

NEW GOSPEL SELECTIONS

Made Ready for Pulpit Work

**BY
R. C. H. LENSKI**

**TEXTS FOR THE ENTIRE CHURCH YEAR
FROM THE FOUR GOSPELS
AND THE ACTS**



**1919
LUTHERAN BOOK CONCERN
COLUMBUS, OHIO**

INTRODUCTION.

THE author's work on the *Eisenach Gospel and Epistle Selections* for the church year has found such a ready reception that the management of the Lutheran Book Concern felt encouraged to issue a similar series of Gospel texts for the church year, asking the author to undertake the work. So this new volume is sent out.

A goodly number of pericope systems have come into use in modern times in different sections of the church, in addition to the old line of pericope texts. But the moment we take up one of these newer lines, expecting to follow it by another, we discover that practically each line was selected without reference to the other lines, merely avoiding the texts already embodied in the old series. Many, especially the choicest texts, thus appear in a number of the newer lines of pericopes. The fact is that this could hardly be avoided. Take a festival like Christmas for instance. In all the four Gospels plus the Acts there are really only four Christmas texts, and the twenty-two newer pericope lines find themselves restricted to a choice between three, since the finest Christmas text of all, Luke 2, 1-14, has been preempted by the old pericope system. Once we use one of the choicer newer series of texts we will not be able to take up another series without repeating some, perhaps many, of the texts already used in the first set. With this situation before him in the publication of the very choice Eisenach line of Gospel texts, the author determined not to take as a second series of newer Gospel texts one of the established lines however excellent it might be in itself, but to avoid the duplication that would thus result at many points, by selecting from all the remaining lines of texts, outside of the Eisenach series, the best texts

offered for each Sunday and festival of the church year. To give more room for selection those systems which utilize also the Acts were included, and a goodly number of new texts could be chosen from this precious New Test. book. Even so, however, it was found that here and there a text not utilized in any of the modern lines would be desirable in place of the texts offered by these lines. The result is before the reader: no Eisenach text is here repeated, all the texts are new; yet not "free texts" as this term is usually understood but texts chosen from the remaining newer lines, most carefully following the thought of the church year in every choice, adding only as a further guide to the choice some of the patent needs of the American church of to-day. There is thus for instance a text on Inspiration, on the millennium, on the true unity of the church and others chosen for similar reasons. So much for the texts in these NEW GOSPEL SELECTIONS.

Now the work. There is first of all a discussion of the purpose and subject of each text, both in advance at the beginning of each cycle or sub-cycle, analyzing the entire group, and then text after text by itself, as the preacher takes it up. His path is mapped out as he comes to each cycle, and he is further directed as he comes to each text. The value of this has been freely attested by those who have used the author's Eisenach Selections. Then follows a careful exegesis of the text itself on the basis of the original. The Greek text used is that of Westcott and Hort, plus the text edited by Alex. Souter, valuable for its critical apparatus. Invaluable for an up-to-date study of New Test. Greek is Robertson's *Grammar of the Greek New Test. in the Light of Historical Research*. On grammatical points this book has been extensively used. It clears up many difficulties which even the best of the newer commentators muddle badly, and corrects many false conceptions which still parade as true knowledge of New Test. Greek. Every preacher who possibly can ought to use this best of helps on that part

of the Scriptures with which he will be most constantly occupied. To assist somewhat, also those of very moderate linguistic equipment, grammatical points have received constant attention in this volume. Yet whenever possible the explanations are made in English, avoiding the printing of the Greek because of the very material item of expense. Moreover, every preacher surely has the Greek text before him when he proceeds to make his preparation, and really needs no second printing of its words and phrases. Soundness and true balance in all points of interpretation were diligently, prayerfully sought, and the vagaries and misconceptions of even the most prominent commentators were not allowed to pass.

The management of our Book Concern demanded a full sermon on each text, as far more helpful than a collection of homiletical thoughts gathered from various sources. This addition, however, really puts two books together in one. The sermons herewith offered are intended, not as models, but as suggestive helps to those who may need such help. The author has, however, attempted to illustrate as best he could some of the most useful homiletical principles which his years of practical preaching have taught him to prize. May these simple Gospel testimonies serve the fraternal purpose for which they are put forth. A brief homiletical analysis under the title "Outlines" accompanies each text. Almost all of the outlines offered had to be composed by the author himself, since these newer pericopes are new ground with but very few outlines of any kind in print, and most of these of little or no homiletical value. The outlines offered are to stimulate the mental machinery of the preacher, to set it going by suggestion in thought and phrase, thus to enable him more quickly, and if possible more efficiently, to build the outline that meets his ideal and satisfies his need. While in the exegetical elaboration the Revised Version is used, this is only because it follows the Greek more accurately; for the sermons in this volume, as well as for

the phraseology of the outlines, the good old Authorized Version is retained, the Bible which our people read and study.

May God bless these pages and the work of all who use them in ministering grace and truth unto immortal souls.

THE AUTHOR.

Columbus, Ohio, July 5, 1919.

INDEX TABLE OF PERICOPES.

The Four Gospels and Acts.

		PAGE			PAGE
Matth.	4, 12-17. 23-25....	174	Luke	24, 36-47.....	508
"	5, 1-12.....	279	John	1, 29-34.....	157
"	5, 43-48.....	955	"	2, 18-22.....	342
"	6, 1-8.....	890	"	3, 16-21.....	80
"	6, 9-13.....	601	"	3, 31-36.....	260
"	9, 35-38.....	212	"	6, 16-21.....	228
"	10, 19-22.....	638	"	6, 30-35.....	244
"	11, 16-24.....	302	"	6, 37-40.....	1135
"	12, 38-42.....	358	"	7, 10-18.....	836
"	16, 15-20.....	530	"	7, 40-53.....	194
"	18, 1-5.....	873	"	11, 47-53.....	420
"	18, 15-20.....	1075	"	12, 12-19.....	439
"	21, 33-44.....	321	"	12, 27-33.....	404
"	22, 23-33.....	1187	"	12, 44-50.....	695
"	23, 1-12.....	1053	"	15, 17-27.....	931
"	24, 1-14.....	22	"	17, 17-24.....	574
"	25, 14-30.....	1010	"	19, 28-37.....	437
Mark	8, 34-38.....	554	Acts	1, 6-11.....	623
"	13, 32-37.....	1152	"	2, 37-40.....	675
Luke	1, 46-55.....	62	"	2, 41-47.....	655
"	3, 15-18.....	44	"	3, 22-26.....	3
"	12, 4-9.....	137	"	5, 1-11.....	781
"	12, 16-21.....	100	"	6, 8-15.....	763
"	12, 49-57.....	911	"	9, 36-43.....	818
"	13, 6-9.....	119	"	13, 38-43.....	746
"	13, 10-17.....	990	"	13, 44-49.....	855
"	13, 23-30.....	1168	"	15, 6-12.....	1095
"	16, 10-17.....	1114	"	17, 10-14.....	714
"	17, 7-10.....	974	"	18, 24-28.....	801
"	19, 1-10.....	381	"	21, 8-14.....	1036
"	24, 1-12.....	485	"	24, 24-27.....	728

THE CHRISTMAS CYCLE

(1)

·
·
·
·
·

·

·
·
·
·
·

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Acts 3, 22-26.

The first grand half of the church year is built directly on the great saving acts of God, Christ's Incarnation, his Manifestation, his Passion and Resurrection, and his Mission of the Holy Ghost. Hence we have the corresponding festivals, which hold up before us what God has done, and call on us to praise his holy name. We may summarize the burden of all the texts for this half of the church year in the grand theme: **Christ's saving work for us**, reserving then for the second half the corresponding theme: *Christ's saving work in us*. The preacher should note well that the dominant note in the first half of the church year is the one of objective fact and reality. Of course, the subjective appeal will also have its place, but the danger always is, especially in the great texts of the first half of the year, that the subjective side be overemphasized, and the objective minimized, perhaps overlooked entirely. Proclaim the eternal realities as realities! With this adequately done, there will be little trouble about the rest.

The first half of the church year is usually divided into three cycles, one centering about Christmas, one about Easter, and one about Pentecost. Because the former two are disproportionately large as compared with the third cycle, we prefer to divide into five: the Christmas cycle, the Epiphany cycle, the Lenten, Easter, and Pentecost cycles. In the following pages each cycle is analyzed in connection with its first text, thus marking out in advance the path which the sermons of that cycle will follow. The texts of each cycle are linked together, much as are those of the Eisenach series.

Compare the introductory sections of the author's *Eisenach Gospel Selections*. We may begin at once, with the Christmas cycle.—In the old plan of the church year the four Advent texts are each distinctly marked. The first treats Christ's gracious coming, the second his glorious coming, the third is the Sunday of the Baptist and his advent message, and the fourth is linked with Christmas and shows us the Christ whose birth we are about to celebrate. These general features in any given series of well-chosen texts will, of course, be individualized without losing their general trend. Our first text is Acts 3, 22-26, the climax of Peter's sermon on the healing of the lame beggar at the Gate Beautiful in the Temple. The subject of the text is found to be *the promised Messiah in his Advent grace*.—The second text is Matth. 24, 1-14, a portion of Christ's great prophecy concerning the end of the world and the things which will precede and usher in the end. Plainly this text deals with *the coming of Christ in his glory*, for it answers the question of the disciples: "What shall be the signs of thy coming?"—The third text is Luke 3, 15-18. The Baptist proclaims: "One cometh!" *John describes the Coming One*, and does it so as to call us to prepare for his proper reception. We are to receive him now in his grace by faith in order to be ready to meet him at last with joy.—The fourth text, Luke 1, 46-55, Mary's Magnificat, is peculiarly fitted for this Sunday. The mother of Jesus herself praises *the grace of God which gave us the Savior of the world*.—Then follows Christmas, with Luke 3, 16-21 as the text, revealing to us in all its greatness *the gift of God's Son for our salvation*. There is a strong negative side to this text, but the negative always goes together with the positive, and thus aids in bringing the positive out forcibly.—The last three texts of this cycle, that for the Sunday after Christmas, for New Year's Day, and for the Sunday after New Year, deal with the time feature marked by the second of these

texts. We have Luke 12, 16-21 for the last Sunday in the secular year, calling on us to *make our lives rich in God*. The rich fool is exactly what our materialistic age needs as it prepares to leave the old year and enter upon another period of God's goodness and grace.—New Year's Day has Luke 13, 6-9, the barren fig tree, *God coming to seek fruit of us*. This is a fine companion text for the previous one, and very effective in its appeal and note of warning.—The final text of the cycle is Luke 12, 4-9, launching us out into the new year with *the call to a courageous confession of Christ*. There is a strong note of encouragement, and a glorious prospect held out in Christ's words of promise. With this brief advance survey of what the Christmas cycle offers us we are ready to study each text in detail.

The great subject for the First Sunday in Advent will always be *the blessings of Christ's first coming*. We have it in this text which constitutes the climax of Peter's sermon to the great crowd of Jewish hearers in Solomon's Porch, when through the name of Jesus the two apostles, Peter and John, had miraculously healed the lame beggar at the Gate Beautiful leading into the court of the women. We have here the apostle's declaration that God sent his Son (Servant) to bless the people by turning them away from their iniquities. The entire text centers our attention upon *the promised Messiah in his Advent grace*. Peter uses the Moses prophecy concerning the Prophet-Messiah. This in a manner puts the prophetic office of the Savior forward. Let us observe, however, that in this way the Word is emphasized as the means of grace, and this Word reveals to us completely the person and work of the Savior, thus bringing us the treasure of salvation. A one-sided emphasis on the prophetic office, to the exclusion of the high priestly and royal, will thus be avoided. An aid in this respect is the pointed reference to the covenant, and to Peter's hearers as "the children of the covenant," besides whom are placed "all the kindreds of the earth" as likewise partakers of the Messiah's blessings.

•

Peter's sermon is an answer to the wondering multitude regarding the healing of the lame beggar. Its sum is: Not we apostles have done this marvelous work, but Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. In the first part of his sermon Peter puts the miracle itself into its proper light, as an attestation and glorification of Jesus whom the Jews had rejected — thus making the miracle a personal matter for his hearers. In his second part he unfolds the saving effect which this knowledge is to exert upon his hearers, and, in fact, upon all men, since the blessing which the beggar received points to all the Messianic gifts vouchsafed in Christ Jesus, that we may appropriate them by faith. The section which forms our text develops this thought as the sum of the glorious Mosaic and prophetic promises of the Old Test. now fulfilled in Jesus. It lies on the surface how this final section of the sermon constitutes a fine text for the First Sunday in Advent.

3, 22. Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you.

The miracle wrought by the apostle is part of the great Messianic hope of Israel now actually realized in Christ Jesus. The entire Old Test. is aglow with it. Supreme among its representatives is Moses, the mediator of the old covenant. From his utterances Peter, therefore, quotes a well-known passage, then adding a summary statement concerning all the other prophets: "They also told of these days." It appears that the prophecy quoted from Moses, while in a way specific, is meant too in this general way, as speaking of "these days," the great days of fulfillment now actually come. Yet the specific feature, the designation of Jesus as **a prophet** like unto Moses, has its value in backing up Peter's admonition to repent and be converted, v. 19, the very thing urged so strongly upon Israel by Jesus himself, Mk. 1, 15.

Moses **said** is the way Peter puts it, although he quotes what Moses *wrote* in Deut. 18, 15 and 18-19. The

spoken and written utterances of the prophets are always identified as equally inspired. The entire quotation produces freely the LXX, slightly changing the order of the words in the first part, and evidently has in mind the original Hebrew, which it follows in the second part. The Holy Spirit led the New Test. writers to use the LXX where this served his purpose; where for any reason it did not, he abandoned that translation. — The word **prophet** is put forward for emphasis. It designates one who is called and commissioned by God in an immediate manner to proclaim and teach whatever God shall communicate to him. Jesus indeed was a prophet beyond compare; Heb. 1, 1 lifts him up above all the others who had a right to this title. Mark 9, 7: "This is my beloved Son: *hear him.*" — The designation **Lord God** (more exact than "the Lord your God," A. V.) is the LXX rendering for the Hebrew *Yaveh Elohim*, which combines the supreme majesty and power of God with his covenant relation to Israel. — He it is who **shall raise up** this supreme prophet — a term which may embrace more or less according to the context; here it implies all the acts of God which gave the Prophet-Messiah to Israel. — The dative **unto you** is placed in the emphatic position immediately after the word "prophet," thus signaling the abounding grace vouchsafed to Israel in that his Messianic work was performed in their midst as well as for their benefit, Matth. 15, 24. — **From among your brethren** is a pointed reference to Christ's human nature, a sufficient equivalent for the Hebrew: "from the midst of thee, of thy brethren," Deut. 18, 15, addressing Israel as a whole; verse 18 has: "from among their brethren," God there speaking to Moses. The Messiah was to be a descendant of Abraham, David, etc., in what a wonderful way the Christmas story reveals to us. — The addition **like unto me**, or more closely rendered: "*as he raised up me*" (margin), because so emphatic, uses the accented pronoun. While Jesus resembled all the prophets of old in this portion of his holy office, he resembled Moses in a peculiar and supreme manner, for the prophet Moses

was the mediator of a covenant, the one on Sinai, and the prophet Jesus was the Mediator of the new covenant, cemented with his own blood on Golgotha. These two, therefore, stand out above all the rest. John 6, 14 shows that in a way the Jews recognized the import of Moses' words. So Jesus also himself uses this prophecy against their unbelief, John 5, 46-47. — With verbs of hearing we have the genitive of the person out of whose mouth one hears, but in the New Test. our verb with this genitive may signify: *auf einen hoeren*, to heed, or obey someone. This is the thought in the injunction: **to him shall ye hearken** = him shall ye obey; and the future tense has an imperative ring, enforced by what follows in v. 23. Any prophet ought to be obeyed, because God himself speaks through him; how much more, then, this supreme prophet, like Moses, a prophet and Mediator in one, and we may add at once, a Mediator beyond Moses, bringing the covenant which superseded that of Moses. The obedience here meant is that of faith, instilled and wrought by the divine power inherent in all this prophet's utterance. — This obedience is to be complete: ye shall hearken **in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you**. This is an explanatory addition of Peter; the Holy Spirit here interprets the scope of his own words as originally written by Moses, a thing he is just as free to do as we when we explain some previous statement we have made. Even in quoting another man's words we may add what exactly gives his meaning. The construction of ἀκούομαι with κατά, "hearken *in* all things," helps to make the verb signify "obey." The use of **all** (neut.), or **all things**, implies that the Messiah will indeed utter many things requiring our obedience. **Whatsoever** is really: "as many as," "such as." The clause is futuristic in the usual New Test. and classic form, with ἄν after the relative, followed by the subjunctive. The verb **shall speak** means simply "to utter," the opposite of "to be silent," omitting any reference to the thoughts, truths, commandments, etc., uttered. Thus stress is laid on unquestioning obedience to this Prophet-Messiah sent by the Lord God; we are to know

that any utterance of his is God's own Word. The tense, too, is significant; the punctiliar aorist conveys the idea: whatever at any special time, in any special instance he shall utter, that we must obey by faith. The entire clause may well remind us of Matth. 28, 20: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." It is the Word by which the Messiah communicates with us, attesting himself, revealing his work, promising and conveying his grace and gifts, leading and guiding our hearts. It is absolutely vital, then, that we hearken unto every part of that Word, trusting and following it implicitly, for our entire salvation is bound up with it.

23. And it shall be, that every soul, which shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.

Peter follows the Hebrew, omitted by the LXX: "And it shall be," or "come to pass." But for the simple Hebrew "whosoever" he uses the fuller: **every soul which, etc.** The relative clause is grammatically like the previous one, only negative, and the active form of the verb is used in the same sense as the middle in the previous verse. The implication is that some will actually disregard this Prophet. The Hebrew is somewhat fuller, but with exactly the same sense: whosoever will not hearken unto my words, which he shall speak in my name." It states directly, however, what Peter's briefer rendering is content merely to imply, that all the "words" of this Prophet are those of the Lord God himself; cf. John 14, 24; 17, 14. — Refusal to heed the utterances of God's great Prophet must entail the most terrible consequences; such a man **shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.** Peter's translation is really an interpretation. The milder and more indefinite Hebrew statement: "I will require it of him" (LXX: "I will execute vengeance upon him"), is rendered so as to bring out all its terrifying force, and this by means of the strong formula which recurs in the Old Test. again and again from Gen. 17, 14 on. The disobedience of unbelief results in complete and final separa-

tion from God's covenant people, i. e., in a death without forgiveness, hence in eternal destruction, and rejection in the final judgment. — The word for **people** here signifies, not the nation as such, but the sacred or covenant people; in the New Test. period they are the communion of saints, the invisible church, the company of all who truly believe in Christ. Outside of this church there is no salvation, only utter destruction.

In this effective manner Peter holds up the prophecy of Moses to his hearers, urging them to the obedience of faith, and enforcing his call and admonition by the divine threat. The prophetic words of Moses are still in force; they apply to-day to every man to whom the Messiah comes with his saving grace and Word.

24. Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these things.

Our R. V. attempts to render the dainty Greek particles, *μέν* in v. 22, followed by its correlative *δέ* in v. 24, by means of the far heavier "indeed" for the former, and "yea" for the latter. These particles indicate only that when Peter began with Moses he already had in mind his statement on the other prophets. *καὶ . . . δέ* = *atque etiam*; the former merely "and," the latter matching Samuel, etc., with Moses. Samuel is mentioned as the *magister prophetarum* (Talmud) after Moses. We really have two constructions here combined into one: 1) all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken; 2) all the prophets, Samuel and those that followed after, as many as, etc. The words: "all the prophets from Samuel on" really embrace all, and there are none that followed these. "Them that followed after" is simply intended for Samuel's successors. Grammatical strictness must not blot out the evident sense of a statement. — The word translated **after** is really = "in order one after another." There was a divinely arranged succession of prophets. — **As many as** takes up **all** the prophets, for they all spoke, though not all of them wrote. The verb is in the historical aorist, the

same verb as that used of the Messiah: as many as **have spoken**, or made utterance. — Now the significant thing is that all these prophets with one accord followed the lead of Moses, and **also told of these days**, or we may translate: "also announced these days." The days of the Messiah are meant, those referred to in the Moses prophecy; Peter had called them "seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord," v. 19, thinking of what they would bring to many. We must not restrict "these days" to the time of Christ's earthly sojourn, they were present when Peter spoke to that multitude, and will continue "until the times of restoration of all things," v. 21. All these prophets had a vision of the Messiah and of the great New Testament era up to and including the Parousia, although, as in the case of the Baptist, they could not know the extent of this great period. Moreover, Peter implies that all these prophets did in their way under the divine direction what Moses did, namely call upon Israel to heed the Messiah in true faith. The force of all this is that Peter's hearers would fly in the face of all God's prophets, including Moses and Samuel in particular, and thus in the face of the Lord God himself, if, after this plain revelation of how they all spoke of Jesus as the Messiah, these hearers would harden themselves in unbelief. Peter's words contain the same implication for all who read and hear his testimony to-day.

Now follows the apostle's direct personal appeal to his Jewish audience:

25. Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

Peter reminds these people of their exalted and blessed covenant position. The personal pronoun **ye** is strongly emphatic in the Greek, just as the same pronoun, in the dative, at the head of v. 26, "unto you." They had more than other people. The term "son," as Meyer finely puts it, designates physical or moral relationship, and that, we add, a most intimate one. "Sons" are more than *discipuli*,

pupils. Peter even adds the article: **the sons**, not merely sons in general, but specifically those who can fully claim this position. Peter, of course, cannot mean that these Jewish hearers of his are true spiritual descendants of the prophets, for he has just called on them to repent and be converted; he is speaking of their natural relation to God's prophets, as members of the covenant nation of God. Even so their position was one of high honor and blessed privilege. As sons of the prophets nationally there was the strongest of reasons and motives to show themselves also as sons of the prophets spiritually. Even psychologically Peter's appeal was highly effective. An ingrate is he who repudiates his own noble father or fathers. — A significant addition follows: they are sons of the prophets, "and of the covenant which God made with your fathers." This is a fuller description of their position. The term *διαθήκη* = *Anordnung*, then also will or testament, and finally "covenant," the Hebrew *berith*. Note that it is **God** who made this **covenant**. Abraham is not co-ordinated with God, as when two contracting parties, standing on an equality, make a solemn agreement, as for instance in a treaty, a marriage, etc. Abraham only receives the covenant, God makes and bestows it. The verb **made**, the historical aorist, reports the definite past fact, but the word itself is cognate with the noun, so that the margin has: "covenant which God covenanted," the middle voice signifying: to dispose of something belonging to me, as by a will or testament, then also "to establish a covenant." The preposition: **with** your fathers, is really: "towards," matching the idea that God granted the covenant, and implying that the fathers received it. — This covenant was entered into with **Abraham**, the father of believers, but Abraham was the head and representative of all the "fathers," so that without further ado the covenant is said to have been made with them. The prophets and the fathers are, of course, not identical; they, however, are counted as belonging to Israel's fathers. — Now as **the sons of the covenant**, these hearers of Peter are ranked as the descend-

ants of the fathers who have inherited this precious covenant by natural birth, who should therefore be interested in it in the most vital and personal way. This covenant was intended for them, i. e., that they too, like their faithful fathers, should enter into it spiritually. This would make them "the sons of the covenant" in the fullest sense of the word. How directly all this refers to Jesus as the Messiah is seen when Peter names the covenant promise. — He translates from the original Hebrew, Gen. 22, 18, even retaining "and" at the head of the sentence. **In thy seed** is forward for emphasis. Gal. 3, 16 stresses the singular "seed," over against the plural "seeds." This singular stands for Jesus Christ, and in no way for the nation of the Jews as natural descendants of Abraham. Modern Judaism indeed imagines itself to be the promised Messiah, through whom all the nations of the earth are to be blessed. The "seed" of Abraham points to the human nature of the Messiah. God's promise positively declared that **in** this seed, in union and communion with the Messiah, **all the families of the earth**, or "all the kindreds of the earth" shall be blessed. The LXX reads: "all the nations," which is substantially correct. The word used by Peter echoes back the idea contained in "fathers" and "sons," thus either "kindreds," "generations," or "families." As they descend the one from the other, age after age, they shall be blessed. While at first Peter brings forward the peculiar Jewish relation of his hearers, he now adds the broadest universality of God's covenant grace: "*all the kindreds of the earth.*" — The promise is unconditional, direct, and positive: they all **shall be blessed**. The verb originally means: "to speak well of," "to praise," hence a benediction by word of mouth; but like the cognate noun it came to mean also the act of blessing by the bestowal of some notable gift. So in this covenant promise: the blessing actually bestowed upon all the kindreds of the earth is the redemption in Christ Jesus. The whole world is now a redeemed world. Whether any kindred or tribe knows

it or not, believes it or not, it too has been bought with the precious blood of the Lamb of God. God has completely fulfilled his covenant promise. How all this affects his Jewish hearers Peter has already plainly implied in the significant designations he applied to them, but now he drives home his appeal in direct words:

26. Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.

The great fact is that *they* were thus singled out and blessed: "unto you first," cf. Rom. 1, 16: "To the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Peter puts his hearers in line with the "families" or "kindreds," and at the very head of that line: the fulfilled Messianic promises begin with them. With such a distinction and grace offered to them, can they possibly refuse to believe and accept? — The word *παῖς*, as here used, cannot signify "Son" (R. V. margin, v. 13, etc.; "his Son Jesus," A. V.), for which the Scriptures always use *υἱός*; it is simply the equivalent of *Ebed Yaveh* in the great prophecy of Isaiah, chapters 40-66: **Servant** of Jehovah, one of the Messianic titles, applied only to Jesus, never to the apostles, who are termed *δούλοι*, "bondservants." — When Peter says that God **raised up** this wonderful Servant, the aorist participle, though punctiliar, does not refer to the resurrection as such (Luther), but to the entire coming and work of the Godman. God's act is viewed as one great deed in the past, and the verb "raised up" is to make us think of its greatness, loftiness, glory. The word thus offers another motive for acceptance on the part of Peter's hearers. — God **sent** this Servant, another aorist stating a historical fact. Usually an aorist participle denotes a previous action; here it would be that God first raised up Jesus, and then sent him. But the action of such a participle may also be simultaneous with that of the main verb, which, from the nature of the acts here mentioned, seems preferable. In raising up Jesus God also sent him, and this sending embraces

his entire redemptive mission. — Peter describes it by attaching a modifier to the pronoun "him," namely a present participle, its tense denoting durative action: "God sent him as one to keep on blessing you." This act of blessing is thus connected with the person of the Messiah, instead of with God's action of sending, as would be the case if an infinitive of purpose had been added. All our blessing centers in Jesus and flows out from him to us. — The nature of the blessing Peter has in mind is made plain by the addition: **in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.** The infinitive clause is made a substantive by means of the article, and thus depends on the preposition. Since the object is mentioned from which Jesus would turn us, we have the compound verb: "to turn *away*," with the preposition in the verb repeated with the object: "*from* your iniquities"; cf. v. 19: "repent and turn again." Only in our passage Christ himself turns us, in v. 19 we are called upon to turn. The two are to be combined as in Jer. 31, 18: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." — Jesus is sent to turn us from our **iniquities**; the term used describes our sins as acts of wickedness, evil and grievous. Verse 19 shows that Peter is speaking of that turning which we usually call conversion, which consists of contrition and faith. When we turn from our iniquities by the efficacious power of Jesus and his Gospel, we, of course, turn to him as our Savior, finding pardon in him from all our iniquities and guilt, and combined with this release from the slavery of sin. When Jesus turns us we are justified and reborn, we become new creatures, and hence live a new life. — This supreme blessing is altogether a personal and individual matter, Jesus dealing with **every one**, each sinful soul by itself.

At this point Peter's sermon was interrupted, yet, under God's providence, not until he had preached to his audience the full Gospel of the Messiah and his saving blessings. He had spread out before them the shining

treasures of salvation, and stirred their hearts mightily by the Word and Spirit to embrace these treasures and make them their own.

Indexed

SERMON.

"Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
To rule in equity."

This is the note that rises in our hearts as we hear how Peter in the very courts of the old Jewish temple tells a wondering multitude how the power of Jesus Christ has miraculously healed a poor lame beggar, making him who had never walked in his life, leap and run for joy. The Savior had come, the Savior promised long. That multitude was to realize it, accept him by faith, and share in all his Savior blessings. To kindle this faith Peter points them to Moses, Samuel, and all the old prophets, how they all spoke of Jesus, this wondrous Servant of God now raised up for them, the promised seed of Abraham their forefather, the fountain of all spiritual blessings for them and all men, for time and for eternity.

Peter is preaching to us to-day. This mighty Servant has wrought for us; all these prophets of God, including Peter, and even Christ himself, have spoken, yea still speak to us. What shall be our answer to this abounding grace of God? Only one answer will do:

"Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
Great David's greater Son!"

Give ear then more fully to

Peter's Sermon on God's Great Servant and the Blessing He Brings.

When Peter follows the great prophet Isaiah and calls Jesus God's "Servant" sent to bless us, he certainly means, first of all, **the blessing of his work**, when he redeemed the whole world of sinners by atoning for their sins.

What was wrong in the days of old, even with the favored people of Israel? It was sin with its deadly curse. Do you hear how Peter strikes every man's conscience in the multitude before him with his words: "every one of you . . . his iniquities"? But surely, we have progressed in these 1900 years since that day, we have climbed higher, grown better. My friends, not one inch have we progressed away from sin. To this day God's verdict is true the world over: There is not a just or sinless man upon earth, no, not one. All the forms of sin, that born in us, as well as wicked thoughts, words, and deeds, go on in one appalling stream. Only one thing occasionally seems to have changed, men seem more than ever inclined to deny their sins now in wilful blindness, varnishing and whitewashing them with all manner of lies, trying to persuade themselves that they need fear no God and no judgment to come.

Here is where the wonderful mercy of God comes in: he planned to save us from our sins. This was the message of the mighty Moses whom God used as a mediator between himself and Israel, and of all the prophets down to the days of Christ. God knew, whether men did or not, that we were all irrevocably lost unless we were freed from the guilt and curse of our sin. Just as long as a single sin remains upon a soul, that soul is damned. No human power, skill, invention, money, works, or suffering is able to save it. Here God alone could help. Do you ask how? Take as the answer: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3, 16. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Is. 53, 6. In other words, he made his own Son our Servant and Substitute to take our curse upon himself, to die for it, and thus to atone for it. That is why he became the seed of Abraham through his wonderful birth from the Virgin Mary. Yet, being true God, a person of infinite worth, his death could and did expiate the guilt of all. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."

This is the inwardness of Peter's great Advent sermon to us: the promise of God through the ages was made good at last—God's own Son came as his Servant to bless all the kindreds of the earth by cancelling their sins with his own blood, opening the way of escape for us all. This is the heart of the Gospel; take it into your heart and hold it fast forever.

As Peter follows Isaiah in calling Jesus God's "Servant" to bless us with deliverance from sin, so also he follows Moses in calling him our "Prophet" whose word we must hear. To the

wonderful blessing of this great servant's *work* there is added, then, in Peter's sermon the service and **blessing of his Word.**

God himself calls Jesus a Prophet, one of those specially chosen and sent to proclaim the purpose and will of God. But he stands at the head of all God's prophets. Only one of them was also a mediator, namely Moses, and he of a covenant that passed away. Jesus is the Mediator of that new covenant which shall never be set aside for another. The man Moses could act in behalf of Israel on Mt. Sinai, only God's own Son in human flesh could act for all the kindreds of the earth on Mt. Calvary when our sins were to be wiped out with blood. So even Moses foretold the coming of this Prophet mightier than himself.

As great as this Prophet, so great is the service and blessing of his Word. Jesus preached the Gospel, the glad news concerning the salvation he himself brought, that men should not perish, but have everlasting life. St. Mark (1, 15) sums it up for us, Jesus preached: "The kingdom of God is at hand, repent ye and believe the Gospel." Never look at Jesus as laying down so many laws and commands for us, to which we with our efforts must come up, and if we do not we shall be lost. He comes with a heart burning with love, hands stretched out in invitation, calling us, and by his call drawing us, to come unto him and be freed from our sin and guilt for which he has atoned, and thus find rest for our souls, peace, and joy eternal. And when this service of his Word succeeds, his great joy is to lay his hand upon your head and say: My son, my daughter, thy sins are forgiven thee. See him in the house of Zacchæus, the sinner, the publican, whom he changed by his Word to be a true son of Abraham, a child of God's kingdom. See him telling Nicodemus of the new birth through baptism and faith, carrying that old work-righteous Pharisee away from his error and folly into the salvation and peace of the cross on Calvary. That is the service of Jesus' Word.

This service still goes on. Only now our heavenly Prophet draws us to himself by speaking through the preachers he sends. Peter was one of them, when he spoke so effectively of Jesus to the multitude in Solomon's Porch. So were the Twelve, sent out into all the world. So are all those now who truly bring us Jesus' Word. Of all these he himself says: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me." Luke 10, 16.

It is because this blessing of the Word is so essential for our salvation that we dare not despise it. It is nothing but the love of God trying to save us, when through Moses and Peter he declares: "Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you"; and when he warns us that, refusing to hear, we shall be utterly destroyed from among his people. To reject Christ's Word

is to reject the salvation it brings, to spurn the atonement Christ made, to turn away from the door of heaven which he opened. Is there another way, outside of Christ's blood and Word, whereby we may come to God and be saved? There is none, and all who seek another, or think they have found another, are deluded and lost.

Christ opens heaven for us by his work, he comes to lead us in by his Word—blessings unspeakably great. But his final object is not reached for you and me until there is in our very hearts the crowning **blessing of faith**, faith in Christ, his work and Word. Only by faith is salvation ours.

When Peter spoke to the multitude he aimed at every hearer's heart, to fill it with the blessing of faith. It was what Jesus had done when he preached and taught as a Prophet among his people. It had been Moses' and Samuel's work likewise when they pointed to the Savior to come. Peter holds up Jesus before his hearers, and the blessing of deliverance from sin and iniquity found in Jesus. Ah, how every soul there present needed that very blessing! Would they see it, would they let this blessing open their hearts and enter? Would they trust this mighty Helper and his all-sufficient help? The moment any one among them did, he had the blessing of faith.

It is so with us to-day as Peter's words come to us also. Here is your soul robbed of all righteousness by sin, poor, outcast. Behold Christ your Savior, offering you the sterling gold of his own righteousness. It is genuine, it will make your soul rich for all eternity. Trust it, take it—believe!—Look at your soul full of the deadly cancer of sin. O do not hide it, the sin is there, its roots go deep. Behold Christ your physician—his blood and pardon take away the guilt and punishment of sin, and break sin's deadly power. Yes, his help is real, it frees, cures, purifies indeed. Let him open your poor heart, trust him—believe!—You know your conscience is not at rest. When you think of God, his holy law, death bringing you into his presence, the great judgment to come—can you hope to stand before him, when already a single sin makes you abominable in his sight? Here is Jesus, and in him the pardon of all your sins; and with him in your heart all this pardon is yours. Yes, it is genuine, for God prepared it himself in Jesus, and this Jesus is his very Son. Do not hesitate, take, hold this pardon—believe!—And all you who have long learned to believe, realize ever anew and more fully that in and through Christ alone all your iniquities are gone, vanished like the vapors of night in the noonday sun. Let your trust grow

Our Advent Faith.

