheld some of these also, and the larger or smaller offerings they brought. If we may infer anything from the sole mention of the rich Jews, who are placed over against a single poor widow, it is this that these rich Jews were among the very people Jesus had just exposed so unsparingly as hypocrites (v. 38-40). As such they have usually been pictured in the paintings of this Temple scene. The

worst kind of giving is the hypocritical, making a grand display of the act in order to gain the admiration and applause of men. While in our giving also we are to let our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven, and while we are to provoke each other to good works in making offerings, nevertheless each giver must make his offering only as if Christ alone beholds it and so as to gain his approval; then will all that concerns our fellow givers take care of itself.

V. 42. "A," really *one*, μία, placing her over against the many, πολλοί, rich. The participle ἐλθοῦσα draws attention to her approach. Jesus beheld her as she drew near, not only as she cast in her gift. He marks us every one as we make ready to give; he beholds our thoughts as they crystallize into the resolution to make our offering. The woman was **poor**, πτωχή (from πτώσσω, to stoop and cringe as a beggar); her appearance and dress no doubt indicated it. — But how did Jesus know that she was **a widow**? We may likewise ask, How did he know that the "two mites" were "all her living?" Some have assumed that the woman was one of Christ's disciples, and that thus he knew her personal circumstances. We prefer the explanation: Christ's omniscience. His all-discerning eyes rested upon her and upon all that here transpired; this is what made his judgment infallible. Every life and every heart lay bare before him. No other explanation suffices or satisfies. It is well here to remind ourselves of God's care for the widow and orphan. Men may often forget or neglect them, but our Savior watches over them. This widow's name is nowhere mentioned; her gift has lent her a name, and it is "a good name" in the Church of all ages. Every man's gifts stamp him with a name, and when the gift is one of two mites, the name these stamp upon the giver is not always the same, sometimes it is the very opposite

of the one the widow bears. — She **cast in**, ἔβαλεν, 2nd aorist, simply states the fact. There is no thought of display, no expectation of praise. Certainly ordinary eyes would never have noted anything remarkable in this woman or her gift. One writer tells us there were always bystanders at these treasure chests, noting the large contributions and murmuring praise when such were cast in. Such people would surely have overlooked this humble woman and her little gift. — For she cast in **two mites, which make a farthing**. The *lepton*, so called because of its smallness, is one-eighth of an *assarion*, two *lepta* making a quarter, *kodrantēs* (also Matth. 5, 26), in value about the fourth of a cent, “of which,” as Bengel remarks, “she evidently might have retained one.” There are those today who will judge this widow’s act according to their worldly wisdom; they will say, she should have kept her money for her own support, or at least should have kept half of it; or the gift was so insignificantly small as far as the Temple was concerned that it practically amounted to nothing. What was it the thief Judas had to object to in Mary’s richer offering to Jesus, in Bethany, about this very time? Worldly wisdom always makes big fools of us. In the case of this widow it sees neither the faith and trust that filled the woman’s heart, nor the act of true worship she performed. All these are more precious in Jesus’ eyes than the largest gifts bestowed by the Jews that day in Jerusalem. Poverty may be made a great curse, as well as a great blessing. It becomes a curse when it fills the heart with anxious care and worry, with murmuring and complaint, or leads to unbelief and dishonesty. It becomes a blessing when it impels the poor man to cast himself upon God who has promised to care for his children.

V. 43. He called them together as for a matter of grave importance, *de magna re*, Bengel. The disciples were to learn a lesson for their own personal

benefit, and at the same time they were to learn the principle according to which all gifts in the Church are to be estimated and valued, this for their own future official work. Remember the willing and generous offerings of the first congregation in Jerusalem. Whether the widow herself heard what Jesus said cannot be determined; possibly she did. **Verily**, this is a true judgment; **I say unto you**, who alone is able to render such a judgment in this case. "This poor widow **cast in** more than all they which are casting into the treasury." The accent is on **more**, *πλεῖον*. The gifts of all the rich are summed up, and the poor widow's (*ἡ χήρα αὕτη ἡ πτωχή*) gift is said to be more than this sum. This is more striking than if her gift had been compared with that of any one rich giver, say with that of the one who that day gave the largest gift. The present participle *βαλλόντων* refers to the moment Jesus spoke, when the widow *ἔβαλεν*, while the casting of the others was still going on. It is *the quality of the gift* which makes it "more," or less, in the eyes of Christ. — Jesus gives a reason for setting such a value on the poor widow's gift. **They all**, *πάντες* — and there might have been many more, for however numerous these who gave much, the quantity of their gifts would never have raised the quality in Jesus' eyes. By giving as these men gave it was impossible to reach the value of the poor widow's gift. — **Did cast of their superfluity**, *ἐκ τοῦ περισσεύοντος αὐτοῖς*, really "of what was superfluous to them." **But she of her want**, *ἐκ τῆς ὑστερήσεως αὐτῆς*, of what was insufficient for her support, did cast in. If Christ had stopped here, the great value of the widow's gift would have already appeared: the rich of their superfluity — she of her insufficiency. But the case is still more in her favor, she did cast in **all that she had, even all her living** = all, as much as she had, her whole livelihood, *ὅλον τὸν βίον αὐτῆς*, all that she had to live on. Here was

a sacrifice indeed! But it must not be overlooked what is necessarily implied in this statement of Christ concerning the gift of the widow. To give as she gave "all that she had, even all her living" means that she gave herself completely into the hands of God, who could and would provide for her better than any "two mites" or a million times two mites could. Here the words spoken to another unnamed woman might be applied: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt!" Matth. 15, 28. What lies behind so many a meager gift of today? The fear that we shall not have sufficient for ourselves. This fear is often plainly expressed by people as the reason why they cannot give, or give as much as they should. Many of these live in abundance. They have never given themselves to the Lord, though they may often enough have sung:

"Take my soul and body's powers,
 Take my mem'ry, mind and will,
 All my goods and all my hours;
 All I know and all I feel;
 All I think, or speak, or do;
 Take my heart — but make it new!"

—Watts.

Did the widow starve? I trow not. Can you imagine yourself in her place doing as she did, without the fear of starving? There are but few who can. But because you cannot, therefore any gift you may give will not get beyond what the rich Jews did that Wednesday in Jerusalem, with the exception of their hypocrisy. The widow's gift, though of copper, was altogether of gold to Christ; the rich men's gifts — I mean the best ones among them, not given for display merely — were like baser metal, though the coins themselves dropped by their hands, were of finest gold. "We may picture her return to her sordid drudgery, unaware of the meaning of the new light and peace which followed her, and

why her heart sang for joy." (Although it is well to remember at the same time, that the joy does not always come so quickly as the result of a God-pleasing act; often the test of faith in hardship, pain, trial and sorrow goes on and on.) "We may think of the Spirit of Christ which was in her, leading her afterwards into the Church of Christ, an obscure and perhaps illiterate convert, undistinguished by any special gift, and only loved as the first Christians all loved each other. And we may think of her now, where the secrets of all hearts are made known, followed by myriads of the obscure and undistinguished whom her story has sustained and cheered, and by some who knew her upon earth, and were astonished to learn that this was she. Then let us ask ourselves, Is there any such secret of unobtrusive lowly service, born of love, which the future will associate with me?" *Exp. of the B.*, IV, 897.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The subject of the text is altogether plain; it is *giving*. Not so plain is the way to arrive at a theme embodying this subject. The theme must have an arrow in it to point the direction in which we are going to unfold the subject; and it must at the same time have the marks of cleavage in it, indicating the natural parts into which the theme may be split. Thus also the theme, to be more than a subject, will have the form of a proposition, or the equivalent of a proposition. — What is it that this text presents on the general subject of giving? This question points us to what is specific in the text. It thus advances the mere subject in the direction of a theme. Well, this text evidently presents Jesus to us as judging men's gifts. So we have this theme: **The Greatest Giver Judges Gifts.** We are speaking on the subject of giving, but more specifically on: Giving as Jesus Judges It. We thus have the arrow. But how about the marks of cleavage? They too are in our theme, for we are going to show *how* Jesus does this judging: Here are certain gifts — he applies a principle — and then on those gifts and according to that principle he pronounces his judgment. We have split on the idea of *judging*: 1) there must be something to judge; 2) a law or principle by which to judge; 3)

a verdict as the result of judging. After presenting these three, the job is finished — legitimately we can add nothing more; to do so would result in an appendix or appendage. Our parts then are these: *I. The gifts he found; v. The principle he applied; III. The judgment he pronounced.* There is liberty in wording the parts, as in wording the theme. For instance, we might use this wording:

Watch the Greatest Giver Judging Gifts!

- I. Mark the gifts he found!*
- II. Gauge the principle he applied!*
- III. Weigh well the verdict he rendered!*

His being the Greatest Giver himself qualifies him as a judge in this case, and that already shows us what principle he will apply in judging. — We have detailed this simple example here, because so many preachers are homiletically helpless or awkward in things they should be able to do without much effort in a masterly way.

We may take the same idea, but put it a little more figuratively. You know coins used to be weighed in olden times. So put it this way:

Jesus Weighing the Widow's Mites.

Be sure to keep the figure! *I. The scales he used. II. The weight he found.* Or: *I. Look at his scales! II. See what they recorded!* Or: *I. What scales do you suppose he used? II. What value do you think he found?* — This idea of weighing, which is easy to split, may be put in a different way. We may put right into the parts illuminating terms in regard to the real weight which Jesus found:

What a Poor Widow's Mite May Weigh in Christ's Kingdom.

- I. When its motive is weighed. (Love and trust.)*
- II. When its sacrifice is weighed. (All that she had, even her whole living.)*
- III. When its reception at Christ's hands is weighed.*

We add the following without further comment:

The Great Questions Raised by the Widow's Little Gift.

- I. Do you give at all?*
 1. Christ watches in the Temple, and it is not strange that he should.

2. He is the greatest giver. The whole Bible is in the one word "give," for God gave his Son, the Son gave himself, and we must give our hearts and lives.
3. This puts the question into its right light: first all the wondrous gifts of God to us, next all our gifts of self and all to God — then single gifts for special purposes, but those as a fruit of our greater gift.
4. Do you give at all in this sense? I hope so, and that your giving will increase.

II. What lies behind your giving?

1. The widow's gift — faith and trust.
2. Christ's gift — love and obedience.
3. Many gifts — unworthy motives, selfishness, pride, etc.
4. Put behind your gift: faith, love, gratitude, obedience, honor, worship and praise of God.

III. How much do you give?

1. The widow gave all — throwing herself trustfully on God's provident care.
2. Christ's boundless gift of himself.
3. The priceless and immense gifts we expect and must have from God for our temporal and eternal welfare.
4. How poor so much of our giving appears when compared with these other gifts. Shall we not give more, and be blessed in better giving?

IV. For what object do you give?

1. The widow gave for the temple.
2. Christ gave for the kingdom.
3. Many give for the world, the flesh and the devil, which demand much and make a fearful return.
4. The greatest object for our giving is God's kingdom. According to the object is the fruit of our gifts. Give to the world, and the gift is lost — and worse. Give to self, and the gift pleases a little while. Give to God, and he will bless the gift with abiding fruit.

Let the Widow's Mite Shame and Encourage Us.

Note well:

- I. *The pocket it came from.*
- II. *The hand that gave it.*
- III. *The treasury it fell into.*
- IV. *The credit it received.*

Whose Gift is Best?

- I. *Who sees Christ beside God's treasury.*
- II. *Who puts his gift into God's treasury.*
- III. *Who adds to the gift his own heart.*

A Roman Catholic priest declared that during a long pastorate many terrible sins had been confessed to him in the confessional, but never the sin of avarice.

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

John 5, 1-14

In John's Gospel the fifth chapter describes the beginning of the great conflict between Jesus and the Jews. Our text contains the opening incident of that conflict. The Jews took offense at Christ's healing on the Sabbath day (v. 9: "and on the same day was the Sabbath"). But our text is not chosen on this account. Both the clash with the Jews and the Sabbath question is here disregarded. The heart of the text for the preacher, who will find in it a setting forth of one of the great characteristics of the Kingdom, is found in v. 14: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee." *Wholeness, soundness*, true health is our general subject. The text must be made to ask of our hearers the deep question of Jesus, "Wilt thou be made whole?" and it must help to answer this question so that every one of our hearers really can be made whole, spiritually whole. — What will not men do to regain their health? Behold the efforts of the poor sufferer in the text striving vainly for so many years to reach the pool in time. Look into the sickrooms, the hospitals and sanitariums the world over and try to sum up these efforts of patients, relatives and physicians to make the sick well again. What a mighty yea to our question as far as the body is concerned, and the mind also. In this text we are not to contrast the sickness and soundness of body (and mind) with the sickness and soundness of the soul; that would be to allegorize, and none of Christ's miracles should be turned into allegories in our sermons. We are rather to combine the two as belonging together; in substance they are one,

not two at all. Our physical and our spiritual ills have the same root, and the question, Wilt thou be made whole? aims at this root. There is no true soundness in any man until the disease of sin is conquered. All bodily health and strength is a transient and vain thing until this is done. But when the root of our infection is overcome we are sound, even if some bodily distress remains. It will soon enough disappear. The Master Physician to work true wholeness is none other than Jesus Christ, and the great institution which he has established to give soundness and health to a world full of sinners and sufferers is his blessed Kingdom of Grace. In Christ's Kingdom there is healing and health.

V. 1. Μετὰ ταῦτα, frequently used by St. John, is indefinite as to the length of time intervening. In this instance it includes a considerable part of Christ's Galilean ministry. — From a homiletical standpoint the question as to what festival is meant by **a feast of the Jews** (ἑορτή, or, with about equal textual authority: ἡ ἑορτή) is of minor importance. Whether the preacher decides it to be the feast of Purim, or goes back to the older opinion that is the Passover festival, will make no material difference to the sermon. He may even take it to be one of the other Jewish festivals, for which there is less reason, or may leave the whole matter unsolved, as some do. Exegetically, however, a great deal depends upon determining what feast this really was, for the decision arrived at influences the entire chronology of the life of Christ. All the more we regret to report that no altogether satisfactory solution of the problem has been found. There are reasons for taking this to be the feast of Purim, and for taking it to be the Passover; but in both instances there are doubts and objections. The homiletical worker must decide the question for himself. Personally the author is best satisfied with the solution that

this was the feast of Purim. We need not be surprised to find Jesus at Jerusalem at this time, he had his purposes and work, which this chapter sufficiently reports. The Jews had been told to make the days of Purim days of joy, remembering especially the poor with gifts. Christ does this admirably, taking one of the most wretched and miserable sufferers to be found and granting him unsolicited a priceless gift. In the same way he taught the Jews to observe their other festivals and the Sabbath, by living up to the true spiritual intention.

V. 2. The present tense **is** is best taken to mean that the pool still existed when John wrote his Gospel, after the destruction of Jerusalem. For many centuries the large excavation near the gate now called St. Stephen's, has been pointed out as the ancient **Bethesda** (Bethzetha, Bethsaida) = House of Mercy, so-called in addition (ἐπιλεγομένη) to some other name not mentioned here. It is true that its immense depth, seventy-five feet, had perplexed many. Robinson thinks the true Bethesda is what now goes under the name of the Fountain of the Virgin, being the upper fountain of Siloam. Prudentius anticipated this view and also the phenomenon of the waters rapidly bubbling up with a gurgling sound in the basin of this fountain from time to time, and then in a few minutes retreating, explaining thus "the troubling of the water," but not of course the healing virtue. The *κολυμβήθρα* is a swimming-pool. — The **five porches** were covered colonnades, supposedly in the shape of a pentagon around the pool, to shelter the sick who waited here. The name House of Mercy may refer to the charitable erection of these porches, and at the same time to the mercy of God in the supposed periodic healing. — V. 3: **A multitude of them that were sick, blind, halt, withered.** The A. V. leaves the impression as if the sick, or "impotent folk," were subdivided

into "blind, halt, withered," whereas four different kinds of affliction are here meant. Trench states the enumeration by four, when meant to be exhaustive, is frequent in Scripture. What a spectacle this **multitude** must have been! And yet it embraced but a small portion of the sickness and suffering which then filled the world, to say nothing of what went before and what followed after throughout the ages. When the "sick, blind, halt, withered" are thus heaped together they impress us much more than when seen one case at a time; and yet there is every reason to be impressed by each separate case. The diseases, the causes producing them, their forms and degrees of severity differed, yet in one respect all were alike — they were all outgrowths of that wretchedness sin has brought upon our race, and all these were helpless to cure themselves, all "sick," ἀσθενοῦντες. — But why were they gathered here? The answer is given by a disputed passage, printed in italics in our Bible, which is omitted entirely in the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, and placed in the margin by the Revised Version. Trench writes: "That fourth verse the most important Greek and Latin copies are alike without, and most of the early versions. In other MSS. which retain this verse, the obelus which hints suspicion, or the asterisk which marks rejection, is attached to it; while those in which it appears unquestioned belong mostly, as Griesbach shows, to a later recension of the text. And the undoubted spuriousness of this fourth verse has spread a certain amount of suspicion over the last clause of the verse preceding, which has not, however, the same amount of diplomatic evidence against it, nay, in some sort seems almost necessary to make the story intelligible. Doubtless whatever here is addition, whether only the fourth verse, or the last clause also of the third, found its way very early into the text; we have it as early as Tertullian, — the first witness

for its presence. The baptismal Angel, a favorite thought with him, was here foreshown and typified; as somewhat later Ambrose saw a prophecy of the descent of the Holy Ghost, consecrating the waters of Baptism to a mystical washing away of sin; and Chrysostom makes frequent use of the verse in this sense. At first probably a marginal note, expressing the popular notion of the Jewish Christians concerning the origin of the healing power which from time to time these waters possessed, by degrees it assumed the shape in which we now have it: for there are marks of growth about it, betraying themselves in a great variety of readings — some copies omitting one part, and some another of the verse, — all of which is generally the sign of a later addition: thus, little by little, it procured admission into the text, probably at Alexandria first, the birthplace of other similar additions." Zahn's later statements corroborate Trench. In answering the question what the preacher is to do who uses the A. V. and cannot alter the text, the first edition of this work attempted to hold fast the substance of verse four as *true*, though not inspired, doing this by the aid of v. 7, where John has the sick man mention the troubling of the water. A re-examination of the text and evidence at hand have led the author to change this. There is no question about v. 4; it must go. There then go with it the angel, so dear to Tertullian, Ambrose, and Chrysostom, and also the miracles attributed to this angel. The preacher, then, may either omit mention of the angel and the cures attributed to him, or he may describe the multitude of sick lying there because of healing opportunities *popularly supposed* to be offered here. As men go anywhere for help in bodily ailments, so these had come here.

V. 5. **Thirty and eight years** — longer than the average term of human life. The case was in all likeli-

hood one of paralysis, probably due to youthful excesses. How long he had suffered the hope deferred which maketh the heart sick, in waiting for a chance at the pool is not stated; it was undoubtedly a long time. The 2nd aor. participle γνοῦς merely states what precedes the main verb λέγει — used in vivid narration; ἔχει states what he knew in the direct way in which the thought was in the Savior's mind, as the Greeks do, regularly, the English accomodating the tenses to each other: *know* that *he had been*. Jesus **knew**, most likely by hearing the statement made, either by the disciples, or by the man himself, who may have been asked; Jesus picked out this saddest and worst case among all the sufferers at Bethesda. "Few employments could be more utterly paralyzing than lying there, gazing dreamily into the water, and listening to the monotonous drone of the cripples detailing symptoms every one was sick of hearing about. The little periodic excitement caused by the strife to be first down the steps to the bubbling up of the spring was enough for him. Hopeless imbecility was written on his face. Jesus sees that for him there will never be healing by waiting here." *Exp. of the B.* What a wreck sin had made of this man's life. He must now have been between fifty and sixty years old, and all these years he had spent in inactivity. Sin's work thus goes on and on, until the true Savior interferes. — Θέλεις ὑγιῆς γενέσθαι; Desirest thou to be made well? It is a question to revive the dying hope amid the ashes of steady failure, to arouse once more the flagging, flabby will in an expectation that will not be vain. "So the Lord asks us in all our afflictions, whether we would be delivered, when he awakens the longing for deliverance in us; and this longing is joined to the conviction, that it is not in our power to help, but that we must look elsewhere, namely to the hand of the Lord, from whom alone all help comes,

and for which we must wait in faith." Brenz. — V. 7. The reply Christ receives is discouraging enough: **Sir, I have no man.** Do we not hear in these words the cry of his heart, no doubt uttered after many a disappointment, "Oh, if only I had some man to help me!" Did the look of interest on Christ's face, the tone of power in his voice perhaps lead him to think that this man would help him finally to reach the water in time, or obtain some other man to do it? — **To put me into**, βάλλῃ, really to throw — for who would stand on ceremony or lose a second in gentle handling, when every one thought that hurry was the chief thing? — **While I am coming, another steppeth down before me** — ἐγώ, ἄλλος, side by side, brings out the contrast. There is always some one more fortunate than he. How many sufferers have found it so? So the whole sad story is revealed; there is no hope in it. As regards ταραχθῆ note that this man mentions no angel; the angel was most likely an invention of the authors of v. 4, by which they endeavored to explain this disturbance of the water. The man indeed believed in the miracles attributed to the water when disturbed, but the evangelist in no way indicates that this belief was founded on realities. — V. 8. But now comes the mighty act that changes everything. Three words from the lips of Jesus do more than thirty-eight years of human effort. **Arise, take up thy bed, and walk** — Ἐγειρε ἄρον τὸν κράβαττόν σου καὶ περιπάτει; note the ingressive 2nd aorist imperative ἄρον, followed by the pres. imperative; ἔγειρε must be read as attached to ἄρον, hence no comma, and though present is aoristic (Robertson); the 2nd aor. imperat. of αἶρω ἰς ἄρον (not ἄρε). These are the words of almighty power. Their effect was instantaneous and miraculous. The question of the man's faith is frequently brought in. A good many commentators presuppose such faith, imagining that Jesus saw it before he spoke the wonder-

working words. But there is no evidence of such antecedent faith; whatever the sick man expected, it is safe to say, this miracle he did not expect. In this case there was no faith to anticipate and accept the healing, but the words of Christ and the healing they wrought in those impotent limbs, were intended to bring him to faith. V. 9. The result of Christ's words was not gradual, but instantaneous: **And straightway the man was made whole.** These are wonderful words: εὐθέως — ἐγένετο ὑγιής. What they signify is brought out by the visible result, **and took up his bed and walked.** This was the ocular proof of the miraculous healing. The bed which had carried him so long, he himself now carries; so long he had lain, and crawled only with painful effort perhaps and very slowly, now he walks. But did not Christ go too far when he told the man to take up his bed? Would it not, in view of the fault-finding it would surely arouse on the part of the Sanhedrists, have been wiser to let the man abandon the bed and go on without it? As regards the second question it is plainly Christ's intention to oppose openly and positively both the human traditions and the false spirit of those Jewish leaders. One must study their barren, legalistic and casuistic methods of building up a hedge of traditions and human regulations around the Law of God, in order to see how utterly impossible it was for Christ to avoid clashing with the supporters and exponents of such traditions. They found thirty kinds of labor forbidden on the Sabbath day, and they so insisted on these commandments deduced by their own wisdom from the Law, that they lost sight of the chief requirements and the true spiritual intention of the Law altogether. Christ could have lived in peace with these men only by submitting to their spirit and methods, and this was an utter impossibility. So he invites the conflict. As regards the first question Moses had indeed said,

Ex. 2, 10, "In it thou shalt not do any work," and Jeremiah 17, 19-27 especially mentions burden-bearing as forbidden. But this latter passage clearly speaks of that desecration of the Sabbath, to which the Jews were ever prone, of doing business and common labor for gain in the Sabbath. This is the sense of the admonition: "Thus saith the Lord, Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction." Keil remarks: "The bearing of burdens on the Sabbath, both into the city and out of the house, points first of all to the business of marketing and trading, comp. Neh. 13, 16, and yet is only named as an example of secular labor; for which reason the words of the Law, not to do any work, Ex. 12, 16; 20, 10; Deut. 5, 14, and so sanctify the Sabbath, namely by resting from all work, are added." Nehemiah had difficulty enough with "the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware," treading wine presses on the Sabbath, bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens. The men of Tyre brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. A glance is enough to show the difference between this sort of burden-bearing and that of the man healed bearing his bed. The former dishonored God, the latter glorified Christ and his mercy; that was for private gain and greed, not satisfied with the six work-days, this was for the praise of the Master. That was clearly forbidden; this Christ himself, in harmony with the old Mosaic Law, commanded. For the miracle wrought at Bethesda was not intended only for the man upon whom it was wrought, but for as many as

should see this man. It was a *sign* to the Jews. As such it was intended, while in no way transgressing God's law, to run counter to the false Jewish traditions, and thus to turn men's hearts — if they would be turned at all — to the true authority of Christ, who, while upholding God's Law, brought both the mercy which heals the sufferer and sets free his soul from false spiritual bondage. Such was the significance of the sign set strikingly before the eyes of the men in Jerusalem: A man marvelously healed carrying his bed before men's eyes through the streets to his home!

V. 10. Christ purposely chose **the sabbath** for this sign; and John narrates the miracle to show the conflict thus precipitated. **The Jews**, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, regularly named thus by John for their hostility to Jesus, were the Jewish leaders, in all likelihood members of the Sanhedrim. — **It is not lawful** — their chief concern was whether a thing were "lawful," ἔξεστιν, permitted, or not, they being the judges in their casuistic fashion. The 2nd aor. inf. of αἴρω is ἄραι. — V. 11. But the sick man who was healed knows an authority other than theirs, **he that made me whole**; and this authority not only permitted, but actually commanded, what these Ἰουδαῖοι attempted to prohibit. John does not tell us whether the healed man put down his bed in obedience to the Jews, or not; we cannot think that he did. — Still carrying it he is plied with the question, v. 12: **Who is the man that said unto thee**, etc.? For them he is only the man who contradicted their view, not the man who had made this poor man whole. Their tradition had blinded them to such an extent that they no longer saw the greatest mercy and power the world ever witnessed standing in its living work immediately before their very eyes. No wonder they failed to perceive and to be impressed by the divine authority which was joined to this mercy and power. The "sign" was before them, placed there by the

master-hand of Jesus, but these men neither read its meaning, nor cared to obey its admonition. — V. 13. But the man who was healed, though he **wist not who it was**, had in his wholeness that which glorified his unknown benefactor and bound the heart in gratitude and wonder to his complete authority. Taste of the mercy of the Lord, and you will be glad to obey him. There is something noteworthy in Christ's sending this weak beginner in the faith against his powerful antagonists, that with his simple declarations he should put them to silence. Let us do what this man did, stick to the plain words of Christ, no matter who objects to them. Let us remember his works of mercy and grace for us, no matter who speaks disrespectfully of him. Let us hold fast that which we know he said, no matter if there are many other things which as yet we do not know. It is the essence of faith and faithfulness to be thus true to him and his word. — John explains why the man did not know it was Jesus who had healed him — **a multitude being in the place**, at Bethesda. How this multitude came there is not stated. Those who think this Sabbath was the Pass-over conclude that the multitude was composed of festival guests. But why they should be there at Bethesda among the multitude of the sick, blind, halt, withered, and that on the Sabbath, is hard to understand. We should expect to find them at the Temple, or in the synagogue, or at the places of interest in the city. The Purim feast would furnish a better explanation of this one multitude going to see the other. Here were poor people indeed, and to bring to the poor a portion at this time was part of the celebration. If the Sabbath this year fell on the 14th or 15th of Adar, the date of the feast, and this, therefore, had to be postponed, the bringing of such portions to the poor could still fittingly have graced the holy day. But whatever the festival and the occasion for this gather-

ing of a multitude, it gave Christ an opportunity to slip away unseen immediately after the man was made whole. If, however, the gathering had been on Jesus' account, he could hardly have succeeded, as beyond question he did this time.

V. 14. How long **afterward** (another *μετὰ ταῦτα*) is not stated; possibly the same day. **Jesus findeth**, having evidently sought and intended to find him, in order to complete the work he had begun. A still greater blessing was to follow the already great blessing bestowed; the spiritual healing was to crown the bodily healing. — **In the temple** — a good sign. Here he was, no doubt, to thank God for his great mercy in the House of Mercy, and to render due sacrifice. Some have supposed that the man rewarded Christ's goodness by foully reporting him to the Jews. But this is certainly not the sense of v. 15. Jesus would not have wasted further attention upon so base and treacherous a wretch. The man told the Jews it was Jesus for his own complete vindication and in a sort of triumph that it was Jesus who had made him whole — note that he does not say, who had told him to carry his bed. — The words Jesus addresses to the man are remarkable. **Behold, thou art made whole** — briefly and vividly that sets the benefit received before the man's eyes. **Sin no more** — like a flash that lays bare the man's distant past, more than thirty-eight years ago. He had sinned then, sinned in a way his conscience would at once painfully recall, sinned so as to wreck his life in consequence. The objection that sinfulness in general was meant by Christ, because once he would not allow his disciples to infer special guilt from a special calamity. Luke 13, 1-5, does not apply here, for it is true that certain sins entail special painful and dreadful results. Moreover, Christ does not enjoin absolute holiness here, for who would then be able to escape the "worst thing." This

man had some mass of grave sin upon his conscience, but Christ had removed the bodily suffering this had caused. Therein lay the grace of pardon and that was the best thing about the miraculous healing as far as the man was concerned. The Lord Jesus had delivered him from the penalty he had suffered so long, and from the guilt which had made that penalty the more bitter. But alas, after thirty-eight years of suffering the root of the old evil remains. There is a possibility of its again shooting up and spreading its poisonous branches. Let every man who has conquered some sinful propensity, some special "weakness," some dangerous habit, remember that "Sin no more!" must ring as a constant warning in our ears. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matth. 26, 41. But now that Christ has freed this man, the admonition to sin no more comes with an effectiveness, bestowing strength and help, which the man had never experienced before. So it is in every case. Not by our own unaided strength are we to fight our foe and sin no more, but in the strength which Jesus gives and is ready to renew and increase daily. — **Lest a worse thing befall thee**, χειρόν (neut. comparative of κακός). Think of it — worse than his years of sickness. We need not jump at once to the conclusion that Christ means only the damnation of hell. There were worse things even in this life into which that man might have fallen if he had sinned again. "Let no man, however miserable, count that he has exhausted the power of God's wrath. The arrows that have pierced him may have been keen; but there are keener yet, if only he provoke them, in the quiver from which these were drawn." Trench. The very indefiniteness with which Jesus speaks of "a worse thing" makes his word the more impressive. On the one hand he sets the grace of the benefit received, on the other hand the grace of

the warning imparted, and between the two the admonition to sin no more. Thus held by a double cord the man will surely be found true in the end. It is a double healing which thus we witness, and the latter is the greater of the two. Blessed is he who by the grace of Jesus Christ is healed of a guilty conscience and escapes the fever-hold of besetting sin.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

We ought to lay down the rule once for all that miracles are not to be allegorized. What is homiletical allegory? A literal Biblical term or action is used as an illustration or picture of something else found in some other portion of Scripture. The preacher sees a resemblance, or thinks he sees one, sketches it out, and thus produces an allegory. It is the preacher's own production. Hence allegory is not true Biblical exposition at all. Now there are natural resemblances of this kind, which we may use like other figurative language in the way of occasional embellishment. But to take one of Christ's great miracles, and to turn that into a mere figure, and to do that as if this *figure* is *the real meaning* and import of the miracle, is simply wrong. When Christ heals a physically blind man, that may remind us of his removing spiritual blindness, but this is not the import of the miracle. The import is to show his divine power. So in our text. The physical impotence of the sick man is physical impotence, and not merely a picture of a spiritual state. Healing the man is a deed of omnipotence, and not merely a picture of another, namely a spiritual, healing. — How then shall we treat this miracle? Use it to show forth the divinity of Christ. This divine Savior attests and proves himself divine, in order that we may believe in him, and thus receive at his hands also the heavenly gifts of grace. Our text is very plain on this point. Jesus heals the man, and withdraws. Afterwards he finds him, reminds him of his miraculous healing, and then warns him in regard to his sin. So we may preach on

Christ's Healing the Impotent Man at Bethesda.

- I. *He removes the results of sin.*
- II. *In order to show that he is able also to remove sin itself.*

Intro.:—It is sin that has brought sickness into the world, ending in physical death. So many think only of getting rid of the sickness and of staving off death, and pay no heed to the sin which is the root of it all. Let us learn from our text:

The Blessed Aim of Jesus in Healing the Impotent Man.

- I. *To set this miracle before men's eyes as a mighty sign.*
- II. *To make men search out who wrought that sign.*
- III. *To win men's hearts for the greater gift promised by this sign.*

There are those who think the miracles of Christ must still be repeated constantly. However, they select only the miracles of healing, omitting the rest. They forget that these Biblical miracles (not only the healings) are signs which once wrought stand as signs for all time, and need no more repetition. Believe the signs Christ has given you, do not cry for more. Here is one in our text. Read this sign aright:

In His Blessed Kingdom Christ Would Remove the Root of Our Disease.

Or we use the briefer theme: Christ and the Root of our Disease.

- I. *He is never satisfied until he gets to the root of our disease.*
- II. *He has different ways of reaching the root of our disease.*
- III. *He has full power to remove and overcome the root of our disease.*
- IV. *He wants to prevent the root of our disease from ever gaining a destructive hold in us again.*

Christ's Words to the Impotent Man at Bethesda Are Meant Also For Us.

- I. *Wilt thou be made whole?* See Christ's compassionate heart.
- II. *Arise, take up thy bed and walk!* See his divine power and grace.
- III. *Sin no more!* Let Christ cleanse your souls from sin and never yield to it again.

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

John 11, 1-11

Tribulation, affliction — that is the characteristic of the Kingdom, and of the life in it, presented by this text. The selection is well made for that purpose. We have here not merely a house of mourning, but we may say a *Christian* house of mourning. Christ and the Gospel were known in the home at Bethany; Lazarus and his two sisters believed in Christ; and Christ himself loved them dearly. And yet Lazarus died! The hopes and prayers of the sisters seemed to remain unanswered. Even the Jews, when they saw the tears of Jesus, questioned, "Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" That is the way with affliction — we like to escape it, evade it when it comes, get rid of it quickly and as easily as possible — still it comes, and comes with great weight, and often remains indefinitely. It is a characteristic of the Kingdom, and of the life in it; we must not expect it to be otherwise. Therefore also this text does not go beyond the death of Lazarus; it omits the wonderful miracle of his resurrection. Yet the picture is not wholly dark. The Christian's affliction must not be painted wholly black. Across its somber shadow there falls the golden ray of Christ's word for the believer "for the glory of God," v. 4, and when the affliction is death and bereavement that other word, he "sleepeth." Let the preacher paint affliction for his hearers with this bright heavenly ray falling over it, and he will have executed his task aright. Yet he must restrain himself for the moment, for another text awaits him in which all the sweetness of consolation is poured

out. Here affliction occupies the foreground as it were, in the next text consolation is the heart of the theme.

V. 1. St. John introduces his readers to two persons already well-known from another Gospel, namely from Luke 10, 38-42. At once the key-note is struck, **a certain man was sick**, for all the rest in a certain way follows from this. One link locks into another: the sickness—the message—the delay of Jesus—the death of the sick man—the return of Jesus into the territory of his enemies—the miracle—the Jewish hatred and plotting ending in Jesus' arrest and death. God always sees the end from the beginning; our eyes, however, are holden. But an example like this should teach us to trust his purposes and leadings completely. — We have here the first mention of **Lazarus**, a contraction of Ἐλεάζαρος = whom God helps. — Two prepositions are used in stating who he was: **of** (ἀπό) **Bethany**, **of** (ἐκ) **the village of Mary and Martha**, but they express only one fact namely that Bethany was his native town. St. John mentions another Bethany in 1, 28 (“Bethabara,” but the better reading is “Bethany”), therefore the addition is made here: the village of Mary and Martha. Mary is mentioned first although she seems to be the younger; it is on account of what John's first readers well knew, and what he himself will presently narrate fully. V. 2: **And it was that Mary which anointed** etc. Mary has thus won a distinction far above Martha, to which St. Matthew already drew special attention in reporting the words of Christ, “Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.” (26, 13). Hengstenberg has drawn a fanciful picture of this little family circle, making Martha the wife of Simon, and identifying Simon the leper with Simon the Pharisee; but all this lacks any real evi-

dence. It is best not to go beyond the little we really know, remembering that if we were to know more it would have been recorded for us.

V. 3. It seems plain that the sisters did not send the message until the sickness grew serious, however early they may have been thought of sending it. Being pious children of Israel the two sisters, together with their brother, no doubt called frequently upon Jehovah for help, and turned their thoughts with longing and desire to Jesus who had helped and healed so many. Alas, he had withdrawn himself beyond Jordan to escape the wicked plottings of the Jews in Jerusalem. We see from v. 21 and 32 what thoughts crossed their anxious minds as Lazarus grew steadily worse. Finally a message is dispatched in all haste. Its wording is significant, **Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.** It merely states a fact, although it draws special attention to it in the exclamation, "behold." It does not say *how* sick Lazarus is, it leaves that to be inferred. There is no direct appeal for help; in no way do the sisters indicate what they hope Jesus will do. There is a wonderful, an admirable restraint — it is all left to Jesus himself, he will know what to do. But who will deny that the sisters hoped Jesus would restore their brother's health? He whom **thou lovest**, they say, resting entirely on *his* love, not on their brother's love to Jesus, or their own love to him, or even Jesus' love to them. They use φιλεῖν, the love which is affection and personal attachment, not ἀγαπᾶν, the higher love of the spirit and reason. This higher love St. John predicates of Jesus in the fifth verse: Ἠγάπα δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς τὴν Μάρθαν καὶ τὴν ἀδελφὴν αὐτῆς καὶ τὸν Λάζαρον. Trench remarks that φιλεῖν might well be used in regard of Christ's love to the brother; but it would have been contrary to the fine decorum of the language of Scripture to use it in v. 5 where the sisters are included in his love; there were chaste

restraints which limited the relations even of the Son of man to women while walking here upon earth. The message with its *ὃν φιλεῖς* gives us a glimpse of the affectionate friendship which Jesus bore towards Lazarus. It is friendship of the truest kind, which, as Augustine says, only needs to know, for Jesus does not love and forsake those whom he loves. And this too lies in the words of the message as it is sent to Jesus. It was the thing that troubled the hearts of the sisters, even as it troubles many a Christian still — to be a friend of Jesus, to be embraced in his tender and true affection, and yet to lie sick, to suffer day by day, to grow helplessly worse, to die at last — just as if Jesus, our Friend, had forgotten! How can it be? Let it be our answer that above the *φιλεῖν* there stands the unfathomable, blessed *ἀγαπᾶν*.

V. 4. The messenger then found Jesus “beyond Jordan,” although we do not know in what place. He receives a prompt answer containing a double assurance, first that this sickness is not unto death — and that is the direct answer to the alarms and fears of the sisters; secondly, that it is for the glory of God and of the Son of God — which puts it on the highest possible plane. It must be noted that Jesus does not say that Lazarus will not die; the words *οὐκ ἔστιν πρὸς θάνατον* declare that the ultimate result and outcome of the sickness will not be death. The words are meant as an assurance that even if Lazarus died he should not remain in death; they thus promise the miracle Christ afterwards wrought. What is here meant by **the glory of God** is explained by the added clause **that the Son of God may be glorified thereby**. God is glorified when the Son of God is glorified. Compare John 17, 1, 4 and 5; 9, 3-4. *Ὑπὲρ τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ* = in behalf of, for the benefit of, the glory of God, for the furtherance of God’s glory. The glory of God is the perfection of his being and his attributes. It is here

spoken of not as it exists in and for itself, but as it shines forth before the eyes and in the hearts of men. For the glory of God required this sickness of Lazarus in order that through it the Son of God might be glorified. His glory, when he walked among men, shone forth in his words and deeds; St. John writes of it: "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." But this shining forth of the glory of the Son of God is the shining forth of God's own glory, as Bengel has it: *Gloria Dei et gloria filii Dei una gloria*. When Lazarus died and Jesus raised him from the dead, then our Savior stood revealed before the eyes of men as the Resurrection and the Life, of whom St. Paul could afterwards say, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." If Jesus had healed Lazarus, either by going at once to his bedside, or by using his power from a distance, he would thereby have been glorified also; but in allowing Lazarus to die and lie in the grave four days, and in then calling him back into life, the glory of the Son of God was more fully revealed, for the glory of the Father. — With great plainness Jesus calls himself ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, **the Son of God**; and this word of the message found lodgment in Martha's heart, for she afterwards confesses, "I believe that thou art the Christ, *the Son of God*, which should come into the world." — The glory of God and of the Son of God, our Savior, is still the highest purpose in all that occurs in a Christian's life; in this glory is always involved our eternal salvation, for this especially glorifies God by praising and magnifying his mercy and love in Christ Jesus. Whatever helps to try our faith, to strengthen our reliance upon Christ, to make us hold fast more firmly his love, to be more patient and trustful of his wisdom and power, to be more certain and joyous in hope — all this tends to

his glory, and though it may include tribulation for us, is always for our temporal and eternal good.

V. 5. St. John here adds the significant statement: **Now** (but) **Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus** — ἡγάπα with the exalted, all-comprehending love of the Son of God. So he loves all his believers today. And this love, rising far above mere affection and personal attachment, is strong and mighty enough to bear us up in our day of trouble. Lazarus lay dying — and for this very time it is said, the great love of the Son of God embraced every member of that household in Bethany. A cloud had fallen over them, but the great sun of Christ's love shone undimmed behind it. So it is still for us, when the shadow comes into our lives.

V. 6. The assurance that Christ loved the sisters and Lazarus is connected by the word **therefore**, οὖν, to the following statements. The love of God's Son prompted all his actions in this case, though they might at first seem strange and hard to explain. "Οτι ἀσθενεῖ, comp. ὃν φιλεῖς ἀσθενεῖ, v. 4; the Greek does not change the tense like the English. With Lazarus lying sick, **Jesus abode at that time two days in the place where he was.** The exact location is not given. It is a mistake to assume that Lazarus was already dead when the messenger of the sisters reached Jesus, or with Trench that Lazarus was dead when the messenger returned to Bethany. Both suppositions are built on the four days during which Lazarus lay in the tomb, counting them thus: one day for the messenger to reach Jesus, two days for Jesus' delay, and one day for Jesus to travel to Bethany. The text itself, however, does not furnish any positive foundation for his reckoning. We are told explicitly, "When therefore he heard **that he was sick**, he abode . . . two days." The inference is that Jesus, though he loved the persons concerned, yea, because he loved

them so, deliberately waited for Lazarus to die. Then, and not till then, did he start for Bethany. We are not told how long a time it required for the messenger to reach Jesus; that may have been more than a day, for we do not know exactly where Jesus was at the moment, and the messenger may not have been able to proceed to him directly. The manner in which Jesus, after two days' waiting, announces the death of Lazarus to the disciples comports best with the conclusion that Lazarus died at this time, Jesus knowing it by virtue of his omniscience. Lazarus' death was the signal for his leaving the safe retirement beyond Jordan and proceeding again into the neighborhood of Jerusalem. His journey consumed sufficient time to allow the four days referred to. Lazarus was no doubt buried on the day he died, as was customary among the Jews in that climate. On the fourth day following, Jesus reached Bethany. Thus Lazarus lay in the tomb part of the day on which he was buried, two full days besides, and part of the day on which he was raised from the dead. The number four here, as in the previous text, John 5, 3, and in other places of Scripture, may be taken as indicating a certain completeness. Jairus' daughter was raised shortly after her death, the widow's son at Nain on the day of his death and funeral, but Lazarus after the work of death had proceeded to its limit in the first marked stages of the decomposition of the dead body. — The messenger then returned before Lazarus was dead. On his death-bed he himself, no doubt heard the answer Jesus sent to the sisters. Yet death already sat upon his brow, and either that night or the next day Lazarus did die. It is hard to imagine the effect of this occurrence following thus upon the message of Jesus. The faith of the sisters was severely tried. Christ's promise — for as such they surely took his words — seemed to be ineffectual and empty. That is the way

with so many of these divine promises — they disappoint for a time, and it takes faith, faith pure and simple, faith in the face of the impossible at times, to hold fast to them. But these promises never really disappoint; the more they seem to do so at the moment, the more they overwhelm us with joy and happiness when their marvelous fulfilment at last appears. “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Mark 9, 24. “Be not afraid, only believe.” Mark 5, 36.

V. 7. After waiting two days, **then after this**, ἔπειτα μετὰ τοῦτο, he saith to the disciples — a double adverbial expression marks the time in a way that draws attention to it. Something important has evidently occurred at the close of those two days. What it is comes out clearly in the eleventh verse, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep.” — But Jesus does not mention the fact at once, he begins by saying, **Let us go into Judea again**. It has been questioned why he says Judea, and not Bethany. We have the answer in the response of the disciples who at once think of the danger involved. Jesus himself is well aware of it — going to Bethany is going to Judea where the cross awaits him. — V. 8: **Rabbi**, Master or Teacher, the disciples reply: νῦν, just **now**, vividly recalling what had occurred so short a time ago; ἐζήτουν λιθάσαι, **were seeking** (imperfect, repeated or continued action) **to stone thee** to death as a blasphemer, see John 10, 31 and 39; οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι **the Jews**, St. John’s significant name for the haters of Jesus; **and goest thou thither again?** They say nothing about themselves; their thought is evidently first of Jesus, yet they include themselves, thinking not to separate from him, even if he should return to Judea and go amid dangers. Thomas shows this when he says in v. 16: “Let us also go, that we may die with him.” — V. 9: The answer of Jesus, therefore, refers both to himself and to the disciples, in fact is so

general as to include every one of his followers. **Are there not twelve hours in the day?** The “twelve” is put first — “*Jam multa erat hora, sed tamen adhuc erat dies.*” Bengel. Οὐκί — to be sure there are. Christ is speaking of the ordinary working day, which runs from morning till evening, and thus has twelve hours; this was the popular way of counting, even where otherwise the Roman method of reckoning the legal day was used. It is the same with the time of life and labor which God allots to a man, there are these twelve hours. Jesus implies that his own working day is not yet ended, and that even if it be the twelfth hour for him now, he shall have that hour also for his work, nobody shall be able to rob him of it by killing him before the time. His words recall a former saying, John 9, 4, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” — **If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.** Ἐάν περιπατῆ, as in v. 10 also, expects that a man do this, and therefore states positively the result: οὐ προσκόπτει, and for the other: προσκόπτει. He says “walk” here, and not “work,” because he had just proposed to go back to Judea. The statement is a general one, thus applying also to Christ. Its meaning is simply, that the twelve hours of the working day are made light by the sun in the heavens, enabling a man to do his work in every one of these hours; so the twelve hours of a man’s life, granted him by God, are full of light, and in these lighted hours he is able without hindrance to do his work. Nobody could, therefore, shorten the great working day of Christ, not even his most deadly enemies in Judea; there was no reason for the disciples to fear. Not until his hour (the night) would come, the hour of shadow and death, would the work of Christ reach its end on earth. Christ, however, saw the day of his life, and every hour

of it, with a clearness greater than is possible for us with our sin-darkened eyes. He, therefore, moved amid dangers with an assurance and fearlessness that is marvelous to us. By faith we in our humble way are to follow him in our life-work, placing ourselves completely in the hands of God to do his will as he points it out to us in his Word and by his providential indications, until the last hour he means us to have reached its end. So we are to go into dangers without fear knowing that nothing shall interrupt or stop our work until God himself lets the night come for us, and then we shall rest, and it will be well. — V. 10. Trench thinks that Christ forsakes the figure of speech with which he began, and leaves out any reference to himself in the closing words: **But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because the light is not in him.** We cannot think so, for in this sentence the same general term **a man** is used, a general statement is made, as in the previous sentence, and the thought there expressed is rounded out and completed by here showing the opposite of it. The thought is substantially the same as in John 9, 4, “The night cometh when no man can work.” Why cannot he work (“walk”) in the night? Because there is no light; he stumbles and falls. — **The light is not in him;** it may be shining still for others, but he is filled with darkness, his light of day has gone out. Too many commentators try to imagine a man walking in the night, and thus reach all sort of strange interpretations, such as a man’s trying to do certain things without God’s will, thus “stumbling” and making a failure of it. The moment we hold fast that νύξ, night = death, it becomes plain that προσκόπτει, stumbling = impossibility of walking (working). And so the thought is both simple and complete: the disciples need not fear, no foe will interrupt or cut short the work of Christ; and

that work will be finished in the allotted time, before death comes to stay the worker.

V. 11. Why Jesus determined to go to Judea is now made plain: Lazarus had died, and Jesus goes to raise him up from the dead. This announcement follows a pause, indicated by the words, **These things spake he: and after this he saith unto them.** There was time to ponder what had been said, before Jesus adds a new sentence full of the greatest importance. Lazarus was dead, and Jesus knew it. There is not the slightest indication that a second messenger brought the news. Jesus knew by virtue of his omniscience what had taken place in Bethany. So his eyes are ever upon us, and there comes no great or small thing to us but what he knows. Others, like the disciples here, do not know and cannot know until they are especially told as Christ here tells his disciples; but he is ever in directest and closest touch with his friends. — He calls Lazarus **our friend**, thus placing himself beside the disciples, or rather raising them up to stand beside himself, in that circle formed with him, the Master and Friend in one, as the center. Lazarus as the friend of Jesus is the friend of Jesus' disciples. So it should ever be among all the friends of Jesus, attached to him they should be attached to each other. — **Is fallen asleep**, *κεκοίμηται* — heavenly language! He has fallen asleep, and thus is sleeping now. “Since the days of old, men on earth and among the children of Israel used this euphemism in speaking of dreadful death, because of the outward similarity, and in order to cast a soft veil over the grave; but in the mouth of the Lord this figure of speech turns into reality.” Stier. To speak thus of sleeping “is to indicate secretly the resurrection from the dead, since they who sleep have the hope of rising again. We Christians, who have been delivered from eternal death and the wrath of God by the precious blood of the Son of

God, should practice, and accustom ourselves in faith, to despise death and to regard it as a deep, powerful, sweet sleep, the coffin as nothing but our Lord Christ's bosom, and Paradise, the grave, as nothing but a soft bed for lounging and rest, as in truth they are before God, and Paul too, in 1 Cor. 15, 43-44, puts out of sight the ugly appearance of death in our mortal bodies and sets before us the altogether lovely and delightful appearance of life." Luther. — **But I go, that I may awake him out of sleep** — "*our* friend," but "*I* go" that "*I* may awake" — he does not say, Let us go and awake. They are to go with him indeed, but the awaking will be his own glorious act. Someone has written a work on the striking manner in which Jesus manifested his divinity by his use of the personal pronoun. — And here our text closes. In Bethany all is still dark, the shadow of the cross lies heavy on the sisters' hearts, doubts, questions, disappointment wrestle in the gloom with faith striving to find and hold fast the hope in the words Christ had sent by the messenger. But beyond the Jordan the sun is already shining: "I go that I may awake him out of sleep." So there is ever the grace, love, and might of Jesus starting to our aid while we sit in the shadow and doubt perhaps or complain. Let us ever believe and hope, for the Lord never forsakes his own.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

In giving the general purport of this text in the place to which our series assigns it we already have a theme: Tribulation and the Kingdom. Themes like this, placing two great concepts side by side, always really signify that we intend to elucidate *the relation* these two concepts bear to each other. So here. The real theme is: The Relation of Tribulation to the Kingdom. To understand this meaning of our theme helps materially in dividing it, for we must split the theme on this idea of "relation";

Tribulation and the Kingdom.

- I. *In the Kingdom we cannot escape it.*
- II. *In the Kingdom God has a purpose in it.*
- III. *In the Kingdom we shall be delivered from it.*

The three parts set forth fully just what the relation of tribulation is to the Kingdom. — Our text speaks of a sick-bed and a death-bed, which may well lead us to ask several pertinent spiritual questions:

There Are Many Sick-beds and Death-beds in the Church on Earth.

But

- I. *How much faith is there?*
- II. *How much prayer?*
- III. *How much knowledge? (for the glory of God.)*
- IV. *How much joy and hope?*

In seeking for auxiliary concepts Luther's seal occurs to us. Describe it: The Christian walks amid roses when he walks under the cross. Apply that to Lazarus and to us:

When is Our Affliction a Bed of Roses?

- I. *When we carry its pain to Jesus.*
- II. *When we receive the balm of his Word.*
- III. *When we taste of the sweet assurance of his love.*
- IV. *When we await with patience his glorious deliverance.*

Fricke restricts the application too much when he speaks only of death: The Sleep of Our Dead: 1) They are not dead; 2) They are only asleep; 3) The Lord is on the way to awaken them out of sleep. Part three is probably intended as allegory, which we decline to use here. — Wuttke in *Botschaft des Heils* uses a striking feature of the text. All through there is something covered and hidden from mere human eyes. It is so still in our lives, especially in times of affliction:

The Hidden Work of Jesus in Our Dark Hours.

- I. *Hidden is his love, yet comforting.*
- II. *Hidden is his help, yet near.*
- III. *Hidden is his glory, yet sure.*

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matthew 11, 25-30

Luther declares, that this gospel is a paragon among the gospels; he would have every Christian to know it by heart, in order to fortify himself against the offense, that the Gospel is despised and persecuted by the wise, and in order to comfort himself in every cross and affliction with the assurance, that we have a Lord who teaches us to know God aright. In this series on the characteristics of the Kingdom this text exhibits the Kingdom as full of *consolation*. Here is the King himself, and we may well picture him to ourselves, as Hoffmann has painted him, standing with hands held out in invitation and saying, Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, or as Thorwaldsen has hewn him in marble, extending the same invitation to us. While this is the climax of the sweetness in the text, all the rest of it is of the same comforting character. It is a sweet word for "babes," for those to whom the Lord is glad to reveal the Father and himself, the Son, in order that they may be cheered and made happy for all time. Following as it does the text on the Christian's affliction its note of comfort is emphasized and heightened. What is veiled and promised in the other text here shines forth with unsubdued splendor. Let him that is athirst come — his heart shall be satisfied to the utmost. — But the duty of preaching on this text, is by no means a light one. You dare not be a rationalist or a moralist even to the slightest extent; you must count all your own wisdom as loss, in order to win Christ; you must have found rest for your own soul; you must day by day bear the sweet yoke of your cross in the obedience of faith and

with meekness of spirit. So only will you be able to transfer by preaching the unsearchable riches of this word of Christ to the hearts of others.

V. 25. Ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ, at that season, that fitting and proper time, Jesus spoke the following words. What made the season proper we cannot gather from Matthew's narration. Luke 10, 21 connects these sayings with the return of the seventy and their report to Jesus; "*in that hour* Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said." Luke's direct statement "*in that hour*" must stand for the true connection. — **Jesus answered**, not because he was asked; the word ἀποκριθεὶς is here used in a wider sense, "he began to say," or "he found himself induced to say." Luke tells us that a certain joy filled the heart of Jesus, and this is plainly voiced in his words. — These constitute a doxology: **I thank thee, O Father**; ἔξομολογεῖσθαι with the dative signifies to acknowledge openly in honor of some one, to praise him. So Christ here makes an open declaration in honor of his Father. — He addresses him as the Son in the essential sense of the word, as the next verse shows. The word **Father** marks the relation of this person to the Son, but another relation is here to be brought out, one which involves the greatness, power, and majesty of the Father in a special way. He is therefore called **Lord of heaven and earth**, the ruler of all that is created. This greatness stands out in overpowering contrast first to the empty, foolish, greatness of "the wise and understanding," and secondly to the exceeding littleness and tenderness of the "babes." What a marvel that a Father who is Lord of heaven and earth should condescend to "babes" — so little and lowly, and yet *his* babes, *his* children, to whom he would be a Father, and such a Father! This is that other greatness of his, the greatness of his unfathomable love. — The act for which Christ magnifies his Father is a double one, **that thou didst**

hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes. The “wise,” σοφοί and the “understanding,” συνετοί, are best taken as two designations of one class, the opposite of that other class called “babes.” The scribes and Pharisees are here meant, these theologians of false learning and false application of their learning to life. There is no article in the Greek for σοφοί and συνετοί, since not all the wise and understanding are meant; there are notable exceptions among them. “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called,” 1 Cor. 1, 26; yet if not many, then at least some, namely those who have found the true wisdom and understanding in Jesus Christ. — **These things,** ταῦτα, the Father hid from them, namely, following the context in Luke 21, the things involved in the mission of the seventy, concerning which they made report to Jesus and received his further instruction; in a word, the things pertaining to the kingdom of God and to our salvation. Keil describes “these things” as “the divine order of grace, according to which man cannot work his own salvation by means of his own excellence and righteousness, but must receive by faith the salvation revealed in Christ, and must allow himself to be delivered and made blessed by the knowledge of sin and faith in Christ, the Savior of sinners.” — **Babes,** νήπιοι, infants. They are the opposite, spiritually, of the wise and understanding. Some of them, like Saul who became Paul, may be learned enough in the wisdom of their day, and may be able with great understanding to apply their learning in the practical concerns of life, but at the same time they have attained that highest wisdom and understanding which perceives that their own intellectual and practical attainments are utterly and forever valueless in the spiritual realm, and that here only the hidden wisdom of God avails. “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the

excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." Phil. 3, 8. Finding all that is their own, loss and dung, they are in the condition of "babes" who have everything to learn and obtain. This is the condition which the Lord describes: "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matth. 18, 3. But let us remember that Christ himself must produce this condition in us and make us "babes." This is his constant endeavor by his Word and Spirit. The one great effort of the Gospel is to make us νήπιοι, and then to bless us with heavenly wisdom. Many resist wilfully and wickedly, and are thus lost; but there are always those in whom the Lord succeeds. — These things **thou didst hide** from the wise and understanding, **and didst reveal them** unto babes. It is all one act, the hiding and the revealing; expressed in the aorist because it is a settled and completed deed of God. "For few receive the Word and follow it; the greatest number despise the Word, and will not come to the wedding. (Matth. 22, 3 etc.) The cause for this contempt for the Word is *not God's knowledge (or predestination)*, but the perverse will of man, who rejects and perverts the means and instrument of the Holy Ghost, which God offers him through the call, and resists the Holy Ghost, who wishes to be efficacious, and works through the Word, as Christ says (Matth. 23, 37): 'How often would I have gathered thee together, and ye would not.'" *Formula of Concord*, J. 656, 41. God's gracious will and the Word of salvation is such that it can be received only by "babes," namely by those who despair of their own wisdom and understanding. These things are hidden from the wise and understanding because they hide them from themselves, until they allow themselves by these very things to be

made "babes" and eager learners. God's hiding and revealing comports entirely with his grace. If the wisdom and understanding of man counted anything toward his salvation, either in preparing him for it, or in receiving it at the hands of God, that salvation would not be by grace alone. Moreover, if one would have to be wise and understanding before he could hope to obtain salvation, all those would be shut out who for any reason could not rise to such wisdom. It is part of the praise of God's grace that it reaches down to the very lowest and humblest of men, even to the very babes. The verbs "hide" and "reveal" agree with the following verb "know," because "these things" are the saving truth of the Gospel which enter the heart by means of the mind, expelling the darkness and filling the soul with the light of life. — V. 26.

Yea, Father — a strong affirmation of the Father's will and plan. There is absolute agreement between the Father and the Son. The article may be used with a vocative, as the Hebrew and Aramaic do regularly, but then the noun has the nominative form; so here ὁ πατήρ, where a moment before we have πάτερ. — **For so it was well-pleasing in thy sight** is variously interpreted. Grammatically ὅτι can be read either "for" or "that." In the first case it would state the reason for what has just been said. In the second, the verb "I thank thee" is supplied before it; thus: "I thank thee *that* thus it was well-pleasing in thy sight"; or "*that* thus was what is well-pleasing before thee"; the second ὅτι would thus be coordinate with the first. The translators of the R. V. have chosen "for," and this satisfies us completely: "*for* thus it was good pleasure before thee." The εὐδοκία is the good pleasure of God, not in the sense of his sovereign, absolute, or arbitrary purpose or will, which is the Calvinistic view, but in the sense of God's "good thought," his gracious purpose and will of salvation, as this is expressed in all

the clear Gospel passages of Scripture. See Eph. 1, 5 and 9; Phil. 2, 13; 2 Thess. 1, 11; also Luke 12, 32; 2 Pet. 1, 17. Buechner defines this "good pleasure" of God as his infinite good will whereby we who fell from his grace by sin are restored to it for Christ's sake, and thus eternally saved. The Formula of Concord (J. 665, 87) restates the εὐδοκία of his will, Eph. 1, 5 thus: "that in Christ he saves us out of pure mercy, without any merits or good works of ours, according to the purpose of his will." The εὐδοκία of God centers in Christ (Matth. 3, 17; Luke 2, 14), and is fulfilled in all those who by faith receive Christ. And this is the sum and substance of Christ's doxology here, he affirms, delights in, and praises that act which is εὐδοκία ἐμπροσθέν σου, good pleasure before thee: to withhold from the wise and understanding the things of the kingdom, and to reveal them by faith to babes.

In v. 27. St. Matthew records some of the deep and glorious things St. John delights in. What is meant by **all things**, πάντα? All that over which πᾶσα ἐξουσία, all authority," "all power," Matth. 28, 18, extends and is exercised. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given *all things* into his hands." John 3, 35. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given *all things* into his hands." John 13, 3; also 17, 2. There is no indication of any restriction, such as some have tried to find in the "good pleasure," namely that all things necessary to carry out the good pleasure of the Father were delivered unto Christ; or in the expression "these things," namely that only the things pertaining to the kingdom were delivered unto Him. The same is true of the restriction mentioned and rejected by the Formula of Concord, that only "created gifts or finite qualities, as in the saints," were bestowed upon the human nature of Christ. "These do not sufficiently explain the majesty which the Scriptures, and the ancient fathers from Scripture, ascribe to the assumed

human nature of Christ. For to quicken, to have all judgment and power in heaven and on earth, *to have all things in his hands*, to have all things in subjection beneath his feet, to cleanse from sin, etc., are not created gifts, but divine, infinite properties, which, nevertheless, according to the declaration of Scripture, are given and communicated to the man Christ." (J. 634, 54-55.) Among the proof-passages for this statement we find our passage Matth. 11, 27. Besser quotes a fine passage from the Reformation sermon of Petri in *Licht des Lebens*: "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father. All things: earth, heaven and hell; men, angels and devils; time, death and eternity; all things: salvation and damnation, grace and judgment, life and death; all things: truth, righteousness, glory, peace and joy, consolation and refreshing, rest and hope, deliverance from sin, victory in temptation, overcoming the world, communion with God, the love of God, the life in God — all things have been delivered unto him; he is the almighty Lord, the Giver of divine gifts of grace, the Executor of all divine works, the Prince of life, and therefore the Captain of our salvation." All things **have been delivered unto me**, παρεδόθη, passive aorist, a completed, settled fact. Only the human nature of Christ is here referred to, as Luther brings out clearly: "They *have been delivered unto me* of my Father, by this he indicates that he is *true man*, who has received them from the Father. For neither would God deliver all things to one who was only man, nor would one who was only God receive them from another. For neither is it possible for one who is only man to be over all things, nor for one who is only God to be beneath God. Thus in this one person true God and true man are joined together." Christ does not speak here of his coming exaltation, as the aorist shows; then indeed he entered upon the complete exercise, according to

his human nature, of all the power and majesty conferred upon him as man, but he had this power and majesty already in the days of his humiliation, when he walked in the form of a servant and became obedient unto death. — When he adds **of my Father**, we must recall what he has just said of the greatness of this Father, when he calls him “Lord of heaven and earth.” As the Son he was equal with the Father from all eternity, in power, majesty, and glory; but as true man he was beneath the Father, and received of him “all things,” all the powers, prerogatives, and excellencies he possessed.

The καί must not be taken in the sense of γάρ; it adds a coordinate thought. Jesus is laying the deep foundation, in these utterances, for the most blessed invitation he is about to extend. One of its vast buttresses is, All things have been delivered unto me of my Father. The other, No one knoweth the Son, save the Father, etc. The third is, And he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. In the first sentence Jesus speaks of his human nature, and of his relation as true man to the Father; and here the essential thing for us to know is, that all things have been delivered unto him of the Father. Then he adds the other side — as **the Son**, ὁ υἱός, there exists between him and the Father a peculiar relation: only the Father knows the Son, and the Son the Father. All others are shut out here, save only as Christ himself admits them. **Knoweth**, ἐπιγινώσκει, note the present tense; the composite is stronger than the simple form. A complete, most intimate, all-embracing knowledge is meant. Luther writes of it: “The word *knoweth* is to be taken both times, not in the philosophic, but in the *theological* sense, i. e. that not only does the Father know the Son, and the Son the Father, according to his being, but also according to his counsel and will; not only, what God is, but also what the Father and

the Son intend and will. What does it profit to know a man's body, as long as his mind and heart, or will, is not known? So it is with God: to know God's counsel and will, that is to know God truly." — Luther brings this last out so strongly because the words follow: **and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him.** "He" = one included above in "babes." The Son's will (βούληται) is the same as the Father's good pleasure (εὐδοκία). Luther says that Christ means to express no reluctance, as though he were unwilling to reveal the Father unto many; his words rather indicate the great condescension with which he stoops to us all to give us this heavenly knowledge full of salvation. Here indeed speaks the Son of the Lord of heaven and earth, whom we should hasten to kiss, lest his wrath be kindled but a little, and we perish from the way. Ps. 2, 12. Both Luther and our Confession use this passage to prove that man is unable to convert himself, or to do anything by means of his own power and knowledge towards his conversion. "Here the bottom falls out of all merit, all powers and abilities of reason, or the free will men dream of, and it all counts nothing before God; Christ must do and must give everything." Luther.

In v. 28-29 the good pleasure of God makes its sweetest revelation to the babes; yet the very act, so blessed and gracious to them, being distasteful to the wise and understanding, by the very folly and perverseness which in their hearts makes it appear so, is a hiding of God's blessing from them. Here the Son shows what he means by his willingness to reveal the Father. In reading this comforting invitation of Christ we must remember that it possesses a double power, one which may be termed effective, and one collative. Christ says **Come — Take**, and thereby touches and moves our hearts with the power of grace to come and take. Of ourselves we can neither come,

nore take, but are utterly dead and lifeless by nature, as the Formula of Concord describes this condition, likening it to a man physically dead who is unable to prepare or adapt himself to obtain again temporal life. Just as a corpse could not move nor stir itself, but must simply lie as it has lain, so are our hearts. But when the Gospel command sounds in our ears, then it envelopes and enters our hearts with the living power of God's Spirit, and so draws us that, not by any powers of our own, but by this heavenly power, can we come and take. This is the effective power of Christ's Word and Gospel, which changes our hearts, creates a new heart, quickens, regenerates; it is always present in and with the Word, but it is made of no effect by wilful and persistent resistance. At the same time there is a collative power in Christ's Word. This appears here especially in the promises, "And I will give you rest" — "And ye shall find rest unto your souls." Here the gift comes out most clearly which Christ with his gracious power bestows upon us. Δεῦτε is an adverb, "hither," and is always used with the plural, either alone as here, or with an imperative or subjunctive following. — **Unto me** — all through these two verses the pronoun of the first person is emphasized: unto *me* — and *I* will give — *my* yoke — learn of *me* — *I* am meek — *my* yoke — *my* burden. Now it becomes still more plain why he said before, as he did, that all things were given him of the Father, and that he is the Son, known to the Father, and knowing him. Luther: "Do not go to another! Christ is the only way, the sole path; the circle which contains the only center, in which all other figures are included; yea, the little round spot and bull's-eye at which all marksmen must shoot; the solitary One, which is the beginning of all numbers, no matter how great they are and how far they reach; therefore he says, *Unto me!*" Behind this call, Hither to me! there stands the full

power of his divinity in human form, exalted over all others that have ever been upon earth, or will be. And here we must see and feel how deadly is everything that draws away from him, no matter in what attractive and seductive form it appears. Away from him is death, damnation, eternal darkness, and destruction. — **All** = *gratia universalis*; a universal call. The little word πάντες, like the other, “whosoever believeth in him,” is more precious than if our names were actually mentioned by Jesus; for another might have a name identical with mine, and he, not I, might thus be meant. But “all” includes me with such certainty that there can be no shadow of doubt. All ye **that labor and are heavy laden** — κοπιῶντες, trying to work out their own salvation by laboring to fulfil the Law; πεφορτισμένοι, having been weighed down with the Law’s requirements and the guilt of not fulfilling them, and now staggering under this weight. This description really applies to all men, for there are none free from the oppression and curse of the Law, until Christ frees them. To it must be added all the vain, fruitless striving after peace, contentment, happiness, rest, and joy, which is found the world over, and, as long as Christ is left out, ends in disappointment or false satisfaction; likewise all the suffering, unrest, trouble, fear, grief, and pain, against which men vainly strive and rebel, and for which they obtain no real healing and relief, as long as Christ is not found. In endless variety, now in a deep and tragic way, now in a more superficial and gilded way, this wretchedness meets us in our race; and ever, apart from Christ, only delusions, self-deceptions, falsehoods, and vanities cover it up. Yet there is a difference; some like the Pharisee imagine they have shoulders strong enough to carry the burden, and therefore spurn the Savior, and some like the Sadducees lull themselves to sleep with the opiates of indifference and worldly pleasure,

while others sink down in sadness and despair, crushed by the labor and the load crying like David, Mine iniquities are gone over my head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. Ps. 38, 4. Normally, and according to the divine intention, all, actually all, ought to be of this latter kind; it is abnormal when with the Pharisee in self-righteousness, or with the Sadducee in skepticism and Epicureanism, men resist the Law, stultify conscience, and harden their hearts against their souls' chief need. But Christ's word, Ye that labor and are heavy laden, shows even these what they should be, and would aid in making them what he thus calls them. — **And I will give you rest** — this is the blessed promise of Christ, and it is so precious that, with an amplification, it is repeated, **ye shall find rest for your souls**. And *I* (emphatically) will rest you ἀναπαύσω = I will give you pause, will make you rest and recover. How perfectly this word fits the case — the labor shall end for good, in its place there shall be rest; the heavy load shall be taken off, in its place there shall be relief. Do we ask how this shall be accomplished? Christ is the end of the Law to those who believe. The sin and the guilt which causes all the labor and the load is pardoned and forever removed. Thus all former vain striving comes to an end. There is rest. Not for the body and mind only, but actually for the soul. Christ rests us (by an act of his), and so we *find* rest (as a great treasure and blessing). O how many have had this blessed experience, have found it constantly renewed and deepened in Christ as life went on, have rejoiced and praised him for his wondrous grace! "Thou, God, hast created us unto thyself; hence our heart is restless, until it rests in thee." Augustine.

V. 29. Take **my yoke** upon you, **and learn of me**. These two, the condition of laboring and being heavy laden, and the condition of having rest, are op-

posites. But Christ brings out a sort of similarity between them. Both are like a "yoke"; but while the one is distressful the other is delightful, for the one crushes the bearer, the other carries him. *My yoke*, Christ says, and sets it over against all other yokes, whatsoever they may be. His yoke is his commandment, the Gospel commandment, every requirement which he makes in order to impart his Gospel blessing to us. We assume the yoke when we receive his blessing and thenceforth follow him as his disciples. — Therefore Christ continues with the explanation, **Learn of me**, μάθετε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ; a 2nd aor., like ἄρατε. This μάθετε is the thing for the μαθητής; it is heart-learning, blessed knowledge and blessed experience and practice in one. — And there is no master or teacher like Christ, **for I am meek and lowly in heart**. He is meek, or mild, and differs for one thing from Moses, the divine teacher of the Law, who had to be exceedingly stern. But he differs likewise from all self-constituted, false, erring human teachers who have arisen in the world and drawn many after them; they are all haughty, selfish and self-seeking. Jesus is full of the mildness of heavenly love, stooping down to us poor sinners, and laying his love — blessed yoke! — upon us. And his meekness is combined with lowliness; for he humbled himself to reach us and bring us his love. His lowliness is true, nothing sham and deceptive — lowly *in heart*. He left his throne of glory and became a servant for our sakes. Of course, the proud of this world will not accept and learn of this Master, but they who labor and are heavy laden delight in him. — For in learning of him, **ye shall find rest unto your souls**. This is the blessed fruit of learning of him. The more we learn the love of Christ, the more we find rest to our souls. Here too is a fine distinction: first Christ says, Come, and draws us to himself, and gives us with his own hand the first sweet

gift of rest for the soul; then, after we have come and tasted of this gift, we are to be active ourselves, we are to seek and find more and more what he constantly offers us, namely this blessed rest and relief. Such is the "yoke" of Christ for his followers. Who would not gladly embrace it?

V. 30. "What can be lighter than a burden which unburdens us, and a yoke which bears its bearer?" Bernhard. "Christ's burden does not oppress, but makes light, and itself bears rather than is borne." Luther. The "burden" and "yoke" are the same. Even when the cross, affliction, persecution and many bitter trials are included, this **yoke is easy**, and lies gently upon the heart, and this **burden is light**, so that it can be easily borne, for it is filled with the strongest consolation and hope, and bears us up best at the very time when all other consolations reveal their emptiness and deceptiveness.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Here is another text which enables us to place its main thought, namely *consolation*, in connection with the Kingdom, only this time in a slightly different way:

Christ's Kingdom is Full of Consolation.

- I. *The throngs of those who labor and are heavy laden.*
- II. *The Great Consoler who dispenses rest unto their souls.*
- III. *The happy bearers of the yoke that is easy and the burden that is light.*

This text is full of attractiveness, in fact it is all attractive in the highest degree. We may list its attractions in an outline:

The Attractiveness of Christ's Call, Come Unto Me!

- I. *It is issued to babes.*
- II. *It provides the power for coming.*
- III. *It would satisfy our greatest need.*
- IV. *It bestows the greatest treasure for the soul.*

Prominent in the text is the idea of the *yoke*, "my yoke." In all the world there never was a yoke like this:

The Lord's Incomparable Yoke.

- I. The power and consolation of his grace.*
- II. Light enough for babes.*
- III. Easy for those that labor and are heavy laden.*
- IV. Giving rest to all that bear it.*

Langsdorff gets at the text in an explanatory way, making a helpful and practical outline:

How Does the Lord Keep His Promise to Give Rest Unto Those Who Labor and Are Heavy Laden?

- I. He takes the worst burden away entirely.*
- II. What burdens remain he helps us to bear.*
- III. The yoke he puts upon us is easy and his burden is light.*

Clauss works up the contrasts that are in the text under a very simple theme:

When Shall We Find Rest Unto Our Souls?

- I. When we seek it, not in the world's wisdom, but in the Father's revelation.*
- II. When we seek it, not in earthly delights, but in Jesus' redemption.*
- III. When we seek it, not in the works of the Law, but beneath the Savior's yoke.*

This is a text demanding that Christ get his full due. We may describe him as painters and sculptors have depicted him, and make our theme:

Christus Consolator.

- I. None greater ever offered to comfort us.*
- II. None gentler ever called us to himself.*
- III. None richer ever promised us so much.*

The rule is, not to use foreign languages in sermons, but this title, "Christus Consolator," like "Ecce Homo," is quite well known, and besides is so near the English that it may pass. "Christ the Consoler" would also be good.

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matthew 12, 1-8

One of the great characteristics of the kingdom is *the absence of ceremonial regulations*. This is the subject of our text. The whole question of ceremonialism is here opened up, although the Sabbath regulations stand in the foreground. The general argument to be borne in mind is briefly this: God indeed did establish ceremonial laws and regulations for his people in the old covenant; but these were only adjuncts for the training and education of the people, and were not absolutely binding (like the moral law) even in the days of old; more vital things lay behind them and at certain times and in various ways supervened. When the Son of man came, he was Lord of all ceremonial laws, therefore also of the Sabbath laws. He indeed observed them faithfully, namely in the true spirit of these laws, not according to the vain Jewish traditions built up around and over them, for he came to fulfil the Law, all the Law of God, for us completely. Yet while he thus made himself the servant of the Law for our sakes, he none the less remained the Lord of the Law. From all this follows what pertains to the Kingdom of the new covenant: *all ceremonial laws have ceased*; we are not to be entangled again in the old yoke of bondage, but are to rejoice in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. Since the Sabbath laws are the chief thing in the text, their abrogation must be emphasized especially. Thus we arrive at the Christian Sunday and the blessed doctrine of liberty which has given us the *Lord's Day*, a doctrine and day to be kept free from all admixture of Jewish (or Puritanic) legalism. This is what the Augsburg

Confession brings out so clearly and forcibly, when it shows concerning “the Lord’s day and like rites of temples,” that these are not “things necessary to salvation,” so that men sin when they “violate them, without offense to others.” “Such is the observation of the Lord’s day, of Easter, of Pentecost, and like holidays and rites. For they that think that the observation of the Lord’s day was appointed by the authority of the church, instead of the Sabbath, as necessary, are greatly deceived. The Scripture, which teacheth that all the Mosaical ceremonies can be omitted after the Gospel is revealed, *has abrogated the Sabbath*. And yet, because it was requisite to appoint a certain day, that the people might know when they ought to come together, it appears that the church did *for that purpose* appoint the Lord’s day: which for this cause also seemed to have been pleasing, that men might know that the observation, neither of the Sabbath, nor of another day, was *of necessity*. There are certain marvelous disputations touching the changing of the law, and the ceremonies of the new law, and the change of the Sabbath: which all arose from the false persuasion, that there should be a service in the Church, like to the Levitical; and that Christ committed to the Apostles and bishops, the devising new ceremonies, which should be necessary to salvation. These errors crept into the Church, when the righteousness of faith was not plainly enough taught. Some dispute, that the observation of the Lord’s day is not indeed of the law of God, but *as it were* of the law of God: and touching holidays, they prescribe how far it is lawful to work in them. What else are such disputations, but snares for men’s consciences? For though they seek to moderate traditions, yet the equity of them can never be perceived, so long as the opinion of necessity remaineth; which must needs remain, where the right-

eousness of faith, and Christian liberty are not known.”

In our day one might prefer a different subject, namely the Christian *sanctity* of the Lord's day. The abuse of Sunday grows apace, invades the work of the church, and carries thousands of Christians into the gravest of sins. The churches are empty, and pleasure places are filled; the Word and Sacrament and divine worship are sadly neglected, and instead of a great spiritual blessing Sunday is made to yield a fearful curse. But while all this is sadly true, and the pulpit with all its power must warn against it, this can be properly done only when the fundamental thought of the text is held fast — freedom from ceremonial law. A fine combination of the two great thoughts is furnished by Pank in his sermon on this text: The Sabbath is made for man — hence no *heathen* Sabbath rejection; man is not made for the Sabbath — hence no *Jewish* Sabbath yoke; Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath — hence a *Christian* observance of Sunday.

V. 1. **At that season** marks a more general period of time, evidently in the first part of Christ's ministry, and possibly connected directly with the incidents of the previous chapter. We do not know the exact locality where Jesus went through the cornfields. It was, no doubt, in Galilee; Robinson puts it “on the way to Galilee,” after Jesus healed the infirm man at the Pool of Bethesda and left Jerusalem. The time of year was near the end of May, as indicated by the ripeness of the grain. The disciples were with Jesus, and also a number of Pharisees. It is mere conjecture to explain the hunger of the disciples by imagining them far from a town or village. The contrary seems more probable, for it was the Sabbath when the Jews never went beyond a certain distance, and the Pharisees would hardly follow the Master and his disciples so very far. We have the dative plural

τοῖς σάββασι; in v. 2 ἐν σαββάτῳ, and both plural and sing. in v. 5; the plural may designate either one Sabbath day, or more than one. — **An hungered** here does not mean actual suffering and want, but rather that natural desire for food after some considerable time since eating last has passed. We may well take it that Christ's teaching had taken up the time. Then, as the band moved on they passed through the cornfield between which a path led, the standing grain waving on each side. — The natural impulse of the disciples, whose appetites craved some food, was to **pluck ears of corn**, rub out the wheat-grains in their hands, and eat them as they walked on. There was nothing sinful or forbidden in this action, for the Law explicitly permitted it: "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbor, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbor's standing corn." Deut. 23, 25. But the moment the disciples **began** to do this the Pharisees raised objections.

V. 2. How was it these **Pharisees** were at hand? They may well have been spies sent out, or proceeding of their own accord, to watch the actions and words of Jesus. If Robinson's chronological arrangement is correct, Jesus had already gravely offended the Jews at Jerusalem by bidding the impotent man take up and carry away his bed on the Sabbath. The eyes of the Pharisees were thus sharpened to detect any further infringement of their very elaborate sabbatical regulations. And now they find what they are looking for. The action of the hungry disciples is, in the eyes of the Pharisees, nothing less than the performance of several kinds of directly forbidden labor, reaping, threshing, winnowing, and storing grain — on the Sabbath. Of course, the quantity handled was exceedingly small; yet what is quantity when principle is at stake? It was only

a bite or two of fruit which our first parents took in Eden to the undoing of our whole race. Besides the Jewish traditions were explicit on the smallness of the forbidden acts. Godet is wrong when he exclaims at the smallness of the work here charged as unlawful: "To pluck ears, to rub out the grains, and eat them — what labor!" Jesus does not defend the act of his disciples by setting forth its smallness. The question was a deeper one. It did not matter whether the work was small or great. — The point was whether it was lawful or not, for the disciples were charged with doing **that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath.** The law appealed to in the case is Ex. 20, 10, the third commandment of the Decalogue prohibiting all kinds of labor on the Sabbath. A case in point is the prohibition forbidding the gathering of manna on the Sabbath, as described Ex. 16, 22, etc. The Pharisees charge that the disciples *do* something (ποιῶσιν — ποιεῖν), and that such doing is *not allowed* (οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἐν σαββάτῳ). They charge that the disciples are violating the law which commands rest on the Sabbath, that their bit of labor, slight indeed, is, nevertheless, labor in contradiction to rest. The *Patres Traditionum* had made very full and exact specifications of everything included in the prohibition of the law. Lightfoot quotes them, *Horae Hebræicæ* p. 342: He who reaps the very least on the Sabbath is chargeable; and to pluck ears is a species of reaping. And whoever breaks off anything from its stalk is chargeable under the specification of reaping. The works which make a man chargeable with stoning and death, if he does them presumptuously, or with a sacrifice, if he sins ignorantly, are either generic or derivative. Of the generic thirty-nine kinds are enumerated: to plow, to sow, to reap, to bind sheaves, to thresh, to winnow, to grind, to pound to powder, etc., to shear sheep, to dye wool, etc.; and the derivative works are such as

are of the same class and likeness, viz. to furrow is the same as plowing, to cut up vegetables the same as grinding, and to pluck ears the same as reaping. — No wonder the Pharisees thought they had a sure case against the disciples. And if the law as expounded by the rabbinical authorities really held, their case was established beyond a doubt. But here they were mistaken, and their learned doctors had utterly misread the divine law. — Luke tells us that the Pharisees accused the disciples directly, while Matthew represents them as speaking to Jesus. Both statements are correct, the disciples themselves were accused, and the matter is brought before Jesus. — **Behold** — these virtuous Pharisees are horrified at what they see — although inwardly they are delighted to have found a charge against Christ. But alas for the Pharisees, Christ himself has plucked no ears of wheat, just as in the other instances, he does nothing with his own hands to which the Pharisees can properly attach guilt. He indeed orders the impotent man to take up his bed, but he does not lift the bed himself; so he orders the man with a withered hand to stretch it forth, but he does not lift it with his own hands. — So Jesus allows his **disciples** to pluck the ears, but does not pluck any himself. Yet in allowing it he assumes the full responsibility for it, undertaking the entire defense of their action, and fully protecting them against their accusers. In this work, however, it was a decided advantage to Jesus that he was defending others and not himself directly. So, in each case also, as far as he himself was concerned, by doing no act of manual labor himself, he managed to exclude that pettiness and narrowness to which the Pharisees were ever inclined in arguing such questions, and gained more room to present the deeper principles which were involved and which the Pharisees had completely lost sight of. The Jews could not come to him directly

and say: "*Thou hast done this and that*"; for in their sense of doing something, he had really done nothing, since merely to utter a few words was no labor forbidden on the Sabbath even by their rabbis. All they could do was to raise the question: Is it right for the disciples, for this man, etc., to do so and so? Jesus wanted the question in this form, or in the other, Is it right to do good, or to do evil on the Sabbath? or, Is it right to heal on the Sabbath? The divine law itself, its intention, principle, and purpose was the thing at stake, and this Jesus desired to keep before his opponents as directly and clearly as possible. So the Pharisees here can say to Jesus only this, *Thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath.*

V. 3. Οὐκ ἀνέγνωτε, did ye not read? That was the trouble, they had read too much rabbinical law, too little divine law. It is the same today, men read too little of the Word of God, too much human learning and speculation. But the Pharisees *had* read 1 Sam 21. Alas, how? So many read without getting hold of the true contents of the Word. — The **shrewbread** is here called ἄρτοι τῆς προθέσεως = bread of setting forth. Twelve unleavened loaves, each made of about six and a fourth pounds of flour, were set forth in two rows on a gold-covered table in the Holy Place every Sabbath day, together with pure incense upon each row. The bread remained thus as week, and when it was removed, only the priests were allowed to eat it in the holy place (Lev. 24, 5-9). — It is taken for granted on the part of Jesus that **what David did** in this instance was right, and he assumes that in this the Pharisees agree with him. David was highly esteemed by them, and they would have been very reluctant to cast reproach upon him. The manner in which David deceived Ahimelech is entirely omitted here, also other details of the story, in order to focus attention upon the one thing of prime importance here. — **How he**

entered into the house of God does not mean that he entered the tabernacle itself, for "the house of God" included also the courts. Here David sought Ahimelech, who, no doubt, was busy with his usual priestly duties. David prevailed upon Ahimelech to give him the "hallowed bread," not that which lay at the moment upon the sacred table, but that which had lately been removed, and was still considered "most holy," Lev. 24, 9. — Mark writes that David went into the house of God "in the days of *Abiathar* the high priest and did eat shewbread." Some are quick to conclude that Mark made a mistake in the name through a lapse of memory, writing *Abiathar* instead of *Ahimelech*. This cannot be the case, even if we are unable to clear up the difficulty. Two satisfactory solutions are offered. One is that the two names Ahimelech and Abiathar were borne by both men, the father as well as the son; this is established by 2 Sam. 8, 17; 1 Chron. 18, 16; 24, 3 and 6 and 31, where Ahimelech is called the son of Abiathar, while in 1 Sam. 21 and 22 Abiathar is called the son of Ahimelech. The other solution is that the father and the son were both present when David came to Nob and both gave the bread to David. Ahimelech, the father soon perished, and Abiathar, the son, became high priest and made record of the facts, which thus were said to have taken place in his day. — Jesus does not say to the Pharisees that David himself took the bread, he merely mentions the fact that David *entered* the house of God, and *did eat* the shewbread; this leaves ample room for the giving of the bread by Ahimelech. — The essential point in the story is that David *did eat* the shewbread, which it was *not lawful* for him to eat, οὐκ ἔξιόν, neither for them that were with him. The law in the case, an explicit law of God, not merely a rabbinical deduction, is recorded Lev. 24, 9: "And it shall be Aaron's and his son's: and they shall eat it in the holy place: for

it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute." This was a ceremonial law, and the letter of it was plainly transgressed by David and his men. Christ even emphasizes the fact adding "but only for the priests." — Do the Pharisees mean to condemn David for eating the shewbread? They must either do this or admit the conclusion of Jesus, that the ceremonial law is not absolutely binding, that there is a principle in this law which admits a deviation from its literal and actual observance. In presenting this conclusion to the Pharisees Jesus ignores the fact that the rabbinical refinements of the sabbatical law are really not the law itself, and may be rejected altogether while the law itself is truly upheld. His argument merely takes the Pharisees at their word when they practically insist on the absolute observance of a ceremonial law. The act of David proves beyond a doubt that such observance is not to be absolute. Besides this we have a hint of the principle which stands behind and above all ceremonial law, permitting deviations from its literal requirements. David was hungry — the disciples were hungry. As long as nothing but a ceremonial restriction stood in the way, they might eat. God cared far more for the right spiritual condition of the heart, than for the outward observance of ceremonial regulations, to say nothing of human traditions. The Pharisees practiced the very opposite, they were painfully careful about outward observance, and allowed their hearts to be filled with the gravest wickedness.