1. *It rests on the Word.*
 2. *It clings to Christ.*
 3. *It brings deliverance and joy.*
-

The Great Days Ushered in by Christ's Advent.

1. *They shine with redemption.*
 2. *They resound with the Gospel.*
 3. *Let them also glow with faith.*
-

Christ's Great Blessing for all the Kindreds of the Earth.

1. *The revelation of all God's grace.*
 2. *The fulfillment of all God's promises.*
 3. *The deliverance from all our iniquities.*
-

How We, too, are Children of the Prophets and the Covenant.

1. *We have their promises—only now completely fulfilled.*
 2. *We have their Savior—only now with all his saving work done.*
 3. *We have their faith—only now most wondrously enriched.*
-

stronger as you learn ever better day by day that this glorious Servant of God is your Savior indeed.

Such a blessing is faith. Moses, Samuel, the prophets and fathers of old, Peter and all the apostles, and they who believed with them—see how happy they were, sure of God's eternal favor through his Son and Servant Jesus Christ. With your sins all gone, all is well with you regarding God. When you cry to him in prayer you know he will hear you for his Son's sake. When temptations and trials beset you, you have the assurance that the Son who loved you unto death is at your side to help you. All through life, and especially in its last hour, the certainty that heaven is open above you gives you priceless joy. This is what Peter's words contain when he says that God raised up his Son Jesus and sent him to bless you in turning away every one from his iniquities.

This Advent day we enter a new year of grace, filled with the blessing of Christ's work and Word. May all its grace be yours, every one of you, in fullest happiness through the blessing of faith.

OUTLINES.

The essential features of this Advent text are: Christ—the Word—faith; Christ as God's great Servant who obtained for us the supreme blessing—the Word by which God, through Moses, the prophets, and Christ himself, brings to us this supreme blessing—faith which gratefully receives and holds fast this supreme blessing. We may draw the three together into one: Our supreme Advent Blessing in Christ Jesus: we have it in Christ—through the Word—by faith. We may also reverse the order: What makes us so joyful this Advent Day? The faith which shines in our hearts—the Word on which this faith rests—the Christ who is ours by faith in this Word.—Another angle of approach is the idea of the covenant, so markedly referred to in the text. The old covenant, through many a golden promise fulfilled at last, led up to Christ. This old covenant merged into a new one, established in the work of God's great Servant Jesus Christ. And we now are the children of this new covenant through faith in Christ Jesus.—In a similar way we may arrange the inner contents of our text around the idea of the "blessing" promised to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ, in particular the deliverance from our iniquities through faith in Christ Jesus.—The guiding thought for any arrangement of the material we may make for a sermon on this Sunday will be the one presented at the beginning of our exegetical study.

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Matth. 24, 1-14.

The general subject for the Second Sunday in Advent is well established in the pericopes and liturgies of our church, it deals with *the coming of Christ in His glory* at the end of the world. The Second Sunday in Advent is always the counter-part of the First: both deal with his coming, the one emphasizing the grace, the other the glory. Our text meets this requirement. The disciples ask Jesus: "What shall be the sign of *thy coming?*" He gives them a detailed answer, one which covers the whole period intervening between the two advents, ending with the definite promise of his return: "Then shall the end come," cf. also v. 30. Adventists of various kinds, and others, have thoroughly perverted the Scriptures on this great subject, which makes it the more necessary for us to set forth carefully just what Jesus foretold concerning his second advent.

24, 1. And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on his way; and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple.

Jesus is in the act of leaving the Temple and going away. This is the force of the imperfect tense of the main verb. The aorist participle here cannot mean that he had already left the Temple and was now walking through the streets of the city. While punctiliar it is here, as in many cases, from the nature of the action or the situation simultaneous with the main verb. Robertson, *Grammar*, 1112, etc. So we must think of the disciples coming to Jesus while in the act of leaving, while still in the sacred precincts. Their purpose "to show him the buildings of the temple" is understood when con-

nected with what Jesus had just said of this "house," 23, 38. Farrar describes the situation well: "And now Jesus left the Temple for the last time; but the feelings of the Apostles still clung with the loving pride of their nationality to that sacred and memorable spot. They stopped to cast upon it one last lingering gaze, and one (?) of them was eager to call his attention to its goodly stones and splendid offerings — those nine gates overlaid with gold and silver, and the one solid Corinthian brass yet more precious; those graceful and towering porches; those beveled blocks of marble forty cubits long and ten cubits high, testifying to the toil and munificence of so many generations; those double cloisters and stately pillars; that lavish adornment of sculpture and arabesque; those alternate blocks of red and white marble, recalling the crest and hollow of the sea waves; those vast clusters of golden grapes, each cluster as large as a man, which twined their splendid luxuriance over the golden doors. They would have him gaze with them on the rising terraces of courts — the Court of the Gentiles with its monolithic columns and rich mosaic; above this the flight of fourteen steps which led to the Court of the Women; then the flight of fifteen steps which led up to the Court of the Priests; then, once more, the twelve steps which led to the final platform crowned by the actual Holy, and Holy of Holies, which the Rabbis fondly compared for its shape with a couchant lion, and which, with its marble whiteness and gilded roofs, looked like a glorious mountain whose snowy summit was gilded by the sun. It is as though they thought that the loveliness and splendor of this scene would intercede with him, touching his heart with mute appeal. But the heart of Jesus was sad. To him the sole beauty of the Temple was the sincerity of its worshippers, and no gold or marble, no brilliant vermilion or curiously carved cedar-wood, no delicate sculpturing or votive gems, could change for him a den of robbers into a House of Prayer. The builders were

still busily at work, as they had been for nearly fifty years, but their work, unblessed of God, was destined . . . to be destroyed before it was finished." The latter is not strictly correct, since the Temple was finished A. D. 63; cf. Josephus.

2. But he answered and said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.

The action of the disciples may well have implied a question, although the word here translated "answered" is one used of a response called forth in almost any way. Our versions are right in reading the first part of Jesus' words as a question, namely one intended to rivet their attention once more upon all the beauty and grandeur before them, so as to make his prediction concerning it all the more striking. **All these things** are the very ones their eyes rested upon. To make the sentence declarative would compel us to understand "these things" to signify the invisible things which the disciples did not see, Jesus in a way chiding them for their blindness. This seems forced and artificial. — **Verily** is simply our *amen* taken over from the Greek, the equivalent of the Hebrew "truth" when used as an adverbial accusative in emphatic confirmation of a statement. Combined with **I say unto you**, the assurance of verity is reenforced by the claim of authority, here divine authority. The Judge who himself will send this judgment upon the apostate Temple here tells of it in advance. — What Jesus had said to the Jews in 23, 38: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate," is now explained as denoting no less than the desolation of utter ruin. "Desolate" might mean only that, with the sanctity violated and gone, the worshippers too had left. But Jesus says that the place itself shall be utterly wrecked, the very stones, now in such orderly and beautiful array, hurled helter skelter. We have one of the strongest forms of negation, the subjunctive (here the

aorist passive of ἀφίημι) with οὐ μὴ: "in no way shall be left." The addition: "that shall not be thrown down," makes the picture of devastation utterly complete.

3. And as he sat on the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

This, then, is where Jesus went. Leaving the city he crossed the brook Kidron, going up the height on the other side to some quiet spot overlooking the valley beneath and a good portion of the city itself. Mark writes, he sat "over against the temple," 13, 3, its glittering roof plainly visibly where Jesus sat. In silence the disciples had meditated on that last prophetic word of Jesus; now, when sitting here and looking toward the Temple he indicates that his thoughts too are occupied with the city and its sanctuary, the disciples — Mark names four of them — came to him in a private way, with none of the people present, and laid before him the question he had raised in their minds. — In substance the question is one, for *the time* when these things shall occur will be indicated by *the sign* heralding their approach. They use the plural, **these things**, which we must understand as referring not merely to the destruction of the Temple, but as well to what he had intimated concerning his return, 23, 39. They thus rightly connect these two events in their thoughts. In judging aright both their question and the lengthy answer Jesus gave them, we must bear two things in mind. In the first place, there is never an attempt to reveal even approximately the date when the end shall come, cf. Mk. 13, 32. Jesus himself, as he sat there before his disciples, did not know. It was not for them to know "the times or the seasons," Acts 1, 7. As far as this point is concerned the disciples, and afterwards Paul, were then in the same position as we are now: the end may come very soon, even in our own life-time; it may too be long delayed. Both possibilities are reflected in Paul's words.

The other point is, that the prophets, the Baptist (Matth. 3, 11-12), and now Jesus himself, when they see the future revealed, always view the great events without the perspective of the actual time intervals. The whole panorama is foreshortened, the events drawn together, the real time intervals taken out, except in specified minor instances. In this great eschatological discourse of Jesus there are portions where this feature of prophecy is carried so far that the things pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem and those pertaining to the end are actually mingled. We who look back now to the former event from our vantage point of time are able to make the division which the disciples before that event could not have made. It is idle to speculate as to just what the disciples meant with their question: **when?** In Acts 1, 7 Jesus puts them off because they thought he would raise his kingdom of glory "at this time." The "when" here is general, as the reference to "the sign" indicates. — There is only one article in Greek for the two nouns: "thy coming" and "the end of the world," thus making them one grand concept. **Coming** is our translation for the Greek term *parousia* = presence, being at hand. It is that presence which Jesus himself had mentioned in 23, 39. The possessive adjective used here with this noun is more emphatic than the appended pronoun would have been, more like "coming of thine." — It is significant that Christ's coming and **the end of the world** are drawn together so closely in this question. There is no chiliastic apocalyptic speculation here, as Meyer rightly says. Christ's coming, the final resurrection, and the judgment all fall on the last day. The margin has the closer rendering: "the consummation of the age," the completion of it; and the word for "age" is *æon*, which is not merely a length of time, but this as it is filled and characterized by the things occurring in it. The disciples mean the world as now going on in its course. — They ask in regard to **the sign**, that definite occurrence or event which shall signal

the approach of Christ's presence and the end. Miracles are always signs, but many signs are only significant happenings without miraculous features, yet behind them is the hand which gives them meaning. The singular "the sign" may refer to a single decisive event, yet it may also mean, less specifically, "the indication"; and we see that Jesus takes it in this broader way.

4. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man lead you astray. 5. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall lead many astray.

By all means let the preacher read and study carefully the entire answer of Christ, in order to handle more effectively the part contained in our text. He will surely dissent from those commentators who think that Jesus set aside or modified in part the question addressed to him, in his way of answering it. He answered it even more fully and completely than the question itself required. The answer to the "when" is very direct as to Jerusalem in v. 34, and as to the world in v. 36 and 42. Again he assures them of his coming, v. 30, 44, 50, even describing its manner. As to the "sign," the whole discourse answers that, giving many striking details. Underlying it all is the thought that Christ's coming and the end are to occur together, just as the question of the disciples implied. There is not the least hint of a glorious earthly reign of Christ for a thousand years (chiliasm, millennium). The entire discourse, however, is pervaded by the most earnest solicitude of Jesus for his followers. It is the Savior's heart which speaks in every sentence, warning, admonishing, cheering, fortifying in advance, and weaving in the greatest of promises. Enough of this is found already in our text.

The way Jesus begins shows that his heart is full to overflowing. Concern for his disciples is his first thought. **Take heed** is really: "see to it lest, etc." They are to keep their eyes open, to be wary and careful. Alas, how many are asleep or blind. **That no man lead**

you astray, "away from the right path," "confuse you," points to a great danger. It is one thing to be on the right road, another to stay on it in spite of false leaders. **For** here introduces a necessary explanation. Not merely a few, one or two, but actually **many** shall attempt to mislead the faithful. They **shall come in my name**, using that as a basis. How, is at once explained; they will, of course, not use the personal name "Jesus," but the one derived from his office, saying (namely each one of them): **I am the Christ**, the promised Messiah, the Anointed One, commissioned and empowered of God to establish the Messianic kingdom. Of course, they each have their own perverted carnal idea of this kingdom and try to carry that into effect. In some instances these deceivers may connect their claims and schemes with Jesus, twisting his Gospel to suit their perversions, in other instances they may set Jesus aside altogether. Some of them may be mere fanatics, self-deluded and in this fashion sincere, others, and no doubt the majority, conscious and monstrous liars playing on the gullibility of their dupes. To the latter class belong those who coin their deceptions into hard cash, and those who use their pretensions to cloak licentiousness. The formula: "I am the Christ" is in the nature of a summary statement, and as such includes the extreme claims of these false prophets. To their class, however, belong also those who—perhaps because of this very warning of Christ—avoid calling themselves literally "the Christ," yet arrogate to themselves Messianic prerogatives and authority. In v. 11 Christ foretells the coming also of false prophets, pseudo-prophets; these are men whose teaching is false, untrue, and therefore dangerous and deadly. They declare that to be God's Word which is not, and that which is they say is not his Word. As such they are in a class by themselves. V. 4-14 speak of the coming of the end of the world, yet we must not forget that in this period is included the tragedy of Jerusalem, and that without revealing the great stretch of time which

we now know lies between these two events. Jesus says little more than that the final end shall come at some indefinite time after the destruction of the city. Among those counted as false Messiahs in fulfillment of Christ's prophecy are Simon Magus and Barcochba in the earlier times, Dowie and Mrs. Eddy in our times. Celsus of old, Russell of our day are in the first rank of the pseudo-prophets, with countless others behind them, each in his own way and degree teaching untruth. — **And shall lead many astray**, a positive prophecy, fulfilled to the utmost. The most insane and inane claims have been set up by these pseudo-Messiahs and their prophets or assistants, yet men have flocked after them completely carried away. Until the Spirit enlightens them men are prone to every error and folly.

6. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see ye that ye be not troubled: for these things must needs come to pass; but the end is not yet. 7. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and earthquakes in divers places. 8. But all these things are the beginning of travail.

Political disturbances belong to "the sign" of Christ's coming. To hear of wars, as distinguished from hearing of rumors of wars, means wars close at hand and thus heard directly, over against wars far away, of which only a rumor or report reaches us. The verb μέλλω with the pres. inf. circumscribes the future tense. here this verb itself is in the future, expressing strongly duration: "ye shall continue to hear." The times preceding the destruction of Jerusalem were full of war-disturbances; all these and all others following herald the world-end. — But they must be understood correctly, as pointing forward to the end, not as actually ushering it in. Hence the admonition not to be frightened with the reason for calmness appended. **See that ye be not troubled** softens down a little the two imperatives placed side by side without a connecting word: "See to it, be

not terrified!" as though the end were at once impending. Both verbs are in the present tense: Christ's followers are to continue thus in self-possession, all along while they hear these war-noises. — The reason is that these things **must needs come to pass**. The verb used may express any kind of necessity, the context helping us to specify. Here the necessity is that of the condition of the world and of God's counsel concerning it. Christians are ever to think of this necessity, and are thus to remain calm and confident. In "come to pass," an aorist infinitive, the entire course of these martial disturbances is embraced as a whole. From beginning to end they must needs be. — **But the end is not yet**, τὸ τέλος, not as in v. 3 συντέλεια. "The end" here is not absolute, the end of the world, but the counterpart of "the beginning of travail," v. 8. These wars are not the close of the impending tribulation, they belong to its beginning. — The next **for** explains that: nations shall clash with each other. The future passive is in the middle sense: nation **shall rise**, or lift itself up, against nation in hostility, moved by the passion of conquest, the pride of power, the greed of gain, by envy, revenge, and the like. The word for **nation** denotes a body of people bound together by the same customs; that for **kingdom**, a body under one king or government. Rising against each other results in wars. What a cataclysm may thus occur no one realized until the world-war involved nation after nation, kingdom after kingdom — literally fulfilling this prediction of Jesus, and surely foreshadowing, if the world continues long enough, even more terrific catastrophes. — Appended to these national disturbances natural ones shall occur, **famines and earthquakes**. Of those in the distant past many have been forgotten, yet some, like the famine in Jerusalem before its fall, the earthquake at Lissabon, are still extensively remembered. Our own times have been strongly marked by these signs of the end. Jesus says, they shall occur **in divers places**. — "from place to place,"

now here, now there, locally; and they have occurred in just that way. — Grave and terrifying as these things are, all of them are merely a **beginning**, and not the end, of the coming **travail**, i. e. "birth-pains" (the noun is in the plural), thus presaging still greater pains. The striking term here used by Jesus utilizes the designation which the old rabbis used for the sufferings and woes which were to precede the Messiah; they called them *cheblee hamaschiah*, *dolores Messiae*, birth-pains of the Messiah, meaning that these woes and tribulations would bring forth the new and glorious times of the Messiah. Jesus uses the word as if the disciples were conversant with its meaning, only he applies it to his final coming, i. e., to the convulsions which precede it.

9. Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. 10. And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another. 11. And many false prophets shall arise, and shall lead many astray. 12. And because iniquity shall be multiplied, the love of many shall wax cold.

What of the condition of the church in all these times of world disturbance? Here is Christ's detailed answer. This is part of "the sign" of his coming and the end of the world: persecution, defection, deception. — The adverb **then**, here and in v. 10, is not "thereafter," but at that very time when these birth-pains have set in. The second "then" is certainly plain in this respect: at that time when they shall deliver you up, etc. As in many instances Jesus leaves to his hearers the proper limitation of his words; **you** is not here all Christians, but some of them. Moreover, those delivered up are not wholly identical with those slain, though "you" is simply repeated. To **deliver up**, "hand over," refers to tribunals, courts, police and judicial authorities, but it may also include mobs, as we see in the case of Paul. The word **tribulation** fits both cases; it signifies *Bedrueckung*, oppression, any suffering due to pressure. The climax of

this will be: they **shall kill** you. There will be martyrs like Stephen, Acts 7, 60, and James, 12, 2, Peter, and Paul. — Back of all this persecution, and in a manner explaining it, lies the general hostility of the world to the church. We have the periphrastic future for **ye shall be hated** in order to bring out the idea of duration: all along, continually, shall ye be hated. The persecutions mentioned before are, then, in the nature of special eruptions of this hatred. **By all nations** implies without further explanation that the church of Christ will spread all over the world. What Jesus eventually ordered in 28, 19 is here taken for granted as carried into effect. This broad statement shows also how in this entire section the word “you” must be understood, namely not as Meyer would stress it, the Twelve, or Christ’s disciples then living, but his disciples or believers generally. There is a natural antipathy against Christ and the Gospel among men generally, every nation will manifest it more or less. Sometimes this antagonism will flame up in fierce outbreaks. The early church is full of such instances; not a few mark the course of history down to our own times; God alone knows what the final days will bring. — The cause of this hatred is plainly stated: **for my name’s sake**, “on account of my name.” By “name” we must understand the person and all that he stands for; but so as to be known, revealed, manifest to men. The great body of men among the nations, when they come in contact with Christ as the Gospel reveals him, will not have this man to rule over them, like Festus and Agrippa they spurn his grace, like the Jews they rage against him. Again and again, as we press Christ upon men to-day, this hatred of his name comes to view, and it vents itself upon those who make this name their one hope of salvation.

V. 10. — When the hatred of the world breaks out in persecution **many** shall lose such faith as they have. Jesus says positively there will be “many.” Even without persecution, when some general delusion is to be op-

posed, some worldly connections broken, some sinful and dangerous practices put away, how many fail to prove true! Now let money, goods, position, honor, loss of liberty, blood be the price of faithfulness, then how many will deny the Name? "Many"—beware of the unfaithful majority!—The verb **shall stumble** is the same as in our Engl. "shall be scandalized," i. e., offended. The image back of the word is not that of a block which the foot strikes, causing one to fall; but of a crooked stick in a trap, to which the bait is fixed, so that when the stick is touched the trap is sprung. Keeping to the image we might translate: "many shall be caught," as in a trap. When we use "stumble" here, we must avoid the idea of losing one's balance only partially, and think instead of one down completely. Literally: many shall lose their faith completely. They are the wormy fruit which falls when the wind blows. In prosperous times the church has many nominal members, in times of persecution only the genuine members remain.—That complete apostasy is meant is shown by the addition: **and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another.** The two belong together, the hatred being the cause of the betrayal. Even blood-ties will be ignored. One of the most distressing and trying experiences of the church is to see those who once supported her trying afterwards with so much greater hate to crush and mangle her. Individual instances of this constantly occur, in the final great apostasy they will assume hideous proportions.

V. II. — What Christ presents are not consecutive occurrences, but interwoven ones, which in various ways react upon each other. While he mentions false Messiahs first and false prophets later, the two will usually go together. Yet the latter also appear by themselves. Times of persecution and defection from the church are certainly fruitful of pseudo-prophets. We have already characterized them. Olshausen, Meyer, Zahn, and others

speak of them as within the church, Meyer even calling them "false Christian teachers," while Olshausen thinks of them also outside of the church. This general view is correct. Their falseness is one of varying degrees, from complete falsehood down to the perversion of individual important doctrines. They shall be **many**, and shall not lack in adherents, especially when by following them popularity with the world may be secured in some way, or escape from persecution.

V. 12. — A final touch is added by the mention of **iniquity**, really "lawlessness," in the sense of immorality. This **shall be multiplied**, heaped up, grow in volume. The idea is that lawlessness shall rise to threatening proportions within the church herself. Both tables of the Law shall be set aside, i. e. now this, now that divine requirement. This means, of course, the Law as it applies to the Christian, as interpreted by Christ and the apostles in detail for our sanctification. — The sum of the Law, the inner principle from which all Christian obedience flows, is **love**, that love which flows forth naturally from faith. The inner reason for the increase of lawlessness is this that "the love of the many shall wax cold." **The many** are really "the majority," and not merely "many" in general. In the greater part of the church the love which shone so bright and glowed so warm in the early church, attracting the attention even of the Gentiles, shall **wax cold**, as when a chill wind strikes it, blasting its very life, like a plant all black, its growth stopped; when love grows cold its root, faith, must also decay. — Such is Christ's picture of "the sign" which marks his coming and the end of the world. It is dark, and the darkness steadily increases. There is no wonderful golden age to rise from the darkness and triumph over it before the coming of the end.

13. But he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved. 14. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a testimony unto all the nations; and then shall the end come.

This is the bright part of Christ's prophecy, the church will endure in spite of every opposition to the very end. "Many," even "the many" shall fall away, but some shall remain true, triumphantly true. Jesus uses the singular: **he that endureth to the end**, not "they," because he wants each disciple to think strongly of himself. The aorist participle with the article is used as a noun; the enduring is viewed as complete. The verb when used without an object, as here, has the sense: to stand one's ground, to remain firm. Meyer is bound to make "to the end" = "to the parousia," just as he construes this entire section of Christ's discourse as referring only to the disciples then living, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world as both falling into their life-time. When Christ spoke these words he left the question as to the time of the end unanswered, and it is wholly unwarranted for Meyer or anyone to say that he meant his disciples would surely live to see the end. Jesus did say, they should not expect the end too soon, that certain things must first take place, even such as involve kingdoms, nations, and the world. There is where he lets the matter rest. Enduring "to the end," therefore, as here meant of each individual Christian, signifies holding out to the last. It includes the martyr and his faithfulness unto death, as well as those tried in other ways and standing firm till the trial passes or they are relieved by death. Rev. 2, 7: "To him that overcometh, etc." This refrain closes each of the letters to the seven churches. To endure to the end is the opposite of being led astray, v. 4, stumbling, v. 10, or waxing cold, v. 12. — **The same shall be saved** — he (emphatic), he alone — rescued with the *σωτηρία* of Christ. The future passive here is passive and implies an agent, namely Christ himself. To be saved is to be taken out of all danger; here the final and eternal deliverance is meant, which comes through a blessed death, or for those living at Christ's return through the transformation in the twinkling of an eye. "The same shall be

saved"—a glorious promise to strengthen our faith amid every trial of these last times.

V. 14. — Another glorious promise of Christ shines with steady splendor above all the clouds of tribulation, down to the very last day. The verb is forward for emphasis: there **shall be preached**, proclaimed, heralded. Our business is to announce Christ's great message like heralds, to proclaim just what has been given us, no more, no less, for men to hear and believe, or if they will, to reject. Jesus does not intimate here who shall herald his Gospel to all the world; we know now quite fully. — Their message is: **this gospel of the kingdom**, of Christ's Messianic kingdom of grace and glory, conceived as one, with him as the king. He says "*this gospel*," because he is in the very act of proclaiming an important part of it. And it is **gospel**, or glad news, in the fullest sense of the word. The word originally meant the reward given the bringer of good news, then it was used for the news itself, and in the New Test. for the supreme news concerning salvation in Christ. — The proclamation of it, Jesus prophesies, shall be made **in the whole world**, literally "inhabited earth" (the noun understood), which the following reference to "all nations" makes clear beyond question. Imagine Jesus with his little band of followers, sitting there on Olivet, death awaiting him because his people would have none of him — speaking of his Gospel reaching all nations! — saying it so calmly, with such certitude. How could he? Because he knew, his own power would carry it there. Perhaps that is why he did not mention the human agents this time. — It shall be preached **for a testimony** unto all nations, a testimony intended to awaken faith and to be received by faith. Testimony is always given for this purpose. **Unto all nations**, a simple dative, the indirect object, matches this thought. The testimony is for their benefit. A more distant implication is that this testimony may not be received by some, or by many — an implication necessary here because of what Jesus

has said previously concerning the nations. But even so, his great work must go on and be completed in all the world; no hostility it may meet and arouse shall stop it. Moreover, when his great and true testimony is proclaimed, they who spurn it are left without a shadow of excuse. When men reject the truth, divine truth, the very truth they need for their own, miserable, sinful souls, they stand self-condemned, and their judgment is just. — **Then**, in the sense of "not till then," **shall the end come**, only the Greek reverses subject and verb, making both somewhat more emphatic: "shall come — the end." Three times Jesus uses τὸ τέλος, and each time the connection determines the exact meaning. Here it is evidently "the end" of the world. It is highly important, in the face of so many chiliastic dreams of false prophets, to conceive exactly what Jesus says: there shall be rising hostility directed against his followers; many who first believe shall be carried back into unbelief; the work of Gospel preaching shall, however, go steadily on — then, when this is finished, with no other and different world-age intervening, the end, the last day shall come. Rev. 22, 20: "He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus."

Indefinite

SERMON. used 1925

Our text is a grave disappointment to many who consider themselves very excellent Christians and students of the Bible. Here Christ himself gives us a complete prophetic account of the last times, stating all the things important for us to know for our guidance—and he says not one word about a millennium. "What?" these people exclaim, "does Christ promise us no millennium? Will he not return to earth in glory to reign here with us Christians in triumph over all nations for a thousand years?" Scan Christ's words as closely as we will, those in our text and those that follow, not only as Matthew, but also as Mark and Luke record them, not a trace of any promised millennium is found.

Here is a delusion, my friends, which is spreading among the churches about us to an alarming degree: people are look-

ing, hoping, praying for "the millennium." They build up all sorts of fanciful notions about it, often letting their imagination run riot, and always twisting passages of Scripture to corroborate their self-made opinions. The church is to celebrate a grand final outward triumph here on earth, her days of cross-bearing, affliction, and tribulation are to end, Christ and his followers will dominate the world. The Jews as a nation will be converted, brought back to Jerusalem, and this city be made Christ's great headquarters and capital. Pulpits, periodicals, books spread these utterly false doctrines. (Already in the days of the Reformation fanatical sects proclaimed them, some even trying to start the millennium then. Our Augsburg Confession condemned the delusion at that time as nothing but a revival of old "Jewish opinions, that, before the resurrection of the dead, the godly shall occupy the kingdom of the world, the wicked being everywhere suppressed.") We hold to that confession to-day, because all such Jewish dreams are contrary to the Scriptures and dangerous for our souls.

When, then, men ask: Does Christ prophesy

No Millennium?

we give the answer of our text:

No! Only the old world ripening unto judgment. Only the Gospel going on to complete its work. Only the church sifted and tried by tribulation. Only the faithful saved at last.

I.

Look at Christ's prophecy concerning the entire course of the "last days," the time between his redemptive work and the end of the world. What significant things shall occur in the world? Wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation. We need not ask the cause of these conflicts. It is sin and the passions it engenders among men, lust of power, greed of gain, cries for revenge, and similar products of our depraved nature. Then God himself intervenes and makes the results of men's sins fall back upon their own heads to crush them. Jesus adds: famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. They increase the terrors of wars and revolutions. Sometimes they occur by themselves, but always they are the stern call of God, if possible to make men repent.

Now for almost 1900 years since Jesus sat on Mt. Olivet and revealed the things to come to his disciples, these judgments of God have followed one another, just as he said they would. The convulsions of the world-war through which so many of the nations have recently passed ought to impress us in the highest

degree. Pestilence, famine, and even earthquakes were not absent. Men said there could not be such a war, or if started it could not last. It came as it did, more than ever fulfilling Christ's prediction. Men now say and hope that this shall be the last of such catastrophies. But here is the word of Christ, these are but "the beginning of sorrows." (Literally he calls them the first birth-pains) which shall be followed by still greater anguish. He thus points to the final calamities which usher in the last day. And the sum of his prediction is that from year to year *the world is ripening toward the final judgment.*

In the entire prophecy there is nothing about a golden age, when all these evils shall cease on earth, when Christ with his church shall rule in righteousness and make all men beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All that Christ offers his followers is the comforting admonition: "See that ye be not troubled." Why not? Because he himself is ruling with a mighty hand, and all his own are in his keeping and care. We may suffer indeed, for much sin clings to us also, but we have his grace to pardon when we repent, and his power to bring us through every trial. That is all, and that is enough. Our final hope is not a millennium on earth, but the last great day itself, when all the enemies of Christ shall meet their judgment doom, and all his followers shall enter that glorious place, typified by the figure of the plowshare and the pruning hook, now realized only in part in the spiritual peace and prosperity of the Christian church, then fully ours forever in heaven.*

II.

Look at Christ's prophecy a second time. (What is his ^{his} plan for the world-age, however long or short it may be. The answer is clear:) the preaching of the Gospel down to the very end.

Think what this Gospel is: "the glad news of the Kingdom," namely of the one which begins here in grace and continues above in glory. Nor is this Gospel merely news, Jesus calls it "a witness," a divinely true testimony that there is really forgiveness of sin, help and salvation for us all in Christ Jesus. Testimony that is true calls for trust, for acceptance by faith. It does so doubly when it is testimony on which our own salvation depends. To ignore, to reject it, to cling to lies instead is folly, crime, yea self-destruction. This precious Gospel witness Christ commanded his followers to carry to all nations, into the whole world. Why? Because it alone is the power of God unto salvation, by it alone can men reach God and heaven.

* Cf. Philippi, *Glaubenslehre*, V. 3, p. 160, etc., on Is. 2, 4 and similar O. T. passages.

When thus we realize what the Gospel is, the one means whereby Christ saves men, then we will understand not only why he was concerned to send it out to the whole world, but also why in our text he assures us so positively that his sending will not fail: this precious Gospel shall actually reach all nations with its saving witness. Nothing shall stop it, neither wars nor world disturbances, nor the wicked hatred of men. Christ himself will see to it that this work of Gospel preaching shall finally cover the earth. All this means that the vital work to be done on earth is this Gospel work of Christ. Let the world scorn, slight, and fight it, this work alone counts for eternity, all other work fades and vanishes. And that in particular is the great thing for us believers to hold fast. Both for ourselves and for others the Gospel is the essential thing; when we have this fully and completely, we have everything; when we give and send this fully and completely to others they have everything. This makes plain why Christ has nothing else in his plan for the sinful world, save this Gospel and its promulgation, and why when this work is fully carried out, the end shall come. With the Gospel the only means of salvation, and all men reached by it who can be saved, there is nothing left but what Christ says: "Then shall the end come."

For 1900 years the Gospel has been preached; nation after nation has heard its witness. In our day we might indeed ask, as some have done: Is the end perhaps very close at hand? and with joyful expectation look for its early coming. But a millennium? Christ neither promises such an age, nor does he leave room for it. He has made the work of the Gospel the all-important thing for all sinners through all the ages. Is that blessed work to stop while he comes to reign for a thousand years in visible glory on earth? If so, then why thus delay the end, why not reign at once with his saints in eternal glory? Only the most positive assurance from his own lips could make us expect such a delay. Or is the work of the Gospel to go on during the millennium? How could there be this "witness" of the Gospel, when men could see and speak with Christ himself in his glory on earth? The old Gospel testimony would be useless, it would be set aside. So also faith, ("the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (Heb. 11, 1.) Men would have sight here on earth instead of faith; salvation would be by sight, and no longer as now by faith. And what of Christ's positive assurance that no man, or angel, and not even he himself knows the time of the end? The moment the millennium arrived all would know that the end would come in exactly 1,000 years. No; these millennial dreams all lead astray. Christ treats us all alike, he gives us all, down to the last day, the saving witness of his Gospel. Blessed are they that hear and keep it!

III.

Now look at what Christ prophesies concerning the church, those who profess his name and join his followers. The picture is dark down to the very end.

Christ warns us all against false Messiahs. When the Jews looked for the Messiah, and rejected the true Messiah when he came, they fell a prey to deceivers who claimed to be the heaven-sent Christ come to establish the Kingdom—always, of course, trying to make it a grand earthly kingdom. This is exactly the danger now when men are looking for a millennium with a Christ here on earth bringing earthly gifts and glories. Openly or covertly some have already claimed to be the Messiah, or forerunners of his to announce his earthly reign. And always many have been deceived.

Again Christ warns us against false prophets, men who pervert the Gospel in whole or in part, teaching that God has said what he has not said, and that he has not said what he has said. Look at these churches around us, which are not churches, because they tread the Gospel under foot; and at these churches which are not true churches, but sects, because they separate themselves from the true church by clinging to doctrines contrary to the Gospel. What crowds of false prophets, harassing the church, even as Christ said.

Now the bitter word persecution. The history of the church already has many a bloody page. Think of Stephen, James, Peter, Paul, the ten great persecutions in the early ages, and the bloody deeds of Rome. The vicious hate which has made so many martyrs already, the Scriptures tell us, will flame forth with still greater fierceness as the end draws nigh. And always did persecution cause many to deny Christ and turn traitor to the church; like Judas some of these even betrayed their own brethren to death. It shall be the same and worse in the dark days to come. Always there is silent opposition to the true church, and every true follower of Christ must feel the cross. Never will the church and the world be friends; Christ and Belial cannot agree.