Jesus does not stop with the first argument, which is general in its nature, embracing all ceremonial law, and thus the sabbatical law by inference. He follows up the generic with the specific, v. 5. The Pharisees might have claimed that the Sabbath law stood above the law concerning shewbread. Jesus here shows them that it does not, and he shows it, not by pointing to a

rabbinical conclusion, but by adducing incontrovertible Scripture proof, the very law of God itself, namely Num. 28, 9, etc.: "And on the Sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two-tenths deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: this is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering." To bring these sacrifices on the Sabbath was labor indeed. But the ceremonial law itself commanded it, and the law was holy, and commanded nothing wrong. Thus the priests in the very Temple itself profaned the Sabbath, *βεβηλοῦσιν*, make it common, unhallowed, i. e. broke the sabbatical law of rest and no labor — yet they were guiltless, *ἀναίτιοι*, with no charge against them. How often had the Pharisees read the law; and yet had failed to note this apparent contradiction, to say nothing of finding the solution of it. But again Jesus indicates the solution for them: the ceremonial requirements of the law are not and cannot be absolute. Whoever makes them so comes into conflict with this law itself. He is proved wrong by the very law he would uphold as right. The ceremonial law is itself subservient to a higher law or principle. This is man's true spiritual interest. It required certain outward labor restrictions for the Jews, but it also required certain laborious ministrations in the Temple for the Jews. Both were required, *but not on their own account, but for the spiritual need of the people*. Moreover, in the satisfying of these needs a good and gracious God was honored, who himself had established the whole service with its ministration and had provided thus for the soul's need. And was it not thus, at least after a manner, with the eating of the disciples as they passed through the grain-fields on the Sabbath? By accepting what God had provided they honored the Provider. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do

all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. 10, 31. Eating without sin, no one could charge them with breaking the law. Thus in general we must observe the higher principle which governed all Jewish ceremonial law. And we may add, now that all ceremonial regulations have been abolished, in the Christian Church this higher principle is the only law, making us free, and yet controlling us in our blessed freedom.

In the argument from David's eating shewbread Jesus made no explicit application to the act of his disciples in eating the grain they had plucked on the Sabbath. In the argument from the priest's work on the Sabbath in the very Temple of God, he now makes a striking application in v. 6. All three cases refer to the Temple: David entered "the house of God" — the priests serve in the Temple in Jerusalem — the disciples walk as learners in the presence of one greater than the Temple, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily. All three do that which the Pharisees deem contrary to the law: David eats the shewbread — the priests butcher the sacrificial animals — the disciples pluck ears of wheat. The gravity of the first two instances, compared with the slightness of the last, ought to satisfy the Pharisees completely. The fact is that the disciples had transgressed no real requirement of the ceremonial law, as David and the priests in the Temple did. But since the Pharisees put their rabbinical deductions on a plane with the law of God, Jesus settles the question with convincing clearness on the basis of that very law, removing even the shadow of proof from his opponents. Then, however, he comes forward with his own divine authority, crushing forever the blind and foolish reasonings of rabbis and their followers. Jesus is **greater than the temple**. Was the Temple great as the House of God, where God dwelt? Jesus was greater for he was God himself. Was the Temple great because God there

drew nigh unto men and dwelt among them? Jesus was greater, because in him God had joined himself to our race and dwelt more graciously among us than in any Temple ever built by human hands. Why does Jesus thus measure himself against the Temple? To emphasize his greater — we may say absolute — authority. Luther: "It is for me, and not for you, to pass judgment," namely on what is lawful on the Sabbath, and what not. Did the tabernacle of old allow David to eat the shewbread, did the present Temple allow the priests to butcher the sacrifices, then he who is greater than these allows the act of his disciples, whose proceeding (in plucking ears, etc.) is in harmony with what they have been taught by him. Christ covers the disciples with the mighty arm of his divine authority. Under his teaching they were escaping from the slavery of the vain Jewish traditions, they were learning the law aright, and more than the law, namely the Gospel which sets men forever free. When we recall the fanatical love of the Jews for their Temple, we must wonder what effect Christ's declaration, that he was greater than the Temple, had upon the Pharisees. The majesty and greatness of Jesus must have come out with such power, as he stood there amid the waving grain under the beautiful May sky, facing his evil-minded accusers, that these were overawed and completely silenced for the time.

V. 7. Εἰ ἐγνώξετε . . . οὐκ ἂν καταδικάσατε, the condition is conceived as not fulfilled. The question is whether the pluperf. ἐγνώξετε is used in the sense of the imperf.; Westcott and Robertson think so, and this explanation of the tense is much to be preferred, only that then the condition refers to present time, the conclusion to past time, "If ye knew . . . ye would not have condemned." We have here the culmination of the argument. It reveals fully both the inwardness

of the law under which the Jews lived, and of which they knew not the real meaning, and the inwardness of the Son of man, who, while he was then a servant of the law for our sakes, was at the same time the Lord of the law — κύριος put first for greater emphasis. Hos. 6, 6: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." This was a word which made fully plain what God intended with the law, not mere outward observance (sacrifice), but holy service (mercy). A mere outward sacrifice was nothing; God wanted the sacrifice of a godly life, a life full of godly acts, mercy, for instance, toward a hungry fellow man, mercy namely for God's sake. Of course, the law itself could not put such mercy, and other godly motives, into the heart, only the Gospel (also in the Old Testament) could do that. But the law was satisfied with nothing less, it never was and could be satisfied with a mere outward performance, such as the offering of sacrifice and burnt offerings. That the Pharisees did not even know what all this meant is evidenced by their condemning without mercy the disciples of Jesus who were utterly guiltless, not even having transgressed a ceremonial regulation. Men's actions thus show how little, or how much, they understand of the true meaning of God's Word. Pharisaic ignorance still exposes itself often enough, and theologians sometimes make a sad display of themselves. Let us be sure that the Gospel has put true mercy into our hearts. — Christ's word that he is **lord of the Sabbath** is of the same sort as his declaration that he is greater than the Temple. The Sabbath and the Temple went together. He who is greater than the Temple has the Sabbath in his power to do with it as he pleases. While he dwelt in the state of humiliation Jesus, though lord of the Sabbath, held himself its servant, put under the law to redeem them that were under the law, and thus fulfilled completely

the Third Commandment. He also left his disciples under the Jewish Sabbath regulations, as God had given them. It is a grave misunderstanding of the meaning of this entire text to interpret it as if Jesus already dispensed his disciples from the observance of the divine Sabbath laws. The time for that had not yet come; the disciples themselves were not yet ready. Soon enough the new would develop in such strength that the old would of itself pass away. The lord of the Sabbath finally fulfilled the old Sabbath completely, when on that Saturday after his death he rested in the tomb, and then he sanctified for his followers a new day, a day of joy, worship, and praise, when he arose on the first day of the week, appeared unto his disciples that day, and a week later again on the first day of the week, and sent his Spirit according to his promise on the blessed day of Pentecost, once more the first day of the week. The old Jewish Sabbath was nothing but the shadow (Col. 2, 16-17); its place has been taken by the body now, which is Christ, Christ who died and rose again and thus won for us, not a continued position under the shadows as before, but all that the shadow had promised, even life eternal, "a rest to the people of God," Heb. 4, 9. He gave no law either before, at this time, or later; he set down no legal requirements; *ceremonialism was at an end forever*. Christian liberty had come, the liberty that springs from faith and is ruled by love; the Spirit of God henceforth guided Christ's followers in this liberty with his light, the Word. So the apostles chose the Lord's Day in the most natural and simple way as the day of worship; in the same spirit in which it first came to be observed and chosen, the old Sabbath dropping away, we today retain it. When modern Pharisees in any manner object, it is enough for us to know that even in the old rigid Jewish ceremonialism there slumbered a higher freedom, and Jesus, who is lord

of the Sabbath, has now made this freedom our own without any restrictions, save those naturally inhering in it, namely good order and Christian love.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The subject of this text is the question regarding the proper observance of the *Jewish Sabbath*—quite a different thing from the observance of the *Christian Sunday*. And identification of the two would ruin the sermon doctrinally. Now in answering the question concerning the *Jewish Sabbath* the Lord goes beyond the old sabbath. The ceremonial sabbath regulations were part of the entire Jewish ceremonial system. So from the subject of the sabbath Jesus advances the question to the entire subject of *ceremonialism*. All ceremonialism was secondary, a higher law rose above it. And all ceremonialism was temporary, and thus in due time was abrogated. These facts must be clearly seen before a sermon for Christian people is attempted on this text.—We may start with the plucking of ears of corn, just as the text does, and then follow analytically through the body of the text: The question:

Is It Right to Pluck Ears of Wheat on the Sabbath?

This question leads the Lord of the sabbath to show us:

- I. *The limitation of all ceremonial law.* David and the shew-bread.
- II. *The limitations of the Jewish sabbath law.* The Jewish priests in the Temple.
- III. *The divine authority which abrogated all ceremonial and sabbatical law.*

A sermon like this will be about all we can achieve if we stick closely to the text. Both the preacher and the hearer, however, living now in the Christian dispensation, will desire instruction in regard to *the Christian Sunday* and its proper observance. To obtain that we will have to go beyond our text. Is it proper to do so? It is. For there are certain texts which cannot be fully and properly elucidated if we confine ourselves strictly to what these texts themselves contain. We are in the position of Jesus who had before him the question of plucking ears on the sabbath. To answer that aright he went into the whole subject of ceremonial regulations, even to the point of pronouncing himself the Lord of the Sabbath. Cf. John 4, 23-24.

The Son of Man is Lord Even of the Sabbath Day.

Jesus thus opens up for us the instruction we need.

- I. The Jewish sabbath was temporary.*
- II. All Jewish regulations are now abolished.*
- III. The wonderful law of Christian liberty.*
- IV. The free institution of the Lord's day.*
- V. The free Christian observance of Sunday.*

We may compress this presentation into a sermon with only two parts:

**The Lord's Day in the Lord's Kingdom as the Lord Himself
Would Have Us Observe It.**

- I. Not like the Jewish sabbath with legal regulations.*
- II. But as indeed the Lord's day with Christian liberty.*

Here there is room to show that the Lord's day is not another sort of Jewish sabbath, that all legal regulations are gone, that both the selection and the observance of the day are free and in the spirit of Christ. —The whole matter can be presented by using the Lord's word:

"I Will Have Mercy and Not Sacrifice."

- I. Even when Jewish regulations were in force.*
- II. More than ever now that Christian liberty has come.*

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Mark 10, 17-27

Money, riches, earthly possessions — that is the subject with which this text evidently deals. If we think of this subject in connection with the Kingdom, it will at once be plain to us, that one of the great characteristics of this Kingdom, and of the life in it, is *freedom from mammonism*. Yes, it needs to be preached again and again that this *is* one of the characteristics of the Kingdom. The world is characterized by mammonism; its god is “the almighty dollar”; and a good deal of the spirit of this world has invaded the churches. Too many Christians are too little lords of their money, and too much slaves of it. The generation of those “that would be rich” still continues in our congregations. We, therefore, need this text, the real purpose of which is *to separate us from our money* — inwardly, which is the true separation, and often manifests itself also in outward separation — the outward alone, however, would not suffice, since the heart’s idolatrous love for money may be just as strong when it has little or no money, as when it rejoices in the possession of many millions.

V. 17. Ἐκπορευομένου αὐτοῦ, gen. absolute: as he went forth, while in the act. **Into the way** some suppose refers to his leaving the house mentioned in v. 10; but this is uncertain, since we do not know that Jesus remained in that house until this time. Our incident may have been in another locality. — **One**, we do not know his name, but his character is so vividly described that we feel acquainted with him, and have ourselves named him the Rich Young Ruler. Luke tells us that, although still young, he had been

chosen a ruler of the synagogue. — **Ran to him, and kneeled to him, and asked him** — the whole scene pictured vividly as an eye-witness would describe it (note the descriptive imperf. ἐπηρώτα), and this is the case all through the narrative. We must say, there is something fine and attractive about this young man's action, his glow of eagerness and enthusiasm in running, his devotion in act and word (kneeling; *Good Master*), the character of the question he asks, baring his whole heart in a few words, presenting nothing thoughtless, giddy, or worldly, but the very gravest concern of the human soul for time and for eternity. All this predisposes us in his favor. The word ἀγαθέ is not used here in a loose, indifferent way as when we say, My good man, My good friend; nor merely as a polite compliment, as when we say, Dear Sir, and yet have no feeling of endearment; nor is it used in flattery, as a *captatio benevolentiae*, to obtain the good will of Jesus. This youth meant what he said when he addressed Jesus, Good Teacher. Jesus seemed the embodiment of goodness to him as far as he had a conception of human goodness. In a way the entire question he has come to ask turns on this thought of goodness, as we see from Matthew, who has it in this form, Good Master, *what good thing* shall I do, etc. Only one who himself possesses this goodness is able to tell others what it is in order that they too may enjoy the blessed fruits of it.—In calling Jesus Διδάσκαλε, Teacher, he properly puts himself in the position of a pupil.—The question itself has caused much discussion. **What shall I do**, τί ποιήσω (Matth.: τί ἀγαθὸν ποιήσω) evidently means some one act or good deed over and above those he had already done. He does not ask in a general way how he shall gain eternal life, thereby admitting that he does not know at all the way to gain it. On the contrary, he feels certain about one thing, namely that eternal life is obtained

by some certain good thing, which one must do, and he is likewise certain that he has the ability necessary to do it. What this "good thing" is he admits he does not know. He does not say What must (δεῖ) I do? but, What shall I do (ποιήσω, future)? It is not the divine command he thinks of, but his own personal desire. He wants eternal life, therefore What *shall I do*? The ancient *Heliand* puts the question in this form, What of mine own shall I do that I may have the kingdom of heaven? — Generally it is taken for granted that there is a contradiction between the thought of *doing* and that of *inheriting*. But, in the first place, κληρονομέω is often used in the wider sense of "obtain," or "become partaker of something"; in the second place, inheritance does not always exclude merit, as many a last will and testament shows, when a larger portion is bequeathed to a more faithful child, or when a portion is bequeathed to a friend, a benefactor, or a person who has rendered some valuable service. In the mind of this young ruler there was no contradiction between "doing" something and "inheriting" eternal life. And Jesus himself speaks of no such contradiction, and does not intimate that inheriting excludes merit. The answer of Jesus follows a different course. — **Eternal life**, ζωὴ αἰώνιος, in the full sense of the term, not merely the blessedness of heaven after death, but already the possession of the blessed life during our earthly sojourn. By this very question the man admits that he is still without this highest gift and treasure, and he desires to obtain it. There is an emptiness in his soul which he has been unable to fill, a longing and desire which all he has done thus far has not satisfied. Moreover, in coming to Jesus (and in calling him "good") he practically declares that Jesus is in possession of eternal life. This must be borne in mind in order to understand the answer of Jesus. This young ruler has a conception of

Jesus like that of many today who call him the ideal man, the flower of our race, the perfect man, but deny and reject his divine Sonship and the work of atonement. They see in Christ the wonder of human perfectness, and in consequence the possession of eternal life; therefore their question is how they may become like him and obtain the same treasure. They inquire, Lord, how didst thou do it, tell us, that we may do likewise. They, of course, assume that they have the ability in themselves to reach the coveted goal. They are complete Pelagians, needing only the little knowledge and assistance they ask for. *Apology*, J. 104, 1 etc. — All this makes the picture of this young man very pathetic: so earnest and enthusiastic, so concerned about the highest thing (where many are satisfied, especially in youth, with far lesser things), so honestly attracted to Jesus whom he admired greatly — and yet so far from the right road to eternal life!

V. 18. Jesus asks a question in return, but answers it himself at once. This question has been fearfully abused by those who entertain Unitarian views. They have taken it to signify that Jesus did not claim absolute goodness for himself. The very shallowness of this perversion ought to be enough to dispose of it without further argument. Subordinationists like to think of a development of goodness in Jesus, a sort of relative goodness differing from the absolute goodness of God and inferior to it. — The essence of the question is really brought out by the answer which Jesus himself adds, **None is good save one, even God.** Jesus declined to accept the designation “good” from this youth, because his whole inquiry showed that he considered Jesus merely a man who had attained eternal life by means of goodness. This simple meaning of Christ’s words includes a rebuke. Why did not this man go to God and accept God’s Word? Why did he come to Jesus whom he considers only a man? This

youth acted as if the Word of God were insufficient; he passes it by and seeks out a mere human teacher to direct him to eternal life — somewhat like the rich man in hell who was not satisfied with Moses and the prophets, but invented a way of his own to save men, namely the appearance of one who was dead. Jesus resents this whole attitude; it is absolutely wrong. He is here not concerned about what is due his own person, namely to have the young man know that this Good Teacher is the Son of God himself; he is concerned about the honor of God and God's Word which his inquirer passes by and slights. Therefore in his further answer he vindicates the Word of God. — The attitude of this man is typical of thousands today. To them it does not matter much what the Word of God says. They pass by lightly what God himself has said for their salvation; they seek another way; they evolve one by their own philosophy and imagination; they accept some human teacher's (great scientific authority) reasoning and deductions; they find all manner of fault with the doctrines of the Church and her Confessions, and give their opinions on the everlasting truths there expressed full sway to deny, substitute, and change. Still these people usually call Jesus "Good Master," or something of that sort. — **Thou knowest the commandments.** Jesus as a good Master takes this man back to the goodness which the great God himself requires of all men: "The commandments thou knowest" (this the order of the words). They are the thing, and thou art acquainted with them. Then Jesus enumerates a number of them from the second table. He quotes freely, beginning with the fifth, and ending (according to Mark, but compare also Matth. 19, 18-19) with the fourth. The form is the aorist subj., used for prohibitions; the last one, the pres. imperative. — **Do not defraud** is often taken to cover the ninth and tenth commandments. In this form it would

serve to apply more directly to the young man who was rich, and whose coveting would show itself largely in withholding from others what was due them. Meyer denies this; but since we cannot have here a repetition of the seventh commandment, and Christ certainly would not introduce a new commandment differing from the ten of the Decalogue, this must be at least a substitute for the ninth. It is based on Deut. 24, 14; Ex. 21, 10; comp. Mal. 3, 3, only it contains a generalization of the special injunctions here recorded. — There was a reason why Jesus quoted from the second table in preference to the first; it is because of the great simplicity of these commandments; also because men generally think first of these commandments, and most readily imagine that they can and do obey them (as in the case of the young ruler). Jesus takes this man where he is surest of himself. — It is less easy to show that Jesus had a special intention in repeating these commandments in this particular order. It seems very probable that he really named seven commandments in all, the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, then, Thou shouldst not defraud, the fourth, and finally, Love thy neighbor as thyself. Perhaps a gradation is intended, those that seemed to the young man easier to fulfill mentioned first. Again we note that the negative commandments are put first, the positive last; for in a general way it is true that sins of omission require sharper eyes to detect than sins of commission. Be this as it may, Jesus uses a free order in reciting the commandments; this is worth noting. Then aside from any special purpose, applicable to the case in hand, in arranging the commandments, this is plain that the Lord here heaps one commandment upon another, putting the sum of the entire second table on top at last, showing a very mountain of divine requirements, before which one may well pause and hesitate. But this youth was not impressed — these were trite

statements to his mind, requirements not difficult at all. Luther finds them otherwise: "Thou shalt not kill! What man can do this without Christ and without the Holy Spirit? . . . But Christ says, Whosoever is angry with his brother is a murderer. If it is not done in deed, or in words and works, it is still done with the heart. This is the temper of the whole world, so that in regard to this fifth commandment it is filled with sin; nevertheless the Pharisee makes bold to say he has kept the Ten Commandments. . . . If adultery were as great an honor as it is a sin and disgrace, who would live chastely? Oh they would sin zealously. Who would keep his marriage inviolate? who does it now, so as to keep chaste, having a pure heart and body?"

V. 20. No such self-examination, such deep, honest, successful introspection on the part of the rich young ruler. His reply comes without a pause in simple, blind, pitiful ignorance, **Master, all these things have I observed from my youth.** The questionable adjective is omitted. Ταῦτα πάντα — no exceptions of any kind; he recalls no sins whether of commission or of omission; things easy and things difficult, he has mastered them alike; ταῦτα πάντα — let Jesus make the pile ever so high, he has no misgivings whatever. This is a result of Pharisaic schooling, a fair sample of fruit from the old tree of self-righteousness. Yet there was a difference between this piece of self-righteousness and that of the Pharisees who prayed boastfully in the Temple. This man was completely satisfied with himself, while the young ruler, Pharisee and self-righteous though he was, felt a great want and was not satisfied. It was not an idle boast, vain empty vaunting, when he declared he had "observed" all these commandments, literally had guarded, or stood guard over them to make his entire conduct comply with them, and that from his very

youth, taking in the fourth commandment fully. He *had* lived an exemplary life outwardly, he had shunned grave outward transgressions, aided and protected, no doubt, both by his training and environment. And there are many today who would be only too well satisfied with themselves if they were like him, and others who would praise and perhaps envy him if they saw him today in modern form. Picture him: an exemplary young man, in early manhood, fine and clean morally as the phrase goes now, the son of wealthy parents, but not spoiled by wealth, with a strong religious bent, and an esteemed member of the church, in fact, one of its pillars, a ruler of the local synagogue, a position more important even than that of vestryman in our present congregations. Where are the parents now who would not be proud of such a son? Where the church which would not give him a prominent place? Where the maid who would not be attracted by his position and personal excellence? And yet all this perfection is utterly vain in the Master's eyes! One wonders what the young man expected the good Master to say in response to the declaration of his own complete goodness. Did he think to hear the words, Thou lackest nothing; go in peace, and let no misgivings trouble thee? If so, it would only be further proof of his own complete ignorance of the real intention of the law of God, and of the real goodness of the Master who was pointing him to it. There is no doubt but what the young man felt that this reply must make some considerable impression upon Jesus. And it did, but not in the way he thought.

V. 21. Jesus makes a surprising answer indeed! The surprise has continued these almost 1900 years. — Jesus *earnestly* looked upon him, as the heavenly Master who needed not to be told what was in men's hearts, but could see their very thoughts and motives with his own eyes; as the heavenly Physician exam-

ining a case to locate the deep-seated hurt in order to reach and remove it. Not that Jesus was indifferent before, but rather that now the moment had come to speak the great decisive word for this soul, and therefore Jesus looked upon him and examined his inner self. According to what he beheld there his final word would be formulated. — **And loved him**, ἠγάπησεν, the aorist states the simple fact; the higher word for love, full of deepest understanding. The word designates a strong motion of Savior love going out at this moment toward the young ruler. His looking upon him and his loving him go together; what Jesus beheld was such as to call for an outflow of love from his Savior heart. Jesus loved all men, his bitterest foes included, even the hardened Pharisee; but his love often found itself blocked in its efforts to reach out and save, as in the case of the obdurate Pharisees. Again, as here, an opportunity to reach a sinful heart presented itself. Then it is that the constant love of Jesus for sinners flows out in a special feeling and manifestation, embracing the opportunity to do its saving work upon the helpless sinner. So here. Again, it is said that Jesus loved him, in order to mark what Jesus now says as altogether the voice of love. There is love in every word, and if Jesus had said less there would have been lack of love. — **One thing**, All that Jesus now states is “one thing,” ἓν, and must not be divided into several, although it has its component parts. Furthermore, this “one thing” is such that it cannot be put alongside of other things which this man already has, so that this thing added to the others will make the measure of requirement full. This one thing is an entirely different thing from any he has ever attempted. Thus far he has attained only an outward obedience to the law, and has not even discovered that this is altogether useless for salvation. The thing he lacks begins with this discovery and includes what

then should follow, namely *a complete change*, ending in faith. This is the "one thing" needed for this man, and for every one like him. But for him the one great thing, while essentially the same as for every other man, assumed a personal form, as it always does, because of the individual peculiarity of his case. — **Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.** The pres. imperat. ὑπαγε is used without a connecting word together with other imperatives; so here: ὑπαγε πώλησον καὶ δός. It would be the gravest kind of a mistake here to make Jesus another Moses requiring the fulfillment of the law for salvation. To be sure, he sometimes does the work of Moses and urges the law as a preparation for the Gospel, that the ancient schoolmaster may bring us to Christ. But in his final work Jesus always comes with the Gospel. So here. In the case of the young ruler Jesus sees where his heart is most firmly bound by the chains of unseen sin — he is inwardly held by his great possessions. There have been other sins and shortcomings untold, but the central one binding him fast completely is the love of money, a root of all evil. Here then is where Jesus places his healing hand, for this is the deepest sore of all his disease, and if this is not completely and fully reached the cure will never be effected. But do not imagine that the cure would be for the young ruler simply to sell all and give it away to the poor. That again would be nothing but an outward performance, such as he has been practicing from his youth on, and it would bring him no nearer salvation than he has come hitherto. The very fact that his heart has grown fast to his wealth makes it impossible for him to perform this thing only outwardly. And here the masterly dealing of Jesus with this man comes to view; he has found the place where he can penetrate this Pharisaic armor of mere outward observance; he at last reaches the very heart and soul of the man. What in reality does

Jesus ask of him? This: Man, your heart must change completely! And since the chief of your sins is the love of money, the change must reach to this and include it. Let us note what this involves. Evidently, when the man looks back over his life from the height of this command, a new light will fall upon it; he will see the sin he has been tied to, the guilt he has been living in, and, if he admits that Jesus is right, he will be filled with sorrow, *the true sorrow of repentance*. This is the thing Jesus is aiming at and working for; this, and nothing less — and it is a pity, a great many commentators fail to note it. No man can obtain everlasting life, according to the teaching of Jesus, except through repentance, *μετάνοια*, — contrition and faith. — Holding this fast, we see why Jesus does not stop with the order to sell all and give it away, but adds, Follow me, or rather: **and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.** The adverb *δεῦρο*, hither, is used with and without an imperative, apparently always a singular, as *δεῦτε*, with a plural. This describes the other side of the change of heart Jesus here sets forth as the one thing the young ruler lacks. Turning in contrition from his past love of money, and cutting loose from that love and from the money itself, by giving it once for all to the poor, i. e. abandoning altogether that which was his chief treasure and joy in his past life under the dominion of sin, and which he had tried to cover over with the glaze of an outward, self-righteous obedience to the commandments: his chief treasure now is to be the heavenly one, not indeed a merit of his own production by the sacrifice of his wealth, but the unmerited mercy of God and the unearned pardon of God; and the mark of the new life upon which he is thus to enter is the attachment to Christ, following him, the Messiah who teaches and leads upon the path of eternal life. In one word, the other side will be

saving faith. Unless we find both contrition and faith in the requirement of Jesus, we ourselves fail to find the "one thing thou lackest." — It is not always that Jesus, in demanding true repentance of the sinner, asks him to give away his earthly possessions. The Savior does not stand for Socialism, and it is in vain that the adherents of this peculiar doctrine point to this passage as proof for their rejection of all personal ownership of wealth. Zaccheus was not required to give all his possessions to the poor; Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple and rich, without this being a reproach to him; Ananias was free to do with his own what he would, only so that he practiced no hypocrisy nor tried to deceive the Holy Ghost; St. James warns the rich only against trusting in riches instead of trusting in God. Luther, therefore, is right when he draws attention to the domestic state and its requirements of certain possessions, such as house and home, food, clothing, etc., for wife and children. The case of this young man is special, and comes under the law which Jesus laid down in the words: "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." Matth. 18, 8-9. We are not so certain about the other feature of this case which commentators generally make the chief thing in explaining why this ruler should give up all his wealth, namely that in following Jesus and joining the band of the disciples to help in their work, voluntary poverty at that time and under the circumstances then prevailing was a necessary requirement. Does the "Follow me" include an admission as one of the Twelve, a call to be an apostle? Hardly. There

were others besides the Twelve who "followed" Jesus, and we know some of these had property of their own. There are callings which require us to forego, or give up, earthly wealth, and we must cheerfully let the earthly and perishable go in order to work for and win the heavenly and imperishable. But since we do not know just how Jesus would have employed the young ruler if he had followed the good Master, it will hardly do for us to make his unknown possible calling the reason for abandoning his wealth, especially when a sufficient personal reason for so doing already exists. — The Roman Catholic interpretation must be rejected. It makes voluntary poverty a work meriting salvation; it calls Christ's command to sell all and give it to the poor a *consilium evangelicum* going beyond the Ten Commandments, and the observance of such counsel an *opus supererogativum*. Likewise the rationalistic view: the one thing the young ruler lacked was moral power, the energy of the will. We also reject the view of all those who see in Jesus' command to sell all and give to the poor only a more real fulfillment of the cardinal demand of the second table of the law to love thy neighbor as thyself, by the doing of which eternal life would be his.

V. 22. He grew dark, his face clouded at what he heard from Jesus' lips, ὁ στυγνάσας; comp. Matth. 16, 3, where the translation is "lowring." That word therefore went counter to all his expectations and fair hopes. The look on his face expressed what was in his heart, namely sorrow. And so he went away: first such enthusiasm and readiness in running to Jesus, finally such a sad going away! And the reason for it — Jesus had discovered the very heart of the trouble in this young life: ἔχων κτήματα πολλά, having great possessions. How many envied him for his wealth, and see, now it leads him away from Jesus. How often has wealth done this for others, and yet they too would

not let go of it. — But we are not inclined to take too sad a view of this case. If this young man had at once agreed to Jesus' word there might have been reason to doubt the sincerity or depth of his resolution. If Jesus was right in discovering the deep root of his evil and laying strong hands on it, then we may well look for a battle to be fought out in that young man's heart, one that may not end with a blow or two, but continue in a longer struggle. He indeed left Jesus, but Jesus' word did not leave him. And the blessed thing about that word is that it does not only point the way we should go, but follows us and returns to us with ever renewed gracious power to make us go that way. So we hope that in this case also in due time Christ's word won the victory.

V. 23 etc. These utterances of Jesus are not to be separated from the above narrative. As that treats of the way to salvation, so does this conversation; as that brought out one great obstacle for an individual, so this treats of it likewise and dwells upon it more fully. In both cases we are free to make our applications to other obstacles which may arise, and their removal likewise by the only saving power, the grace of God. — **Jesus looked round about** — this is the second time we here read of his looking, and we shall read of it again. Every time his look is significant, mightily re-enforcing his words. There must have been a deep sadness now as he drew the great lesson from what his disciples had just witnessed. — **How hardly** does not yet exclude the possibility, but even that is denied at last, as far as human powers are concerned. Jesus speaks first of those **that have riches**, then in elucidating his words to the astonished disciples, of **them that trust in riches**, τοὺς πεποιθότας χρήμασιν. This is the danger always inherent in riches, and against which we cannot warn enough, they attract the heart to trust in them. Man's sinful heart is ever

prone to offer such trust, and riches of all kinds (τὰ χορήματα, the article pointing to riches as something generic) are ever inviting and soliciting such trust. Some old texts read for the second statement of Christ simply, "How hard is it to enter into the Kingdom of God!" Τέκνα, πῶς δύσκολόν ἐστιν εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰσελθεῖν. The textual evidence is in favor of the fuller statement, although it is hard to decide. The briefer text would broaden the statement and include all men, both rich and poor, every one meeting an obstacle too great for him to overcome. Let not the man poor in earthly goods think it is altogether easy for him to reach the great goal. — Jesus introduces his second statement with the tender address, **Children**, τέκνα. His heart is ever tender and kind, full of sympathy and desire to save, even when uttering truth bitter to our taste. — V. 25. A remarkable simile illustrates the great fact which he expresses. **A needle's eye** is not the name for the small portal used by foot-passengers in entering a walled city, it is literally a needle's eye. Two impossibilities are compared: the impossibility of a camel's (not necessarily loaded) passing through a needle's eye, and the impossibility of a rich man entering the kingdom of heaven. The latter is even greater than the former. Πλούσιος, any and every rich man, including, of course, the young ruler who has just gone away. — **The kingdom of God** is practically the same as "life eternal" mentioned above, and the disciples understand it to be the same as being saved (σωθῆναι). The kingdom of grace here on earth is meant, not merely, as some interpret it, the kingdom of glory above. — V. 26. The disciples **were amazed** at the first word of Jesus, ἐθαμβοῦντο; they were **astonished exceedingly**, utterly dumb-founded at the last, περισσῶς ἐξεπλήσσαντο — passive from ἐκπλήσσω; note the imperfect tenses. Their amazement was expressed by the look on their faces, their ex-

ceeding astonishment breaks forth in the question, **Then who can be saved?** Τίς is not restricted to the rich, but refers to every man in general. The disciples tremble for the salvation of the world. And they are right; if it depended on "our unaided strength" not a man would be saved. For the love of riches and earthly treasure is in every one of us, reaching out and clinging to these vanities which hold us away from the kingdom of eternal life and salvation. — V. 27. Once more Jesus looks upon them, and there was all the tenderness of saving love in his eyes. **With men it is impossible, but not with God.** The word "men," παρά άνθρωποις, goes beyond "a rich man," embracing all men; the word "impossible," ἀδύνατον, goes beyond "how hard," πῶς δύσκολον, shutting the last door of hope and sealing it eternally. Here all Pelagianism, synergism, and moralism dies. The second article of the Formula of Concord is a true exposition of this saying of Christ. But the more all hope of ourselves dies, whether we are rich or poor, the more our hope in God and his grace rises, like the morning sun with healing in his wings. — Not impossible with God — that would be enough; but Jesus adds still more, he opens the door of grace immeasurably wide: **for all things are possible with God.** Who will measure the wonderful ability of his grace? Who will describe the miracles it works? We might think of God's omnipotence here in the physical creation, but Jesus is speaking of the kingdom which is not of this world, of the great work of saving men, which is a spiritual thing; he is furnishing overwhelming proof (γάρ) why God is able to save even a rich man. "All things are possible with God," as Christ here uses the statement, refers not to the works of the first article of the Creed, but to those of the third; it describes the marvelous work of the Holy Spirit, Sanctification.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Viewing this text as we do in our series of texts a theme for it lies right on the surface, if we care to make use of it:

The Kingdom of God and Earthly Riches.

I. The two are often antagonistic.

When the heart is inwardly attached to the riches, and the attachment to the kingdom and all the righteousness of the heart is but an outward thing, a mark of which is the resentment which arises when this condition is bared.

II. The two can be truly combined.

By the grace of God alone, cutting loose the heart from riches and attaching it wholly to the kingdom, so that, if needed, it gives up wealth entirely, or, as is always needed, puts it completely into the service of the kingdom — and all this, let it be said once more, by the grace of God.

Another theme invites us in the words of Jesus, one that goes to the heart of the text.

"One Thing Thou Lackest!"

- I. Complete freedom from work-righteousness.*
- II. True contrition and faith.*
- III. The blessed work of God's grace in your heart.*

We may put this in a little different form:

What Do I Lack?

- I. Is it real self-knowledge?*
- II. Is it genuine repentance?*
- III. Is it actual acceptance of Christ?*

While something telling should be said on the subject of mammonism in connection with our text in this series, this may be done without putting money and riches directly in the outline. A good theme is suggested by the young man's own question. We may speak on:

This Rich Young Ruler and the True Way of Salvation.

- I. Christ points the way out to him.*
- II. Christ reveals to us how we can go that way.*

In part one, pointing out the way, should include the young man's release from mammonism. By application we may reach out to any secret sinful bond binding the soul. Of course, "the way" will also include faith.

The author used this text for a celebration of Luther Leagues, taking for his theme: What is Your Ideal of

The Model Young Man.

I. Are you satisfied with the so-called *Moral Ideal*? It is well presented by the rich young ruler in the text. — II. Are you attracted by the *Saint Ideal*? Here the Catholic interpretation of the text is utilized. — III. Is your heart centered once for all on the *Christ Ideal*? This is the one Christ showed to the young ruler in requiring contrition, a heart made new by faith, and a life according.

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

John 9, 24-41

We summarize the five texts from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity under the heading *requirements of the Kingdom*. These requirements are 1) Enlightenment of the eyes; 2) Fruit; 3) Childlikeness; 4) Self-denial; 5) Fearless Confession. There is something characteristic about these requirements, and for this reason one might count them simply as characteristics of the Kingdom, thus extending the previous sub-section to include also these five texts. This, however, will scarcely be found satisfactory. The reason is simple. Every one of these five texts gives us a more direct and pertinent answer when we ask the question, What does the Kingdom here require of us? than when we ask, What mark or characteristic of the Kingdom, is here presented to us? So we find it quite satisfactory to make a new section of these five texts, and treat them as a statement of the chief requirements of the Kingdom.

The first requirement verges somewhat closely upon the characteristics of the Kingdom. The Kingdom enlightens; Jesus furnishes light. That is a characteristic feature of the Kingdom. Yet we find this is not exactly the sum and substance of this text. Its essential part is evidently the closing paragraph, especially these words of Jesus, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." This answers directly the question, What does Jesus and his Kingdom require? The answer is, Eyes which really see. Of course, Jesus furnishes us the power to see; he gives us true en-

lightenment. But we may reply here after the fashion of Augustine, Lord, give us what thou askest, then ask what thou givest! Jesus and his Kingdom never ask what they themselves do not supply. This is the sense in which every requirement must be taken. Still it remains, as we at once see, a requirement. And so we speak here of the enlightenment of the eyes as an important requirement of the Kingdom.

Our text is the closing section of the story concerning the healing of the man born blind. In the very finest manner this section of the story describes the blindness of the Pharisees which grows ever more wilful and dense the more the evidence of fact and the light of truth is brought near it; and, running alongside of it, is the account of the man healed whose heart was open for the truth, and who found the truth more and more fully, until Christ himself offered him the fullest revelation. All through the story, and once more and very forcibly in the words which Christ utters at the end, we hear this fundamental requirement of the Kingdom. You must have eyes ready and willing to see, eyes which allow the light to shine into them and illuminate them. All others remain in darkness.

The first examination of the man (v. 13-17), and also the examination of his parents (18-23) with the man himself removed during the time, had really led to nothing. The Pharisees, who, to judge from their finally expelling the man from the synagogue, constituted a court of trial, were now anxious to close and dismiss the case according to the finding which suited them best, namely that Jesus, being a Sabbath breaker, could only be a sinner in the gravest sense of the word; this being admitted on all sides, they were willing to say and do no more. — **So, οὐν, accordingly, they called a second time the man that was blind,** i. e. they had him formally brought before them. It

is the evangelist's statement that he was blind, the Pharisees make no admission of the miracle. The man came in and stood expectantly before his judges. — Their spokesman addressed him in the name of all: **Give glory to God.** This was an adjuration (comp. Josh. 7, 19; 1 Sam. 6, 5) to seal as the truth the summary of the whole matter at which the Pharisees had arrived, and to which they demanded that the man before them should solemnly assent, — namely: **We know that this man is a sinner.** The A. V. has, "Give God the praise"; which is generally understood to mean, Give the credit for your healing to God, not to Jesus. But this is altogether incorrect. The Pharisees do not admit the healing in this statement of theirs; they do not even say that God wrought it. What they say is this: Give glory to God now by telling the truth; and this is the truth, which we now positively know — and we are the people to know, ἡμεῖς! — that this man is a sinner. They imply that they have sounded this thing thoroughly, that besides the man's testimony they have heard that of others, and the only correct conclusion of the whole case is what they now state. They are counting on their superior authority, as many others have done since, and have found ready submission. — **A sinner**, ἁμαρτωλός, not in the sense that all men are sinners, or that even God's children are still sinners, but in that pregnant sense, an open, grave, offensive sinner, namely a desecrator of the Sabbath. Throughout the Pharisees refer to Jesus scornfully, as here ὁ ἄνθρωπος, never deigning to mention so much as his name. — But this "man that was blind" was a steady disappointment and a growing surprise to the Pharisees. Trench says, he is ready-witted, genial, and brave. Really he is far more, honest, grateful, loyal, and entirely sincere — and this especially differentiates him from his judges. He does not for one moment accept the finding of the Pharisees

as true. The fatal thing in that finding is the omission of his healing. Instead of uttering the truth regarding that, and a true conclusion based on it concerning the healer, it leaves out the healing altogether, and from some other premises draws a conclusion of its own. — V. 25. So he replies: **Whether he be a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.** The εἰ introduces an indirect question. By omitting what the man absolutely knew, and what was of supreme importance to him — εἰ οἶδα ὅτι τυφλὸς ὢν ἄρτι βλέπω — the Pharisees started this man to do his own simple, straightforward thinking, and to draw his own truthful conclusion. The present participle ὢν really has the sense of an imperfect, the adverb ἄρτι with βλέπω making it refer to previous time. By trying to oppose the truth these men have only helped to further the cause of truth. It is often thus. Let it be noted also how these Pharisees persistently turn away from the very thing they ought to keep their eyes and attention on, the fact of this blind man's now seeing. What an obvious thing the great miracle was! How those bright, shining eyes of the man which were turned upon the Pharisees, spoke of Jesus! But these men stultified, perverted, blinded themselves in their own souls by refusing to see what constantly challenged their sight. So were they found without that which the great Kingdom of Jesus requires. — The fatal omission which the man pointed out in the verdict they wanted him to accept, puts them into a predicament. They had formulated what *they knew*, and here again was the thing *this man knew*, most positively knew. They had to face it.

V. 26. Did they hope to bring out a contradiction in his story by now trying to make him recount it again? Were they hunting some flaw which at first had escaped them? Or were they parleying for time, knowing nothing else to say at the moment? Sitting

in the capacity of judges, they are plainly losing their hold. Already they half admit what they really did not want admitted, namely that Christ *did* open this man's eyes. The man takes full advantage of their momentary predicament, and of the weak questions they put to him.

V. 27. It was a telling thrust, and showed considerable boldness, to say, **And ye did not hear.** Instead of being himself put on the defensive by having to go over the whole story of his healing again before these men who were seeking only to catch him up in some way, he puts *them* on the defensive. **God helps his own in the tests to which they are put for Christ's sake.** Let it be a comfort and encouragement for us. — **Wherefore would ye hear it again? would ye also become his disciples?** This in a way softens the statement, "Ye did not hear," by taking it for granted that, of course, they did, at the same time, however, it pricks more deeply by touching what would seem to be the only other reason they could have for wanting to hear his story again, namely to be themselves the better convinced by it, and therefore "also become his disciples." The *καί* is significant; it really implies that the speaker was himself becoming a disciple. 'Υμεῖς' is put forward for emphasis. It is not necessary to assume that the man himself meant to make an artful thrust at the Pharisees; it is sufficient to remember his artless simplicity and honesty; this leads him to conclude that they may after all come to think about his healing somewhat as he himself is bound to think, namely that it would be proper and a good thing to become a disciple of Jesus. There is something like an invitation to the Pharisees in this question about becoming disciples of Jesus. Alas, they *were* not his disciples, far from it, and they never meant to be; their will (*θέλετε*) was absolutely contrary.

V. 28-29. Here is a typical case of wilful blindness. These words are spoken in indignant anger. The very suggestion that they become Jesus' disciples, even if made in simple honesty, calls forth their angry denial. **Thou**, σὺ, with emphasis, and in contrast to **we**, ἡμεῖς. They spoke the truth indeed, he and they were already wide apart, and their respective paths would lead them still farther apart. Once all alike blind, when the light began to shine, it found lodgment in the heart of one, and nothing but persistent repulsion in the hearts of others. — **Thou art his disciple.** No greater praise can the world give me. It is a testimonial of the highest honor. With the derogatory ἐξείνουν they again avoid Jesus' name, and Bengel remarks aptly: *Hoc vocabulo removent Jesum a sese.* — **But we are disciples of Moses.** Here they pronounce sentence upon themselves, and out of their own mouth will the Lord judge them on the last day. There is indeed a difference between Moses and Jesus, but not as they might imagine it. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1, 17. Yet Moses pointed to Christ, and gave the law as a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. Here is a sample of how false doctrine frequently arises, namely by a one-side view of the truth. Thus the whole is thrown out of balance, distorted, and made dangerous and disastrous to the soul. — V. 29. **We know**, and presently, **we know not.** There is a knowing which sets itself up as a convincing authority, and yet is controlled and perverted altogether by the passions of the heart. How many a scientist, skeptic, agnostic has positively asserted, We know this! and, We know not that! and it was all because an evil heart dictated to a subservient intellect. — **That God hath spoken unto Moses** refers especially to Ex. 3, 2-4, then also to the many other places where God spoke to Moses. — **But as for this man we know not whence**

he is. Τοῦτον = this one, this fellow, spoken in scorn. "Whence he is" = who sent him, or by whose authority he comes. The implication, however, is not that perhaps God after all sent him, but that somebody else sent him, or that he came of himself as an impostor, certainly without God. Nevertheless, the assertions of these Pharisees vary considerably, possibly because there were several views among them, one speaking first, then another; or it may be, as it often is, the vacillation and uncertainty of error, exposing itself in inconsistencies. First they know Jesus is a sinner; now they know not whence he is. The thing does not agree.

V. 30. Even the simple logic of the man whom they mean to override pierces through this flimsy armor. **He answered and said**, making a longer and more forceful statement this time, to which their very assertion that they "knew not" invited and impelled him. So instead of bringing the case to a speedy end, they themselves, against their own intention, stir up these telling, penetrating, uncomfortable replies of this man. They really further his thinking considerably, for while at first he was not ready to discuss the question whether Jesus is a sinner, he now proves conclusively that he is not. The opposition of error often renders this service to the disciples of truth, making them look more closely and define the truth more exactly. — The tables are being turned more and more. This man who was to be examined, is really examining his examiners. He who was to answer his superiors and judges, is making them answer him. He who was to accept humbly what they would dictate to him, holds them reluctantly fast to his own convincing conclusions. It does not take much to put error on the defensive, if we know how to handle the truth in all integrity and simplicity. The thing was very plain, and the healed man saw it: Jesus had opened his eyes

— that showed whence he was; it was a shining proof at least of his coming from God. The Pharisees would not see it, pretended to deny it; τὸ θαυμαστόν ἐστίν — it certainly was; but **the marvel** has occurred many times since. The healed man supports his simple conclusion by a plain deduction. He takes for granted that a great blessing, like the one he has received, comes from God alone, and can be secured from God only in answer to prayer. — Presupposing this he states what is really a major premise in popular form, v. 31: **We know, etc.** It is a general experience that God does not hear sinners; the Pharisees (v. 24) had themselves implied as much when they asserted that Jesus was an open and flagrant sinner. Certainly, a man whose life and conduct are in opposition to God, is not heard, even if he asks the divine help for some special work. For God to hear a man he must be of a different kind, namely a θεοσεβής (opposite of ἀσεβής), god-fearing, with a devout, worshipful heart, he must do God's will in word and deed, εἰάν τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιῇ. This is the fundamental principle for deciding the case at issue, so certain and simple that no one will presume to deny it. — Now follows the minor premise, v. 32: **Since the world began, etc.** This is a strong statement, referring directly to the great miracle Jesus had wrought upon the speaker. It declares not only that no sinner ever wrought such a miracle, but no man, τις, opened the eyes of a man born blind. The argument actually grows in the statement of it. The more the man ponders the thing, the nearer he really gets to the truth about Jesus, namely that he is not only one of a class (a worshipper and doer of God's will), but one exceptional altogether since the world began. One born blind he healed, one who never had the power of sight, whose defect was organic, as when the optic nerve is ruined, or the eye-balls shrunken or malformed; such cases are absolutely hopeless as far

as human skill is concerned, — now follows the conclusion, v. 33: If this man were not of God, to say the least, he could do nothing, not to mention a marvelous and unheard-of work like this. Εἰ μὴ ἦν, οὐκ ἠδύνατο, a present unfulfilled condition, although ἄν is not used in the apodosis; Robertson, p. 1014. This conclusion goes beyond the immediate case in hand; it had to, the one case points to others, and really there is no reason why they should not all be covered at once. Here we see how this simple man confounds the wise with his simplicity. He never meant to set himself up as a teacher of his superiors in education, social position, and dignity in the church; they have driven him to it. By trying to quench the light they only forced it to shine the brighter to their own confounding. And the brighter its rays, the greater their fault in not admitting them to their eyes and hearts.

V. 34. Now indeed they finally make a strong reply on their part, strong, alas, not in logic and truth, but in vituperation and violence. "In sins (put forward for emphasis) thou wast born altogether." Thus they actually surrender the argument; they cannot refute the man; they stand convicted before him, in spite of all their bluster. "Since the world began" men who have felt the sting of truth and would not yield to it, have taken their refuge in personal abuse. When their argument breaks down, they try vituperation. What the disciples of Jesus thought possible (John 9, 2), and what Jesus roundly denied (9, 3), these men make their shameful refuge, namely that this man's affliction of blindness from his birth proved absolutely and completely his wickedness, and that even for the present time. They call it an outrage for such a man (σὺ) to pretend to teach them (ἡμᾶς — all their dignity in the word!) anything. In this wicked way they resist this simple teacher and his truthful teaching, repel the light from their minds and hearts,

and sink back into greater blindness and darkness. — So they reach an end of the matter, yet not as they had intended. **And they cast him out**, in accordance with the previous decision of their sect, as stated in v. 22. “Characteristically enough they forget that the two charges, one that he had never been blind, and so was an impostor, — the other that he bore the mark of God’s anger in a blindness which reached back to his birth, — will not agree together, but mutually exclude one another.” Trench. They have found a greater crime than either of these two, his presuming to teach *them* — who indeed were beyond teaching! — and so they cast him out. Jesus had foretold it, Luke 6, 22; John 16, 2 (comp. Is. 66, 5); also 3 John 10; Acts 7, 58. They excommunicated him, expelled him from the Jewish religious communion. This included many distressful civil and social disabilities, as the devout Jews were forbidden to have any dealings with him. He was thus made an outcast. He is, however, “cast out of the meaner fellowship, to be received into the higher, — from that which was about to vanish away, to be admitted into a kingdom not to be moved.” Trench. No doubt, besides the formal decree of expulsion from the synagogue, they also laid violent hands upon him in ejecting him forcibly from the building where the examination had been conducted. “So here this man, as the first confessor in the evangelical church (as the Baptist was the first martyr) goes out, suffering this excommunication from the whole church of Israel, on account of the name of Christ.” Lightfoot, *Horæ Hebr.* Fuller has said that when the Power of Keys is abused, they do not shut the door of heaven, but only shoot the bolt beside the lock, not debarring the innocent person’s entrance thereat. “When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up.” Ps. 27, 12.

V. 35. Jesus sought the man out, who for all his

steadfastness and bravery needed comfort and encouragement; but especially does Jesus mean to finish his work of enlightening his heart. He proceeds directly, asking the all-important question. Σὺ is put first — believest *thou* while so many are disbelieving? — and the question confidently expects an affirmative answer. So Jesus knows our readiness to confess, but he wants us to make the confession in words nevertheless. “Dost believe,” πιστεύεις, dost trust, rely on? He could no longer trust the Pharisees, leaders though they were in the church, for he had seen their blindness and falseness; there was only one in whom he could put his full confidence now, his great benefactor. God often removes our false supports, in order to bring us to reliance upon the one that is true. — For **Son of God** some authorities read “Son of man”; the name (in either case) conveys to this hearer the great thought of the Messiah for whom Israel hoped. — And now we see what it means to have a heart open and ready to receive the light, remembering only that the grace of Jesus alone makes it such.

V. 36. *Kai* shows the man's eagerness, the word *κύριε* his reverence. The entire question, **Who is he, etc.,** breathes faith, a ready confidence in Jesus. Undoubtedly he anticipates to whom Jesus refers with this lofty name, and he is not surprised when Jesus gives the answer. — V. 37. Do we expect Jesus to say simply, It is I? He has a better answer, one which calls out and encourages the man's faith; for when he says that this man has seen him, we must remember that this cannot be natural sight. The man's vision was restored at the pool of Siloam when he washed; Jesus was then far away. It is spiritual sight which Jesus means; this man's heart caught its first wonderful glimpse of Jesus when he was so miraculously healed. That deed of Jesus showed him not the outward appearance of our Savior, but something far

more valuable, something of what Jesus really was. We cannot follow Meyer and Zahn, who propose to refer ἐώρακας, a perfect tense, to the present as describing only natural sight. To this revelation by a deed, Jesus adds another by his word, **he that speaketh with thee**, placing himself, by means of the third person, objectively before his hearer. In deed and in word Jesus thus places himself before this man's heart with the invitation to believe. So he does still: all his gracious deeds, and especially his death and resurrection, all his gracious words, and especially his calls to grace, present him to our hearts in order that we may believe. Do we see him as we should? Hath the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? John 1, 9; 2 Cor. 4, 6. Alas, this light shines in vain for many! — V. 38: **And he said, Lord, I believe.** *“Jam augustiore sensu ita dicit, quam dixerat.”* Bengel. Then he showed that this confession was a true one, **and he worshipped him**, sinking upon his knees before the Savior. The verb προσκυνεῖν is used generally of the worship due to God. His act was a definition of his word. And so the work of enlightenment has reached its first great goal in this man's heart. We need not suppose that all the meaning of the divine Sonship of Christ was clear to the young believer. “For ‘God manifest in the flesh’ is a mystery far too transcendent for any man to embrace in an instant; the minds even of the apostles themselves could only dilate little by little to receive it.” Trench. Let us mark well the course which the spiritual enlightenment of this soul took. First came the heavenly Light itself (v. 5, “I am the light of the world”) with its blessed illuminating power; then there arose powers of darkness, struggling to keep his soul in their hold; more and more deeply the Light

penetrated with its living rays, until the blessed victory was fully won — “Lord, I believe!” But even after that the Light must continue its work, increasing and unfolding its glory in the heart, fulfilling the prayer of the Psalmist: “O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.” Ps. 43, 4. Fulfilling likewise the prophecy of Isaiah: “In that day the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.” Is. 29, 18.

Now follows a remarkable word of Jesus which sums up all that has occurred, v. 39.

No one is especially addressed, Jesus' words are for all who may hear. The **judgment** here spoken of is described John 3, 19: “And this is the judgment (but here the word is κρίσις, not κρίμα), that the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light; for their works were evil.” **Into this world** Jesus has come for judgment, meaning to say that this judgment of his will affect the world, namely all men. It will consist of a judicial separation between men. As Jesus comes into the world men must assume, and do assume, a certain attitude towards him. Two classes are formed, one described by Jesus as they which see not, and the other, they which see. The former are all those who are without light, and, as Jesus comes to them, become conscious of their sad condition, permitting themselves to be enlightened by Christ and brought to faith; by the latter are meant all those who deny their inability to see and, without the true light, yea in opposition to it, make a light for themselves, and so refuse to come to faith. The scribes loved to call themselves βλέποντες, and these Pharisees were very positive with their ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν. How different the man they cast out; he knows only what Jesus has done for him and what the Scriptures say, outside of that he humbly asks that he may know and believe,

— Now this is the purpose of Christ's judgment, that (ὅτι) the former may see, βλέπωσιν, pres. subj., continued action, and the latter may become blind, γένωνται, 2nd aor. subj., one final act. [Originally the purpose of Christ is to light every man. This purpose is restricted in its execution by those who persist in thinking that they have the light already and spurn the light which shines in Christ. So only "they that see not," as distinguished from these "which see" after their perverted fashion, are really made to see, i. e. with spiritual sight, by faith. This is a true seeing, as is shown by the young believer now in the presence of Jesus; he sees Jesus as he truly is, the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel, the great Savior full of power and grace. The others are altogether in a different state; convinced that they see, they reject the light that would make them see, and so persist in this rejection that they not only never see, but grow blind, τυφλοί, in that intensified sense of the word which signifies the hardening of their hearts in wilful and continued unbelief. They look at the Savior, they have his deeds before them, and his words sound in their ears, but they never recognize him with their hearts for what he truly is and would be also for them. It is bad enough that by nature all men "see not," and that the course of our natural lives leaves us altogether such as "see not"; but it is a thousand times worse, when the Light has come and shines over us and seeks to enter our hearts and enlighten us, so to close the eyes that we become forever "blind."

V. 40. Some of the Pharisees were present here also, no doubt occupied in spying upon Jesus. Scornfully they apply Jesus' words to themselves and ask whether they too are **blind**, so that they must obtain sight from Jesus. The μή in their question indicates that *they* have a negative answer in mind. They evidently refer with the word "blind" to the class which Jesus had

designated as "not seeing." No doubt it seemed ridiculous to them, who imagined they were anything but blind, to think *they* should be spoken of as "not seeing." — Jesus now takes the word "blind" as they use it, and declares that they do *not* belong to that class — alas, that they do not! Even this that they fail to perceive to what class Jesus had reckoned them, indicates their blindness in the intensified sense of the word. They belong to the second class, Jesus tells them, and then he reveals their fearful guilt, explaining for one thing how they have come into this class, and what the result must be as long as they remain in it. Εἰ ἦτε, οὐκ ἄν εἴχετε, present unfulfilled condition: "if ye were, ye would not have," namely now; which also νῦν δέ followed shows. In the mind of Jesus these Pharisees do **have sin**. To what the conditional sentence implies as judgment is now added the explicit statement: **But now etc. Your sin remaineth**, it is not removed from you (John 3, 36: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him"). The word "sin" here refers to the sin involved in wilful blindness, namely unbelief, which is the sin of all sins. This would not rest upon them if they were simply such as "see not"; but it must rest upon them, together with all their sin, now that they reject Christ, and work their eternal destruction. A fearful word, "Your sin remaineth," spoken by the Savior, who shall at last sit upon the throne of judgment in heavenly glory. Yet as he uttered it in the ears of those scornful Pharisees it was one more penetrating call to repentance, as today it is a warning to us all who believe in his name.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

This is a tremendous text when one works properly into it. It shows us in a living example just why and how, with all the spiritual light in the world, men remain in absolute darkness, *They* know! *They* see! *their* logic is infallible! And

all the while they demonstrate to a finish that *they* know nothing, see nothing, and with all their logic and reasoning carefully ignore the facts. The thing is endlessly repeated down to this very day. On the other hand we see how and why *we* come to believe and keep on believing in spite of all the vaporings of unbelief. Nor does our believing require great mental powers or learning. No; like this man in the text we need only to get the facts and to get away from the delusions. In studying the text get beyond the outward run of the story, get at the inner decisive points. It will help both the outline and the sermon. — There are two kinds of blindness in the text, hence the theme:

The Kingdom of Heaven and the Spiritual Blindness of Men.

- I. *The blindness which remains in spite of the Light of the Kingdom of Heaven.*
- II. *The blindness which disappears by means of the Light of the Kingdom of Heaven.*

It is a grave mistake to allegorize any of the miracles, especially the miracle in our text. That this is a miracle on a *blind* man makes little difference, it could just as well have been upon a leper or a cripple. The point is, that it is a *miracle*. And in our text it stands before us just as if we had been present at this man's hearing. It will stand so for all time — a tremendous fact regarding Jesus, v. 32. Those who remain spiritually blind have to ignore, or deny, or explain away, this fact and all the other vital facts regarding Jesus. There they are — these facts — pouring floods of light upon us. But men absolutely shut their hearts lest a single ray get in. Yet that light by its wondrous power does penetrate many. One fact, then more facts get into their hearts (not merely heads), and so faith is wrought.

How Shall We Get Seeing Eyes?

- I. *Just let one saving fact regarding Christ get into your heart.*
- II. *Then hold it fast and let no man rob you of it.*
- III. *Presently more and more saving facts will enter.*
- IV. *And so your eyes will see, and your joy will last forever.*

This presents the positive side; but it will be easy to take care of the negative side also, the unbelief and blindness of the Pharisees and of men today.

The man in our text is most interesting, but there is One who towers above him. He it is who gives sight:

Christ, the Specialist for the Eyes of the Soul.

- I. *He treats the worst cases — men blind by nature — his power evinced in the miracle.*
- II. *He has the only remedy — his grace in Word and deed.*
- III. *He attains the most marvellous result — works light and faith in the soul.*
- IV. *He fails only where he and his remedy are rejected.*

Gerok has the following:

The Wonders of God's Grace in This Blind World.

- I. *God still works them.*
- II. *The world still denies them.*
- III. *The children of light still praise them.*

We add one more as possibly suggestive:

"Light of Light, Enlighten Me!"

- I. *The world is so dark!*
- II. *In thee only is there light for the soul!*
- III. *Whom thou dost enlighten, they see!*

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

John 15, 1-8

One of the finest texts in the entire Trinity series! It is full of the glory of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In beautiful imagery it sets before us the grace we have received as believers in Christ, and then it pictures to us what evidence of this grace must come forth in our hearts and lives. It is all comprehended in the one word: *fruit*. Yes, fruit is a requirement of the Kingdom of Christ. The former text showed us a requirement on the threshold of the Kingdom, namely eyes ready to see; this text shows us a requirement after we pass the threshold, namely hearts and hands ready to serve. And let the preacher remember that the sermon itself and its delivery to the people must shine like a luscious cluster of fruit amid the branches of the Great Vine.

Trench calls our text an allegory (*Parables of our Lord*, p. 9); as such it differs from the parable in form rather than in essence. In the allegory an interpretation of the thing signifying and the thing signified finds place, the qualities and properties of the first being attributed to the latter, and the two thus blended together, instead of being kept quite distinct and placed side by side, as is the case in the parable. The allegory needs not, as the parable, an interpretation to be brought to it from without, since it contains its interpretation within itself; and, as the allegory proceeds, the interpretation proceeds hand in hand with it, or at least never falls far behind. In a note Trench refers to *Pilgrim's Progress* as an extended allegory, and rejects the criticism that the signification is mingled too much with the fable, by pointing

out that this is the very nature of allegory. A similar criticism is often made of those statements in our text which do not speak in the imagery of the vine and what pertains to it. Such remarks show that one of the very beauties of this text as a true allegory has not been apprehended, namely that, being an allegory, it is a tapestry woven with two kinds of thread, the silver thread of imagery, and the golden thread of interpretation. To have it woven with only one kind of thread would make it a different cloth entirely.

When and where this parable and the words following were spoken; and what suggested them, cannot be answered with certainty. It is certain that the words were spoken after the institution of the Lord's Supper. It seems probable that they were spoken after the Lord and his disciples arose from their couches in the upper room, where they had celebrated the Passover, and before they passed out into the street. Robinson (*Harmony*) thinks they immediately followed the order of Jesus to the disciples, "Arise, let us go hence." (John 14, 31). Others think they were spoken on the way to Gethsemane. It is a mere supposition to imagine that a vine with its tendrils spreading near an open window of the upper room, or that a view through the open window of the ornamental golden vine at the gate of the Temple, or that a view through the window of a distant vineyard with a fire consuming dead branches, or that such a view as Jesus passed on over the brook Kidron towards Olivet, suggested the allegory. We may well recall, however, the wine-cup used in the Passover meal, and then used again in the sacrament instituted that night; also the phrase previously suggested by this wine, "fruit of the vine." The image of the vine in sacred writing was not new or strange, Isaiah (5, 1, etc.), the Psalmist (80, 8, etc.), and Jeremiah (2, 21) all having used it, the former two with great fulness. Thus Christ here

takes it up in this solemn hour, but with him it assumes a new depth and richness, full of truth and grace, and because of the truth also a touch of judgment. — V. 1. **I am the true vine** — a word of gracious majesty; as when Jesus calls himself the light of the world, the bread of life, the good shepherd, etc. There has been considerable speculation about the word **true**, ἡ ἀληθινή, *verus*, genuine, real. In what sense is Christ the *true* vine? The word has often been taken to mean *essential*, namely to indicate a reality as opposed to a mere appearance, or a spiritual thing as opposed to one merely natural, or as the reality of the idea imaged in the natural grapevine. All these are philosophical notions, foreign to the word as Christ uses it. We decidedly prefer the interpretation voiced by Rieger and others: “Even in his former institutions God’s intention was to have his people a vineyard, to plant as a vine, and to rejoice in the fruit thereof. But it was not long until that vine lost its power and vitality; it was Christ’s spirit which first prepared a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” The Israel of the Old Testament was only a shadow of the true vine to come; truth and grace came by Jesus Christ. So the manna of old was only an image of the true bread of life. Meyer objects, because he thinks the Church of Christ, and not Christ himself, would constitute the correct counterpart to the old Jewish Church as a vine; also because Christ figures as the vine only with regard to his disciples as the branches, not as to the whole character of the vine. Christ as the true vine, when contrasted with the old Jewish vine, must not be viewed as a bare vine without branches and fruit, but, as the allegory at once shows, as the great New Testament vine full of glorious branches and much fruit; secondly, while Christ as imaged by the vine, of course, points to us as branches, his resembling the vine for this reason

is not brought out in the opening of the allegory at all, on the contrary the true vine is at once, and without further statement, supposed to have numerous branches, and, with these taken for granted, is called the *true* vine. He is the true vine, not at all because he has branches; all false vines have branches enough, and the old vine Israel had a multitude of them. The difference is not as to the branches. The answer to these objection is simple: Christ is the true vine because he fully answers the gracious purpose and will of God, which no other vine did, or does even now. — Corresponding to the first image is the second one: **and my Father is the husbandman.** Jesus is speaking of the work of salvation in all this allegory of the vine; in this work he has revealed the first person of the Godhead to us as his Father. And now as regards that work itself, in accord with the image of himself as the vine, the Father is “the husbandman.” As such he planted, he owns, he tends the vine, and finally gathers the harvest (v. 8). His tending and his desire is especially dwelt upon. The heavenly husbandman began the planting of the true vine at Christmas time, finished it at Eastertide, and began the first harvest already at Whitsuntide.

V. 2. We are not told at once what the branches signify; that will be done presently. Here we see first that there are branches, and secondly that the vine itself must be distinguished from the branches. When Christ appeared as the vine there were bound to be branches, even as at the moment of Christ’s speaking this allegory the branches, his disciples, clustered about him, the vine. And yet what a difference between him and these his branches! He is able to do all things of himself; they are able to do nothing without him. Reason enough to say and know: This is the vine — these are the branches! — The branches are at once arranged in two classes, not according to

size, strength, beauty, or age, but according to one essential distinguishing mark — *fruitfulness*: **Every branch in me that beareth not fruit . . . and every branch that beareth fruit.** So at once we meet the chief point in the entire allegory. This imagery with all its beautiful and significant detail centers in one point, the fruit which the Father desires — desired of old already in Israel, but largely in vain; desires now again that Christ has come as the vine, and till the end of time. At first one might suppose that in Christ (“in me”) there would be no unfruitful branches at all; but here we learn that there are such — alas! How unnatural when we think of this vine! Can the life of Christ enter any one and let him go on in the unfruitful works of darkness? Evidently, this cannot be so. To be a branch of Christ must be to partake of his life and spirit, just as in the natural vine every branch partakes of the nature of the parent stem. The mystery of these unfruitful branches is easily solved; there are those who at first had the life of Christ in their hearts, but who lost it more and more, became wild shoots, or dead branches, and so lost their fruitfulness. Such a “branch in me that beareth not fruit” was Judas Iscariot, at this very time working on his traitorous plot; such are they who once were baptized in Christ’s death, and for a shorter or a longer period went forward in the power of that death, then, through the devil’s cunning, the world’s seductions, or the stirrings of the flesh, became inwardly false, denied the power of Christ’s death, and bore no fruit of faith. We do not know what some commentators mean when they distinguish branches of Christ which are unfruitful from the start, and others which after a time become unfruitful. There are none of the former kind, because the life which makes a man a branch of Christ bears with it the character of fruitfulness, and only as this life is lost

does the fruitfulness pass away. — Blessed are the branches “that bear fruit!” The power of the vine works through them. In this there is no merit of their own. “When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” Luke 17, 10. The merit is all that of the vine whose life is in them. — Strange to say, some commentators are not altogether in the clear as to what the **fruit** is, καρπός. They look at the branches as a sort of fruit of the vine, and reason that the fruit of the branches must be similar, bearing other branches, bringing others to Christ. Such thoughts spoil and confuse the simplicity of Christ’s fine allegory. No branch of a vine ever grafted another branch into the vine. The production of branches, the turning of men into disciples, is the peculiar business of Christ, the vine. The Scriptures tell us plainly what is meant by the fruit of the branches. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” Gal. 5, 22-23. “The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.” Eph. 5, 9. “The peaceable fruit of righteousness.” Heb. 12, 11. “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” Phil. 1, 9-11. There may be but little of such fruit, it may be that there ought to be much more; but as long as there is any drawing of life from Christ, there will be some of this fruit. — So much is the great husbandman concerned about fruit that he directs his activity altogether in this direction. But he need not trouble in the least about the vine; that needs no attention, he must busy himself with the

branches. As there are two kinds, those bearing no fruit, and those bearing some, his work is twofold: Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, **he taketh it away**, αἶρει αὐτό; and every branch that beareth fruit, **he cleanseth**, καθαίρει. Πάν κλῆμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μὴ φέρον καρπὸν begins as if this were to be the subject; but the αὐτό which summarizes and repeats the statement shows that it is construed as the object. The great purpose of every branch then is fruit — not shade, not beauty, not growth alone, but fruit. As soon as it grows positively unfruitful, and this condition becomes fixed beyond remedy, the branch itself must go — “he taketh it away,” Bengel notes the *suavis rhythmus* between the two verbs αἶρει and καθαίρει. There is a taking away in both, in the first a taking away altogether of the branch itself, in the second a taking away in order to cleanse. So there is bound to be a taking away for every branch, either αἶρειν or καθαίρειν. If you will not allow the evil in you to be removed, you yourself shall be removed. It is either — or. — What does this cleansing signify? Its purpose helps us to understand that: it is done that the branch **may bear more fruit**, φέρει, present subj., keep on bearing. We have seen what is meant by fruit, namely all Christian graces and the thoughts, words and deeds in which they manifest themselves more or less completely. The cleansing then will have to do with all that remains of our old sinful nature, the flesh and its manifestations and outgrowths. These must be taken away more and more; so will the fruits of the Spirit thrive and grow abundant. It is for this reason that the Lord and his apostles admonish, reprove, rebuke, and warn us constantly against all the workings of the flesh. Their words sometimes cut deeply, but they must do so, in order that the spirit may constantly triumph over the flesh and bring forth fruit meet for repentance. St. Paul shows us how earnestly he longed to be cleansed

completely and made free from the law of sin in his members: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But he adds: "I thank God through Jesus Christ." Rom. 7. Likewise he urges us to abound in the work of the Lord, 1 Cor. 15, 58; "always having all sufficiency in all things, (ye) may abound to every good work," 2 Cor. 9, 8; etc. Allied with this cleansing by means of the Word is the tribulation which also helps in overcoming the flesh. Paul speaks of it: "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." 2 Cor. 4, 16. It is this inward man which produces the fruit pleasing to God. "He that hath suffered in this flesh hath ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of man, but to the will of God." 1 Pet. 4, 1-2. St. Paul may again serve as an example: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelation, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." 2 Cor. 12, 7.

This cleansing of the fruitful branches must, however, be distinguished from another cleansing, namely that operation which first makes us branches. Therefore Jesus adds, v. 3: **Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you.** This is the cleansing of *justification*, as distinguished from that other which constantly works upon the branches, namely *sanctification*. The disciples are fruitful branches, because they are clean, *καθαροί*, justified; and they are the forerunners of many others, *ἤδη ὑμεῖς*, "already *you* are clean." This cleansing Jesus ascribes to "the word which I have spoken unto you" as the great means of justification. The entire Gospel is meant which Christ preached to his disciples, including the Sacrament just instituted. Luther adds

the explanatory remark: "When received and embraced by faith." That the Word must be so received in order to cleanse and justify is shown by Acts 15, 9, where it is said that God put no difference between the Gentiles and the Jews, "purifying their hearts by faith"; and Acts 10, 43: "Whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." In ascribing the cleansing to the Word Jesus takes all the credit and glory to himself and leaves none to us. The cleansing by the Word through faith (justification) does not exclude the cleansing which follows all through life in the putting away of all the defilements of the flesh (sanctification); this had just been symbolized by Jesus for his disciples in washing their feet in the upper room: "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." John 13, 10.

In the first three verses the great fundamental facts are set before us: the vine, the branches, the husbandman working for fruit. On this rests the mighty admonition, v. 4: **Abide in me, and I in you**, and this is followed by a simple elucidation, how essential and all-important this abiding is. *Μείνατε* — ten times, in various connections, this word appears; certainly it must impress itself indelibly upon our hearts. "Abide in me, and I in you" implied that the disciples were in him, and he in them; and secondly, that though they were in him they might become separated from him. Meyer takes the *ἐν* in the sense of the German *an*, — *bleibet an mir*, remain attached to me; but the word "in" conveys this with the addition of the interpenetration, expressing thus more nearly what even Meyer thinks Jesus meant to express, namely the close, intimate, organic union of the branch with the vine. To abide in Christ is to continue believing in him; and because the chief business of faith is to receive from Christ, abiding in him means to keep on receiving from him grace for grace, day by

day, in ever greater fulness. So the branch receives its life from the vine, and so also it develops and grows. It is essential to this abiding by faith in Christ that the Word and Sacrament, which convey to us his grace and gifts, be constantly used; there is no abiding except through these means. We may also add that the faith which abides in Christ by drawing all its gifts from him, must ever turn against those influences which assail it on this account and offer something in place of Christ. The Formula of Concord has a good description of what such abiding in Christ means: "And after God, through the Holy Ghost in Baptism has kindled and made a beginning of the true knowledge of God and faith, we should pray him without intermission that through the same Spirit and his grace, by means of the daily exercise of reading, and applying to practice, God's Word, he may preserve in us faith and his heavenly gifts, strengthen us from day to day, and support us to the end." J. 554, 16. "Abide in me" is a true Gospel command, such as Christ loves to give, a command for us to take, to enrich ourselves, to open and keep open our hearts that he may be able to fill them with his grace, spirit, power, and gifts. For he says "in *me*," and he is the fountain of all, the eternal treasure-house. — To bring this thought out more fully he added **and I in you**. It almost sounds as if he were commanding himself to abide in us; but the words are really a promise that he shall abide in us. The two always go together and cannot be separated. Christ himself is in us when by faith we abide in him. By the Word, through which we abide in him, he conveys himself to us, and he rests and remains in us as this Word lodges its treasures within our hearts. Christ is in you, if the Word is in you, and so he gives himself to your faith more and more, abiding and dwelling in you. How this abiding in us is mediated by the Sacrament the Apol-

ogy of the Augsburg Confession shows in a quotation from Cyril on John 15: "Nevertheless, we do not deny that we are joined spiritually to Christ by true faith and sincere love. But that we have no mode of connection with him, according to the flesh, this indeed we entirely deny. And this we say is altogether foreign to the Scriptures. For who has doubted that Christ is thus a vine, and we indeed are branches, deriving thence life for ourselves? Hear Paul saying that we are all one body in Christ, that, although 'we are many, we are, nevertheless, one in him; for we are all partakers of that one bread.' Does he perhaps think that the virtue of that mystical benediction is unknown to us? Since this is in us, does it not also *by the communication of Christ's flesh cause Christ to dwell in us bodily?*" J. 174, etc. The Formula of Concord calls the Sacrament "a consolation of all distressed hearts and a *firm bond and means of union of Christians with Christ their head* and with one another." 609, 44. — Again the great purpose which Christ has in mind in speaking as he does of abiding in him is brought forward, namely his desire that we bring fruit. **As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine** — a branch may abide by itself, separate from the vine — evidently as a dead branch. But so, ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ, it cannot possibly bear fruit; this is possible only when it abides in the vine. How plain and self-evident the thing is in nature: a branch broken, torn or cut from the vine is forever after fruitless. — It is so with every disciple who in any way becomes separated from Christ: **so neither can ye, except ye abide in me.** Here we find the thought that such a separation may indeed occur. There are such as once were in Christ, but are now apart from him. The Formula of Concord describes them: "They wilfully turn away again from the holy commandment, grieve and exasperate the Holy

Ghost, implicate themselves again in the filth of the world and garnish again the habitation of the heart for the devil; with them the last state is worse than the first." J. 657, 42.

V. 5. **I am the vine, ye are the branches.** A repetition of the first fundamental thought for emphasis. Ever Christ is the vine, and our relation as disciples is that we are the branches. To make ourselves something else, to destroy or give up this relation of ourselves to Christ is fatal for us. In Luther's words, we would become brambles fit only for the fire of hell. — Thus we would destroy for ourselves what Christ here adds: **He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit.** "Wherever fruit is borne, which pleases the husbandman and is sweet to his taste, this hangs upon the branches, but it is the vine which bears both the branches and the fruit and penetrates them with its sap. All the holy thoughts, words and works of Christians, which, made sweet by the taste of love, delight God, are altogether fruit of the branches which abide in the vine, with the vine's living sap in them, are altogether gifts received from the abundance of Christ, who is the heart's treasure of love, the mouth's spice of love, the hand's power of love." Besser. Notice the word **much** — many Christians overlook it, thinking that a little fruit is enough. But the vine is so powerful that it constantly sends up a great abundance of vitality, and the branches that grow indeed from the vine are stimulated to bring "much fruit." This is the glory of the vine, and no true branch will try to lessen it. — **For apart from me ye can do nothing.** Apart from him, χωρὶς ἐμοῦ — what a sad condition! Here only one side of this sadness is brought out, namely that apart from Christ we can do literally nothing. No matter what we do, whether it seem good, grand, excellent to us, and to the world, so that all men applaud

it, its true worth is here stated, it is "nothing," has no value of any kind in the eyes of Christ and of his Father. The world is full of people doing "nothing" in this sense. "Therefore let others whittle and trim as they can, until they make a new birth out of works, and a tree out of fruit, they must still prove the truth of this saying, and out of all of it there shall come nothing." Luther. "Man, when brought to the life in Christ, is not like a clock, which when once wound runs twenty-four hours, but like a spring which ceases its flow the moment its hidden reservoir beneath the earth is cut off." Besser. Our Confessions make repeated use of this saying of Christ, applying it in various ways: "As often as mention is made of the Law and of works, we must know that Christ as Mediator is not excluded." 155, 251. Because Christ says, Without me ye can do nothing, it is in vain to expect to be justified before being reconciled through Christ to God. 193, 85. "Without faith the nature of man can by no means perform the works of the first or second table. Without faith it cannot call upon God, hope in God, bear the cross; but seeketh help from men, and trusteth in man's help." 46, 38. "Without his grace, and if he do not grant the increase, our willing and running, our planting and sowing, all are nothing." (God alone converts.) 498, 6. Augustine well said, that Christ spoke as he did, "in order to answer the coming Pelagius."

V. 6 elaborates the thought stated briefly above, that the husbandman takes the unfruitful branches away. *Τις* correponds to *πάν* above; *ἐάν μὴ μένη*, Jesus expects that there will be some who will **not abide in me**. He does not say, If a man abide not in me, *and I not in him*, for he never refuses to abide in us, if only we abide in him. It is not a question of his willingness, but of ours. If a man abides not in Christ includes that therefore he is unfruitful. — Now comes

the darkest part of the allegory, a detailed description of the taking away of the unfruitful branch. The singular is used to begin with, that every man may smite upon his breast and ask, Lord, is it I? Then follows the plural, for, alas, there are many upon whom the fate here portrayed shall come, and the last part of that fate shall affect them jointly. There are five stages: he is cast forth; is withered; they gather them; and cast them into the fire; and they are burned. The first two of these are aorists, ἐβλήθη and ἐξηράνθη, the so-called gnomic aorist, which has lost the idea of past time and in a general statement, as is the case here, has greater emphasis than the present tense, which also might be used; at least the "timeless" aorist (Robertson wavers between the two); hence the R. V. translates correctly: **is cast forth . . . is withered.** The casting forth and withering does not take place at once; an opportunity for repentance always being allowed; but Christ here states only the result, and not the stages by which it is reached. The gnomic aorist may occur in regular order beside a present tense; our English must use its present tense for both. — **He is cast forth as a branch,** literally "as *the* branch," namely like that of the natural vine previously spoken of. This corresponds to his own action; since he will not abide or remain in Christ, he is necessarily cast forth as a branch. An unfruitful branch is cut away from the vine and thrown aside; so every unfruitful disciple is cut away and cast forth. Nowhere in the allegory is anything said of a vineyard, nor would this image fit here, since there is but one vine, and only one. The severed branch is cast forth from the vine and its great crown of fruit-bearing branches. The soul is inwardly completely separated from Christ, and this spiritual calamity is usually marked by unmistakable outward evidence, a separation from Word and Sacrament, and from the spiritual

fellowship and worship of the members (branches) of the Lord. — **And is withered** (ξηραίνω). The last vestiges of the spiritual life vanish, until every leaf and tendril is absolutely dry and hard. We occasionally see this withering going forward. Less and less Christ, the Church, the Word, the Sacrament is appreciated and used; more and more worldly, vain, reckless, godless, sometimes vicious and blasphemous ideas, utterances, and actions make up the life. So did King Saul wither, and Judas. It is terrible to see a poor human body wither and shrivel under the blight of some wasting disease; it is unspeakably worse to see a similar process repeating itself in the soul. — **And they gather them.** Besser has a very fine explanation. He pictures the preparatory gathering as we are able to see it in this life. The company of Korah gathered itself together against Moses; Herold, Pilate, and the Jews gathered themselves together against Jesus; the Psalmist speaks of the *congregation* of evil doers (26, 5); who will count the associations and gatherings of those whose desire is earthly pleasure, whose worship is without Christ and his blood, whose glory is their shame, whose bond is error, falsehood, and deception? Then death steps in, and gathers all these dead branches preparatory to the last great judgment. But the final gathering is made by the angels, to whom Jesus here plainly refers. They gather at last all the sinners of each kind and bind them together for the final sentence, the traitor Ahithophel with the traitor Judas and others of that kind, Jezebel together with Herodias and those like them. There shall be terrible companionships for the wicked; each shall see his own sin in the other. — **And they are burned.** The last καί is reached. How one piles itself inexorably upon the other! The wood of the vine branches is fit only for one of two things,

to bear fruit, or to burn. One of these two is reached by every branch.

V. 7. Again comes this solemn condition, pounding itself into our memories and hearts, **If ye abide in me**; and here it is explained by the addition, **and my words abide in you**, ῥήματα, the words as Jesus speaks them. For these "words" full of life and power are the means of our abiding in Christ, they have cleansed us and are cleansing us still, their blessed work must ever go on in us; moreover, these "words" abiding in us are an evidence, easily recognized, of our abiding in Christ. — Now follows a promise so glorious that it goes beyond the reach of our imagination: **Ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you.** "Whatsoever ye will," ὃ ἐὰν θέλητε, is put first and makes the lack of any restriction, except our will, the more evident; only we dare not forget that this is the will that abides in Christ, and is governed and led by his words. Such a will is in harmony with the will of Christ and will seek the things which the Father is only too ready to grant for Jesus' sake. And may we not here say that the things we will especially seek in abiding in Christ and his words in us are those which will aid us in remaining in him and carrying out his purpose that we bear abundant fruit? "He who hears God's Word him will God hear in turn, Truly a fine exchange." Luther.

V. 8: **Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit.** Ἐν τούτῳ = ἵνα καρπὸν πολὺν φέρετε κτλ.; here is a case where ἵνα with the subj. (sub-final) has usurped the place of the infinitive: ἐν τῷ φέρειν ὑμᾶς, the idea of wish and intention remaining, not changed into the idea of accomplished fact. This leaves the aorist ἐδοξάσθη to be explained; in spite of Zahn we must call it either the timeless or the gnomic, like the two in v. 6. Robertson writes: "possibly gnomic"; but the R. V. translates exactly like the

gnomic aorists in v. 6: **is glorified**, and, in fact, cannot help itself because of the following pres. subj. φέρετε and the aor. subj. γένησθε (variant reading, fut., γενήσεσθε), both of which refer to future time. Ἐν τούτῳ is emphatic, and we see the reason for it: ἔδοξάσθη, "herein God is glorified," i. e. receives the honor and service due him from the creature, "that ye bear much fruit," that this be done, as we may imitate the Greek with our Engl. subj. "be." No higher view can be taken of our fruit than this to connect it with the glory of God. In no stronger or more effective way could the necessity for this fruit be set forth. And finally, here is the strongest possible motive for our bearing "much" fruit; comp. "more" in v. 2. Oh, that we had more fruit, much fruit! Why will we be satisfied with a few ill-formed clusters of grapes, when we ought to bear many of the very finest kind? — **And so shall ye be my disciples**, γενήσεσθε, or as some authorities read, "and be my disciples," γένησθε. By using γένησθε, instead of ἔσεσθε, the thought is conveyed that the disciples will thus manifest themselves as Christ's disciples, Zahn. The fut. tense is quite possible in the Greek of this time after ἵνα, especially in the second verb added by καί to a subjunctive. The thought thus assumes a sort of independence, as is indicated by the English: and so ye shall be. Having once become disciples of Christ is not enough; we must go on being his disciples, which can be done only by constantly and abundantly bearing fruit. Luther's word is thus in place: "This life is not that we are pious, but that we *become* pious; not a *rest*, but *exercise*." Luther.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The ultimate point in the entire allegory is *fruit* — all the imagery centers around this point. So we may pivot the sermon on "fruit":

Fruit:

Required in the Kingdom of God: the Fruit of the Heavenly Vine.

I. Look at the branches; II. At the pruning-knife; III. And at the ashes of the burned vines — each in a special way speaks of fruits as required.

Next to the idea of "fruit" is the essential requirement for producing this fruit, namely "abiding" in Christ:

The Word of the Vine to the Branches: "Abide in Me!"

Thus shall ye *I. Be living branches; II. Bear fruit; III. Bear much fruit; IV. Glorify the Father.*

Koegel asks:

Are You Verdant Branches of the Vine?

- I. Of the true vine?*
- II. Bearing much fruit?*
- III. For the heavenly husbandman's glory?*

The text would be beautiful for a communion celebration, as Quandt's outline shows:

The Allegory of the Vine and the Branches Interpreted by the Sacrament of the Altar.

- I. Believers are joined to Christ in the communion of his body and blood.*
- II. Believers are joined to each other in the communion of the one Savior.*
- III. Secret unbelievers are neither joined to Christ nor to the believers, but are made riper for judgment by receiving the sacred body and blood.*

THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Mark 10, 13-16

The importance and value of this text are at once apparent. It deals with children, is in fact the Scriptural classic on the question of children and the Church. But it goes far beyond children as such, for Jesus solves the question of children and the Church or the Kingdom by pointing us to the indispensable requirement of this Kingdom, namely *childlikeness*: "Of such is the kingdom of God"; and, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein." It is for this reason also, and not merely because Jesus invites babes unto himself, that our baptismal liturgy for children contains the words of this text. So while much must be said here on children, and many necessary explanations and admonitions relative to children, parental obligation, and Baptism are brought in, the great subject of the text, embracing all these features and reaching far beyond them, is the great requirement of the Kingdom of our Lord — *childlikeness*.

V. 13. The conjunction **and** connects this section with the one preceding, which treats of the relation of husband and wife: "What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." There is a divine as well as a natural fitness of things in this. Children are a heritage of the Lord. Marriage was meant of God to produce children and thus multiply the race; fatherhood and motherhood are the crown of married life. The home was meant for children, to shelter and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The little word "and" suggests

these thoughts so necessary for our day and generation. Woe upon these wives (we cannot say mothers!) and husbands, these unmarried scorers of marriage, these wicked landlords and others, who dare to despise these little ones! Matth. 18, 10. The incident of Christ blessing the children is frequently depicted as having taken place out of doors, but v. 10 and the close connection marked by "and," as well as v. 17: "and as he was going into the way," show us that Jesus was still in the house, and this helps us to understand how the disciples could readily, without Jesus at once detecting them, rebuke the mothers who brought their babes. — **They brought.** The subject is hidden in the verb προσέφερον, or rather let us say it is so self-evident that it needed no special mention. Jewish mothers are meant, and the masculine αὐτοῖς points also to fathers. The imperfect tense really signifies "were bringing"; there was more than a mother or two, there was a procession of parents and possibly other relatives or friends. We do not know that Jesus invited them; in fact, if he had, we may well suppose that the disciples would not have interfered as they did. Had these mothers heard how Jesus spoke of children, Matth. 18? They surely felt that their babes were welcome to the Great Teacher. One, or more, with a correct intuition may have made the start with her babe, the rest following, so that Mark could write "were bringing." The verb προσφέρω is used of the bringing of offerings; we might then say "they offered unto him little children." A fine thought to apply to mothers now. The children were brought by being carried, for the word παιδία, **little children**, means, according to Luke τὰ βρέφη, new-born babes, sucklings (Luke 1, 454; 1 Pet. 2, 2, the same word); note also that Jesus took them up in his arms. This absolutely excludes any understanding on the part of these "little children" of what their mothers and Jesus

did for them. — The mothers brought their babes to Jesus, **that he should touch them.** Matthew says that he should lay his hands on them and pray. This explains the word Mark (and Luke) uses. It is certainly wrong to imagine an expected magical touch; or that the word “touch” merely expresses the modesty of the request. If there had been any idea of magic or charming Jesus certainly would have rebuked it, and refrained from any action which might have been interpreted in so superstitious a way. No; what these mothers wanted was perfectly right and legitimate, and Jesus did touch these babes, every one. Their mothers requested for them a benediction from Jesus. The full form for such a benediction, as these women well knew from the religion of Israel, consisted of words of prayer and the act of touching or laying on the hand. (Gen. 48, 14). In Jesus these mothers recognized at least a great teacher, a worker of mighty miracles, a prophet sent of God. His prayers and benedictions they therefore supposed to be especially efficacious. And so they came to Jesus that his blessing might bring down the divine grace and favor in rich measure upon their new-born babes. What a fine exhibition of sanctified mother-love! Here certainly is an example for all Christian mothers, whose greatest care should be to secure for their new-born babes, and this without delay, the great blessings and benedictions which God still offers through Jesus Christ. What a contrast those Jewish mothers form to all these present-day mothers, who find it too irksome and unpleasant to take their children to God’s house, but drag them along to worldly pleasure-places for their own mere amusement. — **And the disciples rebuked them,** possibly in front of the house, after a few had obtained access to Jesus and were speaking with him and making known their intention. The “and” this time adds an unnatural fact; the action of

the disciples is certainly surprising. The verb used to express it is very strong, ἐπετίμησαν, they threatened. Luke uses the imperfect tense, they were threatening, they continued to do it. We wonder why. Possibly because of solicitude for Jesus, to insure his rest; less probably because they were provoked to have their interesting talk on marriage and divorce interrupted. The answer of Jesus shows us, however, that something more serious lay behind their action. They had forgotten, or failed to understand, what Jesus had said and done on a previous occasion, when he placed a child in their midst and spoke of the Father's unwillingness to have one of these little ones perish. (Matth. 18.) Whatever idea they had of the place of babes in the old covenant, the answer of Jesus plainly indicates that they had a false idea of the place intended for babes in the new covenant, the Messianic Kingdom Christ had come to establish. They overlooked the fact that one of the great requirements of this kingdom is found in babes, such as they ordered away, and that these are therefore able to receive the blessings of this kingdom, which besides them only they who have been made like them can receive. Besser rightly states the thought of the disciples: "What good can these babes get by the touch of Jesus' hands?" Not so the Lutheran Commentary when to the dislike of being disturbed by these mothers with their babes it adds that they thought the request of the mothers "inconsistent with the dignity of Christ" (Bengel) — of which there is no hint in Christ's reply. In their wrong notions and actions on this occasion the disciples were the forerunners of all those who afterwards withheld the divine gift and blessing of Baptism from children. Usually they first change the sacrament, so that it becomes nothing but an act of confession and obedience performed by us, instead of an act of grace and bestowal performed by God. Naturally,

then, only adults, who can make conscious confession and render conscious obedience, seem fit subjects for Baptism. But all this is a human perversion; as in the case of the disciples, a human withholding where Christ extends and imparts.