Add now to all this that the church herself in many of her members shall prove untrue. Christ positively declares that the love of the majority shall grow cold, because the faith from which alone it springs has declined or died. The word of men counts more for them than the Word of God. Do you know any such? Human works please them more than those that delight God? Have you seen Christians like this? The love of the world and its pleasures is sweeter to them than self-denial and the cross of Christ. Ah, I know that you have met many of this kind.

That is the picture which Christ foresaw. Always it is *the*

church sifted and tried by tribulation, winnowed of chaff, purged by fire.

Can it be otherwise, my friends? Dare we cancel from our Bibles, at least for the last 1,000 years the word, that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God? Take away tribulation and the church is bound to fill up with self-seekers of all kinds. When Christ does send us pleasant days see how many learn to love the pleasantness more than the cross, and fall away like leaves in a tempest when the trial comes again. What would a 1,000 years of uninterrupted and magnificent earthly grandeur be for the church? Lo, the crowds that would flock into her doors! But crowds drawn by these golden earthly things alone. But no; Christ's plan is not the cross for some during centuries of world-opposition and trial, and then a 1,000 years of earthly ease and joy for others. For all his followers alike, from the beginning to the end, he has designated the cross; not till the world lies utterly behind us shall we receive the crown.

IV.

Therefore, this is Christ's final admonition and promise: "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Never let them fade from your vision.

While God's judgments rock this world with mighty warnings, while borne by faithful hearts the Gospel moves forward amid sinners on its saving mission, while the church is ever tried and tested anew, let this be your great concern and mine: to hold out in faith and faithfulness to the last.

Is the load heavy and the battle hard at times? Then let this word spoken to strengthen the weary cheer you ever anew: "the same shall be saved." Eternal deliverance—in a little while it shall be yours. What if men love this earth so well that they prefer it completely to the church; what if others love it so well that they hope to combine its glories with the church and enjoy them thus for a 1,000 years, your glory—let it be the cross; your hope—let it be Christ's promise: the crown of everlasting life in the world to come.

OUTLINES.

In analyzing our text for the sermon we may note two of its dominant features: what Christ says of the world—and what he says of the church. As regards the world: its time of grace, the Gospel and example of the church, God's preliminary judgments and mighty warnings. As regards the church: the same Gospel, a fountain of faith, love, and faithfulness; the false Mes-

siahs and prophets who oppose the Gospel; the hatred of the world and its persecution; the promise for final faithfulness. Both facing the great end.—The different features of the text fall easily into place when looked at from the point of Christ's final coming, whether this is taken alone, or combined with the thought of our preparation for the end.—Verse 13 is a fine avenue of approach, suggesting especially the personal element so necessary also in this sermon. There lies an admonition in it, as in all Gospel commands and admonitions the necessary grace is offered; then also a mighty promise, highly effective for the endurance of faith.

Jesus is Coming!

1. *Beware.*
 2. *Make ready.*
 3. *Be glad.*
-

The Great Interval Between Christ's First and Second Coming.

1. *The triumphant progress of the Gospel.*
 2. *The rising hostility of the world.*
 3. *The sad defections in the church.*
 4. *The glorious salvation of every one who endures.*
-

Endure to the End!

1. *Undeceived.*
 2. *Unafraid.*
 3. *Unwearied.*
-

He that Endureth shall be Saved.

1. We think of a *great danger*.
 2. We are comforted by *great grace*.
 3. We look forward to a *great deliverance*.
-

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Luke 3, 15-18.

The fitness of this text for the day is apparent when we note that the Third Sunday in Advent is the one which properly brings us the great forerunner of Christ and his message, or at least a good equivalent for either or both. This Sunday in a peculiar way has come to be the Sunday of John the Baptist, as no other Sunday could well be. The Gospels contain so much about this Advent herald that in choosing texts from them for the church year he cannot properly be passed by, and his place then evidently is in the Advent season. Now with the first two Sundays in Advent already marked in such a decided way, and with the fourth nearly always, and that rightly, drawn already to the Christmas festival, this third Sunday is the one left for the Baptist. His person and almost any part of his message will fit the day. A favorite choice is a text containing his direct call to prepare and repent. Just as fine we deem this text of ours to be in which John points to Christ, proclaiming the divinity of his person and the divine greatness of his work. Note the clear Advent tone when he says: "One cometh," and then describes him. Here, then, let us say *John describes the Coming One*. If we hear that proclamation aright we will have no difficulty in perceiving that in its way it also bids us make ready and receive him by faith, so that his first coming in grace may fit us for his second coming in judgment.

Luke describes the activity of the Baptist with details of his own in the section preceding our text. In our text he presents the most vital part of John's entire proclamation, that dealing with the question who the

Messiah really is. While it is true that in what Luke reports up to v. 15 the Messiah is not directly named, we know enough from the combined account of the four evangelists concerning his preaching and work, not to conclude that till now the Baptist had not spoken of the Messiah. His entire message and baptism center in the Messiah; all reported up to v. 15 would hang in the air without this vital support; and no part of this activity could be properly understood with the reference to the Messiah removed from it. No previous prophet had ever preached and baptized like John. Note how the Messiah is involved directly in v. 4-6, in the judgment in v. 9, and in the admonitions to the people of different occupations, v. 10, etc. John had indeed spoken of the Messiah, but he had not yet pointed him out. That is the feature to be noted. He had spent his time and effort on men's preparation for the Messiah, now he is constrained to do more. We see him at the height of his activity, with crowds of people of all kinds coming to his preaching and baptism.

3, 15. And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ; 16. John answered, saying unto them all.

Two genitive absolutes begin the sentence, both with present participles, indicating action as going on. The word used for **people**, while denoting a mass united by bearing one name, is the customary designation for the covenant people as distinguished from the Gentiles. These were Jews who had assembled in numbers around the Baptist, cf. v. 8. Luke says they **were in expectation**, waiting and looking forward, here in hope, not fear. The context indicates the object of this expectation, namely the Messiah. It is evident, John himself had raised this expectation in them, and surely not by thus far avoiding mention of the Messiah or reference to him, but by summarily and definitely preparing people for the reception of the Coming One. — The second clause char-

acterizes this expectation more closely. It embraced **all men** out in the wilderness with John. They **reasoned in their hearts**, i. e. were continuing to do so, thinking over, considering. Luke does not say that they discussed the matter orally with each other. But while he says nothing to this effect, we know well enough that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. There may well have been quiet and subdued whisperings among friends and acquaintances. This much we feel free to read between the lines, when on the one hand Luke speaks of a question in the hearts of all men, and then at once follows it up with a most positive answer from the lips of the Baptist. Moreover, if the question never got beyond men's hearts, how could John know of it so definitely and thus make his answer? It is simplest to suppose that some one, most likely one of his disciples, reported the thoughts of the multitude to him. — Their question was **concerning John**. He had proclaimed the coming of the Messiah, and had begun on a great scale to make men ready for that coming as imminent and close at hand, yet he had not designated the person of the Messiah thus far. So the multitude, deeply impressed by the character and activity of John, and with no one else in sight so far to whom to turn their expectation, began to consider with some seriousness **whether haply he were the Christ**. Luke uses the optative in the indirect question, the main verb in the sentence being in a secondary tense and thus dominating the two present participles in the genitive absolutes; he might have retained the indicative of the direct form. Cf. Robertson 1044. The addition of *αὐτός*, "he himself" carries the idea of a comparison with someone else, here, of course, one merely supposed — no competitor of John having as yet come to the notice of the multitude. They thought that perhaps John was holding back for some reason the announcement of his own Messiahship, and that when the proper time arrived he would speak out. They were thus anticipating the great moment. There

is not the least reason, however, to assume that this attitude of the multitude held the slightest temptation for the Baptist either to think or declare himself the promised Messiah. Any homiletical applications based on his supposed victory over such a temptation are not only utterly beside the mark, but at the same time unwarranted reflections on his character. — Promptly and very decidedly the Baptist squelches this questioning of the multitude, by speaking **unto them all** in a solemn public declaration.

16. . . . I indeed baptize you with water; but there cometh he that is mightier than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

Another is the Messiah, not John; he is only the Messiah's servant. John speaks as if he had already spoken of the Coming One; he now describes this Messiah's person and work as so great in comparison with his own person and work, that any idea of his being himself the Christ is shown to be utterly out of the question. John contrasts his own work with that of the Messiah, when he says of himself: **I indeed baptize you with water**, but of the Messiah, that he shall baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire. Let us note that the idea of immersion is here set aside. The verb "baptize" as used of John has only the dative of means following it: "with water," not even a preposition. The same verb as used of Jesus has, in place of such a bare dative, the preposition *&* with its double object: "the Holy Ghost and fire." We certainly need not emphasize that neither the Holy Ghost nor fire is anything like a fluid into which people could be immersed. The preposition is rightly rendered "with," and the sense is quite the same as that conveyed by the previous simple dative. If any comparison is in place, it is this that the water is applied in practically the same way as the Holy Ghost and fire. — Not a few have concluded that because John mentions only water as the means for his baptism, this

is intended to exclude the Holy Ghost from his baptism. They frequently extend this deduction to include Christian baptism, calling it in a derogatory way "*water-baptism*," a mere ceremony with water, without the Holy Ghost. The utter falseness of these views appears when we note that Mark writes: John "preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins," and Matthew writes that he baptized "with water unto repentance." They do not mean that some time after the baptism, and apart from it, repentance and remission of sins followed, but in connection with the baptism. Now repentance and forgiveness are always wrought by the Holy Ghost. Let us remember that all the saving work done in the entire old covenant was wrought wholly by the Holy Ghost alone; only then his work was limited in various ways. When John came the Holy Ghost worked through his preaching and baptism, bringing men to repentance and faith in the Coming One. Only here too was the old national limitation, and, more important still, the limitation of revelation, the work of Christ not yet done. Not till Pentecost was the Spirit poured out to carry the blessings of the completed atonement into all the world. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born again "of water and the Spirit"; now the only baptism Nicodemus knew was that of the Baptist, of which Jesus thus himself declared that it combined water and the Spirit. When John, then, contrasts his own work with that of the Christ he does not draw the line between water for himself and the Spirit for the Christ; it would have been false and misleading. The real contrast is between John's work as merely a preparation, to be superseded by the complete fulness in the Christ. And behind these two works as thus related stand the two persons performing them, the one nothing but a humble servant, in whose hands were only these two means of grace, preaching and baptism, the other the heavenly Master himself, whose hand would pour out all the fulness of the Spirit when his redemptive work would be

done. Only people who had an utterly inferior conception of the Christ could entertain the idea that a mere man like John could be he. — A current name for the Messiah was *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, the One in the act of coming. Very significantly, therefore John declares of the Christ: **there cometh** he that is mightier than I. He uses the same tense, the present: he is in the act of coming. The whole appearance and work of John, as well as all that he says of the Christ, and the way he says it, justify the thought, that this Stronger One was even then coming, his arrival impending. — We have the comparative of the adjective, made a noun by the article, with the usual genitive following, for the English: **he that is mightier than I**. The adjective carries the idea of might as an inherent quality and personal possession. The strength and power which are in the Coming One vastly exceed any ability of the Baptist. — How far above himself he thus means to place the Messiah appears in the relative clause: **the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose**. This was the task of the meanest slave for his master. Sandals were regularly removed on entering a house, and the dust gathered on the naked feet from walking in the streets removed by washing. The sandals were held in place by "latchets" or thongs. So mighty and exalted is the Christ that John, of whom the people thought so highly as to consider his possibly being the Messiah, was not worthy, in the sense of "sufficient" in rank and standing, to perform this lowest of all services for him. Put away the thought that this statement is only a piece of oriental exaggeration, and not to be taken literally. The very reverse is true.

• Would that all Christ's messengers to-day had the same exalted opinion of their divine Master and acted accordingly! Not even the great angels of God are "worthy" to lave the feet of the Godman. What undeserved honor for John — and for us — to be called to serve him in a far higher capacity, to handle the great treasures of his

kingdom, Word and Sacrament!—As his might so his work. John here does not mention the atonement, as in John 1, 29 and 36, but the work which crowns it and dispenses its treasures: **he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.** The subject of the sentence is made emphatic in the Greek: *he* (he alone, no other). It is certainly not accidental that there is only one preposition for “the Holy Ghost and fire,” thus turning the two into one concept. There are commentators who admit this but in spite of it separate the Spirit and the fire, making the former signify Christ’s work of grace, and the latter his work of judgment. They conceive of “fire” as always a symbol of judgment and destruction, pointing, like Zahn, to vs. 9 and 17. But what of the refiner’s fire in Mal. 3, 2-3; the purifying fire in Zech. 13, 9; Is. 6, 6-7; 1 Pet. 1, 7; Is. 4, 4. Add the tongues of fire on Pentecost. Moreover, judgment is nowhere pictured as a “*baptism* with fire.” The church has accordingly retained the idea of beneficent fire alongside of that of destructive fire. “Come as the fire, and purge our hearts like sacrificial flame.” “Come, Holy Spirit, from above; come, and with flames of zeal and love our hearts and tongues inspire.” “And each believing soul inspire with thine own pure and holy fire.” John does indeed speak of two works of Christ, but in separate clauses; doing that it would be strange if he were to mingle the two, after one preposition and as one concept, in the very first clause. — The matter becomes still clearer when we consider what baptizing “with the Holy Ghost and fire” signifies. We are not left to our own conclusions, here Scripture explains Scripture with all due clearness. Acts 1, 5: “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. Cf. v. 8. When Peter reports how while preaching to Cornelius the Holy Ghost fell upon these Gentile hearers, “as on us at the beginning,” he adds: “Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed

baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." Acts 11, 16. Jesus, as well as Peter, declare that what the Baptist says in our passage found its fulfillment on Pentecost and in the after-results. They use almost the identical words of the Baptist. As regards the "fire" the miracle at Pentecost had it, Acts 2, 3. Against all this Zahn has nothing but his unsupported assumption that fire *must* signify judgment, which he cannot prove; and his observation that "baptize" is here used *uneigentlich*, not in the strict sense, which, while correct proves nothing in regard to fire, since in either case, whether beneficent or destructive, the verb would be used in a modified sense. Yet in all the Scriptures the judgment of damnation is never described as a "baptism," and that for the very evident reason because "baptize" regularly connotes purification. Even the "baptism" of Christ's suffering connotes the removal of our sins by means of that suffering. So the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost is the great mark of the Messiah. No human being was able even to be instrumental in this mighty work; it was wholly the work of the Son himself, and even he could not perform it until he had finished his great redemption and gone to the Father, John 16, 7.

17. Whose fan is in his hand, thoroughly to cleanse his threshing-floor, and to gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire.

Observe, in the first place, the structure of the sentence as a whole, how the two relative clauses, both headed by the same relative pronoun in the genitive "whose," make these two clauses parallel and equally dependent on the main statement: "there cometh he that is mightier than I." This close connection and parallelism between the two works of the Messiah, the one of grace, the other of judgment, is characteristic of the prophetic view of the Messiah; there is no wide separation, by a long time interval, between the two great

works, this feature being withheld in silence. In John's description of the judgment work of the Christ the thought of might is still held fast: he alone has the "hand" able to wield the "fan," and he alone is able to dispose of the "wheat" and the "chaff" in this majestic and ultimate way. The very thought of any mere man, though one like John himself, proceeding with a work like this, is foolish on the face of it. This is still clearer when the stupendous things behind the imagery here used are brought to mind. — There are two sides to the great picture, first the separation, as in Matth. 25, 32; then the disposal of the separated parts — in Matth. 25, 34: "Come," etc., and v. 41: "Depart," etc. This separation begins already in this life. The wheat and the chaff, believers and unbelievers, are utterly distinct from each other. And so we see the "congregation of the saints" (Ps. 89, 5; 149, 1) drawing together on the one hand, and "the congregation of evil doers" (Ps. 26, 5) on the other, and blessed is he who keeps away from the latter (Ps. 1, 1). But in this life, even in the organization of the church, this separation is not fully carried out, nor can it be made fully visible to men as long as we live in a world in which "it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." 1 John 3, 2. The word for **fan** denotes a large wooden shovel designed for tossing up grain after this is threshed out on a smooth elevated earthen **threshing-floor**, and the loose straw has been raked away. The remaining mass of mingled **wheat** and **chaff**, when tossed up will be separated by the wind, the heavy grain falling in a heap, the loose, light chaff blown to one side. Nor shall the two ever be mixed again, their separation now is final. When John says: **whose fan is in his hand**, he gives us the image of the mighty Messiah as ready at any moment to begin this separating task. **Thoroughly** is the archaic form of "thoroughly," retained in the R. V. The verb: **thoroughly to cleanse his threshing-**

floor, is the aorist infinitive, which views the entire action of cleansing as one and completely finished; and the infinitive expresses purpose. When the time comes, he who now already stands ready with the fan poised in his hand will completely finish this task.—It is worthy of note that John does not parallel the disposition of the wheat with that of the chaff in the structure of the sentence. As regards the former the purpose idea lying in the infinitive is retained; as regards the latter there is no such purpose, but only the fact that the Christ will so dispose of the chaff. Christ's great plan is to separate his own from this sinful world and take them to himself; they who will not be his are simply cast out. So we have a second infinitive coordinated with the first, and like that in the aorist: **and to gather the wheat into his garner**. The word for "wheat" is "grain," which may be either wheat or barley, both being extensively grown in Palestine; and "garner" is the general term for a storehouse of any kind. The imagery used was perfectly clear to John's hearers from Ps. 1 and many other Old Test. passages. **The wheat** = "the godly," the children of the Messianic kingdom, all who embrace and cling to the Christ in true faith. **The garner** is the new heaven and the new earth, the eternal, glorious abode of the exalted Messiah.—**The chaff** are the ungodly, those who live and finally die without faith in the Messiah and his redemptive grace. How valueless is chaff when compared with wheat? Who ever plants a field in order to reap nothing but chaff? The wind blows it away when the winnowing begins, Ps. 1, 4. All the proud works of men, what are they at last when the judgment begins? Light as chaff will all they be who bring nothing else to that great day. Then the righteousness of Christ will alone avail; held by faith it makes us wheat.—The verb for the chaff is **burn up**, not merely "burn." But even this general prophecy of the Baptist shuts out the idea of a final annihilation of the wicked, so strongly held by certain fanatics, for

John now mingles the figure he has been using with the reality for which it is intended, after the manner of biblical allegory as distinct from parable (cf. Trench, *Parables of our Lord*, p. 9), adding: **with unquenchable fire**. If the wicked were annihilated the fire would burn out; instead it will never be quenched, its function of burning will go on eternally as an eternal punishment for the wicked. Commentators have variously tried to make the terms used for "eternal" in the Scriptures, at least as far as they apply to the wicked, signify only a long age or time, but their true sense is assured not only from the parallel of "eternal" as used of the blessedness of the godly, which must be really eternal, but also from terms such as here used by the Baptist: "unquenchable fire." Just as this term shuts out annihilation, so also it bars out the idea of a final restitution. Because ordinary chaff burns away quickly the Baptist had to add the thought of enduring penalty. Men have speculated on the character of this "fire," thinking of fire as we know it in this material world. There is no need to say that God will provide a fire adequate for his purpose, and they who shall burn in it will least care to question its peculiar character.

18. With many other exhortations therefore preached he good tidings unto the people.

So these were "good tidings," though they included the preaching of judgment. Why the words on the judgment are thus included we see when we note their purpose in John's preaching, namely to aid in bringing men to contrition and faith. The Greek has one word for **preached good tidings**, that from which "evangel" is derived; it signifies to bring the good message of salvation. The imperfect tense = John went on doing this, saying nothing about the end of it. We have the same word for **people** as before, construed as a direct object of the verb, which may have the persons addressed either in the dative or accusative case. Luke says, John did this **with exhortations**, really: "by continuing to exhort"

or admonish. His intention was to have them accept the Messiah. Both the main verb and the participle show that. He was a true Gospel herald. **Many other** in the Greek is: "many and other things" he kept urging upon the people. Luke has given us only a brief report, one, however, fully characteristic of the Baptist's Gospel work. We must know that this work went on with extended preaching. John mentioned "many things"; but the addition: "and other things" should not be taken as meaning: things of a different kind (so Zahn). Any such, we may safely assume, Luke would have illustrated by examples. The exhortations of Luke were of the same general kind, only he varied them to fit his different hearers and the different situations in which he found himself. Cf. Robertson, p. 749. Thus the ministry of the great forerunner of Christ proceeded, pointing all men away from himself and all other helps and helpers to the great Redeemer Jesus Christ.

Induced

SERMON.

It is remarkable, when one stops to think of it, what unworthy conceptions men have of Jesus Christ. See these people of whom St. Luke writes in our text. They were Jews, descendants of Abraham, instructed in all the Old Test. promises concerning the coming Savior, and at this very time had a great prophet preaching to them, St. John the Baptist, telling them how to prepare aright for the coming Savior, and yet they were actually entertaining the idea in their minds that St. John himself, a mere prophet of the Savior, might perhaps be the Savior himself. They thus betrayed that they were far, far behind the true conception of the real greatness of the coming Savior, and hence also of the work he would do.—That is what is the trouble with so many to-day. Here is the entire Bible the combined testimony of the prophets and apostles, yea, the Savior's own word and work. But the world passes it all by in unbelief. This Jesus—they think they can safely ignore him. If he ever lived on earth as the Bible says, he was only a man, nothing more—why trouble much about him? At best, some think, we may learn a little from him for our life and conduct on earth, and that is about all. But the worst is that so many of us Christians, who confess complete faith in the

Bible, after all fall below the reality in our conceptions of the Savior. We betray it in all kinds of ways. Quite openly we fail to honor him and his Word as we ought. We constantly have difficulty in trusting him and his salvation as they evidently deserve to be trusted. And as for genuine preparation for the great hour when we and all the world shall face him at last on his judgment throne—it surely is missing in many places where we have the right to expect it.

What do we need? This “fiery angel, St. John, the true preacher of repentance,” as our Lutheran Confessions call him, and his mighty message. We need him to do all his great Advent work upon us, in particular to fill us with a full measure of faith in Jesus Christ, our great Advent King. Come then in spirit, join the multitude in our text, open your ears and let your hearts perceive:

The True Greatness of our Advent King, as John the Baptist saw it.

Do you hear what he says of the latchet of his shoes?—by that he means to tell us:

✓ *This Advent King is the Eternal Son of God himself.*

Do you hear what he says of the baptism with the Spirit and fire?—by that he means to tell us:

✓ *This Advent King works out our Redemption complete.*

Do you hear what he says of the fan and the threshing-floor?—by that he means to tell us:

✓ *This, Advent King will Judge the whole World at last.*

I.

“One mightier than I cometh,” St. John the Baptist announced to all the people assembled there in the wilderness to see and hear him. Hear him, he announces it to you to-day. How much mightier? John answers that fully. So mighty that no human being, not even a distinguished prophet like himself directly commissioned of God, was fit to touch even as much as this King’s feet by loosening the thongs of his sandals. In oriental lands, where sandals are worn, that would be the task of the humblest servant. If even the Baptist is too unworthy for so low a task, how mighty and high then is this Advent King? What does John mean? Nothing less than what all the Scriptures, this King himself, and God who sent him to be our King, declare. Listen to King David in his inspired Psalm, telling that God declared: “I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion . . . Thou art my Son.” Hear Nathanael exclaim to Jesus: “Thou art the Son

of God, thou art the King of Israel." St. Peter makes the great confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Hear the King himself: "I and the Father are one." Hear God's own voice from the open heavens: "This is my beloved Son, hear him." That is what the Baptist meant with his significant reference to the sandals of the coming King.

But when at last the great Advent King stepped forth, when men saw him with their own eyes, when for instance he made his royal entry into the Holy City Jerusalem, where was all this might and greatness of his? He appeared himself in the form of a servant, he was made in the likeness of men and fashioned as a man. He actually wore sandals, ordinary sandals, like other men. People could not understand, many cannot even to-day. Because he assumed our flesh and blood in order to perform his great work of redemption, they refuse to see the rays of divine glory which constantly shone forth from his bearing, his words and deeds. But the Baptist saw them when the heavens opened above Jesus: "I saw," he declares, "and bear record that this is the Son of God." And John the evangelist writes: "We beheld his glory, the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father." Jesus was the Godman—God himself come down to us in human flesh to rescue this sin-cursed world from its doom, and when his blessed work was done ascending visibly again to heaven to sit on the throne of his glory. The sick that he healed, the lepers he cleansed, the dead he raised, the devils he drove out, the tempest he stilled, every gracious word that fell from his lips, all without a single exception support the Advent testimony of the Baptist: *Christ, our Advent King, is the Eternal Son of God himself.*

O that I could drive it into your hearts and make it stay there in all that it means for you and me! This is the great salvation God has sent us: his own Son from heaven. (None other would do. Salvation deals not only with earth, but with heaven and hell themselves; not only with men here below, but with almighty God above.) God's Son is the Savior you are to trust. What an insult to him, what folly and loss to us, if we harbor a single doubt, hesitate even a moment, trust only in part! Repent of your littleness of faith, rely on him to the uttermost. And honor? Why, *he* honors *you* with honors as high as heaven: he washes your sins away, makes you children of God, takes you into his kingdom of grace, fits you for his kingdom of glory. Honor him? It ought to be our highest and holiest delight. Dishonor him by word or deed? All the devils in hell should not be able to make us do it.

II.

The mighty Advent King, St. John the Baptist tells the multitude in the wilderness, "shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." That word too counts for us to this very day. What does St. John mean? He is pointing all men to the stupendous greatness of the Savior as revealed in the completion and crowning of his Savior-work, and this to draw them all unto him in the fullest faith and adoration, since all this glorious work was done for them.

John saw the work as it was to be, and thus the greatness of him who wrought it; it is granted to us now to see it as it actually was, crowned just as John said it would be, and thus to behold as he did the blessed greatness of this Advent King. The Holy Spirit was poured out with miraculous manifestations on the great day of Pentecost. It was a pouring out, and that is why John called it a "baptism." Flaming tongues of fire sat upon each of the disciples when the Spirit came upon them; that is why John called the bestowal a baptism "with the Holy Ghost and fire." They all spoke with new tongues, in languages they had never learned, to the people of different countries drawn together there in wonder and astonishment. That is especially significant: the great King of Salvation from his throne above was starting to dispense to all the world the treasures of salvation he had purchased and won for them all. That work, through the Spirit once poured out, was to go on and on to the very end of days. It is going on this very moment. There is nothing greater, grander, more blessed in all the world. And it all goes back to Christ; *the great Advent King has wrought out our redemption complete.* The pardon from sin which his Spirit now brings us through the Word—it is from him; he gave his life for it. The deathless life his Spirit now implants in us through the Word—it is from him; he died that thus we might live with a life that shall never die. The hope of eternal blessedness which his Spirit now makes ours through the Word—again, it is from him; he brought it from the tomb, he fulfills it in glory above.

But see, all this saving work of our Advent King lies far in the past, and his mighty Spirit works now only through his Word, moreover all his gifts are invisible, spiritual, heavenly treasures. That is why the world is full of people who refuse to be impressed by the Advent King and care nothing for his greatness. There is a dimness in our own eyes, Christians though we are. O yes, we see and prize and grasp at the things of this life, and many of these appeal to us though stained and stench with sin. But when we hear the blessed Word of Scripture, do we

always see the triumphant Savior on his throne above, all his redemptive work so bitter and hard complete, sin, death, and hell overcome, forgiveness, life and salvation won, and his Spirit bringing to us these priceless treasures? That is why God sends anew the Baptist's Advent message to us. Away with our blindness and lack of faith! But for him and his salvation all would be dark. His greatness shall ever be our praise.

III.

Once more Christ's Advent messenger speaks. He sees the Savior in his greatness at the last day. His fan is in his hand; with might he wields it on the threshing-floor; the wheat and the chaff are blown apart; the wheat gathered and garnered, the chaff burnt with unquenchable fire. It is the Son of God, the eternal Judge of all the world. Who will say that this vision and word of the Baptist does not most intimately concern us all?

Chaff—beyond question that is the right word: immortal souls, lives hastening towards eternity, yet blind, indifferent, careless, full of lies and self-deception, satisfied with vanities, follies, fading treasures and pleasures, nothing that God or heaven could prize—all nothing but chaff. The worst of it is: here was Christ and his eternal salvation offered to these souls, urged, pressed upon them by the Spirit, but they had no use for him, no real use, even if some pretended for awhile—they wanted to stay just chaff.—Wheat—that too is the right word: precious wheat, with its life-germ hidden within, its solid strength and usefulness. That is what the husbandman works for and wants, what delights his eyes, what he carefully gathers and keeps. We are spiritual wheat when Christ takes the blight of sin from us, gives us the new life of faith in him, and makes us fit for his kingdom above. For this he died, for this he sent his Spirit. His joy and reward are we when we are wheat.

Wheat—chaff—how can any man harbor the thought that these two can remain together for good? Their very nature proclaims, they shall be separated and remain so. Those who are wheat—those who are chaff: those who trust and love Christ—those who turn their backs on him; those who do what he says and hope in his promises—those who live and die without him: can any man dream that these two classes of men can remain together forever? But even if somebody should, here is the great Advent King himself, his mighty fan and threshing-floor, the fire unquenchable and the garner for his grain—he will make the separation, make it for eternity. It shall be as wide as heaven is from hell. Even the Baptist had to break his imagery to give us the full truth of this separation. For common chaff there is no

unquenchable fire, but for the men who reject salvation the fire will never cease, the smoke of its torment rises forever. Let those who are chaff object and argue as they will, they shall change neither the word here written by inspiration of God, nor the terrible reality when it comes. And as sure as is this word concerning the fire, so sure is that concerning the garner or heaven. God's angels are singing there now; the souls of just men made perfect are already there.

O that these tremendous realities might become so real to us now while still in this life that they would control us completely! What chaff around us on every side—no faith, no love, no hope in Christ. Do you see the fire awaiting it, and him whose unimpeachable judgment flames forth in that fire? With your eyes on him is there anything about this chaff that still attracts you—when you know that it would draw you away from him, away from his grace, toward that fire, yea into it?—And here are God's children in Christ Jesus. O the preciousness of the faith that makes them such—the preciousness of the life that proves them such. Already Christ draws them together here as they assemble to worship his name—while the children of the world are drawn in other directions by the wind of empty pleasures and idle gains. Do you see what it is to belong to Christ now, truly to be his with heart and soul? On his throne of glory above he is waiting now to receive us unto himself. At the latter day when he shall stand in his glory upon the earth what joy unspeakable shall be ours when he shall call our names as pardoned by his blood, and heaven's doors swing aside to let us in!

Go on, then, and worship this Advent King, the very Son of God, our Savior. Let his Holy Spirit make all the treasures of his redemption your very own. So meet the Advent King as your eternal Judge on the last great day.

OUTLINES.

It ought to be unnecessary to publish the warning that the sermon on our text dare not make the Baptist the chief subject, drawing "lessons" from his character and actions as portrayed in our text. Christ dominates this text, and anything said about the Baptist must be made completely and as directly as possible subservient to Christ. We, therefore, unhesitatingly reject such outlines as Langsdorff offers from Harless, Beck and others, preachers who propose to give to the Baptist either the entire sermon, or entire parts of it. They violate the Baptist's own fundamental principle, which was to turn all men away from himself unto the One mightier than he.—The great theme of the text lies on the

surface; we have before us: John's Sermon on the Mighty Messiah. Here is his mighty person—and his mighty work (grace and judgment). Or we may term it: John's Sermon on the Mighty Work of the Messiah—on his work of grace—on his work of judgment (connecting with both John's testimony on Christ's divinity).—Another vital point on which to divide is the Advent idea as such, using John's word: "One cometh." Thus: The Great Advent Preacher's Picture of the Coming Savior—how he comes to save with divine grace now—how he will yet come to save with divine glory (gather the wheat, etc.).—Or: a coming: lowly—yet divine; full of grace—yet involving judgment; with many to reject him—yet a host to acclaim and receive him.—An adequate method would also be to single out what is connoted in Christ's "coming," namely *reception* on our part, dividing on that point: our reception of him ought to accord with his person—with the grace he brings—with the judgment he will bring.—Finally, the text may be viewed from the angle furnished by the "wheat" and the "chaff": for instance—how there comes to be wheat and chaff, and what becomes of the wheat and the chaff. Only in bringing men forward so prominently in the division Christ and his work must be used throughout to mark them.

Christ on the Threshing-Floor.

1. *The wheat and the chaff.*
2. *The wheat winnowed from the chaff.*
3. *The wheat garnered and the chaff burned.*

What Effect has the Coming of the Christ upon Your Heart?

Has it wrought in you:

1. *A humble heart* (adoring his divinity)?
2. *An open heart* (receiving the gifts of his Spirit)?
3. *A serious heart* (prepared for his final judgment)?

"Say with What Salutation Shall I thine Advent Greet?"

When you make answer think as St. John the Baptist did of:

1. *The latchet of his shoes.*
 2. *The baptism with the Spirit and fire.*
 3. *The fan and the threshing-floor.*
-

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Luke 1, 46-55.

The Fourth Sunday in Advent lies so close to the Christmas Festival that it partakes of the Christmas character. As far as texts and sermons are concerned we feel that we must have as much homiletical appropriation as possible for this Sunday, and could not consent to minimize or set this aside for the ordinary homiletical application. We want a text which sets either Christ himself before us, or the mercy of God in Christ, thus directly stimulating our faith. The *Magnificat* fills these requirements in an admirable way. It is still an Advent text, one full of Old Test. thoughts and phrases, in fact a hymn like the Old Test. Psalms, yet at the same time it is full of the Christmas dawn. The mother of Jesus has already conceived the holy child, and it is she from whose heart and lips by the wonderful inspiration of God's Spirit flowed this rich, uplifting, triumphant song of praise. In a tender, reticent way it refers to what God had then already done to have his Son born of a woman and assume our flesh and blood; then it broadens out like a magnificent stream telling of all that lies unfolded for us in this central miracle of his grace. Yes, this is good text to help usher in the Christmas Festival. Luther has a full exposition of it, Erlangen ed., 45, 211, etc., and a sermon, 15, 448, etc.

The song itself and its contents form the text, hence all that precedes and follows is left out; the preacher, of course, will use what he needs for the presentation in his sermon. We retain the usual division into four sections: 46-48a; 48b-50; 51-53; 54-55.

- 1, 46. And Mary said,
 My soul doth magnify the Lord,
 47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
 48. For he hath looked upon the low estate of his
 handmaiden.