V. 14. Ἰδὼν — did he see the threatening gestures of one or more of the disciples, motioning the mothers with their children away? His eyes are sharp to watch the doing of all his servants, especially of his under-shepherds, pastors and teachers. He watches closely over these babes, which many affect to despise, nor will he have their helplessness taken advantage of. Ἰδὼν ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Jesus seeing — let it warn us in all our work with little ones! — **He was moved with indignation**, ἠγανάκτησεν, a very strong word, used of Jesus only in this place. The babes were very small, but great was the displeasure of Jesus when the disciples dared to turn them away. The indignation, or anger, of Jesus was holy, without a trace of sinful passion, as the words he utters show. They are calm and measured, strong and direct, full of heavenly light and truth. Jesus utters them as the great Advocate of children, opening his mouth for the dumb, out of whose mouth by his grace he perfects praise. Bengel gives as the reason for his indignation the obstacle to his love raised by the disciples, and this obstacle his words are uttered to remove. So precious are they that it has been said, without them and the truth they express the Christian Church would be a different thing from what it is. According to Luke Jesus called his disciples to him. With shamed faces they entered the room; and here they who were the chosen apostles received a rebuke before the humble mothers whom they had presumed to correct.

Suffer the little children to come unto me. This opens wide the portals of the kingdom to new-born babes. Jesus utters a positive command which is still

in force today. He does not, however, say, Suffer them to bring the children to me; or, Suffer the children to be brought unto me; but changing the verb, he makes it, Suffer them to *come unto me*, ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με (after the imperative ἄφετε, permit, let). The implication is that children are ready to come and need only that men let them. We daily see how children of tender age absorb the precious Gospel stories of Jesus and give their little hearts to him in faith, showing that indeed he is the children's Savior. But Jesus, speaking of παιδία who were βρέφη, too tiny to teach, predicates of them already this ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με. The affinity of little children for Jesus — if we may call it so — which we can see when they begin to absorb the teaching, is in them from the beginning, not indeed because of any sinlessness, but for the very reason that they, too, are affected by sin, and Jesus is the Savior they need. As the flower in the garden stretches toward the light of the sun, so there is in the child a mysterious inclination toward the eternal light. Have you never noticed this mysterious thing, that when you tell the smallest child about God, it never asks with strangeness and wonder, What or who is God? I have never seen him! — but listens with shining face to the words, as if they were soft, loving sounds from the land of home? or when you teach a child to fold its little hands in prayer, that it does this as if it were a matter of course, as if there were opening for it that world of which with longing and anticipation it had been dreaming? Or tell them, these little ones, the stories of the Savior, show them the pictures with the scenes and personages of the Bible — how their pure eyes shine, how the little hearts beat! This is what Jesus indicates with the mysterious words: 'Of such is the kingdom of God.' " Pank. In describing this receptiveness of children for the blessings of Christ, the very fact that they need

them because of their sinful and depraved condition must be brought out in unmistakable terms. The children which Jesus blessed were indeed Jewish children and therefore under the Old Testament covenant, although the sign of the covenant (circumcision) was applied only to boys. Yet in the entire narrative Jesus lays no stress on these being Jewish children, but speaks of children in general. So also the Church has applied his invitation and assurance to children generally. — **Forbid them not**, κωλύετε, do not be hindering or preventing, pres. tense — a positive warning. Such forbidding is, when for any reason they are kept from Jesus, as the disciples tried to do. This forbidding refers not only to children old enough to hear about Jesus, but also to the newly-born. Βρέφος = child in the womb, then also a child just born. If these are not offered and brought to Jesus to receive his blessing, then are they forbidden to come to him. There is the same implication here as in the first command, namely that these little ones are ready to come to Jesus and receive something from him. Jesus thus forbids every obstacle which our reasoning about little children may raise against their coming to him.

This direct and positive command would in itself be enough. But Jesus goes much farther, he gives us the great reason on which his command rests: **for of such is the kingdom of God**. Let us not overlook γάρ. "Of such," τῶν τοιούτων, not τούτων here, signifies a great class, and to this class the little children belong. Bengel says, that if the kingdom is of such, then with a special right the children must be counted in. They are the model examples of the whole class. If we want to know the character of the class, we must study the children. There is, however, some diversity among commentators as to what makes children eligible to the kingdom of God. Some content

themselves with a general reference to childlikeness, without defining this more closely. A few introduce innocence: "men of childlike mind and character childlike simplicity and innocence." Dryander rejects the thought of innocence and peculiar childlike trustfulness, but he admits Schleiermacher's peculiar idea that the child lives for the immediate present (*Augenblick*), yielding at once and completely to every new impression, and to this he adds, what is pointed out by many, simplicity and humility. Haas adds to these last two the child's helplessness. Grotius (Calov) of "obedient docility." Better than all these definitions of the childlikeness here meant by Jesus is the one given by Noesgen: "receptive for the blessing of Christ, willingly yielding to what he does." Stelhorn gives this more fully, bringing out the real inwardness of this receptive condition: "It is not necessary for the Holy Ghost first to break the hardness of heart which is the inevitable result of a long life in conscious sin; wilful resistance which alone prevents the regenerating and saving activity of the Holy Ghost is not yet present in their hearts." — What children are in their infant condition, ready and willing to accept the grace of God, adults must become through the gracious operation of God's Spirit. He must work in us a receptive mind and heart, which he does through the means of grace, especially his Word, and then at once confers and imparts the gift of regeneration and justification, i. e. salvation. — By **the kingdom of God** is meant Christ's spiritual kingdom of grace here on earth, the holy, Christian Church, the communion of saints, which is the portal to the kingdom of glory. — "Of such is the kingdom of God" — the kingdom of God is composed of such; all they who constitute the kingdom, who are in it, are of this kind. Frequently Christ's words have been taken to mean that all children, merely by being children, are already

in the kingdom of God. This is generally done by those who deny original sin, or the total depravity of the whole human race, namely that whatsoever is born of the flesh is flesh, John 3, 6, imagining that children are by nature "innocent" and "pure"; also by those who refuse to baptize children at all, and by others who indeed are willing to baptize children, but deny the regenerating and saving efficacy or grace of Baptism. The opinion of the latter generally is that the atoning merits of Christ are imputed to all children from the very beginning of their lives *without any means whatever*. When Christ says, "Of such is the kingdom of God," he indeed says that in his kingdom there are none except of this kind; but he does not say that all who are of this kind, by virtue of being so, are already from the start in his kingdom. So also when he says, "Suffer the little children to come unto me," he does not mean merely, They are already mine and already have all the blessings of the kingdom, therefore let them come to me. That would greatly reduce the blessing of coming to him. He means that they shall come to him, the King, to be received by him into his kingdom, to come in order to enter the kingdom and thus to obtain all its blessings. This reveals the sad mistake of all those who, thinking all children are already in the kingdom, make no further effort to introduce their children into the kingdom, but allow their receptive hearts to remain unfilled with the gifts of the kingdom, till gradually this receptiveness passes away and a worse condition results. As opposed to all such unscriptural views our Confessions have maintained that receptiveness is intended really to receive; that this receiving takes place for children (infants) in Baptism, and for those of maturer years through the Word and Sacrament. We teach of Baptism "that it is necessary to salvation, and that by Baptism the grace of God is offered, and

that children are to be baptized, who by Baptism, being offered to God are received into God's favor; and we condemn the doctrine of those who affirm that children are saved without Baptism." *Augsb. Conf.* "The kingdom of Christ exists only with the Word and Sacraments. Therefore it is necessary to baptize little children, that the promise of salvation *may be applied to them*, according to Christ's command, Matth. 28, 19: Baptize all nations." J. 173, 52. Our confessions state that the Baptism of children is *necessary*, not that it is essential, so that every child that dies unbaptized is simply lost. God indeed has bound us to Baptism, but he has not bound himself. Stier goes too far when he says that "self-evidently also unbaptized children are saved, since he who lets them die, bids them thus to come to him." We do conclude that unbaptized children are also saved, not however because this is self-evident, either because of their innocence, or because of their being already in the kingdom, but because of the great mercy of God of which he has assured us especially in regard to children, Matth. 18, 14. This is *our conclusion* and only a conclusion, not a clear statement of the Word itself, for there is none such. Having bound us, but not himself, to Baptism, we conclude that God may well have ways and means other than Baptism, of which he has revealed nothing to us, for reaching such children and applying his grace and gifts to them. This, however, we do know that without such application no child can possibly enter the kingdom; for except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God, John 3, 4.

V. 15 expresses a truth so important that it deserves the **Verily**. The King himself who is supreme in the kingdom of God here declares, **I say unto you**; his word shall stand as long as the kingdom itself stands. Christ's statement is a negative one, it tells us who shall *not* enter into his kingdom. It thus

forms the counterpart to the preceding positive statement: "Of such is the kingdom of God," emphasizing this, and showing that there are no exceptions. — **Whosoever**, ὅς, applies to every man; we have here a universal law of the kingdom of God. We decline to interpret the aorist subjunctives: ὅς ἂν μὴ δέξηται . . . οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ, of the future kingdom which Christ was about to establish; we prefer to apply them to all future time from that moment on, when men through the gracious blessing of the King already pressed into the kingdom. — **Shall receive**, δέξηται, deserves special attention. Because we must *receive*, receptiveness or readiness to receive, is the all-important thing. We *receive* a gift; and such is the kingdom of God — a gift indeed. It is so great that there is no possibility of any man earning it. A gift takes all the merit from us and gives it forever to God. We have, and are to have, nothing but emptiness, for God to fill; beggary, for God to replace with royalty; destitution, for God to exchange for abundance. — Even a babe can receive; we need not reason it out, Jesus says so: **shall receive as a little child**, ὡς παιδίον. Two great facts are stated in one breath: that children receive; and that their receiving is the model and pattern for all our receiving. Instead of the little child becoming like the adults, as we might reason, the adult must become as a little child in receptiveness if he would receive. That which makes the adult in this respect different from the child, must be removed; it is only a hindrance, an obstacle, a handicap, namely our doubting, our hesitation, our hardness, our perverseness, our wrong ways of thinking and reasoning, our everlasting inclination to work for salvation instead of receiving it gratis, our resourcefulness in ever trying to save ourselves instead of letting Christ alone save us. We must all become babes again in order to enter the kingdom. The world cries: Do not be a child! Jesus bids us:

Be a child again; be a child by my help! God has chosen the little things to confound the great ones of this world; he has not done so wilfully, arbitrarily, but wisely, because so only is salvation possible for us. He cannot take us in our pride, presumption, false merit and holiness; he can take us only when stripped of it all like a very babe, utterly helpless, looking only and entirely to him and not to ourselves. Thus ὡς παιδίον = τῶν τοιούτων; and in this sense "to take" is "to enter" the kingdom. Οὐ μή, with the subjunctive (like-wise with the fut. indic.) is the strongest form of future negation; here it utterly excludes all who do not come as *παιδιά*. Applying all this to Baptism, Seiss, *Baptist System Examined*, p. 335, is right: "Unless every Baptism is essentially an infant Baptism, it is no availing Baptism at all. The kingdom must be received as little children receive it; the man must be converted and become *as a little child*, or the kingdom of God is not for him." Thus all the dreams of the Baptists are annihilated at the door of the kingdom.

V. 16. Mark alone uses the strong and expressive word ἐναγκαλισάμενος, having taken into bent arms, which Luther finely translates *herzte sie*, pressed them to his heart. He thus brings out in an intensified way the difference between his thoughts and those of the foolish disciples. Surely, they could not forget this act, which many a painting since has impressed upon the vision of beholders. He does far more than the mothers asked; he is ever more generous and loving than we expect. Jesus, as Savior of babes, is our Savior indeed. — **And blessed them, laying his hands upon them.** Word and act combine. We almost envy those babes. But has not Christ left the same blessing for children, yea, for us all, in Holy Baptism, effective for all time, also for our little ones? In the sacrament too there is word and act, both Christ's,

and none the less efficacious that he uses now the voice and act of his human servants.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

It is a good rule to follow in preaching: use the concrete in preference to the abstract. Here it would mean: speak of the child or the children in preference to childlikeness. — Opening words of a sermon on the text: My beloved children: — I use this name for you all this morning, because our Lord teaches us that there are only children in his kingdom, little children like you who have come here with your parents, and even littler ones, like the tiny brothers and sisters some of you have, which were made God's children in Baptism; and big children, like you young people, fathers and mothers, old men and old women — yet all children still, with childlike faith letting him bless and take care of you. It is a wonderful thing indeed when we come to think of it: a whole kingdom full of children! And not this kind that grows up and becomes independent and self-sufficient, but this blessed kind which remains childlike and retains always that beautiful way peculiar to all true children, that they lie still, quietly and trustfully, in the arms of him who loves them and takes complete care of them now and always. —

There Are None But Children in the Kingdom.

- I. *Little children.*
- II. *Grown-up children.*

The Children's Savior.

- I. *He calls the children unto him.*
- II. *He rebukes all who keep children away from him.*
- III. *He wants us all to become and be children.*
- IV. *He has the fulness of his blessing for children.*

Richter builds his parts according to the pattern of inversion:

The Children and the Kingdom.

- I. *The Kingdom is for children.*
- II. *Children are for the Kingdom.*

The idea is that the Kingdom is for all who are childlike, hence also actual little children are for the Kingdom. In the text itself this is reversed, for from the little children we older people

are to learn how to get into the Kingdom. So we prefer to reverse the parts:

- I. *Children are for the Kingdom.*
- II. *The Kingdom is for children.*

for part one use, for instance, the ideas of C. Armand Miller:

A child *welcomes love* — *looks up* to parents (adoration as applied to God) — is *trustful* — *believes* the promises made to it — is *receptive*, takes gifts gladly and expects kindness (grace) — has no thought of earning or merit, but counts on the father's power and love. And for part two, on us older people becoming like children, thoughts like these: The comfort of being a child again — when we feel our weakness and helplessness in battling with our foes, the devil, the world, and the flesh; when we lie crushed beneath our burdens and crosses, sick and faint and nigh unto death; when we reach the end of our own wisdom and let the wonderful providence of our great Father above follow its mysterious course in doing what is best for us in life and in death. — A suggestive treatment is the following: Recognition of the importance of children, on the one hand. The state, its schools, laws, etc. — On the other hand, the neglect of children. Some people think them a nuisance, want none, at most one. Moral, spiritual neglect. Look into our text:

The Savior's Thoughts About Children.

- I. *His heart goes out to them.*
- II. *He opens his Kingdom for them.*
- III. *He makes them models for us all.*
- IV. *He gives them his greatest blessings.*

This is the Christian way to think of children, the Christian way to treat them. — While our baptismal liturgy quotes Christ's word on children, we do not think this enough to justify the theme: The Baptism of Children: 1) The objections put forth by reason, v. 13; 2) The authority granted by Jesus, v. 14; 3) The lesson which results for us all, v. 15. There will be room enough in the sermon for reference to Baptism without a theme centering on this Sacrament. — Langsdorff has the theme: "Suffer the Little Children to Come Unto Me!" which of course is highly distinctive of the text (color), and therefore excellent. But he slices this theme into three pieces in order to get his parts: 1) The little children; 2) Suffer them to come; 3)

Unto me. This method is used also by others. It is not to be commended, because it is too mechanical. Perhaps preachers resort to it because themes like this do not at once show other marks of cleavage. Yet a command like this naturally suggests reasons: Why does the Savior say this? At once we see the cleavage: there are those who would hold the children back — the Savior's love prompts this word of his — the children need Jesus — there is a promise underneath this command — it even rests on a law of the Kingdom, for only childlike hearts can enter it. If thus you read the theme aright, as Jesus meant his own words with all their implications, you will have no trouble in finding parts.

THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Luke 9, 57-62

We may sum up this Trilogy: the following of Christ must be unconditional. Putting it into a positive instead of a negative form we may say: The Kingdom requires *complete devotion*. It does this at all times, not merely when we enter it. Christ must have, must always have, *the whole heart*. Too many hold back a corner of it; either they do not see how the Gospel-kingdom is such that a man must be in it altogether, if he is to be in it at all, or they allow their affections and hearts to be held by some ties which conflict with their complete devotion to the Master and his Kingdom. — Perhaps these three incidents actually occurred close together; at least they belong together. Matthew records the last two (8, 19-22).

V. 57. Somewhere upon the road which Jesus traveled, either near the Lake of Galilee, or on the journey to Judea, an unnamed man approached him and his disciples. Luke uses only the indefinite *τις* in speaking of him; from Matthew we glean that he was *εἷς γραμματεὺς*, "one a scribe." This is all we know of him, except his words and the conclusions we can base on these. In a way this man's action was significant, for as a class the scribes, these students of the Law and Jewish traditions, were thoroughly opposed to Jesus. The Savior's words and miracles must have made an impression upon this scribe's heart for him to offer himself to Jesus. — Matthew reports that he addressed Jesus as "Master," placing himself in the position of a pupil, who himself for his learning had been deemed a master by others. He comes with the

unsolicited offer, **I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.** He means to say that he will cast his lot altogether with Jesus, that as a disciple he will follow the Master wherever he may go. Note the future tense ἀκολουθήσω, expressing resolve. There are no restrictions whatever in the offer. It sounds altogether right. Jesus shall lead, he will follow. "Ὅπου ἂν ἀπέρχῃ, the futuristic subjunctive (Robertson 969): "whenever thou shalt go: — whatever the goal, he accepts it; whatever the length, difficulty, hardship of the way, he will enter upon it all. There are no ifs or ands of any kind. What better offer could anyone wish? There is not the slightest evidence that the man as he speaks is not sincere. Nothing indicates that he already belonged to the larger circle of Christ's followers, rather does it seem as if this is his first offer of allegiance. It is a mere fancy to suppose that this scribe was Judas Iscariot, for the records do not even hint that Judas was a scribe, or that he or any other person known to us by name is here meant. The offer this scribe makes resembles somewhat the promise of Peter: "Lord, whither goest thou? . . . Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?" John 13, 36-37; "I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death." Luke 22, 33. This scribe evidently is not only ready, but too ready; his offer is not only complete, but too complete. He is like the seed which fell upon stony ground and grew up quickly, but was bound to disappoint, for it lacked root and could not endure the hot sun. His words sound very enthusiastic; they mark him as a man of sanguine temperament; we may call him an idealist. He serves as an example of quite a class of men, eager, ready, willing — a little hasty, a little superficial, a little thoughtless, or a good deal so. They see the sun shine and put off in a little skiff to cross the great waters, forgetting that the tempest will come, the waves rise, and hurl their frail vessel

to destruction. They see the soldiers on parade with fine uniforms and glittering weapons, and so they hastily join the army, forgetting the exhausting marches, the bloody battles, the graves, perhaps unmarked, in a far-off land. They are under the spell of a fine illusion which cannot last. It may seem cruel to disillusion them, but it would be a thousand times more cruel to let them go on and make havoc of their lives. — The reply of Jesus to the sanguine scribe is by no means a refusal to let him follow, as some have supposed. It is like so many of Jesus' replies, not a simple answer such as we with our limited knowledge expect, but a reply which strikes at the heart of the matter, surprises us most likely, but always, when properly apprehended, satisfies us beyond expectation. Jesus here does not say, Come then and follow me! nor does he say, No; you cannot follow me! He omits the following for the moment, instead he *illuminates the way* upon which the following must be done. That indeed, as far as this enthusiastic scribe is concerned, is the decisive and necessary thing. He must see the way, he must see it clearly and correctly — then let him talk about following. It is not a way bordered with roses: it is not a road through nothing but pleasant valleys. This idealist must see the realities; this enthusiast must come down to the hard facts; this sanguine temperament must be tempered with commonplace soberness. **The foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests.** Jesus uses a comparison from the animal world which is beneath us; this lifts into the strongest kind of contrast the homelessness of him who is the incarnate Son of God. A *φωλεός* is a den, the home of its animal inhabitant; likewise the *κατασκήνωσις* (tent), or nest, a home for rest and shelter to its bird inhabitant. — **But the Son of man hath** not where to lay his head. Ποῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν κλίνῃ, subjunctive, most

likely because a deliberative direct question is implied, which, of course, would have this mode. Robertson. "Where to lay his head" is a description of what the hole is to the fox, the nest for the bird, and what a fixed, permanent, comfortable earthly home would be for Jesus. This now is not for him. He had no place where to lay his head, no house or piece of land he could call his own. Capernaum was indeed called his own city, and he spent considerable time there, but only in the house of his friends, whose ministrations here and elsewhere he willingly accepted. Luke 8, 2-3. But the picture of his poverty dare not be overdrawn. Jesus was no pauper; the depressing and crushing squalor of poverty was not the lot he chose. His necessities were always provided for; only at intervals inhospitality refused to entertain him, more frequently the stress of the multitude gave him no time to eat. The little band he led had at least a purse and a treasurer, and there must have been something in the purse, two hundred pennies at one time, something to give to the poor occasionally, and something also for Judas, the treasurer, to steal from time to time. The poverty of Jesus was great, yet not excessive. He was no mendicant monk, no ragged and emaciated beggar. (See the author's *His Footsteps*, p. 42, etc.) — In referring to his homelessness as contrasted with the lower creatures he calls himself the **Son of man**, but not to emphasize his humanity as against these other creatures. This is his name as the Messiah (Dan. 7, 13), the Son of God made flesh for our sakes, whose great concern is not earthly property, possession, ease, honor, enjoyment, or anything of that sort, but the Kingdom and its spiritual and eternal blessings for men. Thus Jesus became literally poor that he might make us everlastingly rich. But what Jesus here says applies to the enthusiastic scribe. It would be too narrow an application to think that Jesus wanted

this scribe merely to forsake his earthly property and home, share Jesus' poverty, and so live the rest of his days. Whether the zeal of this man would have been equal to this is really a secondary question. Jesus uses his own homelessness as an illustration of the path of all his true followers. Theirs is the life spiritual instead of the carnal; a life of eternal purpose and interests instead of temporal; a striving for heavenly treasures instead of earthly. As the King, so his subjects; as the Kingdom, so they that dwell therein. — Luke does not tell us whether the scribe turned away disappointed, or whether he took up the cross and followed the Savior. This omission, as also in the following two cases, is certainly intentional. It is like a great question raised before every reader of the narrative. Here is the path, all false glamor removed from it, the light of truth and reality shining over it. This very illumination is like an invitation: Such is the Son of man, and such the path upon which he leads — so come then and follow him! And the question in the omission concerning the scribe is this: *If you were in his position, hearing this answer from Jesus, would you follow him?*

V. 59. The first it too fast; the second too slow. Some find a discrepancy between this narrative and that of Matthew, first because Matthew speaks of a disciple, while Luke does not; secondly, because Matthew puts the words "Follow me" after the denial of the request, and Luke before this denial. The man *was* a disciple, one who had begun to follow Jesus, and Luke himself indicates as much in his request, which a man unattached to Jesus certainly would not have made. The call to follow Jesus does not conflict with this, for this invitation is not used exclusively for such as had never before followed Jesus, but also for men who had been his disciples for a period of time. John 21, 19. As regard the second discrepancy, Mat-

thew as well as Luke reduces the narrative down to its briefest form; a fuller account, no doubt, would show that Jesus used the call to follow him twice, and how he came to do so. — This man then was a disciple, had been in the company of Jesus awhile, and had begun to learn of the Master. He had heeded the call to follow Jesus, and had conquered whatever at that time might have deterred him. Now a new thing occurs to test him, and the old call, **Follow me**, takes on a new meaning because of a new obstacle. And if we are permitted to combine the call to follow Jesus now, with the duty which Jesus imposes in denying this man's request, namely proclaiming the kingdom, the meaning of this call takes on more newness still. — What is in the way and makes this disciples hesitate he himself tells, **Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father**. The words plainly imply that his father had died. Baugher (*Luth. Com.*) follows a few others in supposing that the father was still alive, and that the son requested permission to go and take care of his aged father until his end, putting off following Jesus until then. This supposition is based on the assumption that Jesus is now asking him for the first time to follow, which is wrong according to both Matthew and Luke. The man's father lay a corpse, and we may well take it that the sad news had just been brought. The son must have been deeply affected when he spoke to Jesus. The Jews generally buried without delay; if there was time enough, the same day a person died. The matter then had to be decided at once. Both natural affection and the duty towards parents enjoined of God prompted his desire to hurry home for the last service he could render his father. — Yet he is a disciple of Jesus; he has taken the Master's word as the law of his life. He therefore does not decide for himself, but places the question before his **Lord**. Not that he has any doubts about it in his own

heart, far less, as has been suspected, that he has a bad conscience in the matter. On the contrary, we must give him credit both for his filial love and for his sincere faithfulness to his Master, whose authority he fully recognizes in asking, **Suffer me first to go and bury my father.** When he says "first" the implication is that Jesus is starting away and wishes him to go along. The disciple desires to remain in the Master's company, and is thus placed in a strait betwixt two: love for the Master and the kingdom calls him in one direction — love for his father and filial duty call him in another direction. And the duty to go with Jesus is twofold, not merely to go and learn of him, but also to use now what he had learned, in "publishing abroad the kingdom of God." We may well suppose that he deeply regretted that just at such a time his father's death should occur. Things often seem to come entirely wrong for us. Circumstances seem to conspire against our noblest inclinations. We hesitate, we give way perhaps — and regret the mistake ever afterwards.

V. 60. The answer of Jesus is clear, direct, decisive; not a trace of hesitation, not a thought of balancing between the two desires and duties: **Leave the dead to bury their own dead;** ἄφες here followed by the acc. with the inf., τοὺς νεκροὺς θάψαι. This word comes as a surprise — even now, showing that our hearts are not yet as fully in accord with Jesus and his way of thinking as they should be. We are still inclined to put him, his kingdom, our duty to both into a subordinate place, we still feel that there are other considerations and duties sometimes just as important, yes, for the moment more important — which is always a mistake; though, even as we write the words, we feel how we must make a special effort to believe them. Commentators are divided on the two τοὺς νεκροὺς; some take the first to mean the spiritually dead,

the second the physically dead (namely their own, *ἐαυτῶν*), which is the most natural interpretation and, therefore, the best; others take both words to mean the spiritually dead; and a few make a nonsensical paradox out of the saying, by taking both words in the sense of the physically dead. Jesus really lays down an axiomatic command for his disciples for all time. When the spiritually dead come to their end, putting their bodies into graves is a duty which need not exercise us greatly. Not that the disciples are forbidden in every case to help bury their relatives who die in unbelief, if circumstances are such that without injury they may join in such a duty. But burials of this kind are mere secular affairs, which people whose lives are devoted to secular affairs can attend to without us, whose supreme duties are concerned with spiritual affairs. We see thus how Christless associations have frequently as one of their great objects the burial of "their own dead," and might very fittingly take as their motto the words of Jesus: "Leave the dead to bury their own dead"; for they all care nothing for the true life and him who is the Life. Our chief concern is always with this life and with him who grants it. Where the opportunity is gone to work in the interest of this life, our spiritual duty ends. It is certainly wrong when some ministers of the Gospel stand ready to bury almost any dead person; willingly work together with men and associations of men who omit Christ and the Gospel of grace in his blood from their principles and lives; and doubly wrong, yea, a denial of Christ and a misleading of men, when they so preach the Gospel that a hope of salvation remains for the departed spiritually dead. Because this is true as regards the unbelieving dead generally, it is equally true when these dead belong to our own family circles — much as this may add to our natural grief. — **But go thou and publish abroad the king-**

dom of God (διάγγελλε, keep doing it), Jesus here says, Help save those who yet can be saved! To publish abroad the kingdom of God is to spread the news of the kingdom of salvation which has come in Jesus Christ, our Savior. In the case of the disciple in the text this could only be a preliminary proclamation, such as Jesus sent out the Twelve and the seventy to make during his own ministry. The full proclamation in all the world, the preaching of his sacrificial death and this triumphant resurrection could not be ordered until Christ's atoning work was done. But even the preliminary preaching was to extend as far as possible throughout the Jewish land (note *διά*). — These words of Jesus have been called *harsh*, and an effort has been made to remove this appearance of harshness by pointing to the danger of this disciple's not returning to Jesus if once he went away to join his family in the burial of his father. He would thus become ceremonially unclean for seven days; he would find other secular duties pressing him to stay, such as the division of the inheritance; and the entire Jewish custom of mourning, wailing, condolence (the mourning company in Jairus' house; that at the home of Martha and Mary after Lazarus' burial) was anything but spiritually uplifting from the standpoint of Jesus. These considerations have their weight, but none of them is necessary to soften the supposed harshness of Jesus' words, and the text nowhere even hints at them. The concern of Jesus is not in the mere absence of this disciple from his company, but in the whole principle involved in an absence such as this would be, a forsaking of the necessary spiritual duty to attend to an unnecessary secular duty. The supposed harshness of the words of Jesus exists only for that foolish sentimentality which so generally indulges itself in connection with funerals, covering everything with odorous flowers and soft, meaningless words, while blinking

the hard, harsh reality of death itself, and that which is worse than temporal death and separation, namely spiritual death and eternal damnation, when salvation has not been obtained. Let those who will accept such deceitful sentimentality as balm for their grieving hearts. The manly, truthful, bracing words of Jesus are better than all deceitful sentimentality and gentleness. With his father dead, in the way the words of Jesus intimate, there was no better balm for the son's sore heart than the blessed work of publishing abroad the kingdom of God. How many a grieving heart has been blessed, comforted, strengthened, and filled with Christian joy by following the call of Jesus in work for his kingdom, bringing the Gospel of true comfort to others, or in Christian love alleviating their bodily necessities! — Did this disciple follow the Lord's call? Luke does not tell us, and thus leaves the question for every reader: What would you have done if you had been in this disciple's place? To us it seems as if he remained with Jesus and published abroad the kingdom.

V. 61. The first is too fast, the second too slow, the third too conditional. *Καί* does not combine this narrative with the former because of a special similarity, but like the *καί* at the head of the first narrative merely links the story which follows to the one which precedes. Concerning the man here introduced we know only what we gather from his own words. He is evidently not a disciple, but inclined to become one. While his offer, **I will follow thee**, and his respectful address, **Lord**, in themselves sound well enough, the added request, which is really a condition, changes this: **But first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house**. He says "my house," and must then have owned a home. We do not know whom he had left there; he wants to bid farewell *τοῖς εἰς τὸν οἶκόν μου*, which may refer alike to his family, friends, or

servants. Note that εἰς is here used entirely without the idea of motion; comp. Robertson 536. He reminds us of young Luther intending to enter the monastery at Erfurt and inviting his friends for a farewell feast. They tried their best to dissuade him when they learned his intentions, but his strength of character and the firmness of his resolve was such that, mistaken in his decision though he was, he carried it out in spite of his friends. But this man evidently would run too great a risk to venture back to his house and friends, tell them of his intention to leave them all in order to go with Jesus as his pupil, and thus bid them an affectionate farewell. Let us honor him for his friendship and love, but let us note at the same time that even such humanly noble affections may lead away from the kingdom of God or prove a bar to our entering it. — The answer of Jesus is again axiomatic, and at the same time figurative: **No man, having put his hand, etc.** Here is a general truth which cannot be denied. It applies to this prospective disciple as well as to every other person in any way like him, especially those who are ready to accept the kingdom conditionally. The man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is usually pictured by commentators as drawing crooked furrows, and one even draws attention to the awkward ancient plows which demanded great care in handling properly. Noesgen thinks the ploughman's looking back means his longing for the past joys of the harvest and the sweet winter's rest. But these interpretations of the figure fall short of the point to be illustrated. Jesus speaks of one who is *not fit* for the kingdom of God. A man glancing back occasionally can still plow, even though he draw crooked furrows and bungle the work; so also can a man whose thoughts keep going back to past easy days. The illustration which Jesus uses shows us a man who *cannot plow at all*; his hands indeed hold the

plow handles, but his eyes are altogether somewhere else, namely behind him (βλέπω, the attention directed to *one* point, and this behind him). As Jesus is speaking of a man entering his kingdom, we must think of a man just laying his hands on the plow for the first time. He is not an expert, an old practical hand, able to plow with his eyes shut, but a mere beginner. He cannot possibly plow with his eyes turned back, he cannot draw even a crooked furrow. This illustration has a touch of humor in it; a man learning to plow with his hands attempting to go in one direction, while his eyes go in the opposite direction, only makes himself ridiculous. Jesus does not say that the plowman looks back at some particular thing behind him, he merely looks back, in the opposite direction from the one in which he ought to look. No matter what the thing is behind him at which he looks, the effect is always the same as far as the plowing is concerned. This figure aptly illustrates *a divided heart*, the attempt to follow Christ and yet stay with the world, to grasp the kingdom and to enjoy the world at the same time. — It cannot be done; whoever tries it is not **fit for the kingdom of God**, εὔθετος, well placed, adapted, suitable, which does not refer to a moral, meritorious fitness or self-adaptation of the sinner to enter the kingdom of grace, but to that inward opposition of the heart, that attachment to the world which often persists in spite of the gracious drawing of Jesus and the Gospel, and will not be overcome. It does not make so much difference to what part of the worldly life the heart looks back with longing, unable to live without it, the effect is always the same — not fit for the kingdom. Every condition to which a man would have Jesus assent before giving him his heart is a fatal looking back. The man in the text who could not give up his friends completely when he stood in the presence of Jesus with those friends absent, could far less give

up those friends when standing in their presence and Jesus absent. The thing has been tried often enough. Baugher tells of the experience of missionaries in India with new converts. Their parents plead with tears and threats that they be not baptized. Failing in this they ask at least one parting visit before the Baptism be administered. This seemingly reasonable request once conceded, the convert is lost to Christianity, never, or seldom, returning from the charm and power of the old pagan home control. Paul therefore writes: "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3, 13-14. Hos. 10, 2. — Did this man follow Jesus after hearing the word? Again no answer in the sacred record, and the question returned to us, for each one, putting himself in this man's place, to answer. We think that the word of Jesus, so clear and strong, so illuminating and convincing, bore its proper fruit when first spoken to that one hearer, as it has borne much fruit in unnumbered cases since.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

There is no question about the outward division of this text, nor is it difficult to find its unity. The preacher's task is mainly one of formulation. We may sum up the text in the theme:

Christ's Kingdom Requires Complete Devotion.

- I. Enthusiasm deep enough.*
- II. Affection high enough.*
- III. Willingness true enough.*

Really the text shows three negatives, namely faults or mistakes, which our outline aims to turn into the corresponding positives. — Of course, the negative form may be retained, if only the preacher understands that he must not preach a lot of don'ts. Let him make the positive points sufficiently strong, and then he may formulate like this:

Make No Mistakes in Trying to Follow the Master!

I. Be not too fast — count the cost! II. Be not too slow — place Jesus first always! III. Do not try a half — only the whole heart will do.

Another way with a negative text is to combine each negative with its positive mate:

What Kind of a Heart Does the Kingdom Require?

- I. One superior to earthly pay.*
- II. One superior to earthly grief.*
- III. One superior to earthly love.*

The text really deals with the idea of fitness and unfitness for the Kingdom. By nature we are all unfit. Any fitness by which we come into and stay in the Kingdom is the work of Christ and his grace and Word.

Are You Fit for the Kingdom?

You can tell by taking a look 1) *At the holes of the foxes and the nests of the birds;* 2) *At your own father's grave;* 3) *At the man who would learn to plow with his eyes turned behind him.* The positives are sufficiently implied in this outline, but be sure to use them. — Karl Gerok is all negative, yet his ideas are good if we take care of the other side:

Let No Obstacle Keep You From Jesus!

- I. The world's treasures and enjoyments.*
- II. The world's griefs and cares.*
- III. The world's friendships and companionships.*

Zapff has the idea of steps that carry us into the Kingdom: 1) a well considered step; 2) a firm step; 3) a straightforward step. — Several outlines have been offered with the word "three" in them: "three obstacles," "three lessons," etc. Some homileticians let such themes pass. We reject them, because they really express no unity, and because a better formulation can be secured with very little effort. Homiletics is the art of finding a *better* way in many points. Excellence is in always choosing the *better* way.

THE TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Matthew 10, 24-33

This pericope presents the final requirement of the Kingdom in this series of texts, namely *fearless confession*. Confession has been mentioned before, it is always the proper expression of faith. But here the world before which confession must be made is taken account of, its wicked opposition, the danger resulting for the confessors, and the fearlessness with which they must face their foes. A believing Church is a confessing Church, therefore an opposed Church, often enough a suffering Church, but always a victorious and at last a triumphant Church. Compare the parallel passage Luke 12, 2-9.

This text is part of the charge of Christ to the disciples when he sent them on a preaching tour. But far from being limited to that time and occasion, Christ's words have a universal application for all time; and this not only for the messengers and ministers of the Gospel, who still carry forward the work once begun by Christ and the Twelve, but also for all the members of his Church who confess his name before men, stand behind the proclamation of his Word, and therefore share the tribulations and persecutions which result.

V. 24. Our text continues the chapter on the persecutions which the disciples as heralds of the kingdom must expect. How self-evident, how natural in fact it is that Christ's ministers should be persecuted. They are pupils, and he is the teacher; they are servants (bond-men), and he is their lord and owner; they are of his household, members of his family, and he

is the master or head of the house. These three statements describe the relation of Christ's disciples to him, their Lord and Savior, and this relation is the same for all believers. There is an *intimate bond of union* between Christ and his own. The figure of the bond-servant shows that he literally *owns* us; that of the household, that we are actually *related to him*, as children to a father; that of the pupil, that his mind, doctrine, principle, and wisdom are *willingly absorbed* by us. A threefold cord binds Christ and us together in such a way that we cannot be separated from him. — As far as the pupil is concerned and his work of learning from the teacher, his highest aim is to be **as his master**, especially in this case, where far more than intellectual learning is meant. "Let this mind be in you," writes St. Paul, "which was also in Christ Jesus." Phil. 2, 5. And Jesus himself said: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." Matth. 11, 29. "For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." John 13, 15. "Ye should follow his steps," 1 Pet. 2, 21. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so walk, even as he walked." 1 John 2, 6. — V. 25. 'Ο δούλος ὡς κτλ. continues the sentence without reference to ἀρκετόν, which would really require a second dative: καὶ (ἀρκετόν) τῷ δούλῳ. In the case of an ordinary teacher his pupils frequently go beyond him, but never so in the case of Christ. "As his master" is purposely used because far more than intellectual requirements are meant; these pupils, all disciples, are learning to become Christlike in mind, heart, and life. As far as **the master of the house** is concerned, Christ holds that position forever, for God "gave him to be the head over all things to the Church." Eph. 1, 22; and we are to "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ," Eph. 4, 15; in all things he has the pre-eminence, Col. 1, 18; in fact "we are mem-

bers of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," Eph. 5, 30; and "Christ is all, and in all," Col. 3, 11. — This intimate bond and union between Christ and all his true followers is certainly a precious, comforting thing, but here it is brought forward for a different purpose, namely that because of this relation we cannot expect to be **above** Christ, in the sense of his humiliation while among men, and the persecution which he suffered from his enemies. We cannot expect a better lot than the one which befell him. — What that lot is Jesus describes in stating that most vicious and malicious slander which his enemies hurled at him in their blind, satanic hate, when they **called the master of the house Beelzebub**. We know that the Pharisees actually said: "He casteth out devils through the prince of devils," Matth. 9, 34; 12, 24; also: Thou "hast a devil," John 8, 48. Some commentators think that Jesus here refers only to these wicked slanders, arguing that if he was a tool of the devil, Beelzebub must have dwelt in him and controlled him completely, so that this slander *virtually* called him Beelzebub. But there is no reason why we should not take Christ's word exactly as it stands. The men who went so far as to call him a tool of Beelzebub needed only one step more, actually to call him Beelzebub, although the occasion when they did this is not set down for us in the sacred record. Meyer rightly accepts the words of Christ as they stand. Βεελζεβούλ (lord of the dwelling) is the name Baal-zebub (the Ekronite "god of flies") as the Jews in ridicule changed it, making it mean "god of dung" (which however is *zebel*). *Zebul* means "dwelling," lord of this lower world, "prince of the power of the air," Eph. 2, 2, and taking up his "dwelling" in human bodies, Matth. 12, 45. There is a correspondence between the name Christ gives himself, οἰκοδεσπότης, "the master of the house," and this meaning of the name his haters ap-

plied to him, Beelzebul, "master of the dwelling." As the Ekronite god was applied to by King Ahaziah to cast out his disease, so the Jews taunted Jesus with using the same idol power to cast out demons. Idols and demons had a close connection, 1 Cor. 10, 20-21; and Beelzebul was thought to be the foul prince of both. See Fausset, *Bible Cyclopedia*, comp. also Zahn. — But Christ and his followers shall not be treated altogether alike. The Master is ever greater than his disciples, and this greatness in a measure restrained his enemies. His followers lack that, also his sinlessness, his perfect wisdom, his mastery of every situation. They shall make mistakes, they shall fall into many a fault and sin. In this sense they shall never be "above" their Master, and therefore **how much more** shall they be called Beelzebub by their persecutors. When John Huss was led to his death by fire he had to wear a tall cap painted over with hideous demons.

V. 26. Here is the strong comfort which all the true servants and followers of Christ have when the bitterness of persecution comes upon them. This comfort is framed in the threefold injunction: **Fear not**. There is reason to fear; we shall be inclined to fear; but Jesus does not merely tell us not to fear — he actually removes the cause for fear. Fear them not **therefore**, οὐδὲν, uses what he has just said as a reason why the disciples should not fear; they are so closely connected with him that they must share his lot — therefore, let them not fear. But a number of other reasons press for consideration (ῥάο). The first is *the victorious course of the Gospel* — the things he has said to them cannot be suppressed. **There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known**. A proverbial saying, with a rhythmic repetition for emphasis. It expresses a general truth based on the consciousness of an all-

seeing, just God, who will bring all mysteries to light. A thing may be *κεκαλυμμένον*, covered up by men, and it may actually be *κρυπτόν*, really hidden; nevertheless the cover shall be removed, *ἀποκαλυφθήσεται*, and the thing shall be known, *γνωσθήσεται*. Jesus used this saying on other occasions; its bearing must be ascertained from the connection in which it is used.