There is a decided difference between the manner and words of Elisabeth and those of Mary. Elisabeth "lifted up her voice with a loud cry," of Mary we read only that she **said**. Direct and special revelation appears in Elisabeth's words, she is filled with the Holy Ghost and calls Mary "the mother of my Lord," adding the promise of the fulfillment of the things divinely promised to Mary. Mary utters only words of faith and praise. Elisabeth, though greatly stirred, speaks in prose; Mary's words are beautiful lines of poetry. The difference is due to what each of these women uttered, and to the individuality of each in making that utterance. Elisabeth's words to Mary are in substance a repetition of Gabriel's words to her, only modified to fit the situation as now advanced. Therefore we are told that the Holy Ghost was behind them. Mary's words are like the response she made when Gabriel's revelation first came to her. Only now, when for weeks her heart had dwelt on the wonder and blessedness of it all, she pours out in answer to this renewed revelation in Elisabeth's words all that her heart felt, her humble faith, her grateful acknowledgment, her fervent praise. One might sum it all up in the single acclamation: *Soli Deo Gloria!*—In the first strains Mary declares with deepest joy what God's wondrous grace has vouchsafed unto her. The verb is forward and emphatic: she cannot help but do what she is doing. This verb in its Latin form in the Vulgate has furnished the title for the whole song; it is called the *Magnificat*. **Magnify** here is to ascribe greatness to him who is really so great as to deserve more than we can ascribe to him. One may magnify what is small, or magnify

what is great beyond its actual greatness; but here the magnifying reaches up toward a greatness which looms beyond human conception and power of expression. — It is, of course, plain that **soul** and **spirit** as here used both refer to the inner self. We need not stress either of the terms unduly, and yet Luther is perfectly correct when here he takes each in its proper sense without erasing or generalizing away the difference. Soul and spirit both designate the immaterial part of man, but soul is this inner part as it is directed toward the body and joined with it; hence soul frequently = “life.” Luther says it is the seat of reason, which however is bound to go astray unless guided by the higher light of faith which has its seat in the spirit. The soul thus receives the impression of the senses, and rules the body and its members. Spirit is the same immaterial part of man in its capacity of receiving light, life, and power from the heavenly world. Luther says, it is the house in which faith and the Word dwell. This distinction holds in Mary’s use of the terms: her “soul” uses her lips to magnify the Lord; while it is her “spirit” of which she says that in great joy it had received the impress of God her Savior’s grace. — The verb **hath rejoiced** expresses great and abounding joy. Its aorist tense contrasts with the parallel present tense “doth magnify,” and is best explained of Mary’s joy as preceding her present utterance of it. Great joy did come to her (when and how not specified now), and this lies back of her jubilant praise. — It is **the Lord**, Israel’s covenant God, Jehovah, whom she magnifies. In the second line she calls him **God**, the name which connotes his might as the equivalent of *Elohim*, and adds **my Savior** to indicate the direction in which this might was exerted for her benefit, namely rescue and deliverance. Meyer’s rendering: *Begluecker* is entirely too weak. In the Old Test. sense “Savior,” as here used by Mary, like “salvation,” while less specific than when used of Jesus in the New Test., includes the same help from

evil and gift of blessing coming from divine grace.— Both of these first lines have the beautiful Old Test. sound in them, yet exact Old Test. parallels are not found, because Mary in her own beautiful and deeply spiritual way appropriates and uses what the Old Test. has given her.— In a simple, reticent, yet fully sufficient manner she now states the reason for her joy and praise. Her **low estate** = *unansehnlich Wesen* (Luther): "God has looked upon me poor, despised, lowly maid, where he could easily have found a rich, high, noble, mighty queen, a daughter of princes and great lords; so he might have found Annas' and Caiaphas' daughter, which were the highest in the country, but upon me he cast his pure good eyes, and used such a lowly, despised maid, that no one should boast before him that he would have been or was worthy," etc. The Reformer shows how it is one thing to recognize properly one's actual low estate, and altogether another merely to act lowly. The latter is a manufactured humility; it is like carrying water and pouring it into a dry well, the former like water naturally flowing out of a spring. Queen Esther wore a fine crown, but to her it was no better than a common shawl — she was undeceived as to her lowliness. The damned in hell are indeed low enough, but these are not willingly so; the angels are high enough, but with no false lust of pride in their estate. So not merely must things be changed to make a "low estate" that God would look upon, but we in our mind and heart.— So Mary very fittingly calls herself a second time (cf. v. 38) the Lord's **handmaiden**, really "bondmaiden," just as Paul called himself Christ's "bondservant." She means to say that she belongs wholly to the Lord, for him to do with her as he desired, and that she was wholly willing and glad to be such.— Now the great act of God toward her low estate she sums up in the one expression: **he hath looked upon** my low estate. It was God's most gracious, unmerited condescension.

She, of course, means that God should have chosen her of all the women of the house of David to be "the mother of the Lord," yet she does not say it out, she veils it in beautiful, tender reticence, revealing again her genuine humility. Another might have boasted, not Mary; that other was therefore not chosen, could not have been, but she was looked upon.

For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

49. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things;

And holy is his name.

50. And his mercy is unto generations and generations of them that fear him.

In these strains Mary declares how men shall acknowledge what God's grace has vouchsafed unto her. The exclamation **behold** draws attention to this acknowledgement on the part of men; many of his great and gracious deeds are not so treated, this one, Mary says, shall be. The causal **for** here treats the result as evidence and proof for the act of God which brought it forth. **From henceforth**, "from now on," cannot mean, as Keil thinks, from the moment of Gabriel's announcement, which was weeks ago, but from that moment on when Elisabeth had spoken openly of Mary's secret and had begun to call her "blessed." In these utterances of Elisabeth Mary sees the beginning of a long line of similar utterances, including **all generations** in the future. Mary's secret will, of course, cease to be a secret soon when her son is born and appears to men as the Messiah. He will then establish his Messianic kingdom among men, all generations shall know of him. But Luther is right when he says that "all generations" is not meant of the masses of each succeeding generation, but of the succession itself, so that he translates: *alle Kindskind* = father, son, son's son, etc. There is no

need then to think of Jews and Gentiles who do not call Mary blessed, nor, as Zahn does, of those who call her blessed in a wrong manner. — When Mary says so many **shall call me blessed**, she, of course, is not basking in the sunshine of future human praise. What she has said already and what follows shows that she means: men shall praise her for the grace vouchsafed to her. Luther is very keen on this point, castigating the Romanists for lauding the virtue and merit of Mary when she thinks only of her low estate, thus making her a liar, and robbing us of her example and the comfort contained in it, that as God looked in grace upon her lowliness he will do so with ours when we appear before him in a similar spirit. — Not for her own, but for God's sake, men shall call her blessed; thus she accords all credit to God, none to herself. The order in the Greek is: "For there hath done unto me great things he that is mighty." The aorist **hath done** refers to the definite past act which selected her as the mother of the Messiah. The plural **great things**, however, views the parts of what God did when he sent his messenger from heaven, caused the miraculous conception, and revealed this mystery to Elisabeth. All of them are truly great, but they are left with a beautiful veil of reticence, without closer specification. Luther sees the fitting order in Mary's words: first the divine will in the preceding lines, now the divine works and gifts. "Where the gracious will is there also are the gifts, but not in turn is there a gracious will where the gifts are." Abraham gave gifts to the sons of his concubines, but to Isaac he gave the entire inheritance. We must not trust to the gifts alone, many of which God throws out also to unbelievers, but to his will; if that is for us, the gifts will take care of themselves. — **He that is mighty** is simply the masculine adjective made a noun: "the Mighty One," possessed of power and ability, thus matching the verb and its object. "Mighty here is not to mean a quiet, resting might, as we say of a temporal king that he is mighty, though he sits still and does

nothing; but a working might, a constant activity, which is exercised without cessation and operates." Luther. The conception of Mary, the central part of the "great things," was a work of divine omnipotence. — The addition: **And holy is his name**, speaks of the person of God as it is revealed to us; we do not know God except by his name = through the revelation of himself. Now in this miracle wrought in Mary the holiness of God as he is revealed to us is brought to view; it was a work utterly separate from the sin and sinfulness in man. This is in line with v. 35: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee . . . That which is born of thee shall be called holy." The conception is thus a thing separated unto God. It is rather a deduction from this idea of separation, and not a direct exposition of the term "holy," when Luther urges that here all the honor of the work is reserved unto God, none of it assumed by Mary. — Just as the first "and" connects that sentence with the one preceding, so this parallel "and," thus combining might, holiness, and mercy. The punctuation in both English versions fails to bring this out, giving an independent position to v. 50. While the holiness of God's name separates the conception from every connection with sin, this miracle nevertheless belongs to God's **mercy**, *ἔλεος* as distinguished from *χάρις* or grace. Grace is love towards those who do not deserve it because of their guilt; mercy is love toward those who are in misery as a result of their sin and guilt. Here this mercy is described as extending **unto generations and generations** in the sense of Luther: "*wachret immer fuer und fuer*." It does not appear only once now and then but goes on and on. The idea is that the conception of the Messiah lies in this mercy-line, all God's mercy in past generations led up to this crowning mercy, and all God's mercy in coming generations flows out from this. — The course of this mercy, however, follows a certain channel; it is: **on them that fear him** (present tense: continue fearing). This is the "fear"

so much spoken of not only in the Old, but also in the New Test. (Rom. 3,18; 2 Cor. 7, 1; Eph. 5, 11; etc.) It is the awe which fills the heart and reflects itself in the bearing of those who recognize aright God's majesty and greatness. His power, holiness, and righteousness deter them from treating him and his commandments lightly in disobedience; while his love, grace, and mercy move them to honor and obey him with childlike reverence. Fundamentally there is no difference between fear in the Old and in the New Test.; in both there is the idea of faith, childhood, and willing obedience. Therefore, the mercy of God is here said to be "on them that fear him." The rest have spurned it, though it tried to bless them also. The Greek has the simple dative: "to them that fear him," *dativus commodus*. Among the generations as they follow each other there shall always be those people who fear God, and they shall be the bearers of his mercy.

51. He hath shewed strength with his arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination
of their heart.
52. He hath put down princes from *their* thrones,
And hath exalted them of low degree.
53. The hungry he hath filled with good things;
And the rich he hath sent empty away.

We may arrange with the R. V. in six lines as here given, or we may reduce to four, as does the Greek text of Westcott and Hort, by making one line each of v. 52 and v. 53. In these strains Mary describes the power and grace of God in detail. Commentators and grammarians discuss the aorists here used. Are they timeless, simply stating God's acts at any time? or prophetic, stating what is yet to be as if it were already done? or just ordinary aorists, stating what God has actually already done? The latter is sufficient and therefore to be preferred. To say that all these aorists are in line

with those of v. 48-49, as Zahn does, is not correct, because the two "and" sentences, 49b and 50, constitute a decided break. — **To shew strength** is really: "to exercise strength" in some powerful work, as in Ps. 118, 15-16. Hence also the anthropomorphic addition: **with his arm**, the symbol of strength. On the instrumental preposition see Robertson, p. 590: the shewing strength is viewed as "in" the arm. Mary evidently is elaborating what lies in the designation: "he that is mighty." — God's display of strength is now unfolded in detail. First upon **the proud in the imagination of their heart**. The dative here used is not the dative of means, as though God scattered them "by" (R. V. margin) their imagination, i. e., their thinking or reason, but the dative of relation: proud in regard to their thought or reason. And the term for **proud** signifies people who make themselves conspicuous above others, overweening, arrogant. The **heart** is conceived as the seat of the soul-life, its thought, emotion, as well as will. These people are not merely inwardly puffed up, imagining themselves great and lofty, but transfer this idea of themselves into their treatment of others, lording it over them with a high hand. The implication, of course, is that in their haughtiness they have no respect even for God and his will. These the Lord **hath scattered** completely, i. e., when they gathered together to carry their plans into effect, cf. Ps. 2, 1-5. Luther has a fine illustration: "When the bladder is full, and everybody thinks they are on top and have won, and they themselves also are secure and have brought it to an end, then God pricks a hole into the bladder, and it is all over with." Cf. Ps. 37, 35-36; 89, 10. — In the next two verses the might of God is shown by contrasting the godly with the wicked, the arrangement of the clauses being chiasmic. **Princes** are those who exercise power and rule. The term does not point to demons or to spiritual rulers, but to earthly potentates. These in their wickedness **he hath put down from their thrones** where they thought

themselves so secure. History is strewn with examples justifying Mary's words. On the other hand, with the same might, but now used in wondrous mercy **he hath exalted them of low degree**, using for these the companion word for "low estate," which Mary referred to herself. "Exalt" is to lift up and make high by giving them position, honor, etc. That this often goes far beyond mere earthly high places is seen in Mary herself; the highest places are in the kingdom of God. Paul gives us in full God's rule in this regard in 1 Cor. 1, 26-29. Even when rulers stay on their thrones during their lives death puts them down and delivers them to judgment. — **The hungry** are not a class different from those of low estate, but these viewed from a different angle. Meyer is right when he warns against hasty spiritualization, yet he is wrong when he confines everything said by Mary to mere physical ideas. These "who are hungering" are not always longing merely for bread, though that should by no means be excluded. We see this when Mary says of the hungry that **he hath filled them with good things**, using a term so broad that any and all good things may be included in it, and making the verb correspondingly strong. Let us recall Luther's word about the gifts as valueless without the gracious will of God behind them, and the constant scriptural use of terms like "the poor," "the hungry," etc., for those, whatever their earthly condition, who seek for divine satisfaction. What the Beatitudes promise is here spoken of as fulfilled. — **The rich** (also a present participle, of durative condition) are those satisfied with what they have, whether it be pelf, or science, or moral excellence, or "works" which their own hands have done in self-righteousness. God cannot tolerate them with their spurious satisfaction — **he hath sent them empty away**, not necessarily by taking their riches away, for these are the very proof of their emptiness, riches that are marks of genuine poverty. They may take wings and so show their emptiness, fading as vapors, shadows,

slipping through the fingers like sand, water; or their very continuance may develop growing and finally complete disappointment. In "sent away" there lies the thought that God, because they would not listen in the time of grace, now puts them where they shall never be able to obtain the true riches. Without God's grace no man can possibly be rich.

54. **He hath holpen Israel his servant,
That he might remember mercy**
55. **(As he spake unto our fathers)
Toward Abraham and his seed for ever.**

In these final strains Mary praises God's grace as the fulfillment of his promise to Israel. The aorist is like ~~those~~ preceding. God's help conceived as having been actually bestowed in the miracle vouchsafed to Mary. The verb **hath holpen**, in the middle voice = to take hold of something or somebody, and thus to help, construed with the genitive, cf. Acts 20, 35. **Israel** is by no means = the Jews; it emphasizes the covenant relation of the people, intended indeed for all descendants of Jacob, but realized only in those who were true to Jacob's faith. This true "Israel" is Jéhovah's **servant**, *παῖς, Ebed* (Hebr.), a term not used of sonship, not even when employed of Christ as in the Acts. Israel as God's "servant" was to do his will in all things and find the highest blessing in that. — The infinitive, an aorist passive, **that he might remember**, our translators understand of purpose, which is far preferable to Robertson's idea of result (p. 1001) or of epexegetical relation (p. 1086). What God had done upon Mary was a plain intimation of his purpose to remember his promise to Abraham. It was a remembering of **mercy**, i. e., to carry his mercy into effect. To some it may have seemed that he had forgotten, but when the time comes God always remembers, as he did here. — Our A. V. combines: "As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and

to his seed for ever." We cannot connect "for ever" with "he spake," besides "to our fathers" has a preposition, while "Abraham and his seed" are simple datives. The clause: **As he spake unto our fathers**, is parenthetical. All along God had told the fathers through the prophets that he would effectively remember, i. e., redeem that promise made to Abraham. That is to be noted now when this remembering has actually occurred. The following datives then are *dativi commodi*: "remember to or for Abraham," etc., or as the R. V. has it: **toward Abraham and his seed for ever**. Thus God was redeeming his promise to Abraham — of this he had spoken to the fathers, now he had carried it out. Note that this puts Abraham and his seed together, all the coming generations of his true children as well as all the past. The gift of the Messiah is equally for them all. We would expect a durative instead of a punctiliar tense for "remember" since it is modified by, "for ever." The matter is clear when we consider that the one act of remembering consisted in the giving of the promised seed to Mary; that one act had its effect "for ever." Having thus remembered once, God did not need to go on remembering afterwards. His promise once redeemed the blessed effect would accrue to all his children to all eternity. And thus Mary's song closes most beautifully. We think she spoke by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, though this is not said of her as it is of Elisabeth, though Keil denies it. The omission is explained by the previous reference to the Holy Ghost regarding Mary, v. 35, making a second mention, like that respecting Elisabeth, seem hardly necessary or in place.

Indexed

SERMON.

What a wonderful song is this that flowed from the lips of Jesus' mother when on her visit to her relative and friend Elisabeth she was greeted by her as the mother of her Lord! God had sent his angel to Mary to announce to her that she was to be the mother of the Savior of the world; and now she sees that God had

made known this wonderful news to Elisabeth. Mary answers her friend's significant greeting by words that welled up from her inmost heart, in the form of the beautiful Old Testament Psalms, magnifying God and giving all the glory and praise to him alone.

But see what all her words include. She goes back to Abraham and the wonderful promise God made to him; she reaches out to all generations to come, to eternity itself; she speaks of princes and thrones, the hungry, and those of low degree; and over all time and all men she places God—him who is mighty, merciful, holy, and true, and she calls him: "God my Savior." A glorious song; doubly so when we get the full reach of its meaning. I have already pointed to the key. It lies in the word "Savior" and what Mary says of the great deed of God by which he proved himself a Savior, the gift of his Son Jesus Christ for our salvation.

Christ is the Golden Key of Mary's Magnificat.

I.

Here are wonderful words about God. How shall we grasp aright what all they say? Take the true key:

Christ unlocks to us the heart of God himself.

With Christ before us we see indeed that *God is our Savior*. He sent his own Son to deliver us, not from this or that temporal ill merely, but from sin, death and hell forever. He did that by having him born as man, choosing the Virgin Mary to become his mother. It is the most wonderful of all God's miracles: uniting his own eternal Son to our poor race through this humble handmaiden Mary. Hear Mary's own praise: "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden. . . . He that is mighty hath done to me great things." We too praise and confess: "I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord." We know why he was born thus of a spotless maid—that by his holy life and atoning death he might purchase and win us from all sin, from death, and the power of the devil. This is the inmost center of God's loving heart, the salvation he wrought out for us in his Son. Mary unlocks it for us to see, believe, and with her magnify God as our Savior.

There is more: in Christ we see the inner things of *God's might*. The heavens, indeed, declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handywork, Ps. 19, 1; we see his mighty judgments in the earth, fire and brimstone upon Sodom, destruction upon Jerusalem. But the fullest greatness of God's might is when the Creator joined himself to us poor creatures in order to

save us from our sins. With God nothing shall be impossible. And here he wrought a deed by his might so great that foolish men still deem it impossible, though it was done for them. But God's might is still behind this deed of his: the gates of hell shall not overthrow what he has done, nor spoil the fruits of it in his blessed church, those who like Mary worship his might and praise his name.

With Christ before us we behold the inner things of *God's mercy*, coupled with his saving might. Mary praises it: "His mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation." It is a shallow, not even half-way mercy which moves men to pity and alleviate a little the suffering they see about them. They fail, in most cases, to see that all this woe is only the prelude to the eternal misery which must follow if no real help is found. What is the root of all this pain, woe, terror, death, despair, eternal doom, among men? How many do not know! But if they did, their hand could never reach and remove the root of it. But this very thing God has done—and that is his wonderful mercy, the very heart of it: through his Son Jesus Christ, born of Mary, he has broken the curse that causes all our woe, and opened the healing fountain to cure all our ills and remove every trace of them at last, and they who see it as Mary did, through the Redeemer God was sending for our race, can never cease praising his glorious name.

But the Lord our *God is holy*; wrong, wickedness, sin of any kind cannot stand before him, he must cast it from his presence into outer darkness at last. Yet Mary, herself a sinner, and knowing that all men because sinful too cannot draw nigh unto God, lauds him: "And holy is his name." Let us not fail to take the key. In Christ God found a way to remove our sins and free us from their curse, to make us clean and new inwardly now, and even outwardly too at last. Though born of a sinful woman, Christ, the Son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost through a miracle of the power of the Highest, was sinless and holy, and by his blessed work joins us now to himself and makes us too holy and acceptable to God. What a different thing from the follies of men who would keep their sins and imagine God will not care, thus dragging him down to their base level! No, no; look at Christ, see how he lifts us up to God pure and holy, and then you will know his real glory, and with Mary may praise his holy name.

II.

In the same way this golden key of the magnificat,

Christ, unlocks to us the marvels of God's dealings with men.

It is God our Savior, in his might, mercy, and holiness who stands supreme above all the world of men, and with his hand rules their affairs.

Here they are, "the proud in the imagination of their hearts." They puff themselves up like a great bladder full of air. They boast of their reason, their wealth, their moral excellence, the good and praiseworthy things they have done, their honor and standing among men. They are "rich" in this shadowy wealth. Some of them sit on thrones and blazon their names on history's pages. All of them think they need no Savior God, no Redeemer Christ, no repentance and faith for their souls. They are like Herod and Caiaphas of old, like the proud, self-righteous Pharisees, like the rich free-thinking Sadducees, like blind heathen Pilate, like the learned supercilious philosophers at Athens. We have them in all their varieties to-day. Now how does God deal with them? You cannot understand unless you take Mary's key. Why, he lets them go on and on for many a day. How can he? It is because he is a Savior and has sent us a Redeemer. He gives them all time to repent and to win the true riches of salvation in Christ. But when they will not repent, when all God's gracious efforts are vain, when they keep on puffing themselves up, then God sends his judgments at last. He pricks the bladder, and behold, it lies flat. Look at his judgments as they strike men already in this life, revealing that they are nothing. But if even this will not help, death lays them all forever low. Christ, Christ is behind it all. They who live and die without him go down forever.

Behold the other side, with Christ as the key. Do you see "them of low degree"? Whatever their station in life, they have learned from God that they are nothing—all their righteousness only filthy rags unfit for the presence of the great King's wedding feast; all their earthly wealth and attainments a mere shadow to be left behind at last; all the praise and honor of men only a sound that echoes for a day. But God holds out to them also his precious blood-bought gifts in Christ his Son, and thus he awakens in them a hunger which those very gifts are made to satisfy to the uttermost. So they kneel in the dust, confess their sins and take into their souls by faith the true riches in Christ Jesus. Some of them are great as men count greatness, like Moses, Abraham, David of old, but they know their nothingness before God; some of them are poor as men count poverty, like Jesus' own mother, the beggars

and many a sufferer Christ healed, but God makes them his children and writes their names in heaven. All of them have his blessings in Christ Jesus, and at last he crowns them with glory above.

That is how God deals with men. It is the inwardness of what happens day by day all over the world, including ourselves. Behold its real meaning in Christ. There are questions indeed in these dealings which God has not revealed to us, since they belong entirely to him; but we know what we ought to know that with Mary we may fall at the feet of God's throne and praise his name forevermore.

III.

And now think of the promise of God, only take once more the great key of the Magnificat.

Christ unlocks to us the blessings that lie in all God's promises.

How does God bestow his gifts and make them ours? How are they really, actually transferred to us? In one way only — by his *Word and promises*. Long, long before Christ was born God promised him to Abraham. Did Abraham have to wait till the birth of Christ took place, or rather till Christ had finished his work, before Christ and his saving blessings could be his? What would then have become of him, and indeed of all the fathers who too had nothing but God's promise? No; that very promise, in the fullest sense of the word, made Christ and all his saving grace theirs.

It is so with us to this very day, living as we do long after Christ's birth and work on earth. Does not this space of time remove us from him, so that we today are without him? Never. He is ours to-day through God's Word and promise. That literally and actually bestows him upon us. And that is why Mary in her song combines Abraham who lived long before her, with Abraham's seed that would live in all the generations after her, saying: "to Abraham and to his seed forever," and again: "His mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation," including even those before Abraham. The time of Christ's birth affects none of them — they all alike get him and have him by the promise. Even Mary herself, Jesus' own mother, though she held him in her arms after his birth, and clasped his poor bleeding feet afterwards on the cross, did not thereby have him and his saving grace as the treasure of her soul. She too had him only through God's Word and promise. Only when God counts Christ for us as he himself says, only then is Christ ours. Judas had him in closest outward association, but his soul did not have him and his salvation, his soul was held by Satan.

O see, then, why Mary sings so of the promises to the fathers of old. They and all the great Gospel promises give us Christ. In him their blessings are all unlocked and made truly, really ours. But see at the same time that their unlocking and making ours is only for *faith*. He who thinks God's promises are empty, who casts them aside and seeks something else, by that very act casts away the diamond that is in them and intended too for him, and thus because of his own folly and unbelief remains a beggar. But you and I—let us learn from Mary here always, always to see the diamond Christ and all his blessings, forgiveness, life and salvation, in God's gracious promises, and thus join her and Abraham, the fathers and all God's children, in clinging fast by faith to these promises forever.

OUTLINES.

It is the task of the sermon to read the *Magnificat* with something of the same faith with which it was originally uttered. Any proper measure of such faith will read in the first strains of that glorious hymn: that the great things God did for Mary in regarding her low estate he did for us, for this Savior is ours. In the second strains: that we are one of the generations who call Mary blessed, since we are partakers of her blessing. In the third strains: that we are to belong to the lowly and hungry that through Christ we may escape the judgment of God's holiness and might. And in the fourth: that what the promises fulfilled have brought is the key for us to the promises still to be fulfilled. These grand appropriative thoughts we may group around the center: The miracle of which the *Magnificat* sings: It is the gift of the Savior—bestowed by mercy and might—to bless forever the lowly and hungry—and crown all God's promises past and present. We may enter the text in another way by grouping its contents around the picture of God as our Savior, utilizing for instance his mercy, his might, his holiness, and his truth; and even go further by connecting with each of these attributes in their work of salvation what pertains to man: mercy toward man in his misery—might toward man in his helpless weakness—holiness toward man in his sin (to lift him out of it)—truth toward man in his shams and delusions (to lift him out of these). Since the attributes of God constitute his glory we may so combine them: Mary magnifies the Glory of God as manifested in his great Gift: his might—that we may fear him; his mercy—that we may love him; his truth—that we may trust him.—There is a wide sweep in Mary's song; it goes back to Abraham, it runs through all the coming generations, it takes in the highest and lowest, and it brings God and his salvation in Christ in relation

to them all. We advise against a sermon on Mary and her virtues, exalting these and making them models for us. Nor need we pay elaborate attention to the Mariolatry of Rome. We follow this blessed woman's example best when we try to rethink her glorious thoughts as here so beautifully and majestically expressed.

What does Jesus' Mother See in the Birth of her Son?

1. *That Son as God's supreme gift (v. 48-49).*
 2. *That Son as our supreme possession (54-55 and 50).*
 3. *That son as the-world's supreme judge (5-53).*
-

Let the Mother of Jesus Show us how to Look at the Coming Christmas Festival.

1. *There is the gift of the Savior.*
 2. *There is the mercy that gave him.*
 3. *There is the call to accept both in true faith.*
-

Mary Magnifies God as our Savior.

1. *She sees all the need of salvation (the lowly and hungry who admit this need; the proud, etc., who deceive themselves by denying it).*
 2. *She rejoices in the gift of the Savior (the wondrous gift of mercy, might, and holiness).*
 3. *She praises the blessings of salvation (their character as seen in herself, Abraham, all lowly and hungry — extent — duration).*
-

Mary's Song Reveals God's Thoughts in regard to the Whole World of Men.

1. *How they all radiate from Christ.*
 2. *How they are all set against those who boast of themselves.*
 3. *How they all reach out in help to those who see their need.*
 4. *How they are all unchangeable forever.*
-

CHRISTMAS.

John 3, 16-21.

There are really only four Gospel texts for Christmas, as an inspection of the twenty-two pericope systems listed by Langsdorff shows: Luke's account of Christ's birth, Matthew's account, the Prolog of John, and John 3, 16-21. We have the Matthew text in the *Eisenach Gospel Selections*, where also the entire Prolog of John is used in close connection with Christmas. There is left then only our present text. It, of course, does not record the birth of Christ like the two historical texts, and in so far is inferior to them for the great birthday of Christ. But it makes up for this, like John 1, by giving us a full view of what the Christmas Festival really brings us, *the gift of God's Son* that the world through him might be saved. It goes without saying that the text is chosen for the place it here holds because of its first verse. Still, the last four verses have their value also for the Christmas message, and should therefore not be ignored in the sermon. There is a necessary negative under the strong positive in verse 16, "whosoever believeth," which must be brought out whether we include the final verses in our text or not; using these verses we have Christ's own directive in this respect, and that is better than to elaborate ourselves.

3, 16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life.

This passage is nothing less than the Gospel *in nuce*, a miniature Bible, the A. B. C. of the entire Gospel. Here are the essentials of the Gospel in such a clear and simple form that if a man had only these words and

none of all the rest in the Bible, these would be enough to save him. They flow with milk and honey, says Luther: "words which are able to make the sad happy, the dead alive, if only the heart believe them firmly."

In his conversation with Nicodemus Jesus shows that old work-righteous Pharisee that only a new birth admits to the Messianic kingdom of grace; moreover, that this birth is mediated by water and the Spirit, in a manner altogether mysterious indeed, yet entirely real, as all know who have had the experience. And the way of this experience is faith — faith, by which alone we can receive the earthly things here involved, to say nothing of the still more transcendent heavenly things. And there is every reason for this faith, for Jesus has come from heaven itself; moreover, for this very purpose shall he be lifted up that by believing in him men may have eternal life. Now, to set forth the ultimate divine basis of this faith and thus of its saving effect, thereby if possible to kindle this faith in Nicodemus' heart, is the further purpose of Jesus. — The **for** at the head of the statement is not intended to furnish proof for what was previously said, but to introduce an elucidation and explanation of the great fact that the Son of man came down from heaven, and that faith in him bestows undying or eternal life (in regeneration or a new birth). This elucidation is made by Jesus, as himself "heavenly" and "from heaven," v. 12, telling Nicodemus one of the greatest of all the "heavenly things": "So did God love the world," etc. The Only Begotten Son who was thus given is the one who can directly testify to the act and of the unspeakable love of God which prompted it. The first word in the Greek is **so**, in such a manner, so greatly and wonderfully. — The verb precedes the subject, carrying the emphasis; not that *God* loved the world, but that God **loved** it. We have *ἀγαπάω* for "love," the word used regularly for the highest form of love — deep, comprehending, intelligent.

purposeful love; not φιλέω, the love of mere affection, friendship, and ordinary human relation.* The attempt has been made to deny this distinction since Jesus spoke the Aramaic which shows only one word for all forms of love. The answer to this is that we have only a very limited knowledge of Aramaic, and even if we knew all of its forms of speech and found there only the one word; there would undoubtedly be other ways of bringing out a difference in the character of love. But in the inspired Greek which God gave us this distinction is so marked that in scores of cases the two verbs could not possibly be exchanged; especially would it be impossible here to substitute the lower form of love, as we see at a glance when we translate what the lower would really signify: "God so *liked* the world." Jesus uses the aorist tense because the manifestation of this love toward the world was an accomplished fact, as the deed which manifested it shows. This tense, we may say, reaches back into all eternity, but it culminated in Bethlehem. — **God** here is the Father, as is shown by the mention of "the Son." The Greek word is used as a proper noun, and hence, like such nouns in general, may or may not have the article — here it has, and in the following, but not in v. 21. The best grammarians know of no real difference. Let us note that in this discourse of Jesus with Nicodemus we have the entire Trinity clearly revealed, another one of the "heavenly things"; and it is remarkable indeed, that Nicodemus accepts this revelation as if it were not strange and incredible to him or to the Jews generally. — **The world** here undoubtedly signifies all men, not a single individual excepted. Every limitation inserted by Calvinistic commentators, here or in other similar statements of Scripture, is one of the worst and most dangerous errors, poisoning the stream of free grace at its very source. Thus they read "the world" here to mean

* Cf. *Eis. G. Sel.*, 2nd ed, I, 595 on John 21, 15, etc.

only: *omnes ex toto mundo electos*; just as they read "all men" in 1 Tim. 2, 4 to mean only: *omnis generis homines*; in Calvin's own words — see his commentary —: *Nullum mundi vel populum, vel ordinem a salute excludi, quia omnibus sine exceptione Evangelium proponi Deus velit*. Thus by a tricky perversion "the world," "all men," is reduced to signify only that no nation, no order or class of men is excluded, i. e., God offers his love and Savior only to *all kinds* of men — not actually to all men as such. The reason for this perversion and its consistent misinterpretation of all the universal promises of God is that Calvinists see in these written promises only the *voluntas signi* or *revelata*, behind and above which they think they see the *voluntas beneplaciti*, the real will of God as they claim it is shown in his acts, when he saves only some, and damns the rest. Hence they interpret all that God says according to their conception of what God does, instead of doing the very opposite, leaving any mysteries that remain in regard to God's acts to the light of the future world. — How God could and did love this world no human intelligence is able to fathom. "World" here means the world as it is, as we see it to-day, guilty, stained, corrupt with sin, not an abstraction, an ideal world, not one as he might hope to make it, but as it was; with all its sin open and naked in his sight. The revelation of this love places the Christian religion infinitely above all human religions. And this love of God is the pinnacle of his glory, the crown of all his attributes. It makes God supremely attractive to every soul needing his love, a most efficacious call to believe in him, and thus to enter into the fullest enjoyment of his love. — "So . . . that" correspond to each other. The indicative of the following verb: **gave**, expresses the attained, actual result; the infinitive would express a result intended, or toward which God's love tended. The gift was actually made — there was Jesus in human flesh that very moment before the eyes of Nicodemus doing his Savior work. — And now Jesus does not use again as in v. 13-14 the term "Son of man,"

but one that fits perfectly the divine attribute of love and its act of giving in heaven: **his only begotten Son**. Because John has used this term in his own statement in 1, 14 and 18, some have thought that here too we have John's words, and not those of Jesus; they would close the conversation with Nicodemus with v. 15, making what follows a series of reflections by John. Such a view fails to account adequately for the connective "for" at the head of v. 16, which indicates no break; what Jesus says in v. 16, etc., is exactly what Nicodemus needed to awaken faith and warn against unbelief; to cut the conversation off at v. 15 leaves it incomplete; finally, the term "only begotten Son" is not one coined by John, but one he derived from Jesus himself as he used it here, which John then employed in his Prolog. It is a great pity that a commentator like Zahn should read *μονογενής* of the Incarnation, i. e., Jesus human conception and birth. This rejects the Athanasian Creed: "not made, nor created, but *begotten*," i. e., from eternity. In 1, 14 it must cancel the *divine* "glory as of the Only Begotten," and substitute for it human glory "as of *an* only begotten"—and yet only sons of human parents have no especial glory at all. In 1, 18 it ruins the entire thought, for how could Jesus' human birth involve his being in the bosom of the Father and his power thus to declare God completely to us? Likewise in our passage God's gift of love must be named as this gift existed in heaven when he gave it. There, with the Father, this Son was the Only Begotten, i. e., from all eternity, and as such God gave him to the world. The long line of conservative commentators is right: this term is metaphysical and expresses the *generatio aeterna*, as we confess it with Luther (2nd article of the Catechism): "true God, begotten of the Father from eternity."—Him God **gave**, such was his love. Note the aorist: a definite, completed act. This giving and the gift open up for us all the fountains of divine grace. "Gave" does not refer to the giving into death on the cross alone,

nor to the Incarnation alone, but to both, and in fact to everything that made him our Savior and bestowed him as such upon us. Note that there is no indirect object after "gave"; Jesus could hardly say that God gave his Son "to the world," because the world as such did not on its part take the Son, cf. 1, 10. There is thus this significant omission after "gave." — But all is clear when we hear the purpose of God in his gift: "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." This is a fuller statement than in v. 15; here we have the negative beside the positive. The A. V. has both verses alike, following inferior textual authorities in v. 15. Note that in **whosoever believeth** all the universality contained in "world" is left unreduced and unlimited. When God gave he wanted all the world to accept. But this cannot be done in mass, the accepting is altogether, in the very nature of the case, an individual and most intimate personal matter. Hence the singular: "whosoever." The word is so utterly general that it is like a blank space into which every person is to write his own name. — The acceptance is by faith: whosoever **believeth**, not once or twice, but on and on, hence the durative present participle. Believing is an inward act of the soul itself. The essence of it is *fiducia*, trust, confidence, obviously including knowledge and assent. Even in the ordinary matters of life, where in a commoner way we use the word, faith and confidence is always something called forth in us by the person or object that impresses us as reliable, trustworthy, fully efficient for the object involved. So is the Only Begotten Son as regards our salvation from the sin we are in. We cannot imagine one more adequate for this purpose, more mighty to save and to bestow saving on us. When then God and his Word thus show him to us they bring to bear upon us this faith-producing power, the proper and natural effect upon us is to kindle within us the blessed confidence of faith. This confidence lets go of everything else and turns wholly to him who calls

it forth, God's Son, all whose saving power is directed to us, and thus he is ours, and we are his—the acceptance in our hearts complete, wrought in us wholly by him.—The effect is deliverance: **should not perish**, left alone in sin and its curse. Here the aorist subjunctive denotes the single and final act of utter destruction when death seals the sinners' doom eternally. By faith we escape that. Now the positive side: **but** (should) **have eternal life**. Here is that word for "life," so constantly used by John, which denotes the inner life-principle itself, that which makes us alive, namely spiritually. Its beginning is the new birth or regeneration of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus in the very first sentence. Nothing dead can give itself life, least of all that life which has its seat and source in the Son of God himself. He bestows it, he alone, but he does this by kindling faith in us. Faith and life are one. The faith that clasps Christ has him and thus makes us alive in and through him. A thousand evidences show that the change from death to life has taken place, when faith begins, every motion of that life Godward, Christward, against sin, flesh, world. Here the present subjunctive appears: "have now and continue to have," i. e., from the first moment of faith on. And this life is "eternal," it goes on and on endlessly, undisturbed and unaffected by temporal death, except that then this deathless life is transferred into the heavenly world. While in its nature it is "eternal" and deathless it may be lost during our stay in this sinful world, but only by wilful and wicked unbelief, by a deliberate renunciation and destruction of our faith. This combining the negative with the positive is the strongest form of statement. It reaches out to the heart of Nicodemus with the utmost power of love to make him desire such deliverance and life, and to obtain it by allowing Christ to fill him with trust. There are only two possibilities: to perish, or to have life, and faith is decisive between them. This too is to move Nicodemus to faith.