V. 27. Here we see that Jesus by that which is covered means **what I tell you in darkness**, and by that which is hidden, **what ye hear in the ear**. The darkness acts as a cover; what is whispered in the ear (Bengel: one ear) is successfully hidden. Jesus speaks then of his Gospel, namely of the entire course of instruction which he gave his disciples. Much of this was given in private; Jesus frequently took his disciples apart from the multitude, and they, when they were alone with Jesus, asked him many things; and there were some things especially which he ordered them to keep to themselves, because at the time they could not fully and properly understand them, and were therefore unfit to tell them, until fuller knowledge came to them. But all these things, in the words of the proverb, however covered and hid for a time, could not remain so — were bound to be revealed and known. Men might try to hush them up, prevent the Word of Jesus, his precious Gospel, which Jesus at first so carefully gave into the keeping of his disciples, from spreading abroad, — they would not succeed. Jesus has in mind this one thought: the Gospel cannot be quenched. This is what he wants the disciples to know and understand thoroughly, and so, with an inward assurance which overcomes and casts aside all fear, proclaim the triumphant message of Christ. — Was it delivered to them under cover of darkness, in privacy, **speak ye in the light**, of publicity, before all the world. Was it whispered to them in the ear, and so hidden only, in their minds and hearts, **proclaim**

upon the housetops and let it be known by all men. The aorist imperatives εἶπατε and κηρύξατε are stronger than the present. The flat-roofed oriental houses were fine places for a crier to stand and publish news to the crowds below in the streets. Oriental mysteries were kept veiled; esoteric knowledge in many idolatrous cults was handed down under seal of secrecy from one devotee to another; Freemasonry still swears its members to eternal silence under gruesome penalties. These try to hide themselves under cover of darkness and secrecy; they too shall be revealed and made known — to their confusion. But the message of Christ, while confined to a few in the beginning for natural reasons, unlike these cults which need mystery, secrecy, and darkness for their very existence, is in its very nature a thing of light and publicity, and though hated and fought against by many, it shall, together with those who joyfully, fearlessly proclaim it, prevail.

V. 28. The second cause for fearlessness is *the limited power of their foes*. As they shall fail in suppressing the Word of Christ, so they shall fail in injuring Christ's followers beyond a narrow limit. **And be not afraid** of, καὶ μὴ φοβηθῆτε ἀπὸ — the same verb as in the injunction, Fear not, only with the preposition instead of the simple accusative; indicating a fear which causes one to flee from what is feared. — In a way there is cause for such fear, for seeking safety in flight, for the foes of the disciples are they **which kill the body** (ἀποκτείνω means to kill, to take out of life). Let Stephen whom the Jews stoned to death serve as an illustration. This is terrible enough, a power never to be underrated, which at times has been exercised to the limit of human effort, till the arms of the executioners grew weary, and their swords dull. Alas, it has terrified many Christians of little faith, and to escape death they have denied the faith. And

there were others even more faint-hearted and weak-kneed, who denied long before blood was even mentioned or thought of. — But what is this worst thing men can do? “Kill the body,” **but are not able to kill the soul.** Σῶμα and ψυχὴ are contrasted; the body can be cut off from its bodily life, but not the soul of the Christian, which has the spiritual life in it, from that life, by the hands of men. As between the two, the soul with its priceless life outranks the body and its earthly life altogether. To lose the body is to lose little; to lose the soul is to lose all. When then the followers of Christ meet their bitterest foes, these with their most vicious and wicked hatred can never reach beyond this poor body and its little span of earthly life — and they cannot touch even that as they may decide, Jesus presently adds. — But Christ remembers that so many of his disciples are fearful and of little faith (Matth. 8, 26). It is not enough in order to remove their fear, to point to the causelessness of it. He must take stronger medicine — namely *the fear of God* to drive out all *fear of men*: **but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.** We see no convincing reason why the word fear, φοβείσθε, should be taken in any other sense in this place than in the other three places in this text, one of which indeed has the ἀπό, but the others not. If φοβέομαι is used with reference to the killing of the body as a terrible thing, we certainly cannot alter the meaning of this verb to something less than downright fear when the destruction of soul and body together in hell, a thing infinitely more terrible, is spoken of. Besser and others understand the devil as the one to be feared, but he is only one of those foes of ours whom we are not to fear, but to resist, for then he will flee from us, 1 Pet. 5, 9. He also has no unlimited power to destroy our bodies and souls in hell. God is here meant. But the fear here set before us is not

that childlike fear and reverence which is the proper motive for filial obedience to his will, but that terrifying fear of his holy, burning indignation and wrath which would have to come over us if we yielded to the fear of men and denied his Word and will. His wrath destroys body and soul in hell. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath." Ps. 90, 11. The Baptist asked the Pharisees and Sadducees: "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Matth. 3, 7. This dreadful fear is indeed not the Christian's motive for obedience, nor is it so spoken of here; it is not in the Christian's heart at all while he faithfully serves God. It is that fear which fills the heart of men opposed to God, which will dreadfully overwhelm them at last. The words of Jesus have this sense, If you, my disciples, are going to be moved by dread of terrible consequences, dread not men who can only kill the body, but dread an almighty and allholy God who can destroy soul and body in hell. Pank applies this in his sermon as follows: "Here is a son who lies to his father, his teacher, his employer. Why does he lie? He is afraid of the consequences of the truth before men. But the consequences of the untruth before God he does not fear! . . . Here is a company in which faith and religion are ridiculed and laughed at. You sit silent, laugh also, not because in your heart you think as they do, but — because you fear the condemnation of a few shallow fellows, you fear men. Behold, you have escaped the condemnation of men, but another condemnation has already been recorded against you; do you want to hear it?" — **In hell**, ἐν γέέννῃ, really "valley (of the son, or the sons) of Hinnom" (an unknown man), who probably owned property in the valley south and west of Jerusalem, where the idolatrous Canaanites burned their children in sacrifice to Moloch. This valley the Jews used for the

burning of cadavers and offal, and thus came to employ the name for the abode of the damned, i. e., hell. — Now follows a third reason why Christ's disciples should know no fear of men in following Christ, confessing and preaching his name.

V. 29. *God's special providence* is over Christ's disciples. **Two sparrows** for the very smallest coin, **a farthing**, and the smallness doubly emphasized by using the diminutive both times: two *little* sparrows for one *little* farthing, the tenth part of a drachma. So insignificant, of such little value is a sparrow. But the great **Father** in heaven, your Father, watches over them every one so carefully that not one falls (dead) to the ground without his permission and will. — The smallness of the sparrow suggests something exceedingly small belonging to us, a hair of our head. **The very hairs of your head are all numbered.** It is said that a human head carries on an average about 140,000 hairs. Why should these be numbered? What difference does it make if we lose one? So complete and minute is the providential care of the Father for his children that it extends to the very hairs of their heads, not one of which, like the apparently insignificant sparrow, shall fall to the ground without his permission and will. — What a tremendous reason for the abolition of all fear: **Fear not therefore.** No need of the particle γὰρ in the sentence which draws the grand conclusion from the lesser to the greater, yea, from the least to the greatest (almost): **Ye are of more value than many sparrows.** Ὑμεῖς is last; *little* sparrows again; διαφέρετε with the gen., ye are more distinguished, excellent. — This is a complete answer to every thought of fear on the part of the disciples. Their foes might indeed persecute, even kill them bodily, but not a hair of their heads could they touch, to say nothing of the body itself and its life,

without God's permitting it; and he as their Father could and would permit nothing but what was both best for them and the kingdom, and conducive to his glory and honor. If he governed so completely the animal world, and the tiniest thing in human life, a hair of the head, he would certainly rule in the midst of his enemies when these interfered with the work, tranquillity, and progress of his kingdom. But there are many glorious conclusions we can draw from these statements of Christ; the only trouble is that our faith hesitates to accept them, rest on them, and act on them as it should. If we were more trustful, we would be less fearful.

Now follows a *glorious promise*, v. 32. "Therefore," οὖν, here draws a general conclusion from the foregoing argument and elaboration. The idea of fear is here exchanged for that act which fear is likely to prevent or modify, ὁμολογήσει ἐν ἐμοὶ ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων, showing that all through Jesus had this act, the cardinal one in the Christian's and the preacher's life and work, in mind. 'Ὁμολογέω ἐν = to make a confession regarding some one," here, however, a confession which identifies with Christ (ὁμολογέω, to say the same thing) ; the ἐν is due to the Aramaic, Robertson. Nothing is said now of what such a confession may cost; all that is understood from the foregoing words on the fear of men. It may cost even life itself, especially for the heralds of the Gospel, the pastors and leaders of the churches. It is bound, in any case, to cost something, for the world is ever around us with its sneers and slurs, its silent, if not open, opposition, its many ways of showing its hatred and dislike of confessing Christians. — But he who shall be found faithful, putting away fear and trusting the Master who is over him, **him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven.** The future ὁμολογήσω

refers to the last great day. Then will Jesus identify himself with us, i. e. acknowledge us as his very own; and this before his Father in the heavens — *his* Father, pointing to his greatness and glory, *in the heavens*, embracing the whole heavenly world, all the inhabitants of which shall hear the blessed words. All believers are confessors, and only unconscious faith, as in babes, does not actually confess; but even babes have been slain as belonging to God's people. The confession Christ promises his confessors is not some peculiar acknowledgment he shall make of them before the Father, but that blessed one which we know: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matth. 25, 31. — But there is a reverse to this glorious promise. **Whosoever shall deny me before men.** In the first statement we have ὅστις ὁμολογήσει, a fut. indic., here, however, in the same sense ὅστις ἀρνήσεται, an aor. subjunctive, and without the ἄν that often appears; this subj. is futuristic: "shall deny." Comp. Robertson. Deny — as Peter denied, saying he knew not the man; as others denied during the ten great persecutions, when to save their lives they sacrificed to idols or to Cæsar; as ever more and more deny him, by turning from the Savior, the Gospel, and the Church which in true faith they once confessed, or by failing to confess, defend and suffer for the truth which they hold, when it is assailed. Alas, there are many such and they often take their denial as a light thing, threatening no serious consequences. — But Jesus has set the seal of doom upon it: **him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.** We know the words of that denial from Jesus' own lips: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matth. 7, 23. Confusion, dismay, consternation, eternal misery will fall upon all whom Christ thus

denies. — So much depends upon our confessing Christ before men. His confession, or denial, of us, shall be the reflection and echo of ours. God strengthen us all and make us fearless confessors to the end.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The real subject of this text is not merely *confession*, but a *summary of the chief motives for confessing*. The moment we perceive this, we have an outline for the sermon:

Christ's Kingdom Demands a Fearless Confession.

- I. *For Christ's sake, to whom we belong.*
- II. *For the Gospel's sake, which we must proclaim.*
- III. *For the world's sake, which we must overcome.*
- IV. *For the Father's sake, who shall protect us.*
- V. *For our own sake, whom Christ is to confess.*

The supreme motive for confessing Christ is doubtless the desire to have him confess us at the last day. We may pivot the sermon on that vital point:

Do You Want Christ to Confess You at the Last Day?

- I. *Then remember you are not above him now.*
- II. *Then conquer all fear of men now.*
- III. *Then joyfully confess him now.*

The motives for confession may be treated in another way. Certain things must be faced, they are painful, but we are ready to do that. Certain things may be expected; that draws us, and makes us happy.

Does It Pay to Confess?

- I. *It may not look so.* You will share your Master's fate — men may even assail you — denial will seem more profitable by far. Yet all these deterrents are deceptive, and we must see their falseness.
- II. *But it always is so.* It is glorious to be like the Master — sensible to fear God instead of men — right to expect the Gospel to win — safe to rely on divine providence — blessed to be confessed by Jesus at last.

How Christ Helps Us to Confess.

- I. *He removes our fears.*
- II. *He strengthens our faith.*
- III. *He proffers us his promise.*

The Noble Act of Confessing Christ.

- I. *It is noble to conquer fear.*
- II. *It is noble to voice conviction.*
- III. *It is noble to be like the Master.*
- IV. *It is noble to stand approved at last.*

The negatives are easy to supply. Who wants to feel, to be, and to be branded at last, as ignoble?

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

John 10, 23-30

The four texts set for the four last Sundays of the church year, as may be expected for this season, are eschatologic in character, and may be arranged under the general heading, *The Consummation of the Kingdom*. The purpose of the last text, however, is a dual one; it is intended for one thing to close the entire church year, and for another to serve as a message for the *Totenfest*, the festival of the dead, celebrated in Germany and elsewhere. The main theme and purpose of each of the four texts, aside from other great thoughts contained in them, may be set down as follows: 1) Eternal life; 2) The resurrection and the judgment; 3) The eternal reward of grace; 4) The great closing admonition, Be ye ready!

In taking up the first of these texts it is a wise suggestion that we do not only make use of the usual *oratio* and *meditatio*, but also read, play, and sing some of our beautiful hymns on Jesus the Good Shepherd and the blessed condition and the glorious hope of his sheep. This suggestion could and should be followed in approaching other texts; it will attune our hearts to the divine message, put us in the proper frame of mind to receive the blessed truths we are to convey to others, and enrich our own spiritual lives. The great point of our text, considering its position in this series, we find in the words of Jesus concerning his sheep: "I give unto them eternal life." By this life we understand the possession we have already here on earth, a possession, however, which shall never end, for it is *eternal* life, wherefore Jesus also adds:

“They shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.” — The twenty-second verse does not belong to the text, neither does the thirty-first. This means that the historic setting of the text, the narrative feature of it, is to be omitted or at least thrust into the background. We are not concerned with the time, the place, the action of the Jews in treating Jesus as a blasphemer, but chiefly with the words of Jesus as they apply to us. So much for the limitations of the text. Nevertheless, it is well to know that the dialog recorded in our text was spoken at the feast of the dedication, a festival ordered by Judas Maccabeus, B. C. 167, in commemoration of the cleansing and rededication of the Temple after its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes. This festival was celebrated annually for eight days beginning on the 25th of Chisleu (the middle of December), throughout the whole country of Palestine, especially by illuminating the houses, therefore also named τὰ φῶτα, “Lights.” The Passover festival occurred in the spring, the harvest of Pentecost festival in the summer, the Feast of Tabernacles in the fall, and the Feast of Dedication in winter.

V. 23. The porch of Solomon afforded shelter and warmth on the wintry day. This is the porch chosen afterwards for the assembly of the Christians. It was named after King Solomon, as Josephus tells us, *Ant.* XX, 9. 7, because it was the only part of that king's structure left after the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar. It was situated east of the Temple building proper. Here Jesus **was walking**. Though not obliged to be at Jerusalem for this feast, he was here nevertheless, having spent the two months since the Feast of Tabernacles away from the city. He was engaged in thought, and while nothing is said of his disciples, these (with John who mentions the place and the action of Jesus so carefully) no doubt were

with him, walking likewise. — **Therefore**, because his walking thus afforded such a fine opportunity, **the Jews**, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, a part of Christ's haters, regularly designated thus by John, **came round about him**, encircling him by preconcerted action with bold and evil intent. The situation is dramatic: Jesus is face to face with his inveterate enemies, these have closed about him, and for the moment there is no friendly multitude near to act as a silent backing for Jesus. His disciples — however many or few were attending him at the moment — the Jews no doubt considered a negligible quantity. — Their boldness reveals itself in their question, which ends with a short incisive demand, **How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly.** These Jews were long past any scruples or excuses in attacking Jesus. Their action in surrounding him is plainly hostile, their demand sounds altogether like a direct challenge. Their answer to the statement which Jesus makes to them was to "take up stones again to stone him," v. 31. They calculated on this very thing, that Jesus would indeed assert his Messiahship somewhat in the way he actually did. They meant, therefore, not only to find a charge against him to be used before their judical council against him, but to end the whole matter right here on the spot. Jesus is in their hands, they now have him, and they mean that he shall not escape. Every eye hangs upon his lips. Will he equivocate and put them off? Will he show cowardice and evade the direct issue? They speak about suspense, τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν αἴρεις, "thou liftest up our soul," in expectation. There was suspense indeed, a different kind of suspense — what would he say? what could they do to crush him forever?

V. 25. The first word of Jesus, **I told you**, is a perfect master-stroke — Εἶπον ὑμῖν — that was all! Here they are demanding a thing with such a show of

suspense — and it has been told them long ago. Where had they their ears? They are trying to force an issue now — why, they should have forced it long ago, when he first told them. Why had they failed to take up his word when it was spoken to them, coming now with the plea that he had never told them plainly, so that now — for some reason (known indeed well enough to Jesus) — they might take it up? All these inferences lie in the two little words εἶπον ὑμῖν. And more than these — for Jesus is actually telling them now what they demand, namely that he is the Christ. So far is he from evading the dangerous issue thrust upon him that he meets it squarely and pointedly in his first utterance. If he had made answer in a way expected by the Jews, say in words like these: “I will tell you now, I am indeed the Christ,” we may well suppose that the Jews would have taken action at once, for undoubtedly this was what they surrounded him for. But the unexpected form of Jesus’ reply prevented this and gave him opportunity to say all that he meant to say on this occasion. — We may ask, when had Jesus told the Jews that he was the Christ? Had he expressed himself to them as clearly as he did to the Samaritan woman: “I that speak unto thee am he,” John 4, 26, or to the man he had healed of congenital blindness: “It is he that talketh with thee,” John 9, 37? Let us note that on the latter occasion some of the Pharisees were present and heard what Jesus said. He had indeed told them plainly again and again, by word as well as by deed, that he was the Messiah; so when he called himself the Good Shepherd not long before this, when he told them he was the Light of the world, the Bread of life, and in many other ways; then especially also in his works, which all spoke a language so plain that it could not be misunderstood if any man had ears to hear and eyes to see. In addition note the clearness of John 5, 17 etc.,

where the Jews try to kill Jesus, "because he also called God his own Father, *making himself equal with God.*" There, surely, he had told them who he was, namely the divine Messiah; and they had understood very well what he said. — The trouble was not with Jesus, in either having failed to speak at all or in having used doubtful language about his being the Christ, just as it was not now, when in two words he again told them in the plainest and simplest way just what they asked for. The trouble was with these Jews themselves: I told you, **and ye believe not.** After all this telling, even now they believe not (present tense). His telling has all been useless, through fault of theirs; is even so now. Why this is so he adds in a moment. — In order to settle the question of his telling them properly once and for all, he points to that most convincing form of his telling them, which is not merely by words, but by deeds which absolutely substantiate his words: **the works that I do**, etc. Words alone, mere verbal statements ever so plain and direct, however valuable and necessary, could never suffice. A fraudulent Christ might say with his mouth, I am the Christ. We know that false Christs did arise and so declare themselves. But their works proved them liars. The "works" of Jesus absolutely substantiated his words concerning his person and office as the Christ of God. He significantly calls them the works **that I do in my Father's name** — ποιῶ, still do — they have not ceased by any means. Every one of them is a work, wrought in no self-chosen way, but done altogether in the Father's name. It is God's work; done through his power; in obedience to, and in accord with, his will; a work such as God delegated and sent him to do; and — more remotely — a work such as God through the prophets had foretold and described in advance, that when men saw it done they might know its character and significance. Such

works are all the miracles of Christ, for this reason called signs; but not as miracles alone, i. e. exhibitions of power, but as miracles of mercy in the highest sense of the word, not only mercifully aiding the body, but pointing the soul to eternal life. A fine example of this character of Jesus' works we see in the healing of the paralytic whose sins Jesus forgave; another in the healing of the blind man already referred to, for whom he afterwards opened the eyes of faith to see his Savior, the Son of God. — All these works, Jesus says, **bear witness of me**, now, even at this moment they are standing before you as witnesses (*μαρτυρέω* = to be a witness, to bear witness), crying aloud to you. Through these works Jesus was speaking at that moment, and speaks to this very day, in the plainest possible way, yea, in a way absolutely essential for the testimony we must have; for if these witnesses (his works) were silent, or if they gave a different testimony from the one they so clearly and unanimously utter, then indeed we might be in doubt. But now all doubt is answered.— In making this reply Jesus fearlessly accepted the challenge of the Jews and to their very faces in the most masterly way declared himself the Christ. But there is far more than just fearlessness and the highest kind of masterful bravery here; there is also the love that reaches out to save yet, if it be possible, these his foes. The appeal to the testimony of his works is an effort to make this testimony take hold in their hearts at last. It bids them stop and think, go over in their minds these works of Jesus, observe that they are all truly done in the name of the Father, and therefore accept their plain and convincing testimony. Jesus might have stopped at this point, but he did not. His effort to save causes him to say more, namely to state "plainly" why these Jews do not believe, and in connection therewith to picture beautifully the blessedness of those who do believe.

V. 26. **But** ἀλλά, a sad word to place after a statement full of saving grace. This time Jesus adds **ye**, ὑμεῖς, emphatically, **believe not**. The trouble is entirely with them, namely in their persistent unbelief. The testimony of the works is absolutely plain — the Good Shepherd's voice is clear and easily recognized; but they render it ineffective for themselves through their wilful unbelief. Where there is every reason to trust the testimony, they simply reject it. This is always the case with unbelief. The saving light and grace with all its divine efficacy is present, but unbelief meets it with wilful resistance and so prevents the saving effect. — **Because ye are not my sheep**; ὅτι here states the intellectual reason for their unbelief, as any one could see it; not the effective cause. The sense is: Ye are not my sheep, and since ye are not, ye do not believe. It is not: Because ye are not my sheep, ye cannot believe. There was nothing outside of themselves to prevent them from being his sheep and believing in him. The sad *fact* (οὐκ ἐστέ) of their not being Jesus' sheep explains their unbelief. Jesus says ἐκ τῶν προβάτων, the ἐκ with partitive meaning, "of my sheep"; he has others. — **Sheep** refers to the sayings of Christ spoken during his former visit to Jerusalem, two months ago, to these same Jews. Then he called himself the Good Shepherd (v. 11 and 14) and described his sheep. Now he repeats that particular characteristic of his sheep which comes into play here. These Jews differ from his sheep in that they do not hear the Shepherd's voice. — **My sheep hear my voice**, i. e. hear it so as to recognize it for their Shepherd's voice: this is their characteristic, the thing that marks them. Trustful hearing is meant. Jesus is known of his own ("my sheep" τὰ ἐμά). They know his voice, and a stranger they will not follow (v. 4-5). The Jews had chosen another shepherd, namely him who is a thief and a robber, who comes to steal, kill and destroy.

No wonder they did not believe (trust) this Shepherd who was trying to win them. Jesus does not say, My sheep hear my *word*, but my **voice**, τῆς φωνῆς μου. The *word* signifies the contents, the *voice* the tone, sound, personal peculiarity. Both are inseparably bound together. In the Shepherd's word, wherever and whenever it is spoken, the sheep hear the Shepherd's voice, and it is inexpressibly sweet and attractive to them. "This lovely, delightful picture you may, if you wish, see for yourself among sheep. When a stranger calls, whistles, or coaxes: Come, sheep! come, sheep! it runs and flees, and the more you call, the more it runs, as if a wolf were after it, for it knows not the strange voice; but where the shepherd makes himself heard a little, they all run to him, for they know his voice. This is how all true Christians should do, hear no voice but their Shepherd's, Christ's, as he himself says." Luther. The word of Jesus concerning his sheep is here spoken to the Jews who were not his sheep. He draws a beautiful image of his sheep before them, implying throughout that they had none of this beauty and blessedness, yet at the same time trying to awaken in their hearts the longing to acquire it; there also runs through the description a hint of what must become of all those who are not his sheep and to the end refuse to become such. And with all this Jesus gives them the complete answer which they needed; he tells them plainly who he is, as they asked, and then — something they neglected to ask — who they are, who they should be, if they desired salvation, and what they missed and lost by being what they were. — These three statements go together: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." In three perfect strokes the relation between Christ the Shepherd and his believers as his sheep is painted before our eyes. Something vital would be lacking if one of these three were missing. They are

simultaneous, not successive. This is the sense of the four καί which unite the sentences with the present tenses, to which two negations regarding the future are added, showing what blessed protection is in store for Christ's sheep in the coming days. — **I know them**, γινώσκω, indicates knowledge, not merely that Jesus knows which ones are his sheep, but that he knows all about them. The Shepherd's eye always rests upon his sheep, and there is nothing about any one of them which escapes him. In the fullest sense of the word he *knows* his sheep. That Jesus knows us we, of course, soon discover and rejoice in the fact and every tender evidence of it; but Christ does not here refer to our experience of his knowing us, he goes no further than the plain statement that he knows us who are his sheep. It is an activity of his mind and heart (not of ours) which he describes in the word γινώσκω. The intellectual is the chief part, but to it is joined the idea of affection, for he knows his sheep as his own; it is a *noscere cum affectu et effectu*, not an idle or indifferent mental perception. To be known thus of Jesus Christ is blessedness and comfort indeed. — **And they follow me.** The image is still that of sheep, treading in the shepherd's footsteps. But while the two former verbs expressed inner acts, this one, ἀκολουθοῦσιν, expresses an outer act. To follow Jesus is to be attached to him, to let him choose the path and direct us in our steps. The expression pictures the life of the Christian controlled by faith in Christ and love to him. As the sheep trustfully follow the shepherd, so Christ's sheep follow him and know themselves safe in his care. As the sheep lovingly stay with their shepherd, so Christ's sheep stay with him and spend their lives with him. In the following is included obedience; and since Christ's path is the way of the cross, it also includes patient suffering according to his will.

Ÿ. 28. Καγώ, "and I," who am the life; with great emphasis, implying so plainly again that he indeed is the Christ. Christ **gives**, δίδωμι, no man can earn eternal life. This word proclaims his free mercy and grace; it reveals our Good Shepherd to us in his full beauty and attractiveness. The world never saw such a Giver as stood before the Jews that day. And he spoke of his great act of giving in order to awaken in their hearts the desire for his gift. But they did not believe his assurance, and so they rejected the offer implied in it for them. The present tense is used, believers *now* have eternal life, the gift of gifts. — As the Giver so is the gift, royal, imperial. **Eternal life**, ζωὴ αἰώνιος, is the true life which flows from God, which is grounded in God, which joins to God, and which leads to God. It is born in us by regeneration when we are born anew; it dwells in us by faith and is held more and more firmly as faith grows in strength; it grows in us and reaches its full development when we are translated from earth to heaven. Temporal death not only does not interfere with it, but aids in fixing it everlastingly as our own. Life itself, the natural as well as the eternal, cannot be seen. Dissect a plant — you cannot find the thing called life; so with an animal. But the manifestations of life can be seen very readily, green foliage, growth, flower and fruit in the plant; breathing, movement, feeding, etc., in the animal. The life eternal (or spiritual) also has its manifestations, hunger and thirst for Christ, his Word and Sacrament; prayerful desire for his help and blessing; sorrow for the sin that still clings to us, and constant reliance upon Christ for pardon and release from sin; willingness to do his will and render him service; love for him, showing itself in love for others; readiness to bear the cross for his sake, and hope of the crown of glory through Christ alone. These manifestations mark the presence of the life as it is

ours now in a world of death. When the day of glory comes the manifestations of our life shall be glorious altogether. — **And they shall never perish**; οὐ μὴ with the 2nd aor. middle subjunctive ἀπόλωνται, one of the strongest forms of denying something future. The reference is to eternal destruction; to perish is to be eternally lost. “In no wise shall they perish forever” is in force from the moment in which Christ gives us eternal life. The image of the sheep and Shepherd still controls the language of Jesus. Sheep when wandering away from the flock die, they perish; wild beasts sometimes carry a poor sheep away, and it too perishes then. The blessedness of Christ’s sheep is their complete protection by the Shepherd. He seeks the lost till it is found and bears it home rejoicing (Luke 15, 1, etc.); he does not fear and flee when he seeth the wolf coming, as doth the hireling (v. 12). The words of Christ admit that there is danger, and that of the gravest sort; he speaks not of any slight hurt, but of perishing forever, of being snatched out of his hand by some fierce enemy. Besides the dangers that now dog the steps of his sheep as they follow him during their earthly lives there is the hour of death when Satan snatches at the soul, and there is the judgment, against which Jesus has especially said he would protect the believer (John 5, 24). — By οὐ . . . τις every hostile power is meant; “for I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Rom. 8, 38-39. Christ protects his sheep against all these foes; under his mighty hand they are entirely safe: καὶ οὐχ ἄρπάσει τις αὐτὰ ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς μου (here the denial with the fut. indic.). We must note that as Jesus says: “no one shall snatch them *out of my hand*,” so he adds in

a moment: "and no one is able to snatch them *out of my Father's* hand." In a perfectly clear way he is thus again "making himself equal with God," John 5, 18. The blessedness of Christ's sheep is not only sweet and great, it is also sure and certain, not like that of the world, which today shines bright, and tomorrow is gone forever. Christ's words apply correctly to all believers, and not, in a Calvinistic sense, to a certain chosen few selected mysteriously and arbitrarily from the vast number of sinners in every way all alike and without faith. The certainty of salvation for believers is thus complete and very comforting, yet not absolute — it is for troubled and tempted men (not for the secure and indifferent) that they may look, not at their own weak hands, but at the hands of Christ — and it does not shut out that possibility to which Christ refers John 15, 6: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch," etc., which keeps our eyes upon the condition underlying all Christ's promises, that we do not wilfully turn from him. — The repetition of the first pronoun in all these brief sentences about Christ's sheep is noteworthy: *My* sheep, τὰ ἐμά; hear *my* voice; *I*, ἐγώ, know them; they follow *me*; *I* ἐγώ, give to them; *my* hand. Thus our salvation rests on Christ indeed.

V. 29. Zahn prefers the reading: ὁ πατήρ ὃ δέδωκέν μοι πάντων μείζον ἐστίν κτλ., "what the Father hath given me is greater than all," drawing a comparison between Christ's sheep and all else. If what the Father has given Christ and what, therefore, now is his, is so great, he surely will keep it against all who would take it from him. But the textual evidence, as Alex. Souter shows it, is fully strong enough for ὁ πατήρ ὃς . . . μείζων ἐστίν; and this reading lays the emphasis on ὁ πατήρ (put first), and on *him* as "greater than all," so that the reason for his keeping the sheep against every foe lies in him, not in something found in the

sheep. The sheep are a gift of the Father to the Son, not merely in the sense that they are entrusted to Jesus to take care of, but as Jesus says John 17, 6, "which thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them me" (comp. John 6, 37), making them indeed Christ's own property. All men belong to God the Father in that special sense in which he is the Creator of all. Some of these by faith through God's grace become true spiritual children of God, and these the Father gives to the Son, the great Redeemer, as the reward for his labor, to live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness. — **Is greater than all**, and πάντων comparing τις in v. 28, and οὐδεὶς in v. 29, is properly taken to be masculine. The Father's greatness is absolute; here his power is concerned, which exceeds that of any and of all who have to do with the sheep in this life or in that to come. — **No one**, οὐδεὶς, in the entire number comprised in "all," no matter what his name, power, or cunning may be, δύναται, has the ability to take a single sheep out of the Father's almighty hand. So well are they protected. This statement parallels the other concerning Jesus, only in that we read οὐχ ἀρπάσει, the simple future shutting out the fact; here οὐδεὶς δύναται ἀρπάξαι, shutting out even the possibility. — How these two statements: "no one shall snatch them out of my hand," and: "no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand," belong together is shown by the closing word, which is the climax of the whole reply of Jesus to the Jews: **I and the Father are one**. This makes everything plain, both his claim to be the Christ, and all his works and promises, especially such declarations as he has just made, that he gives his sheep eternal life, that they shall never perish, nor be snatched out of his hand. Promises like this involve almighty power. Jesus purposely describes his Father's almighty power

in words which repeat the description of his own equal power. There can be only this conclusion — either Jesus is God, or he is blasphemously making himself equal with God. “As all the working of God, by allotting its completion to Jesus, does not cease to be God’s working, so the mission of Jesus as the good Shepherd, carefully and lovingly guarding the flock entrusted to him, and protecting it against all danger, is not meant to put the old God of Israel, the Shepherd and Keeper of his people, out of commission, but rather to put them the more into close union with God. Jesus is not the official successor to one who has died, or the substitute for one who is absent, but the personal and human instrument of the living and omnipresent God, who works in and through him. He who is safe in the hands of Jesus is by that very fact safe in the hands of God.” Zahn. The sense of Jesus’ words dare not be weakened to escape this conclusion. It is not enough to say Jesus and the Father are one in will, or in purpose, or in work, however true this is in itself. The special reference here is to power, namely to almighty power. This essential attribute inheres in Christ, and it inheres in the Father; and the solution is “I and the Father are one,” one in both being God. “I and the Father are one, or one thing, one being, one God, one Lord.” Luther. The two persons are not mingled, for Jesus clearly distinguished between ἐγώ and ὁ πατήρ; but they are a unit in essence, ἓν, one. Augustine says that ἓν frees us from the Charybdis of Arianism, and ἐσμέν from the Scylla of Sabellianism. The Jews to whom this majestic word was addressed understood it to mean: “That thou . . . makest thyself God.” Jesus accepted this understanding of his utterance, and so do we, since it reaches beyond the equality of power alone, and declares Jesus to be one with the Father, because he is equally God. — The Jews now began to carry stones together on Solomon’s porch,

preparatory to inflicting upon Jesus the penalty of the law for blasphemy, and this they did deliberately, without any sudden excitement, showing what had been in their minds from the start. But Jesus who had met their challenge unflinchingly and had told them so plainly and fully who he was, stood his ground even now, and after further defending himself went forth unscathed out of their hands.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Let us note, to begin with, Koegel's conclusion to his sermon on this text. The preacher may well shape his sermon so that it runs to a similar conclusion: "I give unto them eternal life. Where are our departed? - Only down in the grave and corruption? God forbid. Do they rest only in the memory of our love? Our memory too dies. No, another, a higher one, remembers and holds fast and keeps alive. To him they all who have fallen asleep in Christ are unlost. Where I am, there my servant shall be also. Christians never see each other for the last time. And those spirits, who have been made perfect and now live in eternal joy and delight, are my brethren and await me. Where are mine own who have veiled their countenances and retired into an invisible world? In thy hand they rest, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in thy temple they serve thee day and night. No hunger, thirst, heat touch them any more. All tears thou dost wipe from their eyes — and from *our* eyes. Halleluja! Amen." The outline may have this form:

"I Give Unto Them Eternal Life!"

- I. *With the gracious hand of the Shepherd.*
- II. *With the mighty hand of him who is one with the Father.*

The parts may be more extensive, drawing the full picture presented in the text:

The Flock as Jesus Leads It to Salvation.

- I. *He knows every sheep.*
- II. *He calls us with his voice.*
- III. *He gives us eternal life.*
- IV. *He keeps us in his hand.*

The full picture may be drawn also by pointing to the blessedness of Christ's sheep:

Blessed Are the Sheep of Jesus Christ.

- I. *Though in the midst of foes Jesus leads them.*
- II. *Though in a transient world eternal life is theirs.*
- III. *Though facing unknown dangers the Father and the Son protect them.*

A powerful note of assurance runs through the text, and the sermon may take its cue from that:

What Makes Us So Certain of Eternal Life?

- I. *We already have it.* "I give unto them external life." This life we hold by faith. We realize that we have it when we hear the Savior's voice, etc.
- II. *No one shall take it from us.* "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." We are sure in hope, resting on Christ's person, power, and promise.

Blessed Are the Sheep of Jesus Christ.

- I. *They hear his voice* — and are blessed.
- II. *He gives them eternal life* — and they are blessed.
- III. *No man shall pluck them out of his hand* — they shall always be blessed.

THE TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

John 5, 19-29

The progress from the last text to this is quite plain. There the gift of eternal life is the chief thought, here the great events of the last day, stated in v. 28-29, *the resurrection and the judgment*. The passage is a *sedes* for these doctrines, clear and powerful and exceedingly precious. It forms the climax of Christ's mighty defense against the accusations of the Jews after the wonderful healing of the impotent man at Bethesda (Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity). Christ here refutes the charge of Sabbath breaking and of blasphemy, v. 18. He does it in his wonderful way, by fully revealing himself and his work before his accusers. He shows them his relation to the Father, and what in consequence his great work is and must be. Then he adds a wonderful description of his work, dwelling on the chief parts of it, namely the raising of the spiritually dead and the judging of men now (comp. John 3, 18 and 36), finally the raising of the bodily dead and the execution of the great final judgment at the last day. The accusations of the Jews were therefore not merely groundless, but were themselves blasphemy against God and a seal of condemnation for those who uttered them. When Jesus spoke the words of our text he was still in the state of humiliation, but behind the veil of his lowliness, in the light of his majestic words, we can already see the greatness before which at the last day every knee shall bow. This feature of the text should be well utilized; in describing the great works of Christ let the glory of the Worker fully appear.

V. 19. Jesus replied directly to the charge brought

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against him with such bitter hatred by the Jews. Their accusation was utterly false, therefore this double ἀμήν, **verily**, which sets over against the lie the truth, and the additional **I say unto you**, which is the authoritative voice of him who is the truth itself and in whose mouth guile was never found. But not only does truth thus oppose falsehood here, the truth itself is so great, wonderful, and impressive in this case that for itself it deserves this solemn formula, so that we may appreciate and feel its weightiness. — Far from denying or hiding his equality with the Father in order to placate the Jews, Jesus defends himself by setting before his accusers his relation to the Father and the wonderful things involved in it. With the work in mind for which the Jews had called him a Sabbath breaker, Jesus solemnly declares: “The Son can do nothing of himself.” So then, he *is* ὁ υἱός, **the Son**. The sense in which the word is here used is beyond doubt: Jesus, as he stood there before the Jews, is the Son of God, namely the incarnate Son, the second person of the Godhead in human flesh as our Redeemer. Accused of his deed in healing he speaks of ποιεῖν. Accused of a deed contrary to God and God’s law he declares that this is impossible, for he **can do nothing of himself**. “Of himself,” ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ, means so that it would emanate from him alone, and deviate from or contradict the will of the Father. Such a thing cannot be, οὐ δύναται, because of the constant dependence of the incarnate Son upon the Father. A good exposition of the thought here expressed is given by Faber in his sermon in *Botschaft des Heils*: “We might prefer to have this read: The Son can do all things of himself, and needs not even the Father’s counsel or help. It would be bad if the words read thus. For the real and true humanity of Jesus would be abolished and in consequence our redemption. This constitutes the innermost part of his humiliation, that

he entered into human consciousness; and so he prayed and looked up in a human way to the Father, and had to be directed by him. But where could we find a second man who could say: I can do nothing of myself, I must be in that which is my Father's — for whom it is an inner necessity, even in the smallest of things, to be altogether one with the Father? Is not this still exaltation and glory?" Thus in every deed of the incarnate Son the mind and will of the Father stands revealed; and the word is true that every one who seeth the Son seeth the Father. — Jesus does nothing of himself, **but what he seeth the Father doing.** The clause οὐδὲν ἄν μή τι βλέπῃ τὸν πατέρα ποιῶντα, "except what he shall see the Father doing," is conditional, referring to the future; as we would say: "except what he may see" etc. The present subj. βλέπῃ, as well as the participle ποιῶντα refer to continuous action; what the Father does all along, that the Son sees all along; and it is implied that this he is able to do (likewise continuous). The Son "seeth," not assuredly as we do, with eyes darkened by sin, never seeing more than in small part, but with eyes of perfect vision, seeing the very inwardness of God's working, and comprehending it all with perfect penetration and grasp. The words of Jesus state that while he can do nothing of himself, he does do what he seeth the Father doing. Thus the will and work of the Father is the absolute norm for the will and work of the incarnate Son. This excludes completely any idea like that expressed in the Jewish accusation, namely that some act of Jesus could be unlawful, ungodly, or sinful. The fact is that what the Father himself does, that, all that, only that, the incarnate Son does, and so there is not and cannot possibly be, a clash, a division, a difference, or deviation. That which is revealed in the Son and in all his work is the will and work of the Father alone. — **For what**

things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. "Α . . . ταῦτα = identical *things*; ὁμοίως = identical *manner*. Ἔγω introduces the reason, which in this case is a general principle, therefore regulating and governing every single work. The emphasis here is on the doing, and on the doing in like manner; and all this in "what things soever," a rule without exception.

V. 20. Jesus goes still deeper into this relation between himself and the Father and between his work and that of the Father. The basis for the wonderful and mysterious unity of action is love, absolute, perfect, infinite love. Jesus expresses it in the verb φιλεῖν, which denotes affection, whereas in John 3, 35 he uses ἀγαπᾶν, the higher word denoting intellectual love; we therefore conclude that φιλεῖν is not meant to exclude ἀγαπᾶν, but is here used in preference because it harmonizes more with the affectionate intercourse and communion between the Father and the incarnate Son, as expressed in the added words: **and sheweth him all things that himself doeth.** Here the relative clause is simply: ἃ αὐτός ποιεῖ, what he actually does; in v. 19: ἃ ἂν ἐκεῖνος ποιῆ, what he shall, or what he may do. The Father's love withholds nothing. *Qui amat, nil celat.* Bengel. Note the present tenses δείκνυσιν and ποιεῖ; the two actions are continuous, uninterrupted, proceeding every moment, even as Christ spoke; just as φιλεῖ, the loving. His very action in saying these things to the Jews was the reflex of the Father's will and act. "Sheweth" designates full revelation, and according to the whole context it includes an enabling of the Son to do what the Father does and shows. "All things," πάντα, literally means *all* things, without any exception or restriction; the word thus goes far beyond the works pertaining to our redemption, although naturally we think — and have a right to think — of these first. "Α αὐτός ποιεῖ has αὐτός to mark the subject (the

Father), which might otherwise be the Son.— **And greater works than these will he shew him.** “These works refer to the ones Jesus had already done in healing the impotent man and other sufferers. They were certainly works of wonderful greatness, at which men properly marveled. But these by no means reached the limit of Jesus’ grace and power. Greater works were to follow, even those which Jesus now proceeds to describe, the raising of the spiritually dead, the final raising of the bodily dead, and the last great judgment. These were greater, *μείζονα*, manifestation indeed of the same wonderful power which wrought the previous works, but exhibiting this power more completely, and therefore more marvelous to men. The future tense is used, *δείξει*, not because no spiritual vivification had as yet taken place, but because miracles like the healing of the impotent man were preliminary to such vivification and preceded the great act of the final resurrection and judgment at the last day.— **That ye may marvel.** The Father and the Son intend this, *ἵνα*. “Ye,” *ὑμεῖς*, are the unbelieving Jews. Really these greater works are marvelous also to the disciples, but with them the marveling is filled with faith, and the faith as the essential thing is spoken of in their case (“But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,” John 20, 31); with the Jews, and all others in like unbelief, it will be marveling alone. They will not know what to make of these works, they will be astonished and finally overwhelmed with their progress and greatness. The final exhibition of this marveling St. Paul describes to us when he says that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. 2, 9 and 11. Jesus now proceeds to describe the greater works, *μείζονα ἔργα*, which are all parts of his one great *ἔργον* as our Redeemer. They

furnish detailed proof in defense of Jesus against the Jewish charges; and so mighty is each detail that the accusers should have become terrified at what they had done, and should have fled in consternation. But the doom of unbelief is that wicked blindness which leads men to war against a gracious and almighty God to the last.

V. 21. "Greater works," Jesus said; the reason (γάρ) for calling them greater is here given, they are nothing less than ζωοποιεῖν and κρίνειν (v. 22). Commentators divide on the significance of Christ's ζωοποιεῖν. Some hold it to mean only the spiritual regeneration of men through the means of grace; others add the work of raising the bodily dead, Lazarus and others in the past and all the dead at the last day; Zahn, the raising of the dead at the last day. There are strong objections against the idea of the bodily resurrection being meant here, since this is spoken of so emphatically in v. 28. The whole tenor of v. 21-25 is such that it cannot well refer to the last day. The future δεῖξει does not require that all of what thus the Father will show the Son shall at once be mentioned, nor that what is thus mentioned shall be at end of the world. "That ye may marvel" indeed includes that the Jews to whom Jesus spoke will behold these greater works; but, as in the case of δεῖξει, it is not necessary that Christ should at once say what works these are at which they would marvel, nor is it necessary that the seeing of these works and the marveling at them occur during the earthly life of these men. This would certainly not be the case if, as Zahn assumes, the final resurrection is meant; the marveling would then be on the final day. Then, however, not only the final resurrection will cause marvel, but all the wonderful works of God and the Son of God, so many of which are spiritual and for the present largely invisible. So there is ample room for ζωοποιεῖν in the sense of spiritual

quickenings as this is wrought all along among men through the means of grace. — The Father's work is expressed in the words: he **raiseth the dead and quickeneth them**, the equal work of Jesus in the one term: the Son **quickeneth**. There is no real difference. Ἐγείρειν τοὺς νεκροὺς pictures the condition of death which the Father wondrously removes; ζωοποιεῖν pictures the gift of life which the Father graciously bestows; the two are the two sides of *one* great work, for where the condition of death is removed, the gift of life is certainly bestowed. This shuts out the idea that the Father's work here refers to two works, namely to the raising of the bodily dead, ἐγείρειν τοὺς νεκροὺς, and the spiritual quickening included in the same words, νεκροί standing for both kinds of dead. In the case of the Son ἐγείρειν is omitted, but only because it is virtually included in ζωοποιεῖν. The present tenses all have the same meaning; they refer to the present progress of this one work. We also decline to say that the "quickenings" is greater than the "raising," for since the two terms refer to two sides of one work a comparison of this sort is out of the question; nor do we admit that the "quickenings" does not refer like the "raising" to τοὺς νεκροὺς, which it evidently does, since the dead are the only ones who need quickening or the giving of life; and the R. V. properly translates "quickeneth *them*." Moreover, if the quickening of the Father does not refer to the (spiritually) dead how could that of the Son refer to them? — **Even so also**, ὡσπερ οὕτως, marks the action of the Father and that of the Son as in every way exactly alike. — **Whom he will** signifies the gracious, saving will, not an arbitrary will, nor a secret, mysterious will which has put forth a decree after the Calvinistic manner. This gracious will is revealed also in v. 24 of this text. To refer "whom he will" to the raising of Lazarus, in order to make the Son's

quickenings include the bodily resurrection is improper. Miracles like the raising of Lazarus are not included in the "greater works," but belong to the category of great works, like the healing of the impotent man.