17. **For God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him.**

Here again **for** is explanatory. The giving of the Son is wholly an act of love, not of justice and judgment, wholly that men should have life, not that they perish. But now the giving of the Son is described by the aorist: **sent**; God gave him by sending him. So too we have the briefer designation: **the Son**, but meant in the same sense as "the Only Begotten Son." With the new verb the addition: **into the world**, makes the action of God clearer, where the previous verb "gave" needed no addition. As the one sent Christ was before Nicodemus at that moment. — To judge the world God would not have needed to send his Son, certainly not in the manner in which he did send him; he could have sent another flood, or fire, or some other cataclysm. The verb used for **judge** signifies: to pass a decision. With the world lost in sin and unbelief this could be only a condemnatory decision, hence the explanatory and not incorrect rendering of the A. V.: "to condemn the world," although Jesus used only the simple verb "judge." Its aorist tense implies a final act of judgment. But God's purpose was the salvation, not the judgment of the world, sinful and worthy of condemnation though it was, and so he sent it a Savior. There is a marked contrast between: "in order to judge," and: "in order to be saved," made more telling in Greek by placing both verbs alike after their conjunctions. The effect is heightened by repeating "the world" three times in an impressive way. — The passive: **should be saved**, includes an agent; here it is God himself. But **through him** shows that God will use an agent or Mediator in this work, his own Son. The verb itself, like the equivalent adjective and nouns, carries with it the imagery of rescue from the terrible danger referred to in the previous term "perish." In fact, the passive "be saved" is the opposite of "perish." Only the verb al-

ways has the strong positive idea: to keep sound, uninjured; to preserve unharmed, safe. Thus "to be saved" = to possess and enjoy eternal safety, i. e., "everlasting life." The aorist tense matches that of "to judge." The divine purpose was the complete salvation of the world through Christ. — V. 17 thus throws into bold relief the great purpose of God's love; at the same time it intensifies the call to faith.

18. He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.

With God's great purpose of love thus clearly stated, the manner of its realization in each individual is again emphasized, namely faith — thus aiming directly at Nicodemus' heart. This Jesus does by showing how his being sent to save the world of itself takes care of the necessary judgment. Men will either believe on him and accept his salvation, or they will refuse to believe and thus lose his salvation. This itself is the decision. Here Jesus speaks of faith as directed toward himself, his person; in verse 11 as directed toward his Word. To trust his testimony is to trust also his person, for the testimony points to his person. **Is not judged** means now, as he believes. No special decision needs to be passed on him, his faith and saved state are decision enough. — Now the opposite, more striking because both sentences lack connecting words. The man who does not believe, i. e., goes on refusing to believe **hath been judged already**, and, as the tense implies, stands now as one so judged. Why? Jesus states the reason: **because**; but he does it by using the form of a legal charge or indictment. This point is lost in our English translations because we have only one negative, while the Greek has two, one objective, of the fact taken as such, one subjective, of the opinion of the speaker. Here we have the latter. If Christ had used *oû*, he would simply have stated the fact regarding the

unbeliever: *quod non credit*, nothing more. By using $\mu\eta$ he states the charge against this man, as he himself or God would make it: *quod non crediderit*. So stated it includes what God or Christ *think and hold* regarding this person. In fact, we may say it is more than a charge, it is the verdict of God on the man. Cf. Robertson, 963. — And that is why the reason Christ gives is stated in such a full and formal way: **He hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God.** The "name" is the revelation of the Son, just as he was making it here, showing clearly who he is and what he does — all so as to call forth most effectively our reliance upon him. Always the "name" is used when we are bidden to believe in God or his Son, for this has the trust-producing power. Therefore, too, Jesus describes himself in his divine greatness as "the Only Begotten Son of God." If a man will not trust him, whom will he trust? Can there be any greater folly or crime than to refuse him trust, and to place trust upon self instead, or upon mere men? Note how directly these questions struck at Nicodemus. Unbelief pronounces its own doom.

19. And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil.

Let us remember that the final judgment of the last day is only the outcome and public declaration of what is now actually preparing itself in the unbelief of men. The children of God, reborn through grace, need no judgment; it is unbelief which brings judgment in its train, the unbelief which loves and lives in darkness and must be fully and finally exposed by the divine light in the judgment. Jesus follows this unbelief a step farther, by showing its inner motive, which again is its judgment. The situation is this: **the light is come into the world.** Jesus means himself, cf. 1, 4-5. "The Light" = the Truth, but as open, manifest, shining for all men to see and know. In Christ the divine realities and facts con-

cerning God and us sinners and his grace toward us lie open and bare, so that men must see their shining. The perfect tense "is come" implies that it is now here. One would expect that with these realities thus open before them, men would be drawn to act accordingly. But no; they deliberately do the contrary. They **loved the darkness** rather than the light. The aorist states the simple fact; it was a fact then already. And note that ἀγαπᾶν is here the proper verb, corresponding as an opposite to the ἀγαπᾶν of God in v. 16. Intelligently, deliberately they did this, chose darkness in preference to light. That shows the enormity of their folly and crime, and the justness of their judgment. Jesus says **men** did this, leaving it to the context to show that not all are meant, for he had just spoken of "him that believeth" etc. But the word "men" reads as if many are meant. "Rather" = *potius*, not *magis* ("more"). "The darkness" is just as definite as "the light"; it is the opposite of the truth or reality of salvation in Christ, namely the unreality of all that men imagine and invent in their folly regarding God and their souls and eternity. Not one bit of it is so, yet they stake their very souls upon it, and that in the face of all the light which displays the real facts to them as they are. There is an utterly unreasonable, unreasoning folly in choosing "the darkness" and spurning "the light"; in the last judgment all these men will be dumb when asked why they chose thus. — But there is an inner decisive motive for this choice, not one which in any manner excuses the choice, but one which more fully reveals its utter baseness: **their works were evil**. The Greek order of words puts emphasis on both "works", and "evil." "Their works" are not scattered, individual deeds, but those that make up and display their real inner nature and will — the net sum of their lives. And "evil" is in the active sense: doing evil, putting it forth, set on it. The implication in both words is, not that they helplessly lay in the toils of evil, but that, when the saving power of "the light" came to them, they wilfully and wickedly

clung to their "evil works," to go on making these the sum and substance of their lives. To get the force of Jesus' statement we must take "evil" not merely in the sense of gross immoralities, but in the sense of all forms of ungodliness, including all self-righteousness, religious formalism, carnal and material religious hopes, with every practice displaying these evil inclinations. — Christ here reveals the terrible inwardness of unbelief, laying bare the cold facts: every man who deliberately rejects the divine light of truth when it comes to him to draw him from evil to God, and instead determines to hold fast to the darkness of untruth and lies, does this because he determines to keep and carry on further the evil works that mark his soul and life. More than this, Jesus now adds: not only does he thus turn from the light and stay in the darkness, but, having set himself to evil in doing this, he is bound to hate and fight the truth, since this by its very nature must ever expose and brand him for what he really is.

20. For every one that doeth ill hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be re-proved.

The "for" in v. 19 explains by stating a fact: unbelief is always due to the love of evil. The second "for" in v. 20 advances the matter by explaining what that fact always involves: unbelief, by loving evil, hates and opposes truth. **Every one** — there is no exception. **That doeth ill** has the present participle of durative action; the doing is constant, it marks the whole life. The man has set his will in this direction; and note well: after the light of saving truth has come to him to draw and turn him away from this course. Here Jesus uses *φαιλα*, where before he had *πονηρά*; "things worthless or inferior," implying a comparison with things valuable, and indicating the loss involved for the fool who chooses the worthless for his life. But having so determined, this fact carries with it that he henceforth **hateth the light**, namely the divine truth which always displays everything as it really

is, thereby, with divine power and the precious reality of God's grace, to draw us utterly away from the "ill" and the "evil," to the true good of faith and a new life. This "light" he is bound to "hate," he wants nothing of it, spurns, reviles, and antagonizes it. This hatred he shows by avoiding the light; he **cometh not to the light**, into its presence, so its truthful rays can fall upon him. The "light" is there, and he knows it is there; it is there for him, and its rays go out to reach him. But he deliberately avoids it. The light ought to attract and draw him; that is its natural function. But he is determined to resist: "he cometh not." Why not? **Lest his works should be reproved**, "convicted" (margin), shown up as worthless and evil. That is the inner, hidden self-contradiction and self-condemnation of all doers of evil, i. e. those who in unbelief act contrary to God. They choose the worthless, but they do not want its worthlessness revealed, they want to be undisturbed in thinking the worthless valuable; the evil likewise. This they can do only in "the darkness," where they themselves and others like them cannot see. The thought behind the reproof, as Jesus here speaks of it, is that this by its convicting power will draw away the man from the evil—the very thing he is determined shall not occur.

21. But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God.

This parallel statement makes the previous one still clearer. It must be added to reveal the whole matter as it is. But now, with that surprising depth of thought which constantly appears in Jesus' words, he does not say: "he that doeth *good things*," but penetrates at once to the source of any things really good in God's sight which we may do, saying: **He that doeth the truth**. In Greek abstract nouns may have the article, which the English idiom usually forbids. "Truth" here is the same as "light." But note the implication: for any man to do the truth, that truth must have reached and taken hold

of him, and that not merely intellectually, but so as to reach his heart and will — else how would he ever “do” truth? “Truth” sounds very general, and many commentators are thereby misled; on the lips of Jesus who called himself the Truth, being its very embodiment, the word can mean only one thing in this connection: the saving truth of God’s grace in Christ Jesus. Any wider use of “truth” is here shut out by the following statement, that the works of the doer of truth are such because they were “wrought in God,” i. e. in union and communion with God as mediated by the Gospel. There is no other way for any work to be “wrought in God.” Here, then, is a man to whom “the light” came as to the other in 20. He too up to this time was doing “evil” and “ill,” like the other. But now when “the light” began to shine into him and draw him, he did not wrest himself wilfully away and cover himself up completely with “the darkness.” “The light” effects its work in him; it moves him to do “the truth.” It enters his will and begins to control it. The result is “works wrought in God,” i. e., produced by the power of the Gospel. The first of these works will always be contrition and repentance for all past evil works, combined with faith and any of its evidences, the whole range of good works. Not that we get a perfect and complete doing of truth at once; there will be weaknesses, faults, sins enough. But the new doing has begun, and by the help of the truth will go on. — What of this man? He **cometh to the light**; he gladly follows its drawing. He has no reason whatever to fear it when it shows up the inward realities of his heart and life. Quite the contrary. It approves, commends him. Men may have done the very opposite, judging with lies. This man’s refuge, vindication, and hope is “the light,” the revelation of things as they really are. So he comes ever and ever to the light for this strengthening, confirming, joy-giving purpose: **that his works may be made manifest**, truly manifest for what they are, by God’s own light which has produced them

in him, showing thus **that they have been wrought in God** — “have been” (perf. tense), and thus stand there now as such. This is what “the light” does for all such works now already. It is a kind of judgment of grace helping us mightily day by day as we fight “the darkness” that still assails us. What a glorious verdict this will be at the last day when then the unerring “light” seals its eternal approval before the whole universe of angels and men.

Indefat.

SERMON.

“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” That is the Christmas miracle as the shepherds on Bethlehem’s plains first heard it announced by an angel messenger from heaven itself the night the great miracle occurred. At once those shepherds resolved to see for themselves what God had done: “Let us see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us.” It is the thing to do for all men everywhere, for us once more to-day.

“Now let us all with gladsome cheer
Follow the shepherds, and draw near
To see this wondrous gift of God,
Who hath his only Son bestowed.”

In our text Jesus himself opens the door for us, not only that we may see, but actually take into our very hearts, and make our own forever, what God has prepared for us all.

See What Came to Pass when God Gave his Only Begotten Son!

Salvation Came:

**The gift of love — brought by the gift of light — to be ours
in the gift of life.**

I.

Salvation came when God’s Son was born in Bethlehem. That holy babe was the Savior of all the world, who in due time by his holy life, suffering and death, his resurrection and

return to the glory above wrought our deliverance from sin and opened heaven for us all. How did this great Savior and his wondrous salvation come? Jesus, the Savior himself, declares: it was **the gift of love**—the infinite love of God: "For God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son."

"O love divine,
All love excelling."

With the light of Christmas about you, with this precious Word from Jesus himself before you, realize the vastness and the true wonder of this love. As great as the Giver himself, so great is the love he gave. It was God, the eternal, infinite God, higher than all earth, yea than all heaven and its glories, who gave us his love, all of it, as great and wonderful as himself. As great as the gift he gave, so great is his love. And the gift was God's own Son equal with God in glory and majesty. Him he gave, from the glory of heaven, into this sin-cursed world, to suffer and die for us, thus to atone for us and save us. No human mind can measure this gift and the love that bestowed it on us. As great as is the gulf between the high and holy God and this sinful, lost world, so great is God's love and gift, when he bridged the gulf by his own Son and opened heaven for us in him. As great as is the purpose of the gift, so great is the love that carried this purpose into effect, to blot out our sins, remove our death and damnation, and lift us into eternal life above. As far-reaching as is this gift, so great is the love that gave it. It extended to all the world, to every sinner on the face of the globe, from Adam on down through the rolling ages to the last day. This is what came to pass when God gave his Only Begotten Son—his infinite love brought salvation to all the world.

See it with Joseph and Mary as the little babe, our Savior, lay in the manger; with the shepherds and wise men who came, saw, and believed; with Nicodemus afterwards and thousands and thousands since who took all this love and its supreme gift into their hearts and enjoyed the salvation they brought.

Alas, that any should turn from love like this, and love instead their sin with its evil and judgment. Woe to the world which carries its sin thus far! This is the condemnation of the world, that when God's wondrous saving love came unto men, they spurned it and went on and on in their sins. Thank God that he did not withdraw his love! The more blind unbelief clings to its sin, the more let us open our hearts to God's precious love and take the salvation it brings.

II.

Salvation came when God sent his Only Begotten Son. That holy babe in Bethlehem was the Savior, not only to work out our salvation, but also to bring this salvation through his holy Word and Gospel, to place it into our hearts and make it our own by faith. Salvation, the gift of love, is at the same time **the gift of light**. It is the Savior himself who declares "that light is come into the world." He himself is the light, the full revelation of all the realities of our salvation.

The world is full of darkness. What does that mean? Men are by nature utterly full of ignorance, blindness, self-deception, and desperate delusion concerning the most vital things of their existence. They grasp at and hold fast earthly treasures as if these were real, and not mere shadows of an hour. They mask and make light of their sins, and think that thus the death and doom that are in them will be stopped. They invent a God of their own imagination, one who will not damn sinners and who needs no Savior for their deliverance. They paint up and puff up their poor, empty virtues, and think that these will be enough to insure them a place in heaven. Some even go much farther in the blind imagination of their hearts.

Into this dark, truthless world the Savior came and brought the real salvation of God for sinners. He came, therefore, as the "light," revealing to us all beyond a question just what our sins really are, who God in heaven really is, and what he must really do with all sin and sinners; and then this greatest work of his as the "light": what the love of God really is, how it has actually made a way of salvation in God's own Son, and how you and I and every man may truly have and keep this salvation to all eternity. That is the gift of "light," the light that saves. Its embodiment is Christ himself; its shining is the message that tells us of Christ, the Gospel, the saving truth of God. This pierces and drives out the deceptions in our hearts, and puts in place of them the true realities just as they are. It thus fills us with faith and trust in these realities, making God's great Savior and salvation our inward possession, the supreme treasure of our souls, our very own. The gift of Christ's saving work is brought to us by the gift of his saving light.

O glorious, heavenly light, shining out from Bethlehem, from Calvary, from Christ's open tomb—the whole Bible glowing with its radiance! See it together with Mary and Joseph, the shepherds and wise men; see it as Jesus shows it to Nicodemus, and as countless thousands have since seen it with him. It is what God has done, truly done for you through his beloved Son. Let it grip and hold your hearts with its blessed reality; believe, and be saved.

But many will not believe. Why not?—when all is actual reality, and a reality full of blessedness for them? The light comes to them, but they rush back into darkness and delusion, shout out the light, put every possible barrier of false notions against it. Jesus tells us why: they love their sins, their godless, self-chosen ways, so that they will not let them loose; therefore, they flee the light, lest it show what they are truly doing and brand their baseness for what it is. Oh, the desperate folly of unbelief! How can it escape the light on that great day when every last delusion shall be utterly dispelled? Thank God that the saving light has come into the world. The more men love darkness because their deeds are evil, the more let us be won by the light and blessed by the salvation it brings.

III.

Salvation came when God sent his Only Begotten Son. The babe in Bethlehem by delivering us from sin rescued us from the curse and damnation of sin, which is eternal death, and joined us to himself by faith, which is eternal life. Salvation, the gift of love, the gift of light, is thus, when possessed by faith, **the gift of life**. For Jesus himself says: "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that believeth on him is not condemned."

The worst thing about sin is its curse of death. Every form of ungodliness or godlessness separates from God, who alone is the fountain of life. There is no true, abiding life apart from God. O yes, men live their natural lives here for a time. But what then, when this life fades out? The true light tells us: darkness, howling, gnashing of teeth. An existence indeed, and an unending existence, but wholly and forever separated from joy and blessedness, from God and heaven. And that is death, in the full sense of the word. The condemnation of this death is already upon every man who clings to his sins and will not have the pardon of Christ's salvation. He is judged already. Without life now, and spurning the only Giver of life, he shall lie in the darkness of death forever.

Behold, then, what God gave us in his Son. It is pardon and release from sin, and thus reinstatement as God's children. Death's hold on us is gone; there is no condemnation for us, we have escaped. Christ is ours, and we are his; our faith binds us to him. Having him we have life, the true life that comes from God and shall continue with God forever. When our earthly days end, our eternal home above receives us, that there we may live with Christ in joy forever. Hear his glorious words: "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

O the joy of salvation in the Only Begotten Son of God! He came from on high and brought down to us here below the true life which we had lost. Mary found it in him, Joseph, the shepherds and wise men, Nicodemus too as the Gospel story tells us, and hosts of others besides. Thank God for the true life, all its happiness and joy here already as Christ becomes ours more and more, and the eternal happiness that awaits us beyond. Alas, that any should love death more than this true life, allowing sin and Satan to deceive them! But the more let us treasure and guard our life in Christ until its full fruition comes.

Salvation—*infinite love, saving light, eternal life*: that is what God gave us in his Only Begotten Son.

"Glory to God in the highest!"

In heaven God's angels who sang of this gift on Bethlehem's plains will help us perfect our humble praise.

OUTLINES.

A workable combination on this text is offered by *Great Texts in the Bible* as follows: 1) God and the world—"God so loved the world"; 2) Christ and the world—"gave his Only Begotten Son"; 3) the world and Christ—"whosoever believeth in him"; 4) The world and God—"should have everlasting life." The latter two numbers carry a strong negative behind them: those who will *not* believe—who are judged already and shall thus perish.—Likewise we have: The Giver and his universal love; The gift—the Only Begotten Son for our salvation; The act of giving—gave and sent to effect universal redemption; The reception of the gift—faith, and its opposite, wilful unbelief.—Koegel in his sermon lifts these three into prominence: Love—Life—Light. He combines on our part with each of them: We need the love of this Love—We are to live by this Life—We are to rejoice in this Light. The latter might be changed to read: We are to be enlightened by this Light.—In any adequate Christmas sermon the objective elements of the text must receive a dominant position and treatment; the subjective are here too, but their place is subordinate in a proper Christmas sermon. It ought to be impossible for a Lutheran preacher to deviate from this order or treatment of the two elements. Usually the appropriative side, faith, etc., are reserved for the second festival day. This is done in the case of all the great festivals, and the texts are chosen accordingly. But with us the second festival day is not celebrated; there is no service and sermon. This makes it

necessary to combine the appropriate feature with the objective saving act in one sermon. Our text gives ample opportunity for this, it is so strong in this direction that the preacher must beware of giving too much room and weight to this side of the text in his sermon. The central theme will always remain: God gave his Only Begotten Son.

The Christmas Gift of God's Only Begotten Son.

1. *See it.* 2. *Take it.* 3. *Enjoy it.*
-

God So Loved the World.

1. *That he gave his Only Begotten Son.*
 2. *That we should believe in him.*
 3. *And have everlasting life.*
-

God Gave his Love to the World in the Only Begotten Son.

1. *He opened the fountain of life for the world in the Only Begotten Son.*
 2. *He sent the light of salvation for the world in the Only Begotten Son.*
-

The Greatest Christmas Gift the World ever Saw.

1. *Its Giver is God — there is no greater.*
 2. *The gift is the Son of God — there is no greater.*
 3. *The treasures in the gift are life and light — there are no greater.*
 4. *The joy in the gift is eternal blessedness — there can be no greater.*
-

Christmas, the Day of Light for all the World.

1. *Think of the night into which this day came.*
 2. *Think of the light which this day brought.*
 3. *Think of the escape from night to light which this day ushered in.*
-

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

Luke 12, 16-21.

In the arrangement of the church year it is usual to count this Sunday not as still belonging in a way to Christmas, but as marking the close of the secular year and thus connected with New Year's Day. This indicates the general purpose of the text. With the passing of the year it reminds us of the passing of our earthly lives, and bids us examine ourselves betimes, whether we have given too much room in our hearts to the transient things of this earthly life. The parable itself is all in negative form; it is thus in the nature of a warning. But close beneath the negative imagery there lies a mighty positive truth, which also comes out prominently when at the end Jesus himself makes the application. We may say, then, the text urges us to *make our lives rich in God*. The point in the parable that the rich fool, so poverty-stricken in spiritual things, died in such an unexpected way helps decidedly in fitting this text for the last Sunday of the secular year. Every closing secular year shows us men of this type, rich in all secular wealth, bare of spiritual wealth. Our materialistic age needs this very warning. There is no special connecting link between this text and the past Christmas Festival, except the phrase "rich toward God," and the contrast between the wondrous riches brought to us once more in the previous festival text, and the utter absence of them all in the soul of the fool set before us in this text.

We think that Keil is mistaken when he concludes that there is no connection as regards time with what Luke records in the first part of this chapter, and that the evangelist inserted our text here for other reasons.

No, the story is plain: Jesus is speaking to a large multitude (12, 1); he has apparently finished a part of his discourse, making a slight pause; then a certain man of that multitude, having pushed himself forward, makes bold to ask Jesus to intervene between him and his brother regarding the division of an inheritance. He betrays by this interruption that his mind is all taken up by this secular matter even now when Jesus is speaking of far higher and more valuable matters. He wants the property he thinks is rightly coming to him, he is altogether unconcerned about the property and inheritance rights Jesus is offering him. There seems to be no reason for thinking that the man was preferring an unwarranted claim against his brother, and thus trying to enlist the efforts of Jesus on the wrong side. We may well suppose that in such a case the answer of Jesus would have been of a different sort. He does not strike here the sin of injustice, unrighteousness, or attempted wrong against a brother, but the sin of covetousness. However just this man's claims were against the avariciousness of his brother, he was himself guilty of covetousness, the *amor sceleratus habendi*, which may express itself either in holding too tightly what one already has, or in reaching out greedily for what one as yet has not. Jesus really covers both cases. The man before him was reaching out to get what was being withheld from him, the parable paints a man who had gotten what he desired. In giving this kind of an answer Jesus shows again his deep and comprehensive grasp of everything involved in any case or question; his answer is thus altogether complete. He virtually says to this man so hungry for his share of the inheritance: suppose that you had obtained it all, yea more, the entire inheritance for yourself, see then what kind of a man you would be, your heart filled with the covetousness now consuming it. And that is what makes this reply of Jesus, the parable of the rich fool, such an effective warning to-day against *all* the forms of covetousness, instead of only

against the one form exhibited by the clamorous brother. — Jesus promptly and positively refuses to fall into the error for which Moses was duly rebuked in Ex. 2, 14, which passage Jesus must have had in mind. But he freely and gladly renders this covetous petitioner a far higher and more profitable service, one in line with his calling as the Savior from sin. The great error of covetousness is to think that "a man's life consisteth in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." That is true only of the life *which he lives* (*βίος*), its course day by day, as this depends on food, drink, etc., and is made richer and pleasanter by various earthly possessions. It is not true, however, of the life *by which he lives* (*ζωή*), the life-principle itself, in the pulsating heart, in the nostrils' breath. That remains as it is, whether a man is rich or poor, secures more or less of earthly possessions. *Vivitur parvo bene*. In fact, as the parable shows, life in this sense is dependent on the will of God: all the riches of the rich fool were unable to make him live through that one fatal night when he died. Here all men are alike, and none has the advantage over another. Dives fared sumptuously every day, Lazarus subsisted on crumbs, but the life itself of each was equally the gift of God direct, and in his hands to continue or take according to his will. He who recognizes that will put away covetousness, and will look instead to God, and thus begin to get the true riches which bring the life eternal.

12, 16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17. and he reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits?

Jesus had disposed of the man's request and so dismissed him. But his eagerness for the treasures of earth combined with his indifference towards the things of heaven prompted Jesus to issue his warning against covetousness and to expose its fatal error, for the benefit of all present. This now he illustrates by means of a

simple and highly effective parable; but he more than illustrates it, he proves by his illustration the folly or the sin he warns against. Parables, as the word itself indicates, are always comparisons, *Gleichnisse*, correspondences; but some of them are more, namely examples which clarify, visualize truth by putting it into concrete, living form, and by this very clearness prove the truth they express to be the truth indeed. — **The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully.** No name is given; rich men of this sort have no record in heaven, no names worthy of memory. He is introduced as one of a general class, whose mark is riches — simply that and nothing more. This summed up sufficiently his whole existence and character; it was all that could be said of him or for him. How little, how insignificantly little that seems when Jesus says it. "Rich man" — that sounds important among worldly men; great deference is paid to "rich men"; money talks — poor men do not count. It sounds good to hear Jesus drop all this false show and present this man to us as he really is, nothing but "a certain rich man." There is, of course, no opprobrium attached to his riches as such. It is no crime to be rich; Abraham was rich, only he was more than "a certain rich man." There is no hint here of wrongful riches, ill-gotten gains; rather the contrary — the man owns "ground," apparently a goodly acreage, inherited possibly from his ancestors or secured by rightful purchase. He was no extortioner, he had not ground the face of the poor, or withheld the laborer's wages. He was an honest man, and no doubt respected accordingly. — And now his wealth had greatly increased, but in the most legitimate and honorable way possible, "his ground did bear well." The aorist is not a pluperfect; the harvest had not yet arrived, only the plenty of the yield was an assured fact, and a sensible man was bound to make his preparations accordingly. — So this man. Jesus pictures him as **he reasoned with himself**; the imperfect tense shows us the process, no more. Presently we will see

the result he arrives at, for Jesus will state it. In a way this coming increase of wealth embarrasses him, he is not exactly in a position at once to take care of it all. That is the nature of riches, they constantly keep troubling us, now to take care of them, now to safeguard them, now to handle and use them. They thus take up time, thought, effort, often demanding these to such an extent and with such imperiousness, as to make men the veriest slaves of their earthly possessions, barring them out of far higher interests. Many a man thinks he is controlling his wealth, whereas it in reality is controlling him. — Jesus admits us to this rich man's heart; we hear his actual thoughts; **What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits?** The aorist subjunctive in this deliberative question refers, not to a general course or line of action, which would require a present tense, but to definite measures for the case at hand. But note what this question plainly takes for granted, namely that all this increase is to be gathered and held by him as such only and for himself alone. That point was settled with the man before he began his reasoning. An answer to his question like that offered by Ambrose, therefore, never entered his mind: "Thou *hast* barns — the bosoms of the needy, the houses of the widows, the mouths of orphans and of infants." His inner attitude is simple selfishness — barns in which to stack up his grain. And this answers the further question sometimes raised concerning this man's perplexity. His difficulty in a way was real enough, but should not be paralleled by the difficulties of the poor when they know not what to eat and wherewith to clothe themselves. Behind his worry about the barns is a secret satisfaction and elation in regard to his increased wealth. He feels he has something important to do, something to live for, properly to take care of all this great harvest. When the selfish rich at times complain about the worry their growing riches cause them, the complaint always has a hollow, empty ring; for not for one moment

would they exchange places with the poorer man to whom such worries because of his humbler position cannot come.

18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my corn and my goods. 19. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry.

Jesus marks the break between the man's question and his final answer. Did he consider any other possibilities or plans other than the conclusion he finally adopted? If you were in his place now, would you consider any others? Eugene Burnand brings out the inwardness of what is here conveyed by Jesus. He paints the rich man as he has about come to his decision. He has carefully recounted his gold and silver, setting one sack after another to a side. A certain amount for other purposes is placed by itself. His papers and accounts have also been re-examined. Now he leans back — furrows of thought on his forehead, a far-away look in his eyes — he is thinking of the decided change the replacing of his old barns by ampler new ones will produce, the money that will mean and the work, but also the picture they will form, fine, new, and full to overflowing with "all my corn and my goods." Yes, in some such a way — not all at one jump —, but carefully weighing and estimating it all, taking all this trouble, though with a deep, secret pleasure in it all — so he settled the matter: **This will I do.** Deliberately he works out the problem all on selfish lines alone. Assured that he has not made an error of any kind, and has reached the conclusion that is thoroughly sound and certainly best, he pronounces his decision. Note the pronouns he uses: **I will pull down my barns, and build greater** — a radical measure, but, surely, all his neighbors will call him progressive, and raise their estimate of him accordingly; **and there will I bestow all my corn and my goods** — for he has far more than merely this coming "corn" or grain, wheat and bar-

ley, he has besides all kinds of possessions which go with a wealthy farm-place. Many a time this very thing has been done, as Jesus here pictures it, and not merely outwardly, but with the very reasoning behind it, which Jesus here lays bare to us: But not by farmers alone, with barns and grain and farm possessions, but equally by others with stores, shops, factories, banks, etc., and all the wealth and wealth-producing contents that go with these. There is the same careful planning, exact calculation, excluding any error or mistake, and the same pleasurable certainty that the final conclusion is the right one in every way, with none better possible to make. — But this is a parable, and as such it allows us to see what in actual life, when men plan, calculate, and decide, is often covered up and not admitted in a bare and open way. We have already had the advantage of this feature of the parable when from the start this man was placed before our eyes as he really is, with all the little self-delusive veils which men use in their thinking and acts left away. This is a picture of how the man really is, how Jesus actually sees him, and how he will look when all the world is made to see him and his sordid, selfish life at the last day. You and I may be afraid to talk to our souls out aloud as this man in the parable does, but the silent language of our acts may be none the less just the same. **And I will say to my soul,** when these fine plans of mine are all carried out, say it with the deep satisfaction I feel now already in making these plans and in anticipating that coming day: **Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry.** Zahn draws attention to the fact that the Aramaic which Jesus used employed *nephesh*, "soul," instead of the reflexive pronoun, thus making the man's speech to his "soul" the more natural. But the inspired Greek as written by Luke keeps the word "soul," without turning it back into the reflexive pronoun. This in advance lends greater effect to what *God* said of this man's "soul." But the idea of Delitzsch (*Bibl. Psyc-*

chologie, 104), who thinks the spirit as the stronger and more masculine part of man addresses the soul as "the weaker vessel," is a refinement without any foundation in reality. We need no such duality in this or any similar case. Man's consciousness of himself as a person enables him both to think and speak of himself, and thus if desired to hold dialog with himself. That fully suffices here. It is not the language of the "spirit" which we hear here addressed to the "soul" of the rich fool; it is his own "soul" speaking to his "soul." Only we must note that the term "soul" is the proper one, for in distinction from the "spirit" it is our immaterial part as this is joined to the body, animates and gives it life, and in turn reflects all the conditions, emotions, and actions of the body. This connection explains why the "soul" is called upon to "eat, drink, be merry." It constitutes the physical life, without which the body would be an inert mass of matter unable to eat or do anything else. Only a body animated by its soul can eat and enjoy the eating, etc. Observe, too, that this man knows only the soul-life with its dependence on material things, not the spirit-life, directed upward to the heavenly world, its treasures and pleasures as derived from God. He is spiritually dead, a true *ψυχικός* (= natural man, and thus virtually = *σαρκικός*, fleshly), who thus talks to his *ψυχῇ*. — The words addressed to the "soul" of the rich fool are quite proper and sound, up to a certain point. They fail to take into consideration the vital condition of the soul's being left to continue its function of animating the body. This condition is in the hands of God's providence and must ever be taken into account. Not that the man would have ventured to deny God's providence and power in this respect; quite the contrary, he may even have mentioned the bounties of providence in connection with his grain. What he failed to do is the very thing thousands to-day neglect; they may know God and providence well enough, they do not take him into vital account. A few words — that is all; their lives are not af-

fect, their inner attitude is unchanged. Thus they are content to see **much goods laid up for many years**; they think and plan for these "years" only, omitting — even if such years are granted them — what surely must lie beyond. It is this omission which deems it enough to tell the soul: **Take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry.** That is all very well, if this life were really indefinitely assured, and — we must add — if this life, thus made so prominent, were all. Then the covetous man would be right: Get all you can, and keep all you can! The four imperatives are not alike, the first and last have the present tense, denoting steady duration: keep on taking thine ease — keep on being of good cheer. From these durative conditions the definite acts of eating and drinking are distinguished by means of the aorist for these two verbs.

20. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?

It is not proper to explain away any real speaking of God in this case, and to put in place of it a divine act, as Zahn does; here that would be the death. No; this speaking precedes any act. God is able to express his thoughts by words as well as by acts; nowhere do the Scriptures make him dumb. Cf. Ps. 2, 5 as an example. In the case of this man the terrible thing is that God's speaking to him and his own speaking to himself are utterly at variance. Woe to the man whose thoughts concerning himself run counter to the thoughts of God! — What a contrast: "this night — "many years"! Prov. 27, 1: "Boast not thyself of to-morrow." This man had taken for granted the indefinite stay of his soul with the body — and here that stay was already at an end. All his plans had been made on a false basis; he had left the most vital figure out of the calculation. He deserves the only name we know him by: **Thou foolish one**, or the shorter, stronger rendering of the A. V.: "Fool." The adjective here used as a noun signifies: a

man devoid of sense; without mind or reason. Wise in his own conceit, his wisdom was blank folly. The world is full of these wise fools. — The demonstration or proof for this judgment of his Jesus gives in one keen, decisive stroke, which leaves no room for argument, evasion, or any other sort of reply: **this night is thy soul required of thee.** Note the emphasis on "this night." That very soul which expected so long and so delightful a stay in the body to enjoy all those golden riches, must answer the inexorable summons in a few brief hours. The text is not: "*shall* be required of thee," future tense; but "*is* required," now already while the man was making his happy plans. The Greek really reads: "*they* require of thee," the verb being plural. In a way this, of course, serves as a passive, and the R. V. translates accordingly. It is also listed as impersonal, or as a plural of category, or merely as intended to conceal the subject. Better than any of these solutions is that of Trench, who refers to Job 33, 22: "Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life *to the destroyers*," pointing out that here we have the reverse of the statement in Luke 16, 23: "carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." He also very aptly quotes Theophylact on "require": "Like pitiless exactors of tribute, terrible angels shall require thy soul from thee unwilling, and through love of life resisting. For from the righteous his soul is not *required*, but he commits it to God and the Father of spirits, pleased and rejoicing, nor finds it hard to lay it down, for the body lies upon it as a light burden. But the sinner who has en fleshed his soul, and embodied it, and made it earthly, has prepared to render its divulsion from the body most hard: wherefore it is said *to be required* of him, as a disobedient debtor that is delivered to pitiless exactors." Trench adds, that he is not like a ship long waiting in the harbor, finally joyfully lifting its sails to move toward the haven of eternity; but like one by fierce gales dragged from its moorings, to be driven forth furiously and hurled upon the rocks. Burnand, in a

second picture, shows the fool as he lay down to sleep that night—sleeping on in death—the lower jaw slightly fallen, all cold and stiff. Like any other night he went to bed, with never another thought—alas, even this night—with never another thought!—**And the things which thou has prepared** stands forward for emphasis; the Greek has it: “what things.” The man had “prepared” or made them ready by his plans before he fell asleep. He had set aside so much money for the new structures; perhaps he had already signed a contract with some builder. His previous work too, in carefully tilling his ground, had made ready the fine stand of grain which now promised such a rich harvest. **Whose shall they be?** Not his, that is plain; not even for the sustenance and enjoyment of his earthly life shall he have one particle of it all. Laughing heirs will divide what he leaves behind. So are all the possessions of the covetous, even while they hold them in their hands—not true possessions at all, though they seem so real and loom up so large and grand. Even our earthly life does not, in the last analysis, rest on things like this. The man who came to Jesus about his inheritance would live whether he got the inheritance or lost it; but in either case, if his heart knew no higher wealth, he would be—only another “fool.”

21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

The parable is like a photograph, at the bottom of which Jesus now signs the man's name. Look close whether this perhaps is *your* name. **So** does not mean that every man in all outward respects is like this man in the parable. He may not die so suddenly, and he may die with less or with greater wealth. But in every case the details will all fit in and combine just as they do here to complete his picture in God's eyes as that of a “fool.” That is shown by pointing out what lies beneath any individual set of details in a man's life and governs all such details as regards their real significance: **he that layeth**

up treasure for himself, makes that the real aim and work of his life (hence the present participle), **and is not rich toward God**, omitting him and the wealth found in him (again the present participle). Generally a man succeeds when he sets himself to gathering earthly treasures; but it is the effort itself, when this sums up his life, which marks him as a "fool." And this because all such treasures, however abundant they may be in any man's possession, do not really enrich his soul. Death shows that all too clearly. Not one bit of all the wealth remains for that soul. He laid it up "for himself," but "whose" is it at last? Not his. — Zahn is right, the negative addition: "and is not rich toward God," is not intended as the direct negation of gathering earthly treasure, so that we are not in any way or manner to do the latter, but instead only the former; but this negative qualifies the preceding: our gathering of earthly treasure is not to bar us from gathering the true riches. But Zahn is wrong when he thinks that this subordination is expressed by the negative $\mu\eta$ here used, instead of $\sigma\upsilon$. The former is the regular negative with the participle, cf. Robertson at length, 1136-9; and here, to change the negative would not change the meaning. It is the thought itself which shows how the two participles, joined merely by "and," belong together, and that is both sufficient and clear. Whoever is rich in God will not make earthly riches his sole concern in life, as if even his earthly life depended mainly on them. — The R. V. retains from the A. V.: **toward God**, and the commentators usually try to conserve this idea of direction and even motion. This often spoils their idea of what it means to be rich in this manner, at least it blurs the thought of the text. Luther and Calov were more correct than probably they themselves knew when they read the words: "*in* God." The latest grammars show conclusively that the preposition $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ has invaded the territory of $\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ in the Greek of New Test. times to such an extent that a long list of static verbs is construed with

either preposition, the sense being identical. There is no idea either of motion or of direction with *in* in any case; every idea of that kind has to be in the verb, and there is no trace of it in the verb "to be rich." "To be rich *in God*" means to have our riches in union and communion with him; to be thus rich is to have forgiveness, life and salvation in God, and all the precious things connected with these. This involves faith, for by it alone are we brought into union with God; "in God" = in him by faith. Linguistic and doctrinal soundness thus go hand in hand, and we are rid of such notions as wealth devoted to God and his work as being the true riches, or spiritual excellences in ourselves held out "toward" God for him to approve of. He is rich in God who has the saving gifts which God gives him and holds them with gratitude by faith as his own. And such a man is truly rich, however little he may have of earthly goods; nor will great earthly possessions interfere with his true wealth, since he will make these too, like Abraham, David, and others, wholly subservient to God. In the following verses of our chapter Jesus describes more fully what a life thus centered in God is: earthly cares are overcome, the kingdom of heaven is gained, eternity and blessedness assured.

SERMON. *wed 1925*

Just a short time ago we heard the Christmas bells ringing, the joyous angels singing, for the Christ-child born in Bethlehem. To-day the bells are tolling in our text, a funeral is in preparation, a man of great means has just died.

But do these two go together. They do—just as Christmas goes together with the last Sunday in the old year: just as the true Christmas joy is the prelude to the eternal joy hereafter. After all only a line divides life and death, time and eternity. Many are nearing, some are crossing that line now. And it is well, with the Christmas echoes still ringing in your ears, to think here of yourself. That dead man in our text is meant to deepen and direct your thought aright. Do you know, he talked to his own soul a

few hours before he died; and God also talked to his soul. Alas, his soul listened to the wrong voice.

Soul, Soul, Whose Voice Are You Listening To?

Your own voice of folly? or God's voice of Wisdom?

I.

You must know something about this dead man in order to understand the folly of what he said to his own soul.

He was a fine man, a substantial, prosperous farmer. He owned a stretch of fruitful fields, a well-built home, a good sum of money, and at the time he died his fields were heavy with grain, heavier than ever before, and he had just finished his plans to rebuild his barns in order to store the exceptional harvest. I am sure, his neighbors admired, and many envied him. He had a good name, his prosperity and progressiveness were an asset to the community. If only he had lived, how fine his place with its new buildings would have looked, and how happy he would have been managing and making the most of it all. But now he was dead. The end came very suddenly, he himself had not expected it at all. When people heard of it they were startled. Many wondered whether he had made a will, and who would now get his fine property.

That was the man. I need not ask whether you know any like him; I believe we have some ourselves as fine, prosperous, and respected as he. Certainly there are many less favored who would willingly trade their poorer homes and leaner prospects for his growing good fortune. Of course, his death—that is another thing. He had not thought about that himself, and leaving it out as he did, his life certainly looked attractive and looks so to any number of people to-day.

Now we are ready for the revelation which Jesus makes to us concerning this man. He knew him more intimately than any of his friends, in fact more intimately than the man knew himself.

It was the day before he died. He had just finished his plans about the new storehouses for his coming crops. When all was done, and done as well as any man could have arranged, he spoke to his own soul, and his soul listened to what he said, and was fully satisfied and happy. "Soul," he said, "soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Consider what Jesus thus reveals to us concerning this man and his soul. He spoke of his earthly "goods," of these alone. They were great and rich indeed, as we have seen, yet they were

earthly goods only. They were, we may add, also God's gifts, honestly, honorably obtained, but even so they were earthly gifts only. Did his soul think of that? No; there is no indication; all we know is that his soul listened to this man's voice speaking thus, was satisfied and smiled. He spoke of his having enough for "many years." Do you understand? he spoke only of earthly years. He thought of them stretching far into the future, beautiful, lovely years; but even if they had been granted him, they would have been nothing but earthly years. Did his soul think of that? No; his soul added nothing, it accepted the dream, and was happy in anticipation. In what he said the man did not mention God. Strange—a man so experienced, so careful and wise in many ways, yet not one word about God. Did his soul notice that and interpose? No; his soul never objected at all; it seemed not to observe the omission. And the man said nothing about death. That too seems strange. He was no longer young, and surely he had seen many die. Did he not know that he too finally must die? Of course, he knew that, but it did not seem really to impress him; his thoughts always followed other channels. And so now in this prosperous moment he did not think to mention it to his soul. And his soul? It too was satisfied to leave death unmentioned, left out of the reckoning. He did not speak either of salvation, the spiritual treasures of God's pardon for sin, of the hope of everlasting life. He left all these out too. No, he was not an infidel, a scoffer, or anything like that. He went to church, but when the service was held he generally thought about his fields, his work, his plans and the like. He was naturally a practical man, and these spiritual things did not seem so real to him that he should mention them in any special way to his soul. And his soul never missed what he withheld; it had been well trained not to expect these things, and so it was quite undisturbed and content without. That is the way with poor souls when advantage is taken of them. Even that last afternoon before he died, when he had this special conversation with his soul, even then his soul, with only earthly things mentioned and all others left out, was satisfied. And so the man died!

That is Jesus' revelation about this man. Now do not say that this is an exceptional case. You know there are souls enough to whom never anything else is said than what Jesus tells of this man's soul. And the dread comes into my heart that in our very midst to-day there may be some soul like that. This is the reason why this man's talk to his own soul is told us to-day as another year of our earthly lives draws to a close. What about your soul? What have you told your soul? What is the voice it gets to hear from you? A voice of folly, like that of the man here shown by Jesus?

O realize its utter folly! The man died that very night. His soul went out into eternity with nothing better than this man had obtained for it. Oh, I know, that does not happen just in that way to every man the night after he talks with such a voice of folly to his own soul. But what difference does it make how many years a man may yet go on in life if all along he has no other voice for his soul? It only strings the folly out more. And the folly is this: to tie the soul fast to earthly things, when God has made it for heavenly things, brings these heavenly things to us, and opens heaven itself for our souls. In a day, in a night every earthly thing you make your soul delight in, even if they are far greater, finer, richer than this man's "goods," is bound to slip away from you. Then whose will these things be on which you have spent all your time, strength, life, and your very soul? Naked your soul will go out into the night — your folly recognized too late.

II.

Look again at this man in our text, for there is more to be said of him and his fine earthly life and prosperity. Who gave him his life? Who increased his years? Who filled his days with sunshine and prosperity? Of whom did his fine home, his thriving fields, his goodly barns, his health so far, his ability to labor and plan — of whom did it speak? And his own soul, which lifted him far above the brute creation around him, endowed with wonderful powers and capabilities, able when cleansed and purified, to enter heaven itself and live with God — who gave him that soul? There is only one answer — it was God.

Need I repeat these questions to you in regard to all the good things of your lives and in regard to your immortal souls? There is a difference indeed, some have more, some have less of earthly goods, some have a longer, some a shorter life. But all they have is alike from God, and our souls are alike the breath of his mouth and equally destined for eternal joys. Compare as we will, this essential result is the same: God is our creator and benefactor, and he has made us for himself.

And now you are ready for that second revelation Jesus makes about this man in our text. As he knew him most intimately, so he knows also the God who made him and us all, and this other revelation deals with God.

It was again the night before the man died. There he sat amid all the blessings God had bestowed upon him, making his plans to take care of them all in the best way. Alas, he did not hear the voice of God. Yet it spoke to him then most clearly and effectively. I mean more than that final word which God had to speak since this man would not hear the other words. Down to

that fatal moment God's goodness spoke to him in lovely words of benefaction in every good thing the man called his own. Down to that last moment God's grace spoke to him in all the provisions it had made to save this man's soul. What was the matter that this man's soul heard none of these wise, blessed, holy words? Ah, his soul was deaf, its ears were stopped, it was dead to God. That is why his soul was satisfied to hear only that other voice, the voice of its own folly. And so the fatal moment came and God said: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" All the goodness and the grace of God had been without avail, the hour of reckoning was now at hand. Why did not that soul quail and tremble at those words? Why did it not fall down in the dust and repent? There was yet time for a few hours, a few at least. That was its judgment. Deaf so long, it was more than deaf now. The man put away his accounts and his money. The contractor left who was to build the new barns. The man went to bed as he had done many another night. It was his last. That night he died.

That is the second revelation of Jesus about this man. Do not tell me this was an exceptional case. You know the story has been repeated with outward variations times without number. Would to God his case might never be paralleled among us. But this is the very reason we are given to hear this voice now as another year of our lives passes. Jesus adds his own voice to that of his Father, saying at the end: "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." These are the words of wisdom for us, a million times better than all the blind, foolish reasonings of men. Soul, soul, hear these words of God and your Savior!

Mark well their wisdom. "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark 8, 36. "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink . . . But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." Luke 12, 29-31. "The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. 14, 17. We are "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Rom. 3, 24. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John 1, 7. "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5, 1-2. "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." 2 Cor. 5, 1. "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man

take thy crown." Rev. 3, 11. These are the words of God's wisdom that make us rich toward God. These riches are God's pardon for sin through Jesus' blood, a place in his kingdom here below, his Word and grace to nourish our souls, his comfort in every trial, and the hope of eternal blessedness in death. And these riches, do they detract from the earthly goods God gives us? Hear, O soul, the voice of his Word: the first Christians, many of whom were not rich in earthly things, that Word declares, "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people." Acts 2, 46. With our souls rich toward God "whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." Rom. 14, 8. O blessed wisdom of God, O glorious riches of God!

There are souls too many that will not listen to any voice but that of, their own blind folly. As for my soul, now as the passing year reminds me of my own end, my soul shall hear and heed God's voice of wisdom alone. And yours? Say it with God's help, and say it truly: and mine!

OUTLINES.

Our text is full of contrasts: riches—poverty; wisdom—folly; life—death; time—eternity; man's opinion—God's decision. The sermon is to arrange some or all of these so as to convey the message of the text for the last Sunday of the year. Kliefoth makes the following combination: What death will take from you—leave that; What death wants to bring you—seek that; Whatever aids you in this leaving and seeking—learn that. —The *time* feature is the one which connects the text in a simple and natural way with the Sunday for which it is set, the last Sunday of the year. Looking at the man in our text we may use him to turn our thoughts back to our *past life and the past year*; to the *future* as we are approaching it now; to the *day or night* which will surely be our last; to the *eternity* which cannot be far away. —The word of Jesus: "rich toward God" is one on which to center the entire text. Here was a man not rich in God. Beside the portrait as Jesus drew it we may place another, that of how the man would have looked if he had been rich in God. It makes a tremendous difference whether you are only rich, or also rich in God: 1) There is a difference in regard to every year we add to our lives; 2) A mighty difference when the last day or night arrives; 3) A difference in all eternity.

The Obituary of "A Certain Rich Man."

1. *He lived only for material wealth.*
 2. *He passed by the true riches of God.*
 3. *He died, and lost both.*
-

What Are You Telling your Soul?

1. *The wisdom that seems wise, but is really folly?*
 2. *The wisdom that many deem foolish, but that is really wise?*
-

Investing For the Soul.

1. *The way to lose.*
 2. *The way to win.*
-

Are You Rich in God?

1. *In heavenly gifts beside earthly gifts?*
 2. *In earthly gifts used for heavenly gifts?*
 3. *In heavenly gifts lifting higher the earthly gifts?*
-

The Rich Fool set for our Warning at the Close of the Year.

There is a warning and call for us in:

1. *What he did with his years.*
 2. *What he planned for his future.*
 3. *How he used his last day.*
 4. *How he entered eternity.*
-

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Luke 13, 6-9.

This text, frequently used as a free text for Sylvester Eve, the last evening of the old year, is equally appropriate for New Year's Day itself. There will only be a shift of emphasis in the way the text is used; Sylvester Eve would incline us to look back at the "three years" and the vain quest for fruit, while New Year's Day naturally inclines us to look forward at "this year also" and the opportunity still before us to bring fruit. Comparing this with the previous text we may note that the parable of the rich fool who dies that very night is appropriate for the last Sunday of the year, while the parable of the unfruitful fig tree which is granted an additional season of grace fits well the first service of a new year. There is the other difference: the former parable spoke of *our* being rich in God, while this parable adds the other view of such riches, namely that *God* seeks fruit in us. The one text thus serves as a complement to the other. There is a similarity between the rich fool using his life in such a barren way, and the barren fig tree bringing no fruit these three years; but the imagery in the two cases is so different that the point and appeal of each will be sufficiently distinct. It is natural for the last Sunday of the year and for New Year's Day to follow the same general line of thought, and a pair of parables like this, although not paired by Christ or the evangelist, will be found serviceable for the two related days. As we enter upon a new year of our earthly life let us bear in mind that *God seeks fruit of us*, and all our days are gifts of his grace; only we must take the biblical term "fruit" in its proper sense here,

embracing faith and a godly life, not good works with faith merely presupposed, and absolutely not mere good works devoid of faith, as the world likes to speak of them and an unevangelical theology teaches them.

Our text connects with the five preceding verses. Jesus tells his hearers they must not sit in judgment over men caught in some terrible catastrophe, but, leaving this in the hands of God, must think of themselves, that they may consider the continuation of their own lives as a gift of God's patience and grace toward them, for them to use with all haste in true repentance or change of heart, that by this they may escape the judgment prefigured for them in such calamities. Jesus does not solve for us the mysteries of God's providence in such dire happenings, he tells us only what we must see in them as regards ourselves. They are one and all calls to repentance; and to enable us to repent God permits us to live on. This is the point which the parable takes up and elucidates. Olshausen writes: "The discourse of Jesus, severe and full of rebuke, is closed by a parable, in which the merciful Son of man again brings the idea of grace prominently forward. He appears as the Intercessor for men before the righteousness of the heavenly Father, as he obtains for them *space for repentance*. This idea of the deferring of the judgment of God, so to leave men opportunity to turn, runs through all Scripture; before the deluge, a period of a hundred and twenty years was fixed, Gen. 6, 3; Abraham prayed for Sodom, Gen. 18, 24; the destruction of Jerusalem did not follow till forty years after the Ascension of the Lord; and the coming again of Christ is put off through the patience of God, 2 Pet. 3, 9."

13, 6. And he spake this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit thereon, and found none.

There is little trouble about the owner of the vineyard and its fig tree; that is undoubtedly God. But now the diversities begin, although the imagery in the parable

seems so simple and plain. Trench notes at once the strangeness of a **fig tree**, and only one such tree, planted in a **vineyard**. He saw aright but failed to catch the significance of what he saw. He merely finds it in accord with oriental custom to have such a tree in a vineyard; which is correct, but not enough. Vineyard and fig tree go together, for the fig tree we are told was **planted** in his vineyard. It is the perfect participle, denoting that the planting took place long ago and the result continued on to the present — there stood the tree now. And note, this is **his** vineyard, he owns the vineyard like the tree and has himself by the act of planting combined them. At once it is plain that we cannot say with Trench, the vineyard must be the world, and the fig tree the Jewish people. As between these two there is no combination, but rather a separation. What Trench says is usual in the orient, a fenced vineyard with its fig tree or trees, can symbolize only a certain natural and proper combination, but the world and Israel are opposites; a far different image would be needed to picture these properly. — All this is reenforced by the observation that the image of the vineyard extends farther in the parable, for presently we meet the “vinedresser,” and the owner himself is a vineyard-owner, not one who has a large orchard of fig or palm trees. Keil simply evades one of the difficulties in his interpretation by refusing to see Jesus in this “vinedresser.” He makes the fig tree to mean Israel, and the vineyard not the world, but God’s saving institution here on earth — which is both hazy and superficial. With first the owner of a vineyard, secondly a vineyard, and thirdly, a vinedresser before us we cannot say these all refer to the world. Where do the Scriptures call the world a vineyard? What would Jesus do as a vinedresser in the world? The parable indeed shows him as he is busy with the fig tree, but he is not called a tender of fig trees, he is the vinedresser whose work is mainly with the vines. It will not do to place Jesus as the vine-

dresser into the world; as far as his personal ministration is concerned he was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and when his relation to the world is described he is not one who enters it as a vinedresser steps among the vines and tends them—the world has to be made a vineyard first, i. e., stop being world. If it were not for the special emphasis in this parable on the vineyard as a vital element in the imagery we might accept the fig tree as signifying Israel. When it comes to making applications from the lesson of the parable, of course, Israel will get its application as well as all other nations and individuals; but such applications are not the solution of the parabolic imagery here presented. If the fig tree is Israel, then what can the vineyard be? There is nothing left for it—since it cannot be the world.—All falls into proper place when we note that Jesus is in Jerusalem, and that he has just referred in a pointed way to “all men that dwell in *Jerusalem*.” Israel is the **vineyard**, as the Scriptures so often describe it, and the beautiful **fig tree** planted in it is Jerusalem. God owns this vineyard and planted this tree to grace it; Jesus, the vinedresser of all this vineyard, gives his loving attention as a matter of course also to this fig tree. Zahn is right in offering this interpretation which so many others have sadly missed. Vineyard and tree go together—there is no clash. Yet the Scriptures in different places, and also Jesus himself, frequently single out Jerusalem for special admonition and warning, cf. Matth. 23, 37; 24, 2; etc. Though thus singled out to point us to the judgment which must follow unfruitfulness, we realize at once that the warning is never for Jerusalem alone, but alike for us all. That was exactly what Jesus wanted his hearers to see when he bade them look from the eighteen Jerusalem-ites slain by the falling tower to themselves, i. e., to all the dwellers in the city. For those eighteen he puts the fig tree, for all the rest the vineyard; and what happens to the tree, that may teach also those outside the vine-

yard, for its borders were soon to be extended. — Now Jerusalem, the fig tree, proved unfruitful. The owner of the vineyard **came seeking fruit thereon, and found none.** We are not told anything about what he found on the vines. If anyone desires to ask, he will have to make his own answer, the parable deals with the tree and its barrenness. The coming to seek fruit is referred to again, in v. 7, where we may look at it more closely. A fig tree ought to bear **fruit**; that is its nature and proper function. If properly planted as this tree was in the best of places, in the very midst of a vineyard, it is unnatural not to see fruit forthcoming. If Jerusalem had been planted in some Gentile nation as a heathen capital, then we might have known there would and could be no fruit. But with the case as it is there is something vitally wrong, and not with the owner, or the vinedresser, or the vineyard as such, but with the tree itself. This seemed to be a good-for-nothing tree. Whether it was actually hopeless, that is the point to be determined, the point too on which the parable turns. So far, there had been no "fruit." We are not left to guess what "fruit" here symbolizes, Jesus has already told us in verses 3 and 5: true, genuine *repentance* with all that this includes. The word signifies an inner change of mind or heart, from all sin in true sorrow to the cleansing from sin and the great Cleanser in true faith. It is *the* fruit which alone God desires; if it does not appear, the tree must be cut down. It is this fruit which Jerusalem of all places in the land most positively refused to bear.

7. And he said unto the vinedresser, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why doth it also cumber the ground?

If the commentators were astray on the vineyard and the tree, they are utterly lost when they come to the **three years.** Of course, "three years" does not mean three times. Fig trees have fruit on them for about ten months during a year. The simple accusative "three

years" designates length of time. How often the owner had inspected the tree is not stated, and is immaterial; but he had waited now in vain so long a time. Here again commentators have noted what is quite obvious, that there is some sort of relation between the "three years" already passed and "this year" now already begun, of which the vinedresser speaks, but their efforts to interpret accordingly nearly always abandon this relation. We might as well have ten years, as far as their interpretations are concerned, or twenty-five years instead of "three," and any odd number instead of "this year." Meyer practically gives up interpreting the "three years," Keil makes them the time before Christ and gives up the idea of "three," and others bring fancies for the "three," and get lost with "this year," which some also count as a whole added year. We must drop the idea of completeness in regard to "three," as if this figure means that a length of time had passed completely sufficient to prove the tree unfruitful. Then Jesus would have used "ten," not "three." Moreover, that is the question not fully determined as yet; the vinedresser still has hopes that the tree will bear. — The figure "three years" is chronological, in spite of fumbling commentators, and "this year" is also chronological, though not as they take it, namely an entire fourth year. The three years are not the three of Christ's ministry, and the fourth (of the commentators) another full year of his ministry. We do not know that Jesus' ministry lasted four years in all — it was only about three altogether. So this reckoning is usually dropped as hopeless, though it is close to the truth. Let us note the pointed way in which Jesus twice in close and emphatic repetition issues to the dwellers in Jerusalem the call of John the Baptist: "Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish." This call, with the Baptist's own word "repent," and with his warning of the judgment added, Jesus follows up with this parable, using in it the very imagery of the Baptist, the ax laid

to the root of the tree, when he speaks of cutting the fig tree down. In such a connection he speaks of "three years" — they are not symbolic, but real: three actual years since the Baptist first cried, as Jesus still cries to Jerusalem: Repent! Zahn points out that our evangelist in 3, 1-3 fixed most exactly the actual date when the Baptist began his work; so that we are able to reckon the time with sufficient exactness when now he speaks of the three years mentioned by Jesus in the parable. It is not Jesus (in his ministry) who comes to seek fruit; but God who sent both the Baptist and Jesus. And now we see why he did not seek fruit earlier. The tree had stood in the vineyard these many years, but only during the last three years did God look for fruit. If ever, then now, now that he had sent the Baptist and the Christ himself, there ought to be fruit, repentance. It should have been there the first year, at least the third, with Christ's own work so far advanced. Alas, there was none. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . and ye would not!" We add here, that, of course, "this year also" does not necessarily mean another twelve months. "This year" had already begun, but Christ's work in Jerusalem was not yet done; he had much to do yet in the whole vineyard before the "night" came for him when he would cease work. Jerusalem was meet for judgment already at this time, but Christ continued on in patience till the end. So "this year also" extends to the end of Christ's ministry and to his death. — **Cut it down** is the aorist imperative for the one dire act. It may seem as if there is a difference between God and Christ, when we hear this decided order from the owner of the vineyard and the reply of the vinedresser urging a delay. That there is no real difference comes out at once in the agreement of the owner to let the vinedresser make his final attempt at securing fruit. Moreover, the Scriptures in other places show us the same attitude of God extending his long-suffering to the utmost limit when the measure of sin is already full.

Basil of old already drew attention to this attitude of God: "This is peculiar to the clemency of God toward men, that he does not bring in punishment silently or secretly; but by his threatenings first proclaims them to be at hand, thus inviting sinners to repentance." And Trench adds: "Before the hewing down begins, the ax is laid at the root of the tree, Matth. 3, 10; laid there that it may be ready at hand for immediate use; but laid there also, that if possible this sign of what is threatened may avert the actual fulfillment of the threat." Cf. Luke 19, 41-44; Is. 5, 5-6; Matth. 7, 19. — The A. V. omits "also" in the reason for cutting down the tree: **why doth it also cumber the ground?** There are two reasons for cutting it down, first its own barrenness, secondly its useless occupation of the ground. The verb used for "cumber" signifies *brachlegen*, to render fallow or idle. Trench is too strong when he says the tree "mischiefed" the land. The idea is that the tree by taking up the land and bringing no fruit prevented the land from being used to good purpose. The land itself was not spoiled, but it was idle. It could be used to far better purpose. Every man, when God bestows his grace and care upon him and gives him a favored position, by remaining unfruitful abuses these gifts, which if bestowed upon some one else would bring rich results. "Why" = *ἵνα τί* (or *ἵνατί*), sc. *γένηται*, literally: "in order that what may happen?" "for what purpose?" Here the answer is: There is no reason why it should be left to occupy the ground.

8. And he answering saith unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: 9. and if it bear fruit thenceforth, well; but if not, thou shalt cut it down.

The aorist participle translated "answering" has no reference to time, and is combined with "saith" in Hebraistic fashion, cf. Blass, 420 and 4 (note). This full and circumstantial manner of introducing the vine-dresser's reply is used because the parable reaches its

climax in this reply; hence also the vivid present tense "saith." In verse 7 we have simply the matter-of-fact "said" with no addition. — The vinedresser intercedes for the unfruitful tree, and that in a way to show us in a brief and comprehensive manner the entire intercessory work of Jesus. Here Keil's refusal to see Jesus himself in the vinedresser blurs the entire point of the parable. The idea, of course, is not that the Father is severe and Jesus alone merciful, for the Father accepts the intercession, and Jesus too accepts the cutting down of the tree if the last effort shall fail. We dare not erase the wrath of God by emphasizing the mercy, nor lose sight of the mercy by dwelling on the wrath. Both are real. But Christ is the Mediator: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2, 1-2. Rom. 8, 34; 1 Tim. 2, 5-6; Heb. 7, 25; 9, 24. The basis of Christ's intercession is his atoning sacrifice, which is by no means only an assurance for *us* of God's loving disposition towards us, but first of all and most vitally a propitiation and satisfaction rendered unto *God* by which our sins are expiated. This sacrifice and satisfaction necessarily occurred at a definite time, namely when Christ bore our sins here on earth, but in the mind and purpose of God it stood as a reality from all eternity. Hence Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Rev. 13, 8; "foreordained before the foundation of the world," 1 Pet. 1, 20. Thus as our Mediator and Intercessor Jesus speaks in the parable, and the Father accepts his intercession. It is told us in a simple, human way in order that we may grasp it; but the essential point is vividly brought out that God's grace and mercy toward us are wholly through his Son our Savior as our great and effectual Mediator. — Jesus came to do his Father's will; hence he is properly pictured as the caretaker of the vineyard, who accordingly addresses the owner as

"lord." The relation between the two is not strained when the vinedresser makes his request: **Lord, let it alone this year also**, yet we notice the vinedresser seems more than an ordinary servant. A man hired only for a day would care nothing about the vineyard or anything growing in it; but this vinedresser is personally concerned. We have the aorist imperative for "let it alone"; it refers to the previous command to cut the tree down, i. e., to omit this act. But not indefinitely, only **this year also**, an accusative of duration of time: "for this year." There is yet a season for bearing which the vinedresser wants to try out in addition to those of the three previous years. The tree is to have one more opportunity to fulfill the purpose of its planting. Christ has as little use for unfruitful trees as the Father. For all impenitent men the intercession of Christ asks only an extension of time in order that repentance if possible may be wrought. — But the tree is not merely to have this added time for itself, the time is for a gracious purpose on the part of the vinedresser: **till I shall dig about it, and dung it**. The verbs are aorist subjunctives, in the usual construction, but as aorists point to this work as fully and properly carried out, not merely as begun or in progress. Thus all that can possibly be done for the tree will be done. Note well, it is all what Christ does upon us — so alone fruit is produced. *He* must dig, *he* must dung; *we* only receive from him, and by receiving alone we can return fruit. — **And if it bear fruit thenceforth, well**. Note the hopefulness in putting this possibility first. The condition too is one of expectancy. With love and zeal unflagging the vinedresser will do his work and so look for a favorable result. The sentence in Greek is broken off, the apodosis being omitted and supplied in thought; we may call it an ellipsis or more pretensively an aposiopesis. Our English is constrained to fill in by supplying "well." Really, there is no need to say how both the owner and the vinedresser will feel if the happy result is attained, the former hav-

ing already come so frequently and waited so patiently, and the latter planning now to do the utmost. — But the reverse may happen: **but if not, thou shalt cut it down.** In the Greek "but if not" is a set phrase and is used without adding the verb. If all past and all new efforts fail, then indeed the case is hopeless. It is a fact, that judgment is so often preceded by a multiplication of grace. Trench points to Noah, the "preacher of righteousness" in the days just preceding the flood; Jeremiah and other prophets just before the captivity; Christ himself before Jerusalem fell. The impenitent misunderstand this and treat this abundance of grace presumptuously, making their judgment only the more severe. But the supreme effort of grace cuts off every shadow of excuse. Is. 5, 3-4; Rom. 10, 21. When men reject the grace of God the guilt is altogether theirs alone. They will recognize it themselves at last and their own complete self-blame will make their punishment the keener. — "Thou shalt cut it down" is a volative future tense, close to an imperative. We need not ask why the vinedresser does not say: "I will cut it down," since he had already been bidden to do so. He acts as the agent for the owner. God judges us, but he has committed all judgment to the Son. In the parable the Son honors the Father by thus referring the cutting down to him, though the Son himself shall execute it. — The question is left open: Did the tree bear at last, or did it after all remain unfruitful? The answer is purposely withheld. Jesus was about to do the last work upon Jerusalem; this parable spoken to "all the men that dwell in Jerusalem" was part of that work. Would they hear and heed at last? We know the answer, but the parable both in its make-up and its mighty purpose is complete without. Only we must not inject the synergistic fallacy here, as Trench does: "The free will of man is recognized and respected." There is no free will, only a bound, enslaved will in man's natural or unconverted state. We must reject every idea of

man's liberty to decide between God and Satan, fruit and unfruitfulness. The case is entirely different. Man has already decided and holds firmly to that decision. But the grace of God is brought to bear upon him with power from on high to release his will from its bondage and wicked decision, producing by this power, and by it alone, a totally different decision. But man may nullify every effort of that liberating, saving power, wilfully casting it from him for good and all. Then his doom is sealed, and sealed by himself. But if the power of saving grace succeeds in freeing him, not he or any decision of his will cooperates with that in the freeing power; the work is wholly one of grace, and the glory of it belongs to that grace alone.

SERMON.

Happy New Year! Happy New Year! is the universal greeting to-day, and blithely men start out on the new year. There is a serious side to the beginning of another year of our earthly lives, and the common greeting, meant well enough in its way, must not make us forget that. Here in our text a beautiful vineyard appears. Two men with serious mien walk down the vine-bordered path. They go to inspect the fine big fig tree which proudly rears its mass of branches and foliage near the center of the garden. That tree has not been doing its duty, and it has stood long already. Shall it be cut down now, or shall it be left another season? Shall justice take charge, or shall patient grace still continue? Yes, it was not a mere happy sunshiny day for that tree, it was a serious, decisive day. Let us go along with those two men, the owner of the vineyard and its caretaker, and think of ourselves as they look at that tree and decide what to do.

There is a New Year's Message for us in What was Done with the Barren Fig Tree:

A message of **Grace mingled with Justice** in what was said of its past; a message of **Justice tempered by Grace** in what was determined about its future.

I.

The owner and the vinedresser think of the past as they look the tree over, for the one tells the other how he has been coming for some time to find fruit, and yet has found none. They think of the advantages the tree has above many another fruit tree. It was planted with its young roots into a favored place, not out in the wilds, but right in the midst of the owner's beautiful vineyard. It had the best of soil, and the finest of care, for the vinedresser of the vineyard tended the tree just as he tended the vines.

That favored tree is a picture of Jerusalem of old, the capital of God's chosen nation, planted, established, fed and fostered in the midst of the Holy Land. It was not out in the wilds of some heathen country, amid idolatrous people. It had God's Old Test. revelation and promises of the Messiah, the Temple and worship of the true God, priests and prophets to proclaim to it God's salvation. Surely a large measure of grace! Jerusalem did not earn, or merit these blessings, God granted them to Jerusalem in his grace, in order that the city might develop to his honor and glory.

You see how this reminds us of ourselves. You and I too are planted of God in his blessed vineyard, the Christian church. We were not born and reared in far off heathen lands, amid idolatrous people, in benighted surroundings. We were placed in the true church of God, where his Word is preached and taught, where Christ the Savior is known and worshipped, and a thousand spiritual blessings surround us, like the fruitful soil lies about the roots of a tree, like the balmy air and sunshine enfold its branches and leaves. Did we deserve all this grace of God? No, it was a pure gift of his love, his wonderful favor bestowed in unstinted measure upon us. Let us get a true view of our lives in these past years. They are full of the richest grace down to this happy New Year's Day.

But note that this grace is mingled with justice, and properly so.

Why this planting in the vineyard, this tender and constant care of the tree? You hear the owner make answer: he desired to have fruit of that tree. For that he planted it. He took a fruit tree, not any kind of a tree, and he gave it everything that ought to make it bring fruit. What then did he have a right to expect? Fruit, of course. If you had done with a tree what he did, you certainly would feel justified in looking for fruit.

Jerusalem, the favored city of God, was intended to bring fruit. That is what the prophet of old said of the whole vineyard: "and he looked that it should bring forth grapes," Is. 5, 2. God had a right to look for more from this city than merely earthly

magnificence and prosperity. If God had wanted only that he could have had it in any heathen city, in Rome for instance, the pagan capital of the world at that time. But Jerusalem — the grace vouchsafed to it ought to have made it a city of God, of faith, of love, to God and works delightful to God. Could God be satisfied with less? Your own sense of what is natural, right, and just will furnish the answer. It is the same appeal which Isaiah records of God concerning the entire vineyard, when it had proved unfruitful of old: "And now, O men of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could I have done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" Is. 5, 3-4.

But we and Jerusalem are alike here. Placed as we are in the most favored surroundings, right in the midst of God's garden of grace, what must be in justice expected of us? Simply that we grow and prosper in earthly things? have fine homes, plenty of money, earthly ease, pleasure, friends, prosperity? Why, if God had wanted these, he would not need a church at all, nor this care of placing, keeping, blessing us in his church. Any fine worldly community would be enough, without his sending to us his Son as a Savior, his Holy Spirit with his Word and grace. No; mark it well, God must expect fruit of us. Get a right view of your life and what it includes. The grace bestowed upon you necessarily includes an element of justice: God has a right to look for spiritual fruit from you. Jesus tells us: "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." John 15, 8. And his apostle beseeches us that we "receive not the grace of God in vain." 2 Cor. 5, 1.

All this is intensified when we note what the owner of the tree in the parable says he had done: for three years he had patiently waited, coming again and again to look for fruit. That mention of three years is significant. Already in the case of a tree, if you find no fruit upon it for three consecutive years, your patience will very likely be at an end.

But for Jerusalem, when Jesus spoke this parable, the last three years had been the most gracious of all. These three years embraced all the ministrations of John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner, and Christ's own work up to this time. There never was a city which had enjoyed a greater measure of grace than this. That is why God looked so earnestly for fruit during these three wonderful years. If all this grace, and all this patient waiting on top of it was in vain, then, surely, Jerusalem was hopelessly unfruitful. To use Isaiah's words once more: What more could God have done?

But in this point too we resemble Jerusalem. All the fulness of God's grace in Christ Jesus has been poured out upon us in the

past. The whole way of salvation is preached and taught to us; no doctrine of God's word is withheld. God has tried in countless ways to make his grace fully effective among us. And all this for more than three rich years. If now there is one in whom no fruit appears after all this, no living faith in Christ, no evidence of a new life of godliness, what shall we say? In simple justice, can anyone offer excuses, and ask for still more? Put these things together and think of your life and what God has done for you in it, as you ought to think this New Year's Day. See the full measure of his grace and the simple justice that mingles with it. Pass not by these things, but let them affect you deeply. God desires fruit from you, and you cannot rightfully withhold it. That is the first part of the New Year's message of the barren fig tree.

II.

But there is another part. When the owner and the vine-dresser considered the fig tree, how all this time in spite of all it had received its barrenness remained, the owner said at last: "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" It would have been right to say this before, it surely was right now. So long the tree had not only proved unfruitful, it had also taken up this valuable ground which might have been put to far better use. The sentence was utterly just: "Cut it down!"

Put Jerusalem for the tree, and you have what Jesus meant for the people of this city by his parable. "All day long," cries the prophet in God's name, "have I stretched forth my hand unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Rom. 10, 21. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not." Matth. 23, 37. Was it not time to end this perverseness, this wicked, wilful unbelief? Should God also continue to waste his grace on these people, when others might be found in whom his grace might achieve a better success?

But Jerusalem is only an illustration for us, if we neglect to use our time of grace aright. There is not one among us who has received all God's grace in Christ Jesus here in his church, if he has remained cold and indifferent, bent after all on worldly things, counting as little or nothing what here is offered to him and his family, but should be brought this day to a final and terrible reckoning. Let no man think that because God is so good and gracious he can do with God's grace what he pleases. Behind that grace there stands justice. God does wait long, but at last he commands: Cut the tree down!

But behold this justice even now is tempered with grace. The vinedresser asks that justice may be stayed. No, he does

not dispute the owner's demand to cut the tree down. He is just himself and righteous in all his ways. But he appeals once more to the grace of the owner's heart: "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." He will loosen and aerate the ground, and add still more to its richness. He will thus most literally leave nothing untried. If after all this the tree refuse to bear, he himself says: "Thou shalt cut it down." The owner consents, for the two are wholly of one heart and mind—grace mingled with justice, and justice tempered with grace.

And so Jerusalem was granted a final period of grace, that precious season when Christ finished his work by giving his life for our sins, rising from the dead, and ascending on high. O the wonder of all this mercy, the supreme effort of love divine to win fruit from the hearts of the men of Jerusalem! The parable does not tell of the outcome, but we know that even this supreme effort was in vain. That tree Jerusalem remained barren and was cut down. The prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." Matth. 23, 38. What he said of the Temple likewise: "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." Matth. 24, 2. As an example for all time this tree was utterly cut down, and neither stem nor root left in the ground.

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." Rom. 11, 22. Look aright at men's lives about you, and at your own life, now that another year of God's grace begins. The godless go on with the church at their very door, and spurn its gifts and blessings. Some enter the church, but their hearts' love is not on Christ, but on the world. Still others are like trees full of leaves, but the fruit is poor and disappointing. Why are they not cut down forthwith? Only because the justice of God is tempered with mercy. Only because Jesus intercedes for them. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." 1 John 2, 1-2. As our great High Priest he ever liveth to make intercession for us. Let no man look upon God's patience, longsuffering, and grace lightly. While he brings all his grace to bear upon you and waits long for fruit, justice stands ready to cut the unfruitful down when the fatal hour comes.

Thank God if you have shown fruit in any measure in the past. It was surely due to Christ's patience and grace alone. But let no fruit that you have brought lull you into false security, as if this warning message of the unfruitful fig tree were not needed

by you. Learn more fully what this life of yours is really for, this new year God has granted you to see. It is for fruit, for fruit alone; all else is vain. God looks for true knowledge and faith in you, a true confession and worship of his name, genuine and increasing love for him and his grace, Christian virtues and graces and their works in every part of your life, a sure hope and expectation of eternal deliverance in Christ. There ought to be more, far more of this fruit in us all. When you see what all God does to throw the barren fig tree at last into full bloom and golden fruitage, let all the indifference that still besets you fall away, and give your whole heart and life henceforth to him and his grace. Happy is he, and he alone, this New Year's Day, who lets the justice of God warn him away from all carelessness and indifference, and the grace of God and his patient love win him wholly unto God and his Savior Jesus Christ.

OUTLINES.

The thought most naturally awakened by a careful reading of the text is, that New Year's Day is very much like the day when the owner of the vineyard and the vinedresser went to *decide* about the unfruitful fig tree; so their eyes rest upon us this day. From this central point of the text all its contents are readily reached, and the applications may easily be appended. For that decision took everything into account: all that had been done for the tree—all that should be expected of the tree—all that might now be done with the tree—all that might yet be tried in regard to the tree—all that would result after the final trial.—Another cardinal point in the text is God's seeking *fruit* in us. That is why we exist and our years are extended—that is why God gives us his grace and waits with such patience—that is why Christ intercedes for us and fills up the measure of grace still more—that is what eventually will decide our fate.—Another pivot in the text is Christ's intercessory prayer. The tree was both without excuse and hopeless as it stood; but the intercessor's appeal availed, and his work held out promise indeed. Or, as we contemplate that intercession, there is revealed to us: the dire need of it—the mighty efficacy of it—and the glorious reward it ought to obtain.

Think of the Unfruitful Fig Tree this New Year's Day.

It will help you

1. *To put away all indifference.*
2. *To thank Christ for his intercession.*
3. *To prepare for the day to come.*

"Let it Alone this Year Also."

A word also for us, (1) To remind us of *the seriousness of life*; (2) To point us to *the fruit of grace*; (3) To help us prepare for *the day of judgment*.

—BECK.

Let the Unfruitful Fig Tree Teach You to Look at Your Life Aright.

1. *At the grace you enjoy.*
 2. *At the fruit you should bring.*
 3. *At the account you must render.*
-

What Makes us Happy this New Year's Day?

1. *God's grace.*
 2. *Christ's intercession.*
 3. *The blessed fruit of both.*
-

The Calender of the Unfruitful Fig Tree.

1. *These three years* (longsuffering and grace).
 2. *Now* (righteousness and justice).
 3. *This year also* (intercession).
 4. *Then* (judgment).
-

THE SUNDAY AFTER NEW YEAR.

Luke 12, 4-9.

Langsdorff is right, this text on the right kind of fearlessness is so appropriate for this season of the year that one is surprised so few of the gospel selections make use of it. Only the text is wider than he states in this remark. It deals with *the courageous confession of Christ*. The Sunday after New Year closes the Christmas cycle, which began with the First Sunday in Advent. We have climbed the glorious festival height where the angels sang of the gift of the Only Begotten Son; we saw in coming down from that height, how all our life must now be directed to better and more blessed things than this earth is able to offer; and now as we reach the valley again, this text meets us with its call to courage, its assurance of help and protection through life, and the promise of Christ's acknowledgment as his own in the end. Thus the cycle closes. The note of warning which sounded in the last two texts is supplemented now by a clear, strong note of encouragement.

The tension between Christ and his opponents had increased greatly. They had blasphemously charged him with being an agent of Beelzebub. In the house of the Pharisee Jesus had denounced the Pharisees and lawyers to their faces. The crowds he had left on entering that house had not dispersed. And so when the burning words were spoken and Christ's brief stay in the house ended, "an innumerable multitude of people," so great as to tread upon each other, greeted the Master when he came forth. His disciples too were gathered close about him. Now Jesus begins to speak, first to

the disciples, but in the presence and hearing of the multitude; then, when interrupted, also to the multitude directly, and so, with various changes, to the end. The lines are drawn, as Jesus himself had said (11, 23): "He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathered not with me scattereth." Jesus first warns his disciples against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and then, in the words of our text, bids them be fearless, trust in his protection, and confess him thus openly before men. His words fit the occasion exactly as things stood on that day, and they fit us in the same way amid the dangers and foes which still oppose Christ.

12, 4. And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. 5. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

Beware of hypocrisy, Jesus had warned his disciples, for all that it tries to hide shall eventually be exposed. Openly they are to confess their Master, and when the time comes proclaim his Gospel from the housetops. Let no fear seal their lips or make them pretend they are other than they really in their hearts are. The heart of Jesus is moved and goes out to his disciples who will soon have to fight their battle against many foes: **And I say unto you my friends**, I who by calling you this attest myself unto you as your best friend, better than all others who would give you other advice. "My friends" separates the disciples alike from the open foes of Jesus, the Pharisees and lawyers, and from the multitude gathered about them. Jesus calls them "his friends" here, not because he counts on their friendship to make them faithful, nor because they as his friends will suffer persecution, but because he now is treating them as his dearest friends and proving his friendship to them by the strong encouragement and help he is offering them. Whenever Jesus calls men his friends

he means to bestow something upon them and bless them, which is very different from the ways of men, when they call us friends because they expect something from us. — **Be not afraid of** uses the strong verb for terrifying fear, and adds the preposition to convey the idea of shrinking or fleeing away from the object feared. There is indeed a cause which might produce such fear in the disciples, also a tendency in them to give way to such fear, but Jesus here confronts both to counteract and completely nullify them. — As to the cause, Jesus names it without mincing words or understating the case: **them which kill the body**. He means actual killing, and he characterizes these foes by the present participle he uses in naming them as men bent on this sort of thing; they are animated by murderous hate and hostility. Often enough there are barriers in the way preventing them from going to the natural limit of their wicked desires, but their nature is just what Jesus here states. In his own case attempts enough were made actually to kill him before his hour came, and only the hand of God protected him. When the hour arrived and God allowed those haters of his Son to work their will they slew him. Jesus, no doubt, had himself in mind, and not only Stephen, James, and others, when thus he mentioned the worst that hostile men could do to his followers. But even in this statement note the limitation: they kill "the body," they must stop at that, they "are not able to kill the soul," Matth. 10, 28. **Body**, as thus used, is taken in the sense of physical life, so that we might translate: "take your life." Not for a moment does Jesus mean to deny the value of our physical life, which is God's own precious gift to us, and which no man dare throw away lightly. He speaks of the bodily life like Paul at Miletus: "I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself," when greater things are at stake. Christ's disciples have something far above "the body" and bodily life, and at this Christ hints with the pointed phrase: "them which kill the body." — Our

worst enemies must halt at this line: **and after that have no more that they can do**—again the present participle to describe their character and condition. “No more” means nothing beyond this limit. They may curse their victims as they please, these shafts fall back upon their own heads. One of the old martyrs said of the murderous hate of his foes, they seemed merely to be saying to him: “Leave this place! Here we give thee a steed all saddled and bridled for thy journey into heaven!” All our treasures and pleasures are rooted and grounded not in this body and life, but in Christ himself and in the imperishable life we possess from him; so if under God’s will this life is taken we can afford the loss, since our vital possessions remain untouched.—But Christ knows our weak nature, that while we are in the body here its life seems so valuable to us, and the true life in faith, because invisible and a thing of the spirit, less than what it really is. So he uses another method for making us courageous: with *the fear of God* he drives out *the fear of men*: **But I will warn you whom ye shall fear**, will show you by holding it under your eyes. The subjunctive in “whom ye shall fear” is that of a deliberative question, here placed in indirect discourse. The same verb is used for “fear” as in the previous verse, and is twice repeated in two most emphatic imperatives. In such close connection the sense of the verb must be the same throughout, unless the text itself furnishes evidence to the contrary. Here the evidence is the other way. If the killing of the body may inspire fright, surely the destruction of both body and soul in hell cannot be said to inspire a lesser degree of fear. But the tense should be noted in all the four forms; it is not the present tense signifying a condition of fright that continues, but the aorist, fright as when one is momentarily upset by some display of danger. Thus when our enemies threaten us, we are not to be startled and upset; but we are to be upset, if we should think of giving way to our enemies

by denying Christ, at the thought of what God then will do to us. When the fear of men assails us the fear of God is to steady us. The idea is not that we live in constant fright and terror of God, quailing before his power to cast us into hell; but that this terror should take hold of us if ever, when the critical moment arrives, we should think of acting for the sake of men so as to incur the terrible wrath of God.—In this sense Jesus enjoins: **Fear him, which after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell.** Besser thinks that this signifies the devil, but Satan is only one of the foes whom we are not to fear at all, but to resist, for then he will flee from us, 1 Pet. 5, 9. Nor has the devil "power" in the sense here of authority, i. e., the right and the ability that goes with it, to cast us into hell. Christ alone has the keys of hell and death, Rev. 1, 18, and casts even the old dragon himself into the bottomless pit, Rev. 20, 3. It is God who is meant here, who has committed all judgment to the Son of man; him we are to fear. Christ is not speaking here of the childlike fear and reverence which as a proper constant motive is to make us obedient unto God as our Father in Christ Jesus, but of that other fear which is bound to overwhelm and consume all his enemies, when at last his burning indignation and wrath take hold of them in judgment. Of this the Psalmist speaks (2, 5): "Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure." Christ's disciples are not under the wrath of God, but have escaped from it by receiving the pardon of their sins. But if they fall prone before the fear of men, deny Christ, and lose that pardon, they will run into the wrath of God again. Of that Christ bids them be afraid. Pank puts it in a practical way: "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 — 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?" — God's power is twofold: **after he hath killed . . . to cast into hell.** The same verb is used for "to kill," i. e., destroy the bodily life. As far as this loss is concerned, the anger of God inflicts every whit as much as the anger of men. But when we compare the two, God and men, on this point, there is here already a mighty difference: men can do nothing to us except by the permission of God, and to die because of their anger is thus only an apparent loss; but for God to destroy our lives in his wrath is to suffer loss indeed. It makes all the difference in the world how we die, whether as martyrs for our faith, or as outcasts from the sight of God. — Therefore too, Jesus combines temporal death under God's wrath with the damnation of hell. The word for **hell** here is *Gehenna*, and signifies literally "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 they came to employ the name for the abode of the damned, i. e., hell. The effort to use this derivation in order to alter the significance of the word, and make it mean annihilation, is vain. It signifies a *place* into which God casts; it is a place of fire and burning, Matth. 5, 22, and James 3, 6 speaks of the tongue "set on fire of hell." It is farcical to say that a tongue is set on fire of annihilation. The term as constantly used in Scripture and by the Jews signifies neither an act, nor a condition, but a place to which a permanent condition attaches, namely ceaseless burning. All this is substantiated by the other terms and descriptions used in the Scriptures of the ultimate fate of the

damned, all of which must be taken together to learn what any one term, here for instance *Gehenna*, signifies. The aorist for "cast into" denotes one definite and final act of judgment. — The addition: **Yea, I say unto you, Fear him,** is dramatic in form and effect. As when Jesus began: "I will warn you," so now with the repetition: "I say unto you," he places himself and what he says squarely in opposition to any who may give other counsel to his disciples, also to any cowardly thoughts of their own. All such hide and cover up the reality, his words reveal the actual situation. — It is a mistake to think that in preaching the fear of hell fire is not to be used. There are certainly higher motives which must move us to follow Christ and be faithful to him. But when these fail to operate as they should, when the basest form of all motives begins to assert itself, the grovelling fear of men, then the terror which the wrath of God must ever inspire in all those who lay themselves liable to it, has its function to perform while yet there is time to escape the divine judgment. The wrath of the Almighty absolutely dwarfs any anger of men; merely to recognize that fact will dispel our fear of men.

6. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings? and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God.
7. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.
Fear not: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

The reference to the wrath of God is only one means for expelling the fear of men, a kind of negative means which has its necessary place. Another is God's providence and rule over all creatures, and his special care over his children. To recognize this will fill our hearts with faith and trust, and this is a positive means for conquering fear. — In the Matthew passage Jesus said "two sparrows for a farthing"; **five sparrows for two farthings** is at the same rate, a slight reduction for taking the greater number being the usual thing in market selling. The English loses the reference to the triviality of the transaction in not reproducing the two diminu-

tives: five *little* sparrows for two *little* farthings, the fifth part of a drachma, coins far smaller than our smallest. That is all five of them are worth to men. — But even these are included in God's care: **and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God.** Grammarians will dispute whether this verb is a circumscribed perfect tense, or the copula with the participle as the predicate. We take the latter: not a single sparrow is a forgotten one, left out of mind by God and continuing as such now. "In the sight of God" sounds Hebraistic; the idea is that God's eyes do not fail to note even a single sparrow. When one watches these numerous birds, considered entirely useless now, flying hither and thither, busy with a thousand motions, one so exactly like a thousand, a hundred thousand others, then we begin to understand what Jesus meant by this statement, that every last one of these birds is taken into account by God, who sees that each has what it needs for its life and shall live as long as he wills. As with these "little sparrows," so with all other creatures, greater and smaller — all their endless millions are in his care and keeping; "not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father." — This striking and far-reaching example of God's provident care is used by Jesus in a remarkable way; instead of simply referring to the far more important and valuable human being as such, he goes up from the lesser to the greater by going down to the least thing about that greater: **But the very hairs of your head are all numbered,** i. e., have been numbered and are treated as such now. Robertson, 1185-6, shows that ἀλλά in many connections is not adversative and ought not to be translated "but"; so here, it is "now," merely adding something of a different sort. The human head has some 140,000 hairs. Who would miss one if he should lose it? Who could tell which one he had lost? But God would know, he takes every hair into account. The thought is staggering in its immensity, when we think of the millions of human heads

and the hairs each one bears. — With God's care so great and all-inclusive it deserves a corresponding trust on our part. **Fear not**, at no time; for now the verb is the present imperative for durative, continuous action. Our entire lives ought to be utterly devoid of fear as though anything could ever happen to us without the will of our heavenly Father. The sparrow knows not the eye that watches over it, but we know. Compare Luke 21, 18; Acts 27, 34; 1 Sam. 14, 45; 2 Sam. 14, 11. James may die by the sword of Herod, but it was God's will; he could have sent the angel who delivered Peter out of Herod's hands to deliver James likewise, but he wished to crown James with martyrdom long before he crowned Peter likewise. Alas, that our eyes are so dark and dim, not to see this divine minute care, and to give way so often to useless, harmful fear. — **Ye are of more value than many sparrows**, i. e., ye surpass many sparrows, ye who are the crown of God's creatures on earth, possessing immortal souls; ye for whom Christ came to pay the price of his blood. What then must be God's care and concern for us? This word is addressed to Christ's disciples and thus includes all that lies in their adoption as children of God and heirs of heaven.

8. And I say unto you, Every one who shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: 9. but he that denieth me in the presence of men shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God.

The inwardness of every Gospel command is a golden promise. This promise lies in v. 7, and now rises before us in all its greatness. The command not to fear men is retained in this promise which includes brave confession; only now the cardinal act in which the victory over fear manifests itself comes to view, confessing Jesus before men. The Greek *ὁμολογέω ἐν* signifies to make confession regarding someone, the preposition being due to the Aramaic. The indefinite relative

clause has *ἀν* with the future indicative, a regular alternative for the subjunctive in such clauses in the Greek of this period, with no difference in meaning. Jesus makes his words emphatic: **And I say unto you.** He uses a clause which expresses expectancy: **Every one who shall confess me before men**—there will be such, and not a few. To confess him thus is to acknowledge him in true faith as our Lord and Savior and to hold fast to every word he has commanded us, Matth. 28, 20. The plain implication here is that this will have to be done against the opposition of men, whom the flesh might induce us to fear. Another implication is that such confession in the face of men is made from trust in God's care of the confessor. While thus *we* must make the confession, it is *God's grace* working in us which produces it—the glory is his.—This grace even now is busy stimulating such confession by the promise: **him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.** The emphasis is not on "him," which in the Greek is merely implied, but on "the Son of man." The two confessors are thus put into pointed contrast, or rather co-ordination; the one confession is met by the other. Again it is a story of the lesser followed by the greater: "before men"—"before the angels of God." Evidently this is grace, not merit. Who could merit such an act of Christ? to say nothing of the real power which makes us confessors.—Jesus here uses his Messianic name, and not the bare pronoun "I": **the Son of man.** The term is derived from Dan. 7, 13: "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven," etc. It evidently refers to Christ's human nature, but so as to imply that this Son of man, while truly man, is more than man; it always includes Christ's divinity. This also because Christ, who constantly employs this designation for himself, uses it for his office as the Messiah. So the full significance of the title is: *the Son of God in the form of Man as our Messiah.* As such he is Lord of the Sabbath, Matth. 12, 8; has the power to forgive

sins, Matth. 9, 6; etc. It is a serious mistake to reduce the term to mean man in the highest sense (Schleiermacher), or the one toward whom the whole race from the creation of Adam on tended (Hofmann). The old fathers, Eusebius, Origen, Augustine, etc., were right: "Son of man" is the counterpart of "Son of God." — Jesus might have said that he would confess us as the divine Messiah now while we confess him here among men; that would have been great and glorious. Instead he refers to the consummation of his Messianic kingdom at the last day, when he shall sit on his throne of glory with all "the angels of God" about him. Then he will acknowledge us before them all as indeed his own. There is no mention of men, of all the nations of the earth assembled before his throne, because, apart from us whom he shall confess, there will be only the wicked whom he shall deny. Their presence is implied in the next sentence, but Christ's confession of us is said to be before the angels, because they will acclaim that confession and receive us into their midst. Note the divine certainty with which Christ as he stood there in his lowliness, when men had just reviled him and used his name blasphemously, speaks of his coming glory; and on that great day, amid his holy angels, he will still be the Son of man. Who can describe what it will mean when his faithful confessors hear from his exalted lips what he has already told them in advance: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matth. 25, 31. Let this promise stimulate us to say with Tertullian: "We say it, and say it publicly, openly and without shrinking, even amid your torturing and with bloody and torn bodies: We honor God in Christ." And Luther wrote to Staupitz: "What if I am found guilty of all vices, as long as no one is able to charge me with ungodly keeping still the while my Lord Jesus suffers." — Necessarily Christ's promise has a reverse side to it: **But he that denieth me in the presence of men, etc.**

Here we have only the aorist participle, which merely states the fact as a definite past act, and omits the thought of expectancy on Christ's part. The distinction is not strong in our translation, and yet it is worth noting. It quietly implies that Jesus wants us all to confess him, and no man to deny him. But some will; and Jesus reckons with the fact. To deny is to say no. This can be done in countless ways. Jesus himself explains in v. 10: to speak a word against the Son of man. The aorist participle, however, does not refer to a single act of denial as such; for a man might repent of that, like Peter, and Jesus himself states that such a denial may find forgiveness. The tense of the participle points to definite denial as marking a man's position in general. It is denial without subsequent repentance. And this denial includes a knowledge of Christ; his grace has come to the man to fill him with faith and make him a confessor. Wilfully he rejects this grace, disowns the Son of man, and thus denies him. He may do it politely and suavely; he may have all kinds of reasons; he may deny by his acts while his tongue is still, or perhaps makes empty confession. "Before men" means that they are the witnesses of the denial; if they were confessors themselves the denial grieved them, if themselves deniers the denial confirmed them in their sin. — Here Jesus adds only: (he) **shall be denied in the presence of the angels of God.** As a confessor he willingly ranges himself alongside of his confessors, but he will not range himself equally alongside of his deniers. The very form of his statement shows that he abandons them. The passive verb implies an agent, and Matth. 10, 32 states that this is Jesus; but this statement does not alter the significance of the passive verb with its omitted subject here, in contrast with the full and emphatic subject in the previous verse. We know in advance the words with which this terrible denial will be made: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matth. 7, 23. Who can imagine the

effect of these words when all "the angels of God" shall hear and second them by closing the doors against all such deniers forever? Christ's confession and denial shall follow as the echo of the confession or denial which men make of him now. He who keeps that before his soul constantly will be a fearless confessor to the end.

indexed

SERMON. *used 27*

With the new year we have set ourselves once more to live the new life and journey on toward the new Jerusalem. What do we need as thus we pass on into the days before us? Exactly what Christ offers his friends in our text—a new vision. He scatters the murky clouds of earth that hem in our view, he takes the film from our eyes, and makes us look across the short span of our earthly lives and see in all its glorious reality that supreme day which all of us will reach at last. It is as if, pouring the light of his Word upon us, he calls to us:

Keep in View the Day when You shall Appear before Christ and the Angels of God.

- I. On that day you surely want me to confess you.
- II. Then in these days you surely do not want to deny me.

I.

We have started on a new year. Will you live to see the end of it? Neither you nor I know. One thing we do know; our life is just what St. James says it is (4, 14), "a vapor that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." What a mistake, then, to act as if our lives are to continue indefinitely, or to busy ourselves only with what we may get and enjoy from day to day. Lift up your eyes and see what Jesus here shows you: the supreme day of all the days of earth, that final day when all earthly years shall end, when he himself shall end them by coming in his glory with all the angels of God about him, to gather all the nations of the earth before him and to pronounce the final judgment on every man's soul. You will be there, and I. With all the shining angels looking on, every one of us will stand forth and our very souls will be laid bare in their sight. Then what?

Jesus himself has told his friends, and us with them, what will then be done. He will either confess or deny us. He will either turn to us in his heavenly love and graciousness and say before all that angelic company: "Come, ye blessed of my Father,

inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"; or he will turn in his holy indignation from us, and say before them all: "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." What do you want him to say on that day? The time to answer that is now.

And you are able to do it. We know now already, and can tell with certainty in advance, just what Christ will say in any given case, for he has told us in advance whom he shall confess, and whom deny. Hear his own word: "Also I say unto you, whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."

What does he mean by confessing him before men? Look at the name by which he designates himself, and you will be able to tell. He is "the Son of man." That name he loved and used most often because it points both to what he is and what he has done for us. He, the eternal Son of God, became man for our sakes to be our Redeemer and Savior from sin. He who was more than man became man that he might die for our sins, by his blood remove our curse, and so make us children of God and heirs of salvation. And now you see what it means to confess him before man. It means to recognize him as the divine Savior, made man for our sakes, to accept the cleansing of his blood, to believe and trust in him as our Redeemer, and then to declare and show it openly by word and deed. The vital thing is the heart; that must cling to him as our only hope and help against sin and damnation. But the heart governs the entire life. With your heart holding fast to him, your lips will speak out, your words and actions will show that he is in your heart. And since you know him only from his Word, by which he comes to you and gives you all his grace, your heart will cling to that, you will prize it, live in it, obey it, hope and trust in it. Your lips and life will show that you do. And that is what it means to confess Christ.

And now it is plain what it means to deny him. It means to refuse to believe that he is what he says, and that he has done what he and his Word declare, namely redeem us by his blood. It means to reject his saving grace, to do without, or to figure out some sort of salvation for ourselves. That includes, of course, that a man care nothing for his Word, but prefer his own wisdom to guide and direct his soul. Such a man's lips and life will show in many ways to those about him that he has no use for the Son of man—he thus denies him.

So Christ will confess on that great day those who confess him now, and deny those who deny him now. What do you want him to do with you? O say it with all your heart: *I want him to*

confess me! But realize at once what your words must signify, if you mean what you say. They must signify: I want to be one of his true confessors now—to believe and follow him, to rejoice and glory in him, to hear and obey him, to serve and honor him, and to do this so that men may know I belong to Christ and to Christ alone. The mere wish to have him confess you is not enough; nor a half-effort to be one of his confessors. Such wishes and partial attempts deceive many; in the end consternation will overwhelm them when they find themselves denied and all the angels of God closing the gates of heaven against them. That is why you cannot keep in view too vividly that day when you shall appear before the Son of man and the angels of God. Confess him today as if *that* day were to be to-morrow. Then all your life will be filled with the joyous certainty that he will confess you.

II.

Now all this must be turned around and said in another way, just as Christ does it in our text when he warns his friends, and us with them, not to deny him before men. The trouble is that thousands start out to confess Christ, but when they find so many men hostile to this confession and its consistent practice, they end up miserably by denying the Son of man before men. The supreme realities of that great day, and all that they involve for us now already, are blotted out from their vision by the inferior painful, threatening realities of these days and what they seem to involve.