"For," γάρ, is parallel with the "for" in the preceding verse; it introduces the second greater work. This is κρίνειν and κρίσις, "to judge" and judgment." The words cannot mean "divide." Κῶμα in the New Testament is usually used to express a judgment of condemnation. So the A. V. translates the verb and the noun κρίσις. Accordingly in v. 24 Jesus tells us that he who has eternal life, who therefore has been quickened by the Son "cometh not into judgment," εἰς κρίσιν, A. V. "into condemnation." Likewise in John 3, 18-19, the sense is very plain: "He that believeth on him is not judged (οὐ κρίνεται, A. V.: "condemned"): he that believeth not hath been judged already (κέκριται, A. V.: "is condemned already") . . . and this is the judgment (ἡ κρίσις, A. V.: "condemnation") that light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil." Since Christ quickens whom he will, the question arises, How about the rest? Here is the answer: These too are committed to the Son, to whom the judgment (in this case the adverse judgment of condemnation) has been given, δέδωκεν, perfect, so that when Jesus spoke the judgment was already his. "The Father doth not judge any man" does not mean that while the Father quickens he does not judge, or that the Son alone, without the Father and apart from him, performs this work; this would contradict the statement that the Son does nothing of himself. The Father's giving the judgment to the Son shows that it is indeed the Father's, he exercises it in giving it to the Son, πᾶσαν, all of it, the entire judgment, during the course of time all preliminary judgments, and the final judgment at the end of time. Christ in this

entire reply of his to the Jews is not revealing the inner relation of his divine person to that of the Father, which some commentators endeavor to bring in here (even Besser), but the relation of the Father to the Son in human form, and this with regard to his human nature.

V. 23. In all this, namely in the Son's quickening and judging (not merely in the latter), there is a divine purpose (*ἵνα*): **that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.** The glory of equality in the work is made the basis of equality in honor; but the work is such, that while it is *given* to the man Christ Jesus, it presupposes of necessity that he is more than man, namely equal with God according to his divine nature, for no creature could possibly assume and execute this work, nor dare we forget what God has said, Is. 42, 8: "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another" (namely any creature), "neither my praise to graven images." The present subjunctive *τιμῶσι* conveys the thought that this honor is constantly due to Christ; it was due even then, and would be forever. It is not said here that all men *must* honor him whether they will or not, but that it is God's intention that they all, *πάντες*, should. — There are some, like the Jews, who deny this honor to the Son. Concerning them Christ says: **He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which sent him.** Christ speaks of himself as sent by the Father (*πέμψαντι*, one act), indicating thereby his incarnation and his entire mission and work, and all this as coming from the Father. The Jews, and others like them, claim to honor God, yet reject the Son whom he has thus sent. No claim can be more fallacious, for to honor God and to dishonor the Son sent by him is an absolute contradiction. Thus Jesus casts upon the Jews themselves the accusation of blasphemy. These Jews have many followers to-

day, men who claim to believe in God, to serve God, to confess God, to pray to God, to be acceptable to God, while they omit, discard, reject Christ. Every religious practice and profession, whether by individuals or organizations, dishonoring the Son sent as our Redeemer and Judge, has its sentence of condemnation here recorded. The application to the present-day Christless and anti-Christian forces and organizations should be made by the pulpit with all the power and effectiveness possible.

In v. 24 Christ explains his former words, ζωοποιεῖ οὕς θέλει. The solemnity and impressiveness of his utterances increase as the great works of the Son are more and more completely unfolded. Knowing the weight of these revelations Christ would make his hearers feel it, therefore the solemn assurance of truth and authority, **Verily, verily, I say unto you.** — The mystery of οὕς θέλει is not an arbitrary choice or secret fatal decree, but **he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath eternal life.** This means that Jesus gives life (ζωοποιεῖ) by means of his Word. This Word he utters and sends out, and it comes to men as the bearer of life (Rom. 1, 16: "the power of God unto salvation"). Two things are necessary in order to accomplish its life-giving purpose, I must hear, and I must believe it. Jesus combines the person with the activity by using the participles ὁ ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων, "one hearing and believing"; to every such a one he does what he says, he quickens him. That hearing is meant to which the Word of Christ itself with its invitation, message, and gift impels, namely a hearing which as it proceeds gives more and more heed to the Word. As the Word thus impels one to hear, so it impels one also to trust (πιστεύων) as its message is made more and more clear to the heart. The natural, i. e. proper, effect of the Word is faith. That Word is not only in itself ab-

solutely trustworthy, but it is full of efficacious power to implant trust in the heart. Such trust is always due altogether to the efficacy and power of the Word, never to any goodness or ability on the part of the hearer. Yet the Word never works irresistibly. Man can, if he exerts his depraved will sufficiently, resist all the trust-working power of the Word and prevent it from working faith. There are many who do this, and these the Son will not quicken. — Jesus does not say, “he that believeth *my Word*”; when he speaks of believing he gives a terse summary of his Word, namely **him that sent me**, τῷ πέμψαντί με. The Word always shows us the Father sending the Son as our Redeemer. To trust him is to trust the Word which so reveals and presents him to our hearts. Jesus here uses this summary of his Word on account of the accusation of the Jews which he is refuting; he thus points again to his relation to the Father which the Jews refused to admit. How much lies in the word **sent** — the Word *was* with God, John 1, 1; Jesus came forth from God, and goeth unto God, John 13, 3 — it embraces the incarnation and the entire redemptive mission of God’s Son. To this day Jesus proclaims that the Father sent him, and our faith must rest on this Word and the Father so sending the Son, and the Son so sent unto us. — The result is wonderful. He who thus believes **hath eternal life**, ζῶην αἰώνιον, the life that endures forever (see the previous text for a fuller statement); it at once becomes his possession; the Word, which to its effective (faith-working) power adds the collative (life-bestowing) power, carries it into his soul and makes it his own. As he holds that Word, so he holds what is conveyed by that Word, namely eternal life. And the receptive hand which holds it is faith, wrought by the Word. Where no faith is effected by the Word, the gift of life is indeed

present in the Word, but is rejected by unbelief. — The consequence for him who has eternal life is that he cometh **not into judgment** (εἰς κρίσιν, see above); the judgment of condemnation is meant; and the present tense carries the meaning that neither now, nor at any time after as long as he has eternal life, does he come into condemnation. The sentence of condemnation is completely removed from him. — The thing is made more vivid by the added words, **but hath passed from death into life**. The opposite of eternal life is death ὁ θάνατος. The word “eternal” is not added here, because in the case of one passing from death into life, death, of course, ceases and for him is not eternal. As the opposite of life death is the condition under the wrath of God, John 3, 36. This ceases so completely for him who believes, that when life enters, he can be said to *have passed* (perfect tense) from death, μεταβέβηκεν; 1 John 3, 14. — What a glorious and effective call to faith this precious Gospel-word of Jesus was! In its very utterance the gift of life was knocking at the heart of his hearers, but they held death fast and wilfully rejected the gracious gift of life.

V. 25 is a repetition of the former solemn assurance with cumulative effect. — **The hour cometh**, in so far as what Jesus here says takes place more and more in the future, even until the end of the world. — **And now is**, is said on account of his hearers at the moment, who need not wait for a later period, the blessed hour of grace having already arrived. — Jesus had just spoken of death, namely spiritual death, now he makes his words more vivid and concrete by calling those under the power of death **the dead**, οἱ νεκροί. At the same time he vividly explains the term “quicken”; it means nothing less than to raise these dead to life. — This is done when they

shall hear the voice of the Son of God. Jesus pictures them lying in death, and his voice then reaching them, hence the future tense ἀκούσουσιν. He does not say they shall hear the Word, as he did just before, but the *voice*, τῆς φωνῆς, of the Son of God. This is because of the vividness and directness of the statement. In the Word the Son himself is present and speaks, and so we hear his personal voice, the very tone and quality of his life-giving utterance. The Word is altogether personal, Christ is in it. — And he plainly calls himself **the Son of God**. Let the Jews and all men know it, quickening is nothing less than raising the dead, a work utterly beyond all human powers. This greatest of works shall refute and forever confound the Jews who persist in their accusation of blasphemy against Christ. The whole host of the spiritually dead who become alive (comp. Ezek. 37) through the voice of Christ shall rise up to condemn them. — **And they that hear**, οἱ ἀκούσαντες = “those having heard.” The same word is used: the dead *shall hear* . . . and *they that hear*; but the sense of the second word is more pregnant than the first, implying that they hear so as to perceive. In other words, οἱ ἀκούσαντες = “he that heareth and believeth” in the previous verse. **Shall live**, i. e. have eternal life, the true life which comes from the eternal source of life, namely God.

V. 26. From this greater work Jesus goes back to himself the Worker, to what he must be in order to perform this work. Thus in the most convincing manner he refutes the base charge of the Jews. **For** gives the reason why Jesus is able to do this work. **As the Father hath life in himself** — Jesus does not say merely that he himself has life in himself. The accusation brought against him is that he made himself equal with God. So he brings in the Father. Concerning him there is no question with the Jews, he

“hath life in himself,” he is the eternal fountain of it. The words are general, but the context points especially to the highest form of life, namely the spiritual. — **Even so**, οὕτως, in exactly the same manner, **gave he to the Son also to have life in himself**. It is the incarnate Son, and the giving refers to his human nature, as already shown above. There are not two fountains of life, but only one, the eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and the human nature of Christ is made, by the Father’s giving, a part of that one fountain, a part by gift. The aorist ἔδωκεν points to an established fact; once for all the gift was made.

V. 27. Again we may ask, as already stated above: How about those who are not made partakers of life? These the Father had not reserved for himself, but has likewise placed in the hands of the Son: **and he gave him authority to execute judgment**. The first ἔδωκεν involves the second. The “judgment” is that of condemnation. And now in the plainest way the reason is stated why the judgment *is given* to Jesus: **because he is the Son of man**, ὅτι υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν. The article is absent, therefore this cannot be the same as the frequent designation “*the* Son of man” = Messiah, Dan. 7. “A son of man” = a man (Acts 17, 31). In no other way, except by the Father’s gift, could Christ the man have received authority to execute the judgment. This disposes of all those labored explanations which after all fail to do justice to the words. We mention for one, that “a son of man” is equal to the “the Son of man” (Messiah) in spite of the omission of the article; for another, that the hidden God cannot judge and therefore selected a man (yet the Jews always knew God as one who judges); for a third, that the Redeemer must be the judge and must have the judgment as a reward of his redemptive work; for a fourth, that the

sentence beginning with ὅτι should be connected with the following one, "Marvel not at this."

In verse 20 we were told that it is God's intention for men to marvel at the greater works of Christ. When now in v. 28 Jesus says, **Marvel not at this**, namely at what he has just said (v. 24-27), he does not contradict the former statement, but is about to declare a thing even more marvelous from the human standpoint than the one just set forth before. This more marvelous declaration overshadows the marvel of the former. Luthardt, however, supposes that Jesus here forbids unbelieving marveling. The Jews were indeed unbelieving, and their marveling was found to be full of unbelief, yet Jesus does not refer to this, and his words are no actual prohibition. — **For** shows why Jesus says the Jews are not to marvel. **The hour cometh**; when is not said, and Jesus does not add, as he does above: and now is. This hour is an approaching one, it is hastening forward, its arrival is in the future. — **In which all that are in the tombs** — notice the "all," and then the designation "that are in the tombs," οἱ ἐν τοῖς μνημείοις, so distinct from the οἱ νεκροί above. All the bodily dead are here spoken of. — These **shall hear his voice**, namely the voice of the Son who is a son of man. He shall call them, and in their very tombs the sound shall reach them. Marvelous "voice" indeed! — And they **shall come forth**, all of them; their dead bodies shall return to life and movement again, stepping out from their graves where they have lain so long. But there shall be a tremendous difference. — They shall appear as two classes. The difference between them reaches back to the time when they lived and acted during the span of earthly sojourn allotted to them: οἱ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσαντες . . . οἱ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες. The sum of each man's life is either that he has done

good, or that he has done ill. The connection of τὰ ἀγαθὰ with faith, and of τὰ φαῦλα with unbelief, is furnished by what Christ has said in the preceding verses (he that *believeth* hath eternal life).— **The resurrection of life** (not: *unto* life, but: *of* life) is that resurrection, ἀνάστασις, the characteristic mark of which is life, namely that eternal, true life which Christ gave by means of his Word. Likewise **the resurrection of judgment** (κρίσεως; “damnation,” A. V.) is that which bears as its mark the judgment of damnation.— So ends the first chapter of Christ’s defense against the Jews. Already judgment settled down upon these men. It has done the same thing for all who have been like them throughout the ages. When the great Judge shall descend in heavenly glory at last, then too late they will recognize the falseness of their charge against him. But we will believe him now whose greatness shines out in every age through the mighty works which he performs, so that, when his crowning work is wrought on the last great day, we may lift up our heads with joy.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

The idea of life fills this text to such an extent that we may use it in the sermon theme. It will be easy, then, to take care of the negation of life, its absence and loss, namely death:

The Stream of Life in the Kingdom of God.

- I. *It descends from the Father in heaven.*
- II. *It reaches us in the word and voice of the Son, Jesus Christ.*
- III. *It enters our hearts by faith in his name.*
- IV. *It carries us back to heaven and to God.*

There is constant reference in the text to the end of time. This is very appropriate for the season, and in itself effective to stir men’s hearts: So live as at last you will wish to have lived:

Learn to Look at Your Life in the Light of the Last Great Day.

You will rejoice then

I. If it was full of honor for the Son of God.

- a) Honor, in the way you regard him: 1) As the Son equal with the Father; 2) as the Savior, working out our salvation; 3) as the Fount of blessing, giving life; 4) as the eternal Judge.
- b) Honor in your conduct toward him: 1) In receiving by faith his grace, gifts, blessings, etc.; 2) in confessing his name by showing yourself as his follower; 3) in worshipping him by prayer, praise, etc.

II. If it was full of faith in the saving Gospel.

- a) So that you *know* it (hear, read, understand — perceive and realize that in it is life, salvation).
- b) So that you *own and have it* in your heart (with its quickening life, deliverance from death — with its peace and joy, because you shall not come into condemnation).

III. If it was full of hope of eternal blessedness.

- a) In the resurrection of yourself and your dear ones departed in Christ.
- b) In the judgment, which for you shall be an acquittal before all the world, as now you are acquitted in justification.
- c) In the blissful eternity to follow.

A third view of the text shows us side by side the Kingdom of grace (now) and the Kingdom of glory (then). So we outline:

The Kingdom of Grace Shall be Merged in the Kingdom of Glory.

- I. When the last among the dead have been raised by Christ's work of grace.*
- II. When all the dead are called forth from their graves by Christ's word of power,*

Koegel has this in simpler form: The Greatest Works of Christ for Us: 1) He quickens whom he will; 2) He raises and judges all the dead.—Two expressions in the text may be used as themes for sermons along the line here indicated:

“The Hour is Coming.”

- I. Full of honor for the Son.*
- II. Full of joy for the believer.*
- III. Full of judgment for the wicked.*

Honor the Son, Even as You Honor the Father.

- I. By believing his word of grace as he speaks it today.*
- II. By preparing for his word of power and glory as he shall speak it on the last day.*

THE TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

(Also for the Mission Festival)

Luke 19, 11-27

There is something magnificent about this text — its reach from the time the nobleman went into a far country until his return; its designation of the chief work in our lives during all this great period, “Trade till I come”; its sure judgment for all who will not have this man to reign over them; and finally the royal settlement with the nobleman’s servants and the magnificent rewards allotted unto the faithful ones. It is a grand text on the consummation of the kingdom. Since the previous text combines the resurrection and the judgment, it is best not to make the central thought of this text simply the judgment, but to lay the chief emphasis on the way the judgment is put into execution. The previous text deals more with *the great fact that* there shall be a judgment and that Christ shall judge men. In our present text *this judgment is actually described*. It is this description which our text sets prominently before us. We see the nobleman’s servants with the pounds placed in their hands, and we catch a glimpse of the citizens in their opposition to the nobleman. These elements of the text form the groundwork on which the great description of the actual judgment is based. This, of course, falls into two sections, the judgment of grace for the faithful servants, and the judgment of justice for the unfaithful and wicked. Of the two the former attracts us especially, namely *the eternal reward of grace*. We need the latter also, in order to complete the picture,

and in order to set the reward of grace into proper relief. The great nobleman would like to reward all his servants in the most magnificent way, and to have every citizen of his kingdom here as a faithful servant of his. It is not his will to punish and reject any one, and he does so only because he is compelled to. It is for this reason that we make *the reward of grace* the greatest feature of the text. — Little needs to be said on the difference between the parable of the talents and our parable of the pounds. The former refers only to Christ's followers, the latter deals also with his enemies and was spoken also to others besides the disciples. The former deals with talents, which are unequally bestowed, the latter with pounds, of which one is given to each servant; the former shows that according as we have received will it be required of us, the latter that as men differ in fidelity, zeal, and labor, so will they differ eventually in the amount of their spiritual gains or rewards. There is no doubt as to the fact that these parables are distinct. — The parable of the pounds makes a fine mission text. Warneck so uses it in the series in which he presents the entire work of mission (*Missionsstunden, I, Die Mission im Lichte der Bibel*, p. 110 etc.). Instead of adding a special mission text in this volume, we prefer to use this text for the purpose, and therefore add the necessary homiletical material.

V. 11. Whenever the Gospels introduce a parable by stating the occasion or circumstance which led Christ to utter it, such an introduction deserves special attention, for in every case it aids us materially in understanding the parable. **And as they heard these things** — "they," the disciples and others, as the context shows, the parable itself also distinctly referring to others besides the disciples; "these things," the ones uttered by Christ in the house of Zaccheus. Some commentators cannot see how ταῦτα

can mean what Jesus spoke in the publican's house, and so they say it is doubtful what "these things" refer to. Others refer "these things" to the words of Zaccheus, v. 8, as though his intention was an indication of the approach of the kingdom; but this is certainly incorrect. **These things** = Jesus receiving Zaccheus as a son of Abraham, and declaring that the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. The temper of Christ's followers at this time was keyed up to great expectations, as we see in the case of the sons of Zebedee wishing to secure the most exalted positions in advance for themselves. The people generally were full of similar notions; we see how their enthusiasm broke out on Palm Sunday. This dreaming and expecting of great earthly things in the near future received many a disillusionment as Christ uttered the sober truth concerning himself and what was to come, yet it persisted and grasped at every straw, and on the other hand, murmured at everything that did not fit in with its plans. A case of such murmuring we have here when Jesus stopped at the house of this publican and even received him as a son of Abraham. The disciples and the people hearing what Jesus said in reference to Zaccheus, he felt constrained to explain fully how and when the consummation of his kingdom would come. The Zaccheus incident did not fit into their dreams, but it did fit in perfectly with the plans of Jesus. — So **he added and spake a parable** — προσθεῖς before εἶπεν is used almost like an adverb, in the sense of: "he spake furthermore." **A parable**, because this was best fitted to explain the great plans of Christ. Parables veil the truth from those utterly unfit to receive it because of persistent unbelief; on the other hand, parables explain and make clear many difficult points in Christ's teaching for those who believe or are ready to believe. Our present parable is a gem in this respect. In a

grand, comprehensive way it sets the whole future before the eyes of Christ's hearers, correcting all their wrong notions in a masterly way — if only they will believe and accept what Christ tells them. — **Because he was nigh to Jerusalem.** Jericho was only six hours travel from Jerusalem. Here, at the capital of the nation, the disciples as well as the multitude supposed the great event for which they were looking must take place: "they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear." — **The kingdom of God** which they expected to appear was a wonderful earthly unfolding of power and grandeur. The word **to appear**, ἀναφαίνεσθαι, does not necessarily imply that the kingdom already existed in hidden form and needed only to make itself manifest in its glory. The sense here is, that men expected Christ, if he was indeed the Messiah, presently to establish his kingdom in great magnificence. This is the dream Christ shattered by his parable of the pounds.

"In the great Roman empire, where the senate of Rome, and afterwards its emperors, though not kings themselves, yet made and unmade kings, such a circumstance as this (described in v. 12) can have been of no unfrequent occurrence. Thus Herod the Great was at first no more than a subordinate officer in Judea; flying to Rome before Antigonus, he was there declared by the senate, through the influence of Antony, king of the Jews. In like manner his son Archelaus must personally wait upon Augustus, before inheriting the dominions left him by his father; and then did not inherit them as king, but only as ethnarch. History furnishes many other examples, for it was felt over the civilized world, in the striking words of the historian of the Maccabees:—'whom they (the Romans) would help to a kingdom, those reign, and whom again they would, they displace' (1 Macc. 8, 13)." Trench. — **A certain nobleman**, ἄνθρωπος τις

εὐγενής = a certain man well-born, a fine designation for Christ, "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary," and as the latter of the royal line of David and Solomon. The term εὐγενής fits Jesus also when the nobility of character is considered which is usually expected of noblemen. In fact, there is something incomparably noble in all that this "nobleman" in the parable does. — "The **far country** into which he went is heaven; the kingdom he wished to receive for himself, the earth. After he had humbled himself unto the death on the cross, the Father exalted him over all. Now he is to receive the whole earth as his kingdom. For this he went to the Father that he might be invested with the government of the world." Warneck. — That "the kingdom" cannot be the heavenly kingdom of glory is apparent from what follows in the parable, when "his citizens" send an embassy refusing to acknowledge his rule. That it cannot be the kingdom of grace, or the Christian Church, as distinguished from "the world" also appears from the parable, where the nobleman rules over his enemies as well as his servants, destroys the rebels and rewards the faithful. This **kingdom**, βασιλεία (no article), is therefore the entire rule and power over all the earth; "all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," Matth. 28, 18. — **To receive**, λαβεῖν, here implies an active taking on his part, but also an offering on the part of another, who, however, is not mentioned here. As the Son of God Christ had this kingdom as his possession in his own divine right. "To receive" means at once, not when he shall return. Other kings cannot always rule at a distance, like this king, whose rule is perfect though he is not seen. **And to return** means the return in glory for the judgment, rewarding his faithful ones, destroying the rebels. This is the return of Christ at the last day, Matth. 25, 31; 24, 27.

In v. 13-14 two classes are distinguished: **servants** and **citizens**. It is a mistake to make the "nobleman" a fellow citizen of the latter, as even Trenchard does. He is plainly exalted above them by being named, not ἀνθρωπός τις, but ἀνθρωπός τις εὐγενής. Neither his servants nor his citizens are "well-born." His noble birth entitles him to the kingdom, which none other had a right to claim. All these "citizens" should have been his servants, but they were in open rebellion against him. — A nobleman properly has "servants," who wait upon him. He also should have citizens or subjects who obey his rule. We hear of none such in this case, for the parable deals at this point with the nobleman before he is invested with the kingdom. There were some who resisted this investiture; nothing is said of others, since the lessons of the parable are not based on their actions. — These **servants of his** are the followers of Christ as he had them when he uttered the parable; they include all others like them in the ages to come, for they are presented as one band working for their noble master's interest until he shall return. The number **ten** is symbolical and denotes completeness. Thus there are *ten* Commandments, *ten* virgins in another parable; comp. Dan. 7, 24; Sam. 18; Gen. 31, 7. Baehr writes, that since this number closes the line of fundamental numbers and contains them all, it indicates that which is finished and complete, and is therefore a symbol of completeness or perfection, implying also the conception of oneness. *Ten* servants, therefore, = all his servants, none omitted; all of them, as *one* body. It is perfectly proper and to the point in a parable to use this number in such a symbolical way. Consequently, however, "ten" cannot mean actually only ten, or only a few, as even Warneck supposes. The actual number, whether small or great, cannot be estimated from the symbolical ten, since this signifies simply *all*, and all

as *one body*. In reality the number of Christ's servants is very great, and even when Luke penned his Gospel there were thousands of believers. To take this symbolical number "ten" and conclude, that because in the parable only ten are mentioned, and these ten appear again when the nobleman returns, therefore Christ expected to return during the lifetime of his first few followers, is to perpetrate a blunder so palpable that one must marvel how men of good judgment could be guilty thereof. The Scriptures, and Christ included, do not fix the time of the end of the world in any definite way for any one generation. They use language which virtually says to every generation that has lived since the days of Christ: The end *may* come during your lifetime! — **And gave them ten pounds,** δέξα μνᾶς, a *mina* = about \$560.00 in Hebrew gold; about \$32.00 in Hebrew silver, or \$17.00 in Greek silver. Most likely the second sum was meant by Christ, since the amount is referred to in v. 17 "very little," and Christ may very well have referred to Jewish money. "Ten" here again stands for completeness; this nobleman gave his servants *all* his money, he took none of it along. From what follows in the parable we see that each servant received the same sum, namely one pound. The nobleman treated them all alike, he did not prefer one to another. In this respect our parable differs decidedly from that of the talents. The "pound" must therefore stand for something which every believer possesses like every other; yet something in the nature of a capital which is used in trading and producing a profit (other "pounds"). Trench leaves us in the lurch as far as the interpretation of these pounds is concerned; many others likewise. Stelhorn give us the correct interpretation: "the means of grace"; so also Warneck: "the Word of God." He adds: "The pounds cannot signify such gifts as are diversely distributed: material

blessings, mental gifts, positions and stations in the world and the church. On the contrary, by pounds we must understand the sum of the spiritual blessings of grace, which we possess in the Gospel of Christ, *Word and Sacrament*, in which all believers have equal part. Something deep and a fine irony lies in this that the Lord compares these gifts of grace with pounds, and natural gifts (Matth. 25) with talents. A talent or hundred-weight is about fifty times as great as a pound or *mina*. In the eyes of men, often enough also in those of believers, natural gifts have a much greater value than the simple gifts of grace of the Gospel. A man naturally gifted, rich, highly placed, as we often enough think, can do more for the kingdom of heaven than another who simply employs the Word of God. Certainly, natural ability devoted to the service of the kingdom of God is a mighty weapon, but the Word of God is mightier. Luther did not accomplish the Reformation because he was such a highly gifted man. There were very likely among his contemporaries some more gifted, or gifted as highly as he. He was victorious because he traded with *the pound*, i. e. did business with *the Word of God*. "The Word," so he has confessed repeatedly, "the Word has done it all!" Not the most highly gifted men are the most blessed ones in the kingdom of God, but they who employ the Word most faithfully, energetically, and with greatest faith. The entire history of the Church and of mission proves this. Everywhere our power is "the Word," however cheaply this pound may be valued." Trench tells of a caviller who demands: "Why did he not distribute *weapons* to his servants? Such would have been, under the circumstances described, the most natural thing to do." Natural enough from the standpoint of a Peter who cut off the ear of Malchus, of the pope, the Anabaptists, and of all those who imagine that they must make the kingdom appear immediately. But since the

kingdom of Christ is not of this world, he has not bidden his servants to fight, or to take the sword, but to take the Gospel and disciple the nations.

Trade ye herewith till I come. The reading varies: *πραγματεύσασθε*, aor. imperat.: "Trade ye"; or *πραγματεύσασθαι*, the inf. in indirect discourse. One commentator takes the verb in the sense of: "Speculate!" but *πραγματεύσασθαι* means simply "to do business," and this must be taken in an honorable sense because it is the command of a nobleman. To call this trading a speculating is to charge the nobleman with the very thing the wicked servant charged him with, namely taking what he had not laid down and reaping what he had not sown. "Trade" does not specify in what manner. And there is no need that it should, for we can trade with the Word of God only in one way: preach and teach it. The Word of God then is not for mere private possession and for mere individual enjoyment; it is a capital designed for trading or doing business. This is a grand mission thought. Warneck carries it out by describing both the retail and the wholesale business in which this capital is to be employed. Nothing is worse in the kingdom than "dead capital." Capital well invested and actively employed produces other capital; so does the Word sent out by us — soon it is sent out by those to whom we first sent it. — **Till I come**, ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι (not ἕως, *Textus Receptus*); and ἐν ᾧ must be taken in the sense of "till." No time is mentioned, only ἔρχομαι conveys the assurance that he will come. So we his servants cannot put off the work of trading; our profits must be ready when he comes — and he may arrive at any time. "Till I come" reaches out over all the intervening space till the glorious moment of his final return; and for this great era our Nobleman has set us one great task — not to make money, to build cities, empires, civilizations, to do lesser things, but *to trade with the Gospel*.

The New Testament Era is the Mission Era. It is allowed to continue for this purpose alone. And when this Gospel of the kingdom shall have been preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, then the end shall come. Matth. 24, 24. — The bondservants of the nobleman, having received the pounds, went about their business, and the nobleman departed.

V. 14: **But his citizens hated him** — not fellow citizens, as though he were altogether one of them and on their level; but “his citizens” because properly the subjects of the kingdom intended for him and to which he was entitled. We read *δοῦλοι ἑαυτοῦ*, servants of his, or of himself, but *πολιται αὐτοῦ*, his citizens — the simple possessive, not denoting special attachment to himself, to his person. — The simple fact is stated that these citizens **hated** the nobleman; no reason is assigned — there was no real reason, as the gracious and generous dealing of the nobleman with his servants plainly indicates. “But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.” John 15, 25. The imperfect tense *ἐμίσουν* indicates the continuousness of the hatred. So the Jews hated Christ, though by birth and blood, by character and act, and by his divine nature he was the noblest and greatest and best their nation had ever possessed. — And **sent an embassy after him, saying, We will not that this man reign over us.** “It was exactly thus that a faction of the Jews, in the case of Archelaus, sent ambassadors to the court of Augustus to accuse him there, and if possible to hinder his elevation over them.” Trench. He also writes: “Every persecution of his (Christ’s) servants, the stoning of Stephen, the beheading of James, the persecutions of Paul, and all the wrongs done to his people because they were his, these each and all were messages of defiance sent after him, implicit declarations upon their part, that they would not have him for

their king. Twice before yet he had gone to receive the kingdom, this very declaration found formal utterance from their lips, — once when they cried to Pilate, ‘We have no king but Cæsar’; and again, when they remonstrated with him, ‘Write not, the King of the Jews’ (John 19, 21; cf. Acts 17, 7). But the strictest fulfillment of these words is to be found in the demeanor of the Jews after his Ascension, their fierce hostility to Christ in his infant Church (Acts 12, 3; 13, 45; 14, 18; 17, 5; 18, 6; 22, 22; 23, 12; 1 Thess. 2, 15). When we give this parable a wider range, and find the full accomplishment of all which it contains, not at the destruction of Jerusalem, but at the day of judgment — and it is equally capable of the narrower and the wider interpretation — then these rebellious citizens will no longer be merely the Jews, but all such evil men, as by word or deed openly deny their relation and subjection to Jesus, as their Lord and King . . . and their message will have its full and final fulfillment in the great apostasy of the last days, which shall be even as this is, not the evading of the subjection due unto Christ; but a speaking of proud things against him (Rev. 13, 5-6; Dan. 7, 25; 2 Thess. 2, 1-10); not merely disobedience but defiance, such as, not content with resisting his decrees, shall provoke and challenge him to conflict (Ps. 2, 2).” Note οὐ θέλομεν, the wicked will, where the real seat of the hatred is. To all these haters of Christ, he, the eternal God-man, is only οὗτος, “this one.” Their hatred and rebellion is allowed to proceed unchecked, but the day of final reckoning must come at last, when Christ himself shall answer their “embassage.”

V. 15. Καὶ ἐγένετο, **and it came to pass**, a Hebrew way of introducing an important story or occurrence in a story. What shall be is described in the parable as having already occurred; so Christ sees the end from the beginning, and it is well for us to get from him

and his Word the same comprehensive vision.— 'Επανερχομαι is not merely to **come back again**, but = to come upon someone. It describes the nobleman's return to his servants and citizens. So shall Christ come upon us at the last day. — **Having received the kingdom** is an incidental mention of the great fact, and in the very way in which it is introduced indicates that this was a matter of course, there never having been the slightest doubt about it. The person who came back is described as αὐτὸν λαβόντα τὴν βασιλείαν, he who did receive the kingdom; but the idea is not that at once upon receiving it he made the return, but only that he was the one who received the kingdom — he returned. We, of course, now know that these many years lie between the time of λαβόντα and of ἐπανελθεῖν. **That he commanded these servants unto whom he had given the money, to be called to him.** There is only a hint here of the power and glory with which Christ shall return. It is in "he commanded to be called," εἶπεν φωνηθῆναι, he said, or directed, to be called. Who was to do the calling? This is not stated; there must be those "hearkening unto the voice of his word" — the angels who shall accompany Christ at his return. We meet them further on, when the command is given, "Take away from him the pound," v. 24; and again, "Bring hither and slay them before me," v. 27. Christ went to the Father alone; he returns in the midst of angel hosts ready to do his slightest bidding. — **That he might know what they had gained by trading** — γνοί, subjunctive, later form for γνῶ. In the judgment to come every believer's record shall be investigated publicly, although Christ knows what every one has done long before the public judgment takes place. "What they had gained by trading," τί διεπραγματεύσατο, really "what they had undertaken in business"; the idea is that they had been zealous in business, and this activity is now to be examined, naturally with the

implication that the amount of profit might be known. This is exactly in accord with the description of the final judgment in Matthew 25; we shall be judged according to our works, i. e. according to the fruit of our faith. Even at the last day we shall be known by our fruits. The verb διεπραγματεύομαι, however, assumes two things, one that we are indeed the servants of Christ who has given us the pound to trade with, and the other that we have been "not slothful in business" (Rom. 12, 11), but with a heart full of faith have tried our best in the Master's service. The idea that any servant of Christ should not have been actively engaged in his Master's business, is not entertained in the verb; when now presently such a servant appears, it is a thing altogether unnatural and contrary to all that Christ has the fullest right to expect. — So the "ten servants of his" come before their master, the king.

V. 16. In the joyful coming forward of the two faithful servants we have an example of the "boldness in the day of judgment." "No Christian believing the Bible and clear as to its doctrine, will ever imagine that by such fruits of faith he justifies himself before God, or in any way adds anything toward his justification; but the kindness of God has arranged that these fruits produce a feeling of satisfaction, a good conscience, a rejoicing in grace also in the judgment. Not as though any one could be completely satisfied with himself, even when he has really traded with his pound. There will always be a trembling of the soul when the command comes, Give an account of thy stewardship! and no one will have the courage to say, I have done what I could. But there is something of a hidden blessing bestowed by God upon faithful trading with the entrusted pound, for the less we have received the grace of God in vain, the more our faith gives us courage to rely heartily upon the transcendent power

of grace in the atonement of Christ." Warneck. — He with the ten pounds gained comes first. This is proper and right. He says: **Thy pound** hath made ten pounds more. He takes no credit to himself, but bestows all upon the Lord by emphasizing what the Lord's pound has done. This was a wise servant. Oh, that every preacher might be thoroughly convinced that the Lord's pound, the Word, must do it all; and every congregation likewise! Paul writes: Not I, but the grace of God. The Psalmist: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake." 115, 1. Luther's testimony is all of the same sort: "I have done nothing, but the Word has performed it all." The very greatness of true success in trading for Christ humbles the heart and calls forth the praise: Behold, what the Lord hath wrought! "When the South Sea Islanders, the Karens, the Kols, the Malagasy by thousands, yea by tens of thousands become Christians — the pound shows its old power!" Warneck — **Ten pounds more** is not merely a tenfold gain, but again, according to the symbolism of the number ten, the completest gain, the most perfect gain possible under the circumstances. Thus we may say Paul gained "ten pounds more," and Luther. What joy and glory for us sinners that a gain so great is possible in our humble trading! The verb προσηγάσατο = has wrought besides, or in addition to.

V. 18. The second servant reports, **Thy pound, Lord, hath made five pounds.** He too is wise and puts the credit where it belongs; but he is able to report only "five pounds," and therefore he does not say προσηγάσατο, but simply ἐποίησεν. The question occurs why this servant with the same pound as the other secured a gain of only five pounds while the other had ten? Five is symbolic like ten; if ten = the perfect amount of gain, five = half that much. Thus this man

presents a picture of all such as have fallen short of what they could have done with the pound. They are the ears that bear only thirty or sixty instead of a hundredfold. The fault is not with the nobleman, not with the pound, but with the servants who are less faithful, less diligent, less courageous, less single-hearted in their trading than they actually might be. There are evident faults and shortcomings in them and in their work of trading with the pound. They let many a fine chance slip. The two classes set before us in the parable are evidently intended to embrace all Christians whom the Lord will reward at the last day. We know that none are absolutely perfect in what they have done for the Lord. But some are exceedingly devoted to the Word and its promulgation: all these are pictured in the servant with ten pounds gain. Many of them are not as prominent as Paul and Luther, but still they belong to that class which "turn many to righteousness," and therefore "shall shine as the stars for ever and ever," Dan. 12, 3. The rest — whatever may make them less faithful and less given to the Word and its work — are pictured by the servant with five pounds gain, five being midway between one and ten. The five strikes an average. Noesgen makes this servant with five pounds equally as faithful as the one with ten, but fails to say why he gained less. The reason cannot be that, while he had the one pound from the Lord, he had besides fewer talents than the other, as the other parable states; for the gain is ascribed wholly to the pound and not to something besides the pound. There must, accordingly, have been something in the servant himself which restricted the working of the pound so that it could not do all it was capable of. What this is we see in thousands of actual cases about us: men are less faithful, diligent, devoted, whole-hearted in the work than they might be.

The nobleman now shows forth all his nobility.

V. 17: **Well done, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little** — a great commendation, εὖγε, εὖ with γε added: right; very well; “well done.” This commendation is omitted in the case of the second servant. The nobleman is looking for faithfulness, and if this second servant, as Noesgen thinks, had been equally faithful with the first, he should have received equal praise. “Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.” 1 Cor. 4, 2. “Faithfulness is that mind and conduct which employs well what one has received, attends promptly to what is enjoined, wastes nothing and embezzles nothing, never takes back what is given to God, and keeps every promise fully.” Zeller. The pound is here called **a very little**, ἐλάχιστον, superlative of ἐλάσσων, not because it is very little in itself, but comparatively, when set over against the ten cities. — **Have thou authority over ten cities.** This is spoken like a king indeed. The more so when we consider who this was to whom such authority was suddenly given: he was “a servant,” a *bondservant* (margin), a slave owned by the nobleman. He could have taken all the servant’s earnings without any thanks or reward and been wholly within his rights. But he does nothing of the kind. He not only rewards, but does so out of all proportion with the service rendered. Then **ten** cities again introduce the symbolical number; the very highest reward is meant. “In what does this reward really consist, or what do the **cities** signify? Certainly not salvation, but a special glory in the kingdom of salvation. *What* glory, that is hard to say in this life. Without doubt, certain heavenly realities are meant, only I fear we will fall into fruitless speculation when we endeavor to furnish a specific interpretation. This much is sure, in Christ’s kingdom of glory there are manifold honors, ranks, spheres of authority and power. Everything is not absolutely

alike. One receives ten, another only five cities. According as our faithfulness has put the grace of God to practical use, so our position shall be in the kingdom of glory. Only we must not understand this in a wrong way. God is not deceived by what looks like great success in the eyes of men. We know that the Savior will say to many a one glorying in having done great deeds in his name, Depart from me, I never knew you!" Warneck. Trench calls this authority over ten cities a commentary on the συμβασιλεύσομεν of 2 Tim 2, 12. — V. 19. The reward of the second servant is, **Be thou also over five cities.** The καί goes with σύ: "thou also"; it does not refer to the special praise conferred upon the first servant, as if this "also" applied to the second. — The other faithful servants are not especially mentioned, because they are all practically described in the second one.

V. 20. First the wholly faithful, next the partly faithful, finally the wholly unfaithful. Among the servants there can be only these three classes. **And another came** — alas, that there should be another! ὁ ἕτερος, one of a different sort. Since the parable pictures the final judgment we have here a complete uncovering of all this man's thoughts. — **Here is thy pound,** he says, but what a different idea in the word *thy!* There it stands for Christ with his blessed grace and power; here for Christ as a hard, unjust, selfish, greedy master. **Which I kept laid up in a napkin,** εἶχον, all along (imperf.); so also the present participle ἀποκειμένην; he never really appropriating the pound as his own, never put it to any use. Keeping the pound thus made it "dead capital." The napkin, σουδάριον, is the handkerchief used to wipe the sweat with. A fine use for this fellow's *sudarium!* Instead of working busily with his capital and sweating copiously in his efforts to multiply it, he sits down idly and wraps the unsweated sweat-cloth around the money and lays

both the money and the cloth away. — But why does he do a thing like this? Christ makes him tell his own thoughts; they are *the lies of hypocrisy and the enviousness of barefaced selfishness.* — V. 21: **For I feared thee,** ἐφοβούμην, also imperf.; but with no true, real fear such as fills the heart of the believer, only with the hypocritical fear which figures on settling with Christ according to its own perverted ideas. He feared to lose the pound and not return it; but he did not fear to come with his base unfaithfulness and his wicked sloth. He did not join the enemies of his Master, but he became no true servant of his. — **Because thou art an austere man: thou takest up what thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.** This is how the fellow looked at the order of the nobleman to trade with the pound — he considered it a scheme of his to get what did not belong to him. He did not remember that as a bondman he belonged completely to his master and owed him every service, certainly also this most honorable service to turn himself into an agent of his master in buying and selling with his master's capital. And he had no inkling of his master's grace and noble generosity, which wanted to put these servants of his to work in order to bring out their faithfulness, so that he might make peers of them in his realm, free men, nobles themselves and rulers together with their king. Hypocrisy deceives itself worst of all. But this man's falseness and selfishness is a true and complete picture of all those among Christ's household who refuse to serve him with the capital he has placed in their hands, the Word as a means for building and extending the kingdom of Christ. One and all they think, Christ requires too much of them; Christ will gain unduly when they go to work for him; and they themselves will lose something if they work for Christ and not — as they are bent on doing — for their own ease,

pleasure, enrichment, and wordly honor. Take any work devoted to the Word: support of the home church, of the larger church body, or of home and foreign missions. "To build the kingdom of God," they say, "brings in nothing for us; to serve others does not feed ourselves." In a way they are right, but only in a way, when they imagine, There is nothing in it. There *is* nothing worldly in it, to spend and be spent and do the Master's will. Paul remained poor, lay long in prison, suffered a thousand hardships, died a martyr. It has been the same with thousands of others, especially also men in mission fields. The grand mistake is that these fools fail to see what faith always sees: the sweet content of serving Christ to whom we, and all we are and have, belong, and the blessed reward of grace infinitely out of proportion to the tiny service we are able at best to render.

V. 22. . . . **Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.** Even in judgment this nobleman is noble and kingly; he brings no other law upon this servant than the one he himself has appealed to. **Thou knewest** (ἤδεις, all along) **that I am an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow,** then why didst not thou act in accordance with these thy false and lying assertions? **Then** (καί) **wherefore gavest thou not my money into the bank, and I at my coming should have required it with interest?** Τράπεζα (really τετρά-πεζα) a utensil with four legs, thus a table on which money is changed by a money changer or banker. Since ἐλθόν may refer equally to the nobleman's coming in return to his servants as to his coming to get his money with interest from the bank, the margin allows us to read: "I should have gone and required." Τόκος = interest; "usury," A. V., in the good, not in the evil sense. To put the austere man's money into a bank would have been far safer, as far

as the capital itself was concerned and its protection against possible loss, than to keep it hid in a handkerchief. Then, in the bank it would have drawn at least some interest, and this servant, who pretended to be so careful and faithful himself, while he saw such great faults in his master, would at least have done on his part what would have proved him careful and faithful, at least in a measure. But he did nothing of the kind. His pretensions and his actions are in open and violent conflict — he stands bared before his master as a liar and hypocrite, as a selfish robber of his master by his falseness, in a word as a **wicked servant**, *πονηρός*, self-confessed and self-condemned. Trench, on the parable of the talents, writes what may be applied also to this servant in our parable: “The Lord of the parable is at no pains to dispute or deny the character which this recreant servant has drawn of him, but answers him on his own grounds, making his own mouth condemn him. . . . Be it so, grant that I am all that which thou sayest, severe, exacting, harsh; and yet thou oughtest to have done me justice still; and this with little or no peril to thyself thou mightest have done; and obtained for me, if not the larger gains possible through some bolder course, yet some small and certain returns for my moneys.” — The most probable interpretation of the pound banked and drawing interest is this, given also by Trench on the talents: “If thou wouldest not do and dare for me in great ventures of faith, yet at all events in humbler paths, in safer and less perilous, thou mightest have shown fidelity, and have preserved me from loss.” Or, a little more in detail, as Besser writes: Thou mightest have at least gone to my courageous and diligent servants, the right bankers, and offered thyself, if perchance thou couldst have invested my pound with them and served me in this way. Thus if one is too timid with his own prayer, his own testimony, his

own love to lay hand to the work singly, he is not to sit still, but to place himself at the disposal of his stronger and more courageous brethren — in true humility — together with the gift he has received from the Lord. Aaron and Hur could not pray as Moses did, but they held up his arms (Ex. 17, 12). We cannot all risk our necks in saving the heathen, but we can all pray in faith and give our money, which belongs to the Lord, into the mission-bank, for those who can do what we cannot. You can easily find your banker if you seek for him.”

V. 24. Τοῖς παρεστῶσιν — the angels, who are always shown us as connected with the judgment (Matth. 13, 41; 16, 27; 24, 31 2 Thess. 1, 7; Jude 14; Dan. 7, 10). **Take away from him the pound** — which he had never truly appropriated; even his sham possession now ends. No further punishment is here recorded, as there is in the parable of the talents. But, rightly considered, this is enough. To be deprived of the Word of God, of the fountain of life and salvation, is to sink into eternal darkness and death. — **And give, etc.** The same feeling still stirs in us as made those who stood by and heard the order exclaim: *Lord, he hath ten pounds.* We would have given this extra pound to him who had the fewest, certainly not to him who had the most. But this is because we have not yet fully brought our minds in harmony with Christ's. The nobleman in the parable pays no attention to the objection, he emphatically overrules it.

V. 26. This is the law in the kingdom of Christ. It seems strange at first glance, and yet is not only perfectly just, but so self-evident that it cannot possibly be denied. Warneck cites a few examples. A wealthy miser, who keeps his money locked up, is really a poor man. A man gifted very highly mentally, who neglects his gifts and does not use them, is like a man with no gifts at all. A nominal Christian, who

knows the Gospel and confesses it, but never appropriates it inwardly and makes it part of his life, is like a non-Christian. Now nothing is more natural than that they who fail to use Christ's spiritual gifts should more and more lose them until they have absolutely nothing left; while they who do use them, and use them with increasing diligence, shall find themselves ever richer. The very opportunity which one neglects to his loss, falls to another for his gain; the crown which one lets go, bedecks another's head. Here in time this law works gradually, and we are constantly warned that we may hold fast what we still have, recover by diligent use and exercise what we may have lost, and move upward into the possession of more and more. It will be too late to escape the deadly results of his law at the last day, if we have despised its operations during our time of grace. He to whom the Lord allotted ten cities was best fitted to take the pound which could no longer remain in the napkin of the cast-off servant.

V. 27. Πλήν = moreover, besides. Οἱ ἐχθροί are the opposite of οἱ δοῦλοι, v. 15. They are by no means forgotten, and they are dealt with according to their deserts and the greatness and power of the king they so wickedly spurned. They are still "enemies" and full of hatred against their rightful king. As rebels, who have had every chance to drop their rebellion, they are worthy of death. So they are brought and slain. Meyer supposes them present while the king deals with his bondmen, but the ἀγάγετε contradicts this. "This slaying of the king's enemies *in his presence*, is not to be in the interpretation mitigated or explained away, as though it belonged merely to the outer scheme of the parable, being introduced because such things were done in Eastern courts (1 Sam. 10, 27; 11, 12; Jer. 52, 10), and to add an air of truthfulness to the narrative. Rather it belongs also to the

innermost kernel of the parable. The words set forth, fearfully indeed, but not so that we need shrink from applying them to the Lord Jesus, his unmitigated wrath against his enemies — but only *his* enemies exactly as they are enemies of all righteousness — which shall be revealed in that day when grace shall have come to an end, and judgment without mercy will have begun (Is. 63, 1-6; Rev. 14, 10; 19, 11-16; 2 Thess. 1, 7-9; Heb. 10, 27). All this found its commencing fulfillment, in the overthrow of Jerusalem, and in the terrible calamities which accompanied that day of doom; then doubtless was *a* coming of Christ to judgment; but it will only obtain its full accomplishment when the wickedness of an apostate world, having drawn to a single head, shall in the destruction of him, the personal Antichrist, and of all that have gathered under his banner, receive its final doom." Trench.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Whether used for the regular Sunday sermon or for some mission festival, this text ought to be handled so as to impress its power and grandeur upon the hearers. We all think too slightingly of the work of the Church and the work of missions. — Ours is a commercial age, and here is the Gospel of Christ in a commercial dress. Business is business, men like to say; well, here is the biggest business that has ever been, 19 centuries old now, and Christ means business with it more than any business-man that has ever lived. Men look for profit, but with the narrow spirit of greed and selfishness. Christ puts us into a trade where they alone profit who are full of unselfish love and lose sight of any profit but that of others. Their profit shall be so great at last that they will be overwhelmed in their humility and will never cease thanking their Lord.

A simple way to handle this parable is to outline it according to the idea which placed it in our series:

The Eternal Rewards of Grace.

- I. *They are offered to all.*
- II. *They are easily obtained.*

- III. *They are scorned by many.*
- IV. *They are lost by some.*
- V. *They are gained by the faithful alone.*

Some will like to divide like Warneck: **Trade!** 1) *The task* thus allotted to us; 2) *The reward* thus held out to us. — Or the way Conrad has it: **Trade Ye Herewith Until I Come!** Our Lord's return brings 1) *A reward for faithfulness*; 2) *A judgment for unfaithfulness*. — But the idea of faithfulness itself may be split:

Blessed are the Nobleman's Faithful Servants!

- I. *Theirs indeed is the work*, while the unfaithful are at ease, and the wicked do as they please.
- II. *But theirs is also the result of grace*, while the unfaithful go away empty, and the wicked reap their doom.

For the use at Mission Festivals we append the following outlines:

The Tremendous Business of the Christian Church.

I. The magnificent business era. 1. Its extent. 2. Its significance. — *II. The grand business firm.* 1. All members of the church (ten). 2. "Servants," under Christ's orders. 3. Sure of success. — *III. The wonderful business capital.* 1. Held by all alike, Word and Sacrament. 2. A real capital. 3. A productive capital. — *IV. The ceaseless business activity.* 1. Its central part: preaching the Word. 2. Its subsidiary parts: support of preaching outwardly at home and abroad; support inwardly by prayer; support by translating the Word into life. — *V. The sublime business settlement.* 1. With the successful servants. 2. With the wicked servant.

Mission Work is Jesus' Work.

- I. *Mission work — Jesus' command.*
- II. *Missionaries — Jesus' servants.*
- III. *Mission fields — Jesus' kingdom.*
- IV. *Mission success — Jesus' joy.*
- V. *Mission rewards — Jesus' gift.*

Langsdorff.

Suppose Our Nobleman, the King, Were to Return at This Our Mission Festival.

- I. *How terrible if he found you scorning his great work altogether, like those enemies of his.*
- II. *How sad if he found you slothful and dilatory, like that wicked servant of his.*
- III. *How blessed if he found you partially faithful at least, like the servant who gained five pounds.*
- IV. *How unspeakably glorious if he found you entirely faithful, like the servant who gained ten pounds.*

How Will We Meet the Nobleman When Finally He Returns?

- I. *Will we be destroyed like the citizens who hated him?*
- II. *Will we be cast out like the wicked servant who failed to use his pound?*
- III. *Will we be rewarded like the faithful servants who traded with their pounds?*

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Luke 12, 35-43

The last Sunday in the church year comes with the bidding, *Be ye ready!* The church of Germany celebrates this Sunday as her *Totenfest*, a memorial Sunday for the sainted dead. Our text can be used for this purpose, but we need not lay special stress upon the dead, who have left us in the past, for the text deals with the future, with Christ's coming to us, which may occur at any time and for which at all times we ought to be entirely ready.

V. 35. The picture here presented, including also the next two verses, is really a parable complete in itself. A household of servants is described, whose master has gone to attend a wedding and may be expected back some time during the night, no one knowing just when. Jesus urges his hearers to be watchful, and ready to receive their returning Lord with all due preparation for service; and he promises them, that if they do receive him, their Lord himself will treat them as free men and make himself their servant, girding himself and waiting upon them at table while they feast. — **Let your loins be girded about;** ἕστωσαν (with the ending σαν in the N. T. instead of ν). There is an emphasis on ὑμῶν; no matter what others do, as far as *you* are concerned, be ready. It is repeated in the next sentence: "And *you yourselves* like unto men etc." Once for all we should learn to be different from the majority of men, especially when we think of Christ's return. We are told not only that men generally will not expect him, but also that he shall come in an unexpected way and shall surprise the greater

part of our race when he does come. The temptation is ever strong for us to do as others do. Therefore this special command to us and the instruction following, the purpose of which is to make us different from others. The readiness urged upon us is pictured for us in the image of the servants whose loins are girded about. The oriental dress consisted of a long loose flowing robe. This was in the way when quick action became necessary, and was either laid aside altogether, as when the witnesses against Stephen "laid down their clothes" at Saul's feet while they proceeded to stone this first martyr; or was girded up by a belt about the waist, as when the Israelites ate their first Passover in haste ready for instant departure from Egypt. So men traveling girded up their loins, and also men serving a table where quick movement was necessary. The clothes and the belt require no special interpretation, although Besser attempts it; the long garments = all temporal possessions and gifts; the girdle = truth, Eph. 6, 14. It is enough to say: "Let your loins be girded about" = hold yourselves in constant readiness for service. — **And your lamps burning**, for the time is the night. The λύχνος is the ancient lamp, a shallow dish or bowl, with oil, and a wick laid in the nozzle. These, like the clothes, stand for no special spiritual thing in the life of the Christian. The burning lamps are only a further indication of readiness on the part of Christ's servants. Besser makes the lamps = faith. Instead of sleeping during the night, as other men do, these servants are wide awake, with the house lit up in constant expectation of Christ's coming. — V. 36: **And be ye yourselves like etc.** This completes the picture with a few significant strokes. Ὑμεῖς ὅμοιοι characterizes the description as a parable. **Ye yourselves** = all who mean to be true followers of Christ. He himself tells them in advance about what he shall do and urges

them as to their proper course. There is no excuse for any of us if we disregard Christ's instructions and choose a different course from the one he has mapped out for us as the only proper and safe one. The **men** are described in the next verse as δούλοι, bondservants, belonging to their κύριος or owner, and therefore not only bound to obey him but to consider his interests their own. We are to be nothing less than the bondmen of Christ. How he intends to make us rulers and princes in his heavenly kingdom the foregoing text has shown; and how royally he intends to treat us, this text also shows. There may be a measure of hardship in standing with loins girt about and lamps lit, waiting hour after hour during the night, while others are stretched at ease in sweet sleep, but the hardship is a small thing compared with the reward of grace which presently follows. — **Looking for their Lord**, προσδεχόμενοι, expecting, explains the readiness of these servants. They are expecting him at any moment; he has gone, and presently he will return. This is the same truth as in the previous parable where we saw the nobleman go to receive a kingdom and then return. Christ is thus gone now; the time in which we live is the night of our waiting; we are absolutely assured that he will presently return. — But we are told also for what he went away, in the words: **he shall return from the marriage feast**. It should be noted that this is not his own marriage. This marriage takes place *before* he returns to his servants; the marriage feast of Christ, the Lamb, when many shall sit down in his kingdom with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, takes place *after* Christ's return. Noesgen says that a marriage feast is here introduced, instead of some other feasts, because of the longer delay such a feast might cause in the guest's return to his own household. This feast is now in progress; it is the jubilation of the heavenly hosts over the redemption

Christ worked out for the world. It has been in progress ever since Christ ascended to the Father. From this feast of joy and glory Christ will return to earth at the last day. Κύριος ἑαυτῶν = lord of theirs, and indicates the attachment of the servants to their master; it is almost as much as "beloved lord." The **when**, πότε (with aor. subj. ἀναλύσει), is altogether uncertain. Men have speculated a great deal about the time of Christ's return, and still keep fixing dates in open disobedience to his word, Mark 13, 32; it is not for us to know, but to be ready constantly. Our English: "when he shall return" conveys the idea of arrival at his own home; but ἀναλύω = when he shall start or leave, thus referring to the departure from (ἐκ) the marriage feast. — **That, when he cometh** etc. Ἐλθόντος καί κρούσαντος are genitive absolute, with the pronoun omitted, but easily supplied in thought. Εὐθέως ἀνοίξουσιν αὐτῷ; the idea is that the lord of these servants need not wait, or make special efforts to arouse his household, but finds them ready to receive him. The stress is on εὐθέως, straightway. In the "opening unto him" there lies more than just the unlocking of the door to let the master into the house. He is not one in a lowly station, with but few servants, in a humble house, but a great lord, with many servants, and his reception is according to his station. These servants are expecting to wait on him with all due ceremony and service, late though the hour may be. If merely the door was to be unlocked to the homecoming lord, one servant might have sufficed, and not all would have been required to wait with loins girded and lamps burning. The greatness and grandness of this lord is required not only to image the gloriousness of Christ when he comes back to earth, but also to give proper weight and value to his condescension when he now makes his servants lords and himself their servant.

V. 37. An entirely unexpected thing is here

pictured by Christ. One should think that the lord coming home would simply accept the ministration of his watchful and ready servants, and, seeking his ease, retire for the rest of the night. But nothing of the kind is here stated. The joys of the marriage feast, from which this lord comes, have not wearied him; he is delighted with his servants, and he rewards them in a way they had no right to expect, in a way which this grand, noble-hearted lord alone could invent — he makes, as it were, a marriage feast then and there for them, puts his servants into the position of honored, lordly guests, and, since none others are left to take the part of servants, himself assumes that, and lets them want for nothing. Did they perhaps, while waiting, think of the joys their lord was partaking of while away — now they themselves shall have them in the fullest measure. This is the wonderful sense of the parable. It takes the common imagery of a lord and his thoughtful, faithful servants, and it makes something unheard of (as far as the common proceeding of such persons is concerned) out of this ordinary material. There is not another lord, like this our Lord Christ, in all the world. — **Blessed**, happy, fortunate, but in the full sense of the word, as the following description of what makes them so shows. The blessedness which Christ ascribes to his true followers is always real, concrete, and of a kind infinitely superior to all happiness and good fortune which the world can bestow. As much greater as Christ, the Savior, is than the world, as much holier, truer, wiser, and more loving, so much better is the blessedness which he bestows than that which the world bestows. — Οὗς γρηγοροῦντας — those, therefore, who have heeded the admonition just given by Christ, those alone. Nothing is said of any others, for the general purpose of this description is to draw the hearers into compliance with the admonition of Jesus,

and therefore the alluring picture of those who do comply is unrolled. The point of the previous admonition is here repeated in the word **watching** (γρηγορέω = to be awake, to watch), γρηγοροῦντας such as are watching at the time of the Lord's coming and whom he then finds as such. They who watch awhile and then fall asleep are not called blessed; the watching must be in the hour of the master's coming. This watching is described by Buechner as the solicitude of a Christian when he guards against sin, keeps the faith and a good conscience, remembers his high calling in Christ Jesus and the dangers which surround him, examines himself in the light of the Word lest he grow secure or yield to sin, and ever looks for his Lord's coming. Gregory the Great calls him a watcher who keeps the eyes of his mind open for beholding the true light. He who watches is one who keeps the light of faith burning clearly and himself in readiness to serve the Lord. — The blessedness of the spiritual watchers is sealed by Christ's **verily, I say unto you**. Whatever the world or sleepy Christians may think of such watching and the men who give themselves to it, this that the Lord himself says is both true, absolutely true, and authoritative, for he both knows and brings it to pass. — Now follows the wonderful blessedness: **He shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them**. "As no Israelite dared to see the ark of the covenant uncovered, so no one ought to look at this passage without first having wrapped himself entirely in the blanket of humility." (Quoted by Besser). The tables are completely turned — the servants are treated as lords, the Lord acts as the servant. It is unspeakably wonderful. And yet, need we be surprised that he who once made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, who humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even

the death of the cross (Phil. 2, 7-8), should now, in his exaltation, and without laying aside his divine glory, gird himself and serve us? What this serving shall be no man knows or is able fully to describe. When it takes place we shall sing in an exalted sense the Psalmist's words: "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen: The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad." Ps. 126, 1-3. Let us observe that this exaltation of the servants is altogether without any merit or worthiness on their part; it is a magnificent act of pure grace. Their watching was no more than their servant duty; in no way did it earn either this feast or their lord's assuming the part of a servant for them. Think what it shall be when the Lord himself with all his divine power and resources condescends to make us happy. There is no high and holy, sweet and precious joy which he cannot command and place before us. "Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Ps. 23, 5. We need not trouble about the question which some commentators raise, that this cannot be the feasting in the heavenly kingdom, but must be a feast here on earth. It is enough to know that with the coming of Christ the dispensation of earth shall end and that of heaven (the new heaven and new earth) begin. There will be no millennium such as chiliasts expect. Our blessedness at Christ's return shall be so great that no heathen custom, like the participation of slaves in the Saturnalian feasts, and not even the humiliation of Christ himself when the night before his death he washed his disciples' feet, can in any way foreshadow it.

V. 38. Meyer on Matth. 14, 24 tells us that since the time of Pompey the Jews divided the night into

four watches of three hours each, while before they had only three watches of four hours each. Four watches are to be considered in this parable, and the Lord speaks of the possibility of his coming in the second or third. He chooses these, not because he means to say he positively will not come in the first or the fourth, but, as Noesgen points out, because a return during the second or third watch was most in keeping with the imagery of the parable, which tells of one returning from a wedding feast. As far as the reality is concerned, we may say, there will be no more watches when the Lord comes — the night will be forever at an end. There are two “ifs” in this statement of Jesus, one referring to his coming, one referring to our condition. **If** in the one watch or the other — that makes no difference: certain it is that he shall come, and that blessedness shall come with him. But whether he find us so (εἴη still depending on εἴαν) that is not equally certain, although the subj. puts it into the form of expectation on the part of Christ. Let us be faithful and not disappoint this expectation of his. Let us not be secure, but constantly keep his words before our eyes; so shall that heavenly blessedness be certain also for us.

V. 39. Compare Matth. 24, 43-44. The question whether v. 39-40 of our text were spoken in connection with what precedes them, need not trouble us, since we find them here in the inspired record and they fit well into this place. They continue the theme: Be ye watchful and ready! — **But know this**, τοῦτο δὲ γινώσκετε, may be read, as in the margin, *But this ye know*; there is no way to decide whether the verb is the imperative or the indicative. If the former, Christ wants us to pay special attention to the thing he describes; if the latter, he makes our knowledge the basis of his admonition to be ready. — This comparison drawn from **the master of the house**, ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης, one

who was complete charge of the house, is entirely distinct from the other where the servants are left at home while the *κύριος* goes to attend a feast. We may indeed treat this illustration like a parable and call "the master of the house" each and every Christian, "the house" our life on earth, and "the thief" Christ. But the whole may be treated simply as an illustration taken from the general experience of men, and we prefer to do this. Other passages contain the same illustration, referring the coming of a thief either to the day of the Lord, or, as here, to the Lord himself: Rev. 16, 15: "Behold, I come as a thief"; Rev. 3, 3: "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee"; 2 Pet. 3, 10: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night"; 1 Thess. 5, 2: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." The *manner* of the coming is the point in these illustrations. In our passage the illustration is more complete. If the master of the house had known **in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched** — the thing it self-evident. But it is also evident that the master of the house did not know and could not know. The implication in the illustration also is that the thief did come, that the master of the house did not know the hour, and — worst of all! — *did not watch*. Εἰ ἦδει . . . ἐγγηγόρησεν ἂν καὶ οὐκ ἀφῆκεν states a past condition unfulfilled, and the conclusion of the same kind: "if he had known" — but he did not; "he would have watched" — but he did not. So this illustration adds the other side not drawn out in the preceding parable, namely the consequence of *not watching*. Above we heard nothing of what would happen to servants who failed to watch and greet their lord at his coming. Here we hear what happens in such a case — **and not have left his house to be broken through**, really

digged through (margin), διορύσσω. The house is robbed, its valuables are stolen by the burglar — there is a tremendous loss. Too late the owner blames himself for not watching. In his case, however, the loss may not be irreparable; he may still have the house and by diligent labor and watchfulness may accumulate and protect his valuables in the future. These features of the illustration, however, do not come into play here. The one point is this: since the hour of the thief's coming cannot be known, there is only one thing to do — watch constantly. In the application it is the same: since the hour of Christ's coming cannot be known, there is only one thing to do — watch constantly. Whoever fails in this shall suffer the inevitable consequences. — What these shall be in our case is not drawn out; but the suggestion conveyed by the illustration is terrible enough. Christ merely enforces the lesson he has been teaching in this section of his discourse.

V. 40. Καὶ ὑμεῖς, and you (emphatic) be ready; ἔτοιμοι includes all that was said above in regard to watching with loins girt and lights burning. — Often enough we imagine that when the Lord comes, we Christians at least will recognize the approach of the great hour. But we will not. Christ's coming will occur in an hour when we **think not**, οὐ δοκεῖτε — even with all our watching and readiness. There will be something to make us think that while he surely will come, and come soon, he will hardly come at such and such an hour. We will feel sure of it, in spite of the words here telling us so plainly that Christ will come at just such an hour. It is impossible for the Lord to press his warning and admonition home more completely than he here does. Absolutely, if he shall come when we are sure he will not come, there is only one safe and reasonable thing for us to do: watch every hour! He will not come in an hour when we think

he will or may come; he will not come in many hours when we think he will or may not come; but he will come, not when we think he will, but when we think he will not — even as in many such hours in the past. — **Son of man** is his blessed Messianic name, which is still his now that he sits on the throne of glory. The Son of God made man for us, he will come, and blessed are they who stand ever ready to receive him.

V. 41. Peter, as so often, is the spokesman. His question is natural enough. The point of it is not, as Besser thinks, Peter's idea that the Lord has already come to the disciples, and, therefore, probably means his words only for others — which clashes with "or even unto all." He does not wish to inquire: "Are we too — the disciples — still in danger of losing all, still liable to be caught as by a thief?" He does not distinguish thus between the disciples and the others who are not disciples. **Speakest thou this parable unto us**, i. e. to us alone as disciples, warning and urging us, as the ones whom alone thou wilt have at thy heavenly table — **or even unto all?** so that others besides us, any and all of thy hearers, may apply thy words to themselves and thus secure the promised blessedness? — The answer of Jesus is after his usual manner. He explains more fully, and so Peter is able to find his own answer, and to find it in a way especially necessary for himself. Briefly stated the answer is this: The parable is for all, but let each one look well to himself in the station assigned to him in the Master's house. — V. 42. **Who then is the faithful and wise steward**, or, as the margin permits us to read, *the faithful steward, the wise man*, **whom his lord shall set over his household**, etc. We must marvel at the richness of Christ's teaching. Image follows image, each perfect in itself, and each fitting exactly the doctrine and lesson to be taught. We have heard of the servants and of the master of the house;

now follows **the steward**, οἰζονόμος. Noesgen and others insist that this “steward” does not refer especially to the apostles, but is general just as the “servants” above and “the master of the house,” but this would leave the new illustration without its point, would reduce it to a mere repetition, and would fail to give that answer to Peter which the Lord saw he ought to have. Besser, therefore, is correct when he writes: “What pertains to all Christians, namely to exercise good stewardship with the pound entrusted to them, this the Lord applies especially to those whom he has set as stewards (1 Cor. 4, 1) in his congregation his apostles and head-servants who are placed over his household.” The answer of Christ to Peter is, I mean all, but do you take special heed to yourself!—The word **shall set**, καταστήσει, future tense, refers to the future commission of the apostles. For this office and work the Lord will need **faithful and wise stewards**, πιστός, trustworthy, φρόνιμος, of good judgment and understanding. “Faithfulness is their first qualification (1 Cor. 4, 2); wisdom, that they may be ‘apt to teach’ (1 Tim. 3, 2), ‘instructed unto the kingdom of heaven’ (Matth. 13, 52), ‘rightly dividing the word of truth’ (2 Tim. 2, 15), is the second, growing out of the first.”—In their faithfulness they give to the souls entrusted to them their **portion of food**, τὸ σιτομέτριον, i. e. not their own wisdom, but the pure Word of God, so that they may have Paul’s testimony: “I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20, 27). In their wisdom they give to each soul its portion **in due season**, ἐν καιρῷ, i. e. to each according to his need at this or at that time, whatever he may *then* require; so that they may be true *Seelsorger* and have the testimony of Paul: “I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9, 22; comp. Acts 20, 20).—Besser tells of Gregory of Nazianzen who compared the congregation to a cithara with many

strings; each string must be separately touched, and the plectrum must be so handled that no discords result. — **Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.** This is a plain repetition of the blessing uttered in v. 37, but with a marked difference. We see that the “steward” is after all only one of the δούλοι, a bondservant himself, only one set over others in the house. His position requires more of him than is expected of the other servants who merely stand ready under the orders of their “steward”; he must be found **so doing**, ποιῶντα οὕτως = watching in this special way that he manages the “household” well, and gives to each his “portion of food in due season.” The Lord’s answer to Peter, instead of promising him that the apostles or ministers of Christ are alone to enjoy the blessedness of being served as lords by their Lord, draws attention to the fact, that they alone, because of their more responsible position, have a greater requirement to meet in order to be found faithful. This is plain also from what follows in v. 48: “To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom they commit much, of him will they ask the more.” It is well for us pastors to remember these words of our Lord, so that we may never grow indifferent or careless in our holy office. The blessing offered in general to all Christ’s servants, whatever their place and work (v. 37), is offered especially to us, the head-servants or stewards (v. 43), but only on the condition that we are found watchful as the rest are watchful, and faithful and wise in our watchfulness as our responsible work so evidently demands.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Verse 44 is purposely omitted from the text, because by adding it the text would fall too distinctly into two parts, one on Christ’s followers in general, the other on the ministry. By omitting v. 44 on the special reward of the ministry we may

preach watchfulness to all alike, adding only that each must watch in the station allotted to him. — We hope the following outlines will need no special elucidation:

Watch!

- I. *The Lord commands us to watch.*
- II. *The Lord tells us what watching means.*
- III. *The Lord warns us against not watching.*
- IV. *The Lord makes a great promise to all who do watch.*

Watching in Hope!

- I. *We know where our Lord is.*
- II. *We know that he will return to us.*
- III. *We know what will happen to the unready.*
- IV. *We know what we must do to be ready.*
- V. *We know what grace and glory shall be ours at last.*

Be Like Men Looking for Their Lord!

- I. *With loins girded.*
- II. *With lights burning.*
- III. *With hearts watching.*

P. Kaiser.

Our Lord Shall Return from the Marriage Feast.

Therefore I. *Be patient.* II. *Be persevering.* III. *Be ever ready.* IV. *Be wise and faithful.* V. *Be full of hope.*

“Blessed Are Those Servants Whom the Lord When He Cometh Shall Find Watching!”

- I. *It is blessed to be a true servant doing the Master's will.*
- II. *It is blessed to escape the evil consequences of disobeying the Master's word.*
- III. *It is infinitely blessed to receive the Master's heavenly grace.*

THE REFORMATION FESTIVAL

John 2, 13-17

Little need be said on the fitness of this text for the Festival of the Reformation celebrated throughout the Lutheran Church. It is an old favorite free text, which lends itself readily to a vivid and striking portrayal of the work of the Reformation, this first cleansing of the Temple by the Savior's mighty hand. In describing what the Reformation of the sixteenth century accomplished for the Church the question must ever be present to our minds, Is the church in which we today worship God still clean — as clean as Christ would have it? Or putting it into another form, Have we faithfully held fast what we had, so that no man has taken our crown? There are many very willing to sing with strong voices Luther's old battle hymn:

“And take they our life,
Goods, fame, child and wife,
When their worst is done,
They yet have nothing won;
The kingdom ours remaineth”—

who are only too ready to give up the dearest treasures of the kingdom, the purity of the Word and Sacraments, at the first threat of the foe to take far less from them — should they insist on being loyal and staunch — than life, or child and wife. It is the business of the Reformation sermon to kindle the old heroic fires in the hearts of the hearers: the fire of faith which dreads neither devil, pope, secular power, or any other foe who attacks the Gospel; the fire of love, which is ready and willing to render any sacrifice the Lord may ask of us in his cause; and the fire of zeal which burns with consuming ardor in defending the

Lord's honor and the integrity of his Gospel of grace. Ours is a text furnishing the preacher a divine basis for such a sermon.

V. 13. In Cana of Galilee Jesus had sanctified marriage, the fountain of home happiness; now he proceeds to the Jewish national center of worship, to sanctify that, for it was the fountain of all religious Jewish life. This is the first **passover** since Jesus entered upon his ministry. John's use of the word **Jews** is well known; he always employs the word as a designation for the foes of Christ. He is evidently not writing for converted Jews who would need no more than the word "passover"; and he is really drawing a line here between himself, Christ, and the first disciples on the one side, and the "Jews" on the other. — **And Jesus went up to Jerusalem**, because the city lay higher than Capernaum from which he set out, and because the Jews always spoke of "going up" to Jerusalem on account of the ideal religious height of this their national center of worship.

V. 14. **And he found** simply narrates a fact, not — as has been said — an occasion offered by God for his work; the condition of the Temple at the time was the work of men, and it was what they had done that Jesus found. The part of **the temple** here referred to is the court of the Gentiles. About the Temple building proper there were four courts, that of the priests enclosing the building; that of the men toward the east, and that of the women likewise toward the east beyond that of the men. Around these three courts there was an extensive court, called the court of the Gentiles since Gentiles were permitted to enter it; the outer sides of it consisted of magnificent colonnades.

"We have already seen what vast crowds flocked to the Holy City at the great annual feast. Then, as now, that immense multitude, composed of pilgrims from every land, and proselytes of every nation,

brought with them many needs. The traveler who now visits Jerusalem at Easter time will make his way to the gates of the Church of the Sepulcher through crowds of vendors of relics, souvenirs, and all kinds of objects, who, squatting on the ground, fill all the vacant space before the church, and overflow into the adjoining street. Far more numerous and far more noisome must have been the buyers and sellers who choked the avenues leading to the Temple at the Passover, to which Jesus now went among the other pilgrims; for what they had to sell were not only trinkets and knick-knacks, such as now are sold to Eastern pilgrims, but oxen, and sheep, and doves. On both sides of the eastern gate — the gate Shusan — as far as Solomon's porch, there had long been established the shops of merchants and the banks of money-changers. The latter were almost a necessity; for, twenty days before the Passover, the priests began to collect the old sacred tribute of half a shekel paid yearly by every Israelite, whether rich or poor, as atonement money for his soul, and applied to the expenses of the Tabernacle service. Now it would not be lawful to pay this in the coinage brought from all kinds of government, sometimes represented by wretched counters of brass and copper, and always defiled with heathen symbol and heathen inscriptions. It was lawful to send this money to the priests from a distance, but every Jew who presented himself in the Temple preferred to pay it in person. He was, therefore, obliged to procure the little silver coin in return for his own currency, and the money-changers charged him five per cent. as the usual *kalbon*, or *agio*. Had this trafficking been confined to the streets immediately adjacent to the holy building, it would have been excusable, though not altogether seemly. . . . We learn from the Talmud that a certain Babha Ben Buta had been the first to introduce '3,000 sheep of the flocks of Kedar into the Mountain

of the House' — i. e., into the Court of the Gentiles, and therefore within the consecrated precincts. The profane example was eagerly followed. The *canujôth* of the shop-keepers, the exchange booths of the usurers, gradually crept into the sacred enclosure. There, in the actual Court of the Gentiles, steaming with heat in the burning April day, and filling the Temple with stench and filth, were penned whole flocks of sheep and oxen, while the drovers and pilgrims stood bartering and bargaining around them. There were the men with the wicker cages filled with doves, and under the shadow of the arcade, formed by quadruple rows of Corinthian columns, sat the money-changers with their tables covered with piles of various small coins, while, as they reckoned and wrangled in the most dishonest of trades, their greedy eyes twinkled with the lust of gain. And this was the entrance-court of the Most High! The court which was a witness that that house should be a House of Prayer for all nations had been degraded into a place which, for foulness was more like shambles, and for bustling commerce more like a densely crowded bazaar; while the lowing of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the babel of many languages, the huckstering and wrangling, the clinking of money and of balances (perhaps not always just) might be heard in the adjoining courts, disturbing the chant of the Levites and the prayers of priests!" Farrar. — On the tax taken from every Israelite 20 years old compare Ex. 30, 11-16. Κερματιστής from κέρμα, that which is cut off, a small coin, hence changer of coins or money (found only here in the N. T.).

V. 15. The φραγέλιον ἐκ σχοινίων = **a scourge of cords** or rushes, since σχοινίον is either the rush itself or the cord twisted from its fibers. The question is sometimes raised whether Jesus used the scourge, and some have supposed he did not actually strike with it,

but used it only as a symbol of authority. The Christ who made a scourge used it in driving out the animals mentioned: "cast out both the sheep and the oxen." — **And he poured out the changers' money, and overthrew their tables** — the piled up coins went first when the tables were pushed. The idea that in some way Jesus scattered the money, and then in rising indignation upset also the tables, is entirely unnecessary. The money flew first, then the tables were overturned. — **And to them that sold doves he said, Take these things hence.** Here, too, fancy has stepped in, imagining that Jesus dealt more leniently with the doves and their owners, either because the doves were themselves gentler (forgetting the gentle lambs), or because the doves were the offering of the poor (forgetting that the poor paid also his half shekel), or — more strangely still — because the dove is the symbol of the Holy Ghost (forgetting that the Lamb certainly symbolized Christ himself). The best and most natural explanation is that given by Stellohorn: "The doves he did not let fly because he did not want to deprive their owners of their property." Jesus is righteous in the midst of his holy anger. In the case of the Gadarene swine he had no compunction in destroying them, for it was not lawful for an Israelite to own swine; but cattle, sheep, doves, and money were not in themselves forbidden, so Christ does not deprive the owners of their possessions, he simply compels them to remove their belongings from the temple Courts. One commentator invents a sudden self-control for Christ in the midst of his indignant action, when he comes to the doves. It suffices to say that at no moment in the whole proceeding had Christ in the least lost his self-control. If he had, his indignation would have been sinful. The image of the stern and holy Christ, the indignant, mighty Messiah, the Messenger of the Covenant of whom it is written,

“He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering of righteousness” — is not agreeable to many, who want only a soft and tender Christ. But it is useless to deny the fiery zeal of Christ on this occasion, which must have been tremendously effective when we think of the result — before this comparatively unknown man, with no other authority than his own word and person, there fled all this multitude of traders and changers who had thought to be fully within their rights with their business dealings in the Temple court. — **Make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise.** This was a word addressed, evidently, not only to the owners of the doves, but to all whom Christ drove out, although it was spoken in connection with the order to remove the doves. In this second word reported to us as spoken by Jesus in the Temple he again mentions his **Father**, and there is every reason to believe that he meant this word in its full New Testament sense: the first person of the Trinity, who from eternity begat the Son, who through the power of the Holy Ghost caused the Son to be born man of the Virgin Mary. — Jesus, as the Son, is sent by the Father, and so he is deeply concerned about his **Father’s house**, the Temple dedicated to his service, the center then of all true worship of God on earth. He must be about his Father’s business, ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πατρὸς μου. And so he could not allow his Father’s house to be made **a house of merchandise**, οἶκος ἐμπορίου, house of trading, buying and selling. Not that trading is in itself wrong; we may devote ourselves to ἐμπορία, and we may have our ἐμπόριον (a word come into favor among great business men today, who call their stores “emporiums”). But all this business, as something secular, even if trying to serve the Temple worshippers, had no right in any way to encroach on the

Temple itself, which was devoted to religion alone, and this in the most eminent sense.

Farrar makes a fine answer to the question which any one with some imagination, picturing to himself the situation as it must have been, is bound to ask. "Why did not this multitude of ignorant pilgrims resist? Why did these greedy chafferers content themselves with dark scowls and muttered maledictions, while they suffered their oxen and sheep to be chased into the streets and themselves ejected, and their money flung rolling on the floor, by one who was then young and unknown, and in the garb of despised Galilee? Why, in the same way we might ask, did Saul suffer Samuel to beard him in the very presence of his army? Why did David abjectly obey the orders of Joab? Why did Ahab not dare to arrest Elijah at the door of Naboth's vineyard? *Because sin is weakness*; because there is in the world nothing so abject as a guilty conscience, nothing so invincible as the sweeping tide of a Godlike indignation against all that is base and wrong. How could these paltry sacrilegious buyers and sellers, conscious of wrongdoing, oppose that scathing rebuke, or face the lightnings of those eyes that were enkindled by an outraged holiness? . . . Base and groveling as they were, these money-mongering Jews felt, in all that remnant of their souls which was not yet eaten away by infidelity and avarice, that the Son of man was right." Holy and righteous indignation, when properly expressed and put into action, has often accomplished similar results against open violation of the law. But sin is not always cowardly, it is often presumptuous, arrogant, and violent in its own defense, nor cares what means it employs. In this case the power of the Son of man, his mighty *divine* authority, and not merely his great moral power as the defender of righteousness, must be held fast, in order to explain the non-resistance of

the men he drove out. — Another important question is that asked by Besser: “What good was there in driving out these people with their oxen, sheep, and money-boxes from the temple, while their hearts were still full of abomination and all manner of filth? What good was it to shake a few rotten fruits from the corrupt tree, while the tree itself was not made good? It would indeed be a misunderstanding of Christ if we sought the real object of his zeal only in the poor merchants and money-changers; that would place the Lord — whose delight is in the hearts of men — on a level with the so-called reformers of modern times, who endeavor to mend the leaking ship of a church grown worldly, by straightening and repairing the rigging.” Besser answers his own question by pointing to the Temple as the heart of the whole Jewish people. But we may add that it is not always simply a question of aiming at the heart or at the outward conduct. Luther rightly claims that Jesus was here doing part of Moses’ work. This becomes necessary at times. There are some abuses so flagrant and disturbing that they must be abolished without further ceremony, simply on the light and knowledge people have at the time. So here; the Jews knew full well they should not make God’s house a house of merchandise; therefore, it was entirely correct for Jesus to apply this knowledge and demand the proper fruits of conduct, before offering much further instruction.

V. 17. This remembering on the part of the disciples, when we compare v. 22, must have been at once, and not one resulting from more light secured later on. **It was written** in Ps. 69, 9, which is one of the great Messianic Psalms. **The zeal of thine house,** or, as the American Committee would have it, *the zeal for thy house* — the intended sense being practically the same — is the deep concern of the Messiah for the house of God; ζῆλος from ζέω to boil, to glow or burn,

sometimes in an evil sense, but certainly not here. — **Shall eat me up**, καταφάγεται, future tense, instead of κατέφαγε (Septuagint) in the Psalm. Some old commentators refer this to the future death of Christ which, however, cannot be said of the understanding of the word on the part of the disciples at this time. David's zeal for the Lord is pictured in Ps. 15; 24, 3-6; 51, 18-19; 119, 139, wherefore also the reproaches of the wicked fell upon him, as upon Christ himself, Rom. 15, 3. There is no doubt, as far as Christ himself is concerned, that he knew what end his zeal would lead him to; comp. v. 19. — We need hardly say that we hold, with the best commentators, over against the critical schools, that Christ cleansed the Temple twice, once near the beginning and once near the end of his ministry. Some distinguish between the two cleansings by making the first an act of grace, the second an act of judgment, but both were manifestations of grace on the part of Christ, his judgment upon the wicked nation and their polluted Temple coming later. Christ's act is often viewed as a symbolic one: as he here purified the outward Temple, so his mission was to purify it inwardly, and not the Temple alone, but also the hearts of the nation. This is a legitimate view, and it gives Christ's act a wide range of application for all time.

THE HOMILETICAL TREATMENT

Use homiletical application in treating this text for the Reformation festival. The formula will be: as then—so in the Reformation. The comparison will be historical, and the point of the comparison in *the cleansing*. The cleansing pictured in the text will be the image for the cleansing 400 years ago. It will be necessary, however, to bring in all through this comparison a personal element. If this is not done the sermon will degenerate into a sort of historical dissertation on what once happened in the Temple and on what happened in Wittenberg several hundred years ago. This personal element is easy to add, for we have inherited the cleansed church, must keep it

cleansed now, must enjoy and appropriate all that this cleansing has produced, and must pass on the cleansed church to our children.— There are two general ways of handling a text like ours. One is to draw the two lines of the parallel, that of cleansing the Temple, and then that of cleansing the papal church. We may do it in this manner:

Luther's Reformation Work as Pictured in the Cleansing of the Temple.

- I. A glorious event in the past.*
- II. An inestimable blessing for all time.*
- III. A mighty inspiration for today.*

Christ's Cleansing the Temple is a Justification of the Reformation of the Church.

- I. It shows us what must be cast out.*
- II. It shows us what must be brought in.*

The Reformation the Cleansing of the Church of the New Covenant.

- I. How it became necessary.*
 1. The church had become a house of merchandise.
 2. It had been turned into a den of thieves.
- II. How it was accomplished.*
 1. Men could not accomplish it.
 2. Christ himself brought it about.

The other way of handling the text is to use what the text offers and suggests as a starting point, and to expand fully what was done in the work of the Reformation. Examples of this type of treatment are the following sketches:

How the Lord Cleansed the Church of the New Covenant in the Sixteenth Century.

- I. The condition which necessitated the cleansing.*
 1. No Bible. 2. Justification by faith unknown.
 3. Christ made a severe judge instead of a gracious Savior. 4. The Sacrament abused (Mass). 5. The laity degraded (monks, priests, celibates); governmental authority subjected to the papal authority.

6. Other abuses; indulgences; purgatory; saint-worship. 7. Low morality.

II. The great work of performing the cleansing.

1. God's work. 2. The instrument Luther: lowly, prepared, protected, blessed with success. 2. The result: pure preaching; catechism; Bible; schools; multitudes of preachers and teachers; general reformation of the church.

III. The cleansed church as it has come down to us.

1. It is freely given to us. 2. Easily undervalued by us. 3. Threatened from various sides. 4. Easily lost, unless we use care and zeal. 5. And yet should be preserved intact by us at all hazard, and handed on to later generations.

What Was the Reformation For?

It was a new cleansing of the Temple:

- I. For the honor of God's House.*
- II. For the rebuke of all sellers and buyers.*
- III. For the stimulation of all disciples.*

Johann Rump.

What Was the Reformation For?

- I. For the removal of false doctrine and abuses.*
- II. For the reinstatement of the Gospel.*
- III. For the salvation of men.*
- IV. For the glory of God.*

Instead of sticking to the basic idea of cleansing, prolonged and intensive meditation on the text will discover several other fundamental thoughts applicable to the Reformation season. Here are samples. We ought to be exceedingly grateful for the Reformation. That cleansing, like the Temple cleansing, is really a donation of gifts to us:

By Your Reformation Return Thanks to God for His Reformation.

- I. Your reformation includes holding fast all the gifts of God's Reformation.*
- II. Your reformation includes making the fullest use of all the gifts of God's Reformation.*

Fixing our thoughts on the central figure in the text, and how this figure appears again in the work of the Reformation, we behold the might, power, and kingly control exercised by Christ in the Church. Our age needs that picture:

The Mighty Christ on Reformation Day.

- I. Mighty in holiness.*
- II. Mighty in zeal.*
- III. Mighty in Word.*
- IV. Mighty in Grace.*

Soli Deo Gloria.

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