Two powerful motives block the road to confession and try to crowd Christ's friends into denial, the fear of the harm men may do us, and the dread of the loss we may incur. Here is a precious doctrine of God's Word, perhaps the central one of our salvation. Instead of standing up to confess and uphold it when assailed, we allow it to be contradicted and vilified in our very presence. Here is a plain piece of Christian conduct, assailed in the same way; again we keep silent, denying Christ through fear of men. Worse than this: men expect us to set aside Christ, our faith in him, our faithfulness to him, in all kinds of ways, in business, in society, in politics, in individual actions of this or that sort. What happens? We are afraid to say no to men, and thus by what we do or leave undone at their bidding we deny the Son of man. Gain invites us: friends, influence, money, a good position, favors and advantages, if we drop our close adherence to Christ's teaching, if we take some liberty with our loyalty to his commands. We dread to lose this gain held out to us, we pay the price—we deny. Who will count the instances in which these two motives, the fear of what men may say and do, and the dread of what we may lose,

have made cowards of confessors and turned them into deniers. O yes, there is always an excuse, something about the situation which seems to justify the denial. But no excuse changes the denial when it is made. It is not a confession, but the opposite, and God knows that it is this, and the Son of man knows. Only one thing can change it, blot it out altogether and remove it from the sight of God: bitter contrition and repentance, like that of Peter when from fear of men he too had denied the Son of man.

But look into our text and learn how to confess and never deny. Here Christ takes the worst possible case, not some loss of money, position, friends, and the like, but the deadly hatred of his enemies when they actually kill his confessors. You know this has really happened. The long bloody story of the martyrs attests it. What if you had to face hatred like that? If you deny when men threaten you a little, what would you do if they threatened your life? If you are upset to lose some single advantage in life, what if you were to lose life itself? Oh, I dread to think how in such a trial many who now are counted confessors would be scattered like leaves before the wind. But look at the folly of denial even when life itself and all that makes it fair and lovely is at stake. Let the light of that great day shine upon anything and everything that may happen to us in these days. Which is worse: to have men kill the body—which is literally the worst they can do,—or to have God, when we deny his Son, cast us body and soul into hell, and to have that doom sealed forever by the Son of man on the last great day? It is a thousand times better to lose our poor earthly life, even in the worst possible death, than to lose body and soul in eternal damnation. It is almost incredible how any man here could make the wrong choice. But while we must mention this extreme possibility, because Christ mentions it, and it has occurred, we must ever remember that Christ's enemies cannot do as they please. Look at the sparrows that flit among the trees. Poor people used to buy them for food, five sparrows for two farthings. Now a dozen are not worth a cent because nobody cares for them. But not one single sparrow does God forget, each little life is made to last just as long as God wants. What then about us, to whom God has given immortal souls, for whom the Son of man died on the cross, whom he has adopted in his Son as his children and heirs of heaven? Christ himself tells us: so dear are we to him that not one hair shall be plucked from our heads by a hostile hand, or a single loss come to us as tiny as the falling of a hair from our heads, without the will of God. Fear of men, dread of loss? They shrivel into nothing beside the power of God and of the Son of man, our judge on the last day, the power to disown and damn forever those who deny the Christ that saved

them, and to preserve, bless, and eternally confess those who confess Him with a true heart and life.

Life flows fast. "We spend our years as a tale that is told," wrote Moses of old. So this year will soon be gone. What shall its record be? Full of true, noble, stalwart confession of Christ, no matter what the cost? or marred and stained by cowardly denial for fear of men and hope of gain? Make your answer to-day and every day with your eyes fixed on the Son of man and His holy angels as you shall stand before them on that great day. Then I know the answer will be: *On that day I want Him to confess me; and in these days nothing shall move me to deny Him.*

OUTLINES.

Three great lines of thought are twined together in our text in such a way that we may either simply co-ordinate them and thus combine them under one theme, or subordinate any two of them to the third, in either case doing full justice to the text and the Sunday for which it is set. A world of opposition calls upon us: to confess Christ; do it without fear; relying on God's protection and care. Again: Always looking across to the last great day: we will let no fear of men turn us aside—we will rely wholly on God's care—we will courageously confess our Lord.—Genuine Christian fearlessness never hesitates in the confession of Christ—always finds support in the promises of Christ.—Men often imagine they lose by confessing Christ. Consider what we gain when we confess Christ: Christ's confession at the last day; God's care till we reach that day.

"These Times Call for Decision."

A decision:

1. *Between confession and denial of Christ.*
2. *Between the fear of God and the dread of men.*
3. *Between reliance on God and trust in ourselves.*

What does Christ Say unto us, His Friends?

1. *Fear no man!*
2. *Trust God!*
3. *Confess the Son of man!*

**What Happens when we Make a Fearless Confession
of Christ?**

1. *The world opposes us.*
2. *The Father protects us.*
3. *The Lord accepts us.*

Adapted from J. RUMP.

**"Jesus, be our Guide,
As through life we glide!"**

1. *"Faithfully in our behavior may we follow Thee, dear Savior."*
 2. *"When the world is cold, let us to Thee hold!"*
 3. *"Open, when life's o'er, Lord, to us thy door!"*
-

THE EPIPHANY CYCLE

(155)

EPIPHANY.

John 1, 29-34.

The Epiphany cycle, which begins with the Epiphany festival and includes the six following Sundays, begins, like the Easter cycle, with a burst of glory, which diminishes as the cycle moves on. Epiphany signifies *appearance* or *manifestation*. The original idea of the festival centered in the baptism and anointing of the Savior, inasmuch as thereby he assumed his mediatorial office and manifested himself as our Savior. In the Western church this idea came to be restricted to his manifestation to the Gentiles, which brought in the mission feature. We are free to follow either line, texts in the various gospel selections being chosen accordingly. Here we follow the original import of the festival, which also governs the after-Epiphany selections to a certain extent. The text is one of the finest that could be offered, the testimony of John the Baptist himself concerning the anointing of Jesus and the significance of this divine act. In the fullest sense of the word Jesus is here *made manifest to us as the Son of God our Savior*. There are, of course, many other and most wonderful manifestations, revealing the same great reality, but this one is both fundamental in constituting the assumption of his holy office with the Father and the Spirit participating in the act, and at the same time constitutes the next great step in order after the miracle of the Incarnation, celebrated a few days ago. The special feature of the text is the Baptist's report of the revelation God had made to him in advance of the Spirit's descent upon Jesus, so that when the miracle occurred he might understand its full import. The Baptist now

testifies both in regard to the event itself as it took place and in regard to God's revelation of its full significance. The latter he sums up by declaring Jesus to be the Lamb of God, and the Son of God. Thus he stands revealed before us in all his Savior glory.

We may well suppose that the evangelist himself, at this time a disciple of the Baptist, witnessed the baptism of Jesus and the visible descent of the Spirit upon him. Nevertheless, he gives us, as certainly most vital, the testimony of the Baptist himself, since this also includes much more than the bare acts as they occurred before the eyes of those who were then at hand. The Baptist's testimony must have been given shortly after Jesus' baptism, just how soon after no record reports. John was at the height of his work, thousands gathering around him. Even the Sanhedrim had taken notice of his activity, having sent a commission to make official inquiry. The pharisaic party had also sent representatives, and both delegations had been given their proper answer. Here our text begins.

1, 29. On the morrow he seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! 30. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is become before me: for he was before me. 31. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, for this cause came I baptizing with water.

"On the morrow" is the day after the Baptist had answered the delegations sent unto him, not an indefinite day following. The place must have been the same locality, not the little village itself, "Bethany beyond Jordan" (R. V.), but the spot near it where John did his regular work. The evangelist is not concerned about historical or descriptive features, since his aim is only to give us the Baptist's testimony. The historical present tenses are vivid, and John uses two co-ordinate verbs, instead of making the first a participle; this lifts both into equal prominence: **he seeth . . . and saith.**

The Baptist looking up from his work sees **Jesus**, some little distance away, **coming unto him**. It is impossible to determine the purpose of his coming. It could not have been for the baptism, for all that the Baptist said on the previous day, and what he now testifies, rests on the baptism as an accomplished fact. It is a mere supposition to think that he had come to say farewell so early, cf. 35. The most likely suggestion is that his object was to win disciples, for this is what he actually did, and the Baptist's testimony is intended to turn his disciples to Jesus.

Now follows the great testimony. **Behold** turns all eyes upon Jesus, and may well have been accompanied with an appropriate gesture, pointing to the approaching figure. But instead of using an ordinary designation, John utters this most extraordinary one: **the Lamb of God, etc.** The Greek article conveys the thought that this is the particular Lamb, in an eminent sense, like v. 21 "the prophet"; also Rom. 15, 12; Rev. 5, 5. Commentators divide as to the genitive "of God," whether it is the genitive of origin: "from God," which God furnishes, or provides; or the simple genitive of possession: "God's own Lamb," the one belonging to him. The latter is best: this is God's own Lamb, ordained as a sacrifice for himself.—The term **Lamb** plainly connotes sacrifice, as also the modifier: "which taketh away" etc. There is debate whether the Baptist had Is. 53 in mind, or the Passover Lamb in Egypt. Those who argue against the former point to the gentleness, dumbness, and patience there mentioned, to the griefs and sorrows borne. But why overlook: "He laid on him the iniquity of us all" — "for the transgression of my people was he stricken" — "thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" — "he bare the sins of many"? It is too slight an objection that here God lays the sin on the Lamb, while the Baptist makes the Lamb assume the sin. So also it is argued that the paschal lamb is not called a sin offering. Trench is right: "The reference is not special,

but comprehensive. It is to none of these in particular, but 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.' None of the typical lambs typify all that God's Lamb was; they could not. All that each typified is found in Christ. In the designation three things stood out for the Baptist's Jewish hearers: sinlessness, suffering, atonement or redemption. — There is again debate in regard to the participle **which taketh away**, since the verb may mean either "bear" or "take away," cf. Matth. 11, 29, "take up my yoke," and John 11, 48; 15, 2; 17, 15; 19, 31, etc., for "take away." If "to take up" is preferred here, the tense seems peculiar; it would be: "who is in the act of taking up." Moreover, something would have to be supplied, for surely, he will not merely take up this burden, and then put it down again. No, he is *taking away* this terrible load. Weiss and Zahn think the participle is timeless, merely describing the quality apart from the time of the action. But the fact is, that Jesus was at this time in the act of bearing our sins, having assumed them in assuming his mediatorial office; his baptism itself signifies that, though sinless himself, he ranged himself alongside of sinners to take on himself and bear away the load they could never bear. — **The sin of the world** is a comprehensive singular, in the sense of mass, all sins as one great body, *una pestis, quae omnes corripuit*, Bengel. A single sin is enough to damn a soul; that may convey a slight intimation of what "the sin of the world" means. We ought not to make "sin" here = either the guilt, or the consequences of sin. The guilt inheres in the sin, and the consequences inevitably follow sin. Neither is taken away unless the sin itself is removed; and with the sin, its guilt and consequences are cancelled. In the clause: "which taketh away the sin of the world," we

have the entire work of Christ, especially his sacerdotal work, his active and passive obedience. — **Of the world** is universal. It is folly to insinuate that the evangelist here puts in the Baptist's mouth his own later thought. The Baptist repeats what the prophets had said long before him (cf. Is. 52, 15; 42, 6-7; 49, 6-7); moreover, he himself spoke by revelation. Nor were his words something unheard of in the ears of his disciples; we see that they attracted these men to Jesus. Luther: "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 upon your neck, you are lost; if, however, it lies upon Christ, you are free, and will be saved; take now whichever you prefer." Recall the beautiful hymns in which the *Agnus Dei* is sung; also Rev. 5, 6; 13, 8; 12, 11; 22, 1, that we may keep his greatness before us.

V. 30. **This is he, etc.**, points again to the approaching Jesus, and now the Baptist repeats a testimony he had uttered before this. Our evangelist mentioned it already in v. 15. This is what the Baptist said on that former occasion and now repeats pointing to Jesus: **After me cometh a man which is become before me: for he was before me.** The words are a paradox, with the solution in the last clause. Jesus did come after the Baptist; he was six months younger in point of age, and he had only just now assumed his office, while the Baptist was already at the height of his work. So he was plainly **after** John, the word also placed emphatically forward. Yet John says that this man "has come **before** me," with the adverb again emphatic. It seems useless to labor with our English verb "become" (here: "is become before me") in this connection; *γίνεσθαι* with an adverb of place = to come, and the perfect tense, *γέγονεν* is punctiliar-durative: has come, and now continues as such. Zahn: *Der Hintermann, welchem der Täufer als*

Vordermann bahnbrechend vorschritt, ist der Vordermann geworden; der Nachfolger hat den Vorläufer ueberfluegelt. The verb "is come" or "has come" refers not to the age of Jesus only, but to that plus his office; just as also *ἐρχεται* hints at the standard term for the Messiah, who is called *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, the Coming One. The question is how is this possible? It could not be with any ordinary man. The solution here is the pre-existence of Jesus: **for he was before me**, using now the imperfect *ἦν* — *was*, ever and ever, with no limitation as to how far back this goes. The evasion that *πρῶτός μου* refers to rank: "more than I," not only would require a different word in the Greek, but would ruin the sense of the entire statement, making it trivial and ordinary. In a way which the Jews loved, hiding the sense sufficiently to stimulate inquiry and thought, the Baptist declares the pre-existence, and thus the divinity, of Christ.

V. 31. For the Baptist's hearers it was natural to inquire, how he could be so sure of the great things he said about Jesus; this question he meets in advance. He admits: **And I knew him not** (the pluperfect of this verb is imperfect in meaning), thus plainly stating that his knowledge had a higher source. The Baptist, of course, knew Jesus personally, his mother also being a relative of the Virgin, but as a prophet of God he confined his utterances to the divine communications. The mystery of Jesus' person he did not know until God revealed it to him. — This revelation, however, had to be made; the Baptist could not be left in ignorance regarding the true greatness of the Messiah, for his very mission was to make him known to Israel and to prepare the way for him. The purpose clause is forward for emphasis: **that he should be made manifest to Israel**, and is emphasized again by adding: **for this cause**. The adversative "but" implies the thought, that, not knowing who Jesus really was, and yet being sent to make him manifest, God revealed to him what he needed to know. The aorist

subjunctive signifies a manifestation actually accomplished, not merely attempted. Israel did learn who Jesus was from the Baptist. In the passive voice there lies an agent: God, through John, made him manifest, i. e., revealed who he was. And the honor name "Israel" points to the high calling of God's chosen people, who were to be the first to have the Messiah made manifest to them.—For this purpose, then, John says, **I came baptizing with water**, as one having a great mission and carrying it out. He used a system of lustration, because cleansing was necessary for Israel to receive the Coming One when now he would be made manifest. Here, as throughout where the Baptist's work is described, his baptism cannot mean a mere ceremonial application of water, devoid of the Spirit and thus no true sacrament, but a mere symbol of future cleansing by other means. Israel had all the ceremonies of this kind if needed. The Baptist, however, preached and applied the baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins, Mark 1, 4; Luke 3, 3. He baptized those who repented, confessed their sins, and believed in the Messiah the Baptist heralded. In all this the Spirit wrought, and actual forgiveness was bestowed.

32. And John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him. 33. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, he said unto me, Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Spirit. 34. And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.

The evangelist inserts: "And John bare witness," to mark decidedly that what follows is the testimony of the Baptist, and the term "bare witness" states that he speaks from his own direct personal experience. The perfect tense: **I have beheld**, used so frequently in St. John's Gospel, called the extensive or the dramatic historical perfect (Robertson), conveys that the seeing

occurred some time before, but the Baptist still, as it were, has the vision; its full effect is with him as when he first beheld. The aorist here would be cold and prosaic. The verb used denotes here, as frequently, a gazing upon with wonder. — It is remarkable with what clearness and definiteness **the Spirit**, the third person of the Godhead, is spoken of thus early by the Baptist, and parallel with the Spirit “the Son of God,” v. 34. Both names involve a revelation of the Trinity. It is useless to speculate on how fully the Baptist himself grasped the reality of the three divine Persons, suffice it to say that the Baptist spoke by revelation, as he himself states. None of his hearers, however, are shocked at these Trinitarian names, as little as was the Pharisee Nicodemus, or in fact any of the Jews. They all receive these names as a matter of course. “The Spirit” is by nature invisible, like the Father and the Son, but from of old the divine persons had chosen ways to appear to the fathers. So here John states how he beheld the Spirit: **descending as a dove out of heaven** (Luke: “in a bodily form as a dove”). All figurative explanations must be discarded, an actual bodily form, thus visible to human eyes, descended out of heaven, not indeed a dove, but “as a dove.” Why this form? Luther speaks of friendliness; generally purity, innocence, meekness are symbolized by the dove. Probably the best answer is the graciousness of the Spirit. Gently soaring down upon Jesus, so the Baptist saw the Spirit. **And it abode upon him**, i. e., the Spirit. We might have had another participle, instead we have the finite historical aorist: the Spirit did abide upon Jesus. The following verse shows that the Baptist saw also this “abiding,” for this was part of the sign granted to him whereby to distinguish the Messiah. The statement: “it abode upon him” (i. e., extending over him) means that the Spirit did not leave Jesus again; he became the permanent possession of Jesus, filling his human nature completely and helping to equip it for its wonderful work. How

the Baptist could and did see this, who can tell? When God grants heavenly manifestations we know that he opens our eyes and senses adequately to receive them, cf. John 12, 28-31; Acts 9, 5, etc., and the parallels.

V. 33. Now the Baptist reveals the significance of what thus he had seen. By this very sign, God had told him, he was to know beyond a doubt the identity of the Messiah. So he repeats: **And I knew him not**, emphasizing his ignorance as to the real nature of Jesus. God himself removed his ignorance: **he that sent me to baptize with water — he**, no less a person. As the one who originally commissioned him and communicated with him, telling him to baptize with water, he now gives him this additional information for the accomplishment of his work. When and how, it is idle to conjecture; God never had any difficulty in communicating with his prophets. — The Baptist gives us the exact words which God spoke to him: **Upon whomsoever thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and abiding upon him, the same is he, etc.** Thus the Baptist was fully prepared for what happened after the baptism of Jesus, and understood exactly what the descent of the Spirit meant. The subjunctive in the relative clause is the usual futuristic, used for expectancy. And the Baptist was to see both the descending and abiding; they together constituted the sign. The emphasis of the forward position of the relative clause is increased by the demonstrative which takes it up again: "the same," etc., namely the Messiah. — And he is described here as **he that baptizeth with the Spirit**. Because his mission was to baptize with the Spirit therefore he is revealed to the Baptist through the descent of the Spirit. What Christ's baptizing with the Spirit signifies we have established in connection with Luke 3, 16, Third Sunday in Advent. None but the great Messiah himself could pour out the Spirit from heaven, as Jesus did on Pentecost, to flow on with saving power and grace through all the world for all time; and even he could not do this until all his own redemptive work was finished. We would get an utterly

false contrast, if we supposed John's baptism "with water" nothing but a water ceremony because Christ's baptism is "with the Spirit." The sacrament administered by John was a true sacrament, working regeneration by water and the Spirit, John 3, 5, but it was the beginning of the great work, which God's Son alone could execute and then crown by the unlimited and final outpouring of the Spirit from heaven itself. Only the Spirit is here mentioned, but this briefer reference is identical with the fuller description: "the Holy Ghost and fire."

V. 34. What John was told to expect that came to pass exactly as told him. **And I have seen** includes the descent of the Spirit and the significance of this descent as God had given it to John; he saw the descent and what it meant. The extensive perfect tense speaks of the vision as in effect still before his eyes. — **And have borne witness**, while connected only by "and," really rests on and results from the seeing. Here again the same tense: he testified before this, and his testimony as such stands indefinitely. He may, of course, repeat and renew it, but it is all one testimony which once made abides unchanged. And mark, he "bears witness," for he himself saw what occurred, and saw it aright, fully equipped to understand its significance. He is a witness fully competent, and his testimony is unimpeachable. Such witness we must believe, even as the evangelist and his fellow disciples believed. To reject such witness is to condemn ourselves. — The sum and substance of the Baptist's testimony is **that this is the Son of God**. This designation, Son of God, did not originate with the Baptist; he merely repeats what the voice from heaven declared after the baptism of Jesus: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matth. 3, 17. This is direct revelation, and we need not try to discover just how fully the Baptist comprehended the Father's word. By the Spirit's enlightenment he knew both the Son and the Spirit far better than thousands

of theologians to-day. "Son of God" is meant in the supreme sense, as the descent of the Spirit shows — in human form, yet of the same nature and essence as the Father and the Spirit. By putting this name last the evangelist brings the testimony of the Baptist to a grand climax. For Epiphany we have exactly what we need: the full revelation of what occurred when the Father himself manifested Jesus as his Son.

SERMON.

Epiphany is the festival of Christ's manifestation.

The heavenly light that shone over Bethlehem's plains when the angels sang their gloria at the Savior's birth died away and a great silence fell once more. For about thirty long years there was little or no sign to make known that God's Son was on earth, and that the great work of saving the world from sin was under way. That interval came to an end when Jesus, grown to manhood, stepped forth from his obscurity to assume the mighty office for which he had entered the world. He came to the banks of the Jordan river where John the Baptist was making ready the people of Israel to receive the Savior, he himself was baptized, though sinless, in order to place himself beside us sinners and take our sins away. At that great moment God in heaven, by the most wonderful manifestation, drew aside the curtain as it were, and once more revealed the heavenly realities connected with our Savior and his blessed work.

That was an Epiphany, a manifestation or appearing, so significant in what it revealed that the ancient church set aside a festival day for its celebration, the Epiphany festival, which we too are celebrating this day. In our text John the Baptist himself acts as our Epiphany preacher, and tells us both what God did that day and the full significance of what occurred. Let us give ear, then, with willing hearts as

St. John the Baptist Proclaims the Wonders of Christ's Epiphany at the River Jordan.

I. These wonders begin, he tells us, with the **Father's revelation.**

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for the Savior by calling the people of Israel to repent of their sins and by baptism to receive the forgiveness of God. John knew that the

Savior, promised these many centuries, was now at hand and would appear. God had revealed that to him when he sent him to preach the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins. But John, though he knew Jesus all along and no doubt had his own expectations regarding him, did not know with absolute certainty who the Savior would be. Remember how Jesus had made no sign of any kind, but had lived for years in the most quiet retirement. So John tells us, and even repeats it: "I knew him not." As a true prophet of God he never for a moment followed his own ideas or conclusions, but waited patiently for the revelation he knew would come from God.

And the hour arrived. Just when it was we do not know, for John has not told us. But God at last revealed to the Baptist that the Savior would now step forth from his obscurity, and that God himself would make the Savior known by a mighty miracle from heaven. He would send his Holy Spirit in a visible manner from heaven upon him who was to be the Savior. By that heavenly sign John would know him indeed, yea, would know much more, namely that he would both complete his saving work and then himself send forth that same Spirit again in a miraculous manner, to spread the blessing of his salvation through all the world. Surely, John's heart rejoiced when he received this message from God, and he waited with anxious expectation for the great hour to arrive.

So the wonders of Christ's Epiphany began with *the Father's revelation*. God in heaven himself prepared that Epiphany, for he intended to inaugurate our Savior into his high and holy office as no man before ever had been, as no mere man ever could be, inaugurated. Thank God for his blessed revelation, which, with the glorious deed that followed, is a mighty support to our faith.

II. The second wonder is **the Holy Spirit's descent**. Hear how John proclaims the Epiphany of Christ at the river Jordan; he bears record, saying: "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him." And again he says: "I saw, and bare record."

The baptism of Jesus was finished, he had walked from the river and stood on its bank. Then suddenly the heavens were opened. A voice spoke from the glory of the open sky. It was the Father in heaven saying so that men could hear: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And as the words sounded with heavenly power and sweetness from above, the Holy Spirit came down slowly and gently, so that men could see, in the form of a dove, the symbol of graciousness and peace, down upon Jesus, and remained upon him, not merely touching him again to

ascend on high. That was the Savior's Epiphany, the manifestation that he was the Savior indeed.

It made him manifest as the Savior by thus audibly and visibly inaugurating him into his office as our Redeemer. Kings, priests and prophets of old were inducted into office by a solemn ceremony of anointing. An oil like perfume was poured upon their heads, whereby they were set apart for their divinely appointed work. This oil was symbolic, a sign to picture in a human way the gift of the Holy Spirit to be given by God to these his servants for the work to which they were called. We have a similar sign still, the laying on of hands at baptism, confirmation, and ordination, when we ask God to send the gifts of his Spirit upon those whom thus we consecrate as his servants. All human anointing and laying on of hands can, of course, do nothing more than picture and ask of God the needed gifts from on high. In themselves these symbolic acts cannot bestow even a single gift of the Spirit. But when Jesus came to undertake his work, God himself acted, as he had said he would. Jesus was to be our eternal prophet, high priest, and king. Both to set him apart and to equip him in body and soul for this tremendous task God anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Visibly, for men to see, the Spirit came upon Jesus, and remained. Not one, or several, or even many gifts of the Spirit were made his, but the Holy Spirit himself, in his fulness, and with all his gifts, was poured out upon him. By this divine act he was made the Christ, which signifies the Anointed One, anointed in the supreme sense as our eternal Savior.

That, then, is the second wonder at the Savior's Epiphany at the river Jordan. *The descent of the Spirit* shows us the work of our salvation as so great that all the persons of the Godhead combine in undertaking it: the Father sends the Spirit upon the Son, and thus in conjunction with the Father and the Spirit our Savior takes up the mighty task. Thank God for this wonder of our Savior's Epiphany, which again forms a mighty support for our faith to rest upon.

III. Among the Epiphany wonders at the river Jordan there shines with especial brightness **the Savior's divine nature**. When John heard that voice from on high and saw the Spirit descend, then indeed he knew what here he proclaims to us so emphatically: "And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."

Think of Jesus in his humble earthly life in Nazareth with Mary his mother. There was the daily round of duty, the work of the little household, and the many little things that brighten even the homes of the poor. It was this same humble Jesus who had come to John, "made in the likeness of men and being formed

in fashion as a man." How could this be the Savior? How could he remove the sins of the whole world, conquer death and hell? Remember Jesus had done no miracle as yet, nor had he risen from the dead. Surely, it must have seemed as if he could not be the Savior of the world.

But God made manifest that this was indeed his own Son. With his own mouth he declared from the open heavens: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." It is the identical declaration made to Mary before his birth by the angel Gabriel: He "shall be called the Son of God." The angel over Bethlehem's plains repeats it: He is "Christ the Lord." Not for naught did God make so plain and positive from the very beginning who this Savior is, sent by him to redeem us. He must be great and mighty enough for the tremendous work, else all will be utterly in vain.

And that is why this Epiphany at Jordan with its heavenly wonders is so precious to our souls. Luther has well said, that if only a man were my Savior, I am lost, for no man is able to remove my sin and release me from death, but with a Savior who is God my salvation is forever assured. Let men deny Christ's divinity, they make God himself a liar, to say nothing of his angels and prophets. Unbelief thus seals its own doom. But the Epiphany at Jordan assures us once more of *the Savior's divine nature*. On this our faith rests, and we glorify the Father who sent his only begotten Son to save the world and made him manifest as the Son.

IV. But the glory of the Epiphany wonders at the river Jordan includes still more, for here is made manifest also **the coming atonement for sin**. When John saw Jesus coming to him he stretched out his hand and cried to all who were near to hear: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

"Lamb of God"—every Jewish ear that heard the word from the Baptist's lips thought at once of all the lambs sacrificed in endless succession at the daily sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem, and of the lambs slain at the great Passover Feast once a year. And there was the great prophecy of Isaiah 800 years before, that the mighty Servant of Jehovah would be a Lamb on whom God would lay the iniquity of us all. Now that Lamb was at hand, provided by God himself in the person of his own Son. And here is the Baptist as God's own prophet declaring to us that this is the Lamb which taketh away the sin of the world. He points to the coming sacrificial death of Jesus when on Calvary's height he shed his blood for us.

Mark well this Epiphany of our Savior as the Lamb of God. Here all the shallow opinions which men have of sin are utterly crushed. If God could set our sin aside as lightly as men imagine, never for a moment would he have made his own Son a Lamb for the atonement of sin. If any lesser sacrifice would have sufficed, surely God would have provided that. But no, he took his own Son, the blood of none else would do. Why such a price? Because the guilt of every sin is infinite—and here is the guilt of all the sins of all the world. Unless a blood, an atonement, an expiation of infinite worth could be brought, the guilt of sin would damn every human soul forever.

But behold the Lamb of God is at hand; in him *the coming atonement for sin* is manifest and proclaimed in advance. Let this blessed Epiphany wonder fill your soul with light and peace now and at that great day.

V. Among the Epiphany wonders at the river Jordan John proclaims as the crowning of the Savior's work **the mission of the Holy Spirit**; for God's own revelation to him was: "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

The Son of God supported by the Father and the Spirit would pay the penalty for our sins in his sacrificial death upon the cross. But with this done he would ascend on high, and from his throne above send down that same Spirit upon us, to remain and abide here with us, as once he remained upon him while on earth, and so shed abroad upon us all the treasures of Christ's salvation. "He shall receive of mine and shall shew it unto you," Jesus afterwards said. That sending of the Spirit took place at Pentecost, as the crowning of the Savior's work. The Holy Spirit was poured out in his fulness upon the Christian church, that is why God said Christ would "baptize with the Holy Spirit"—the outpouring was the baptism. And once poured out, that Spirit has remained, working on and on in all languages, amid all nations, even as the miracle at Pentecost foreshadowed, when the disciples in the power of the Spirit spoke in so many different languages declaring the wonderful works of God.

The baptism of the Holy Ghost, then, continues on to this day. It is the Spirit of God poured out upon the hearts of men through the means of grace, the Word and sacraments, giving us Christ's blood-bought pardon, making us children of God in Christ Jesus, filling our hearts with faith, love, and hope. Without this mission of the Spirit we would neither know nor be able to receive the least of the saving blessings Jesus has obtained for us,

but with this Spirit we are infinitely rich in all his heavenly treasures. The special miraculous gifts which the Holy Spirit bestowed on various members of the church in the first period of his work have ceased, such as tongues, healing, and prophecy, but all the vital and ever necessary gifts which he came to make our own he still dispenses in unstinted measure. This glorious *mission of the Holy Spirit*, extending over all the world, the Epiphany at Jordan made manifest in advance when the Savior began his mighty work. That Spirit, as he has blessed us "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" down to this very day, seals the Epiphany made at the river Jordan as true indeed. Thank God for the promise of the Baptist fulfilled in such heavenly riches to all of us now. Here let our faith rest and continue in joy and praise.

But the wonders of Christ's Epiphany thus proclaimed by John the Baptist of old, his revelation from the Father, the descent of the Spirit, the Savior's divine nature, the coming atonement for sin, and the mission of the Holy Ghost, all point to a still greater Epiphany when Jesus shall appear in his glory at last and gather us all into the eternal kingdom of his glory. Then his Epiphany shall be our Epiphany, his glory our glory, to the praise of his name.

OUTLINES.

The Epiphany note is struck full and clear in the words: "that he should be *made manifest* to Israel." Here a theme is offered leading into the heart of the text: How Jesus was made manifest as the Savior of the world—by the Father from heaven—by the testimony of the Baptist—by the fulfillment of his work—by the inspired Word which reveals this testimony and work to us.—The pivot of the manifestation may also be his divinity: How the Baptist knew that Jesus was the Son of God, our Savior.—Since the manifestation or Epiphany presented in the text is intended for *faith*, the cleavage may be at this point: both what God revealed concerning the person Jesus, and concerning his work, calls for faith. The sermon thus may have three parts: person—work—faith; or only two, faith being connected directly with his person and his work.—We decline to follow Langsdorff who furnishes outlines which parallel our baptism with that of Jesus. Any reference to our own baptism is sufficiently taken care of in treating the words: "He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," i. e. now, since the day of Pentecost, with the means of grace, Word and sacrament.

The Epiphany of Jesus at Bethany beyond Jordan.

1. *An Epiphany of his wonderful person.*
 2. *An Epiphany of his blessed work.*
-

The Great Purpose of our Savior's Epiphany.

1. *His person is made manifest.*
 2. *His work is revealed.*
 3. *Both, that we may know, believe, and be saved.*
-

When Jesus Assumed his Office as our Mediator.

1. *He was manifested as the Son of God.*
 2. *The Holy Spirit descended upon him.*
 3. *He bore our sins as the Lamb of God.*
 4. *He made ready to send us the Holy Spirit.*
-

Our Salvation in the Light of Christ's Sacrifice.

See it

1. *In the divine Savior.*
 2. *In the Savior's sacrifice.*
 3. *In the sacrifice made ours through the Spirit.*
-

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Matth. 4, 12-17 and 23-25.

Many of the usual Epiphany texts present miracles of Jesus in order to show us his Savior glory. In our selection of after-Epiphany texts there is only one miraculous event, that for the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany. The first three texts belong together: to begin with we have *Christ in his blessed work as our Prophet*, including a summary account of the miracles with which he sealed his doctrine; then a text on the *reception of Christ's teaching*; finally a text on his great *compassion* for men's destitute souls. The last three after-Epiphany texts deal with the *power* of Christ, his *saving grace* delivering us from our sins, and his *heavenly character* as the Son of God. The entire series of texts is wound around the office of Christ as our Savior, yet without following a strictly dogmatical arrangement. Each text is intended to show us some one great side of our Redeemer, in order that we may turn our hearts unto him in faith. Only the second text is the reflex of the first, and in this way a close companion of the first. Since we seldom have all six after-Epiphany Sundays in our church year, the preacher ought to select in advance which of the six he prefers to treat. The first which may then be omitted is John 7, 40-53; the second, John 3, 31-36. Still the preacher will have his own reasons for choosing the one or the other of the texts herewith offered.

Matthew follows the account of Christ's temptation by a summary of his ministry in Galilee. From John's Gospel we learn of some of Christ's activity before the great Galilean ministry began, and that this ministry

was interrupted by journeys to Jerusalem to attend the Jewish festivals. Matthew is not concerned with these details, but gives first of all a general picture of what Christ did in the upper province, following this up in subsequent chapters with an elaboration of some of the details which again he presents in groups.

4, 12. Now when he heard that John was delivered up, he withdrew into Galilee; 13. and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali: 14. that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying,

- 15. The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
Toward the sea, beyond Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles,**
- 16. The people that sat in darkness
Saw a great light,
And to them which sat in the region and
shadow of death,
To them did light spring up.**

There is no time connection whatever between this section and the previous account of Christ's temptation; we are free to interpose such length of time as we may be able to determine from other sources, i. e., John's Gospel. Matthew takes for granted that his readers know the story of the Baptist and his tragic end. Farther on in his Gospel (11, 2 and 14, 3) he uses some of the details. Here only the fact of the Baptist's arrest is mentioned, and this only to show why Jesus wrought so extensively in Galilee. The verb used here: **he withdrew**, often points to fear of danger as the motive, but not always, and certainly not here, as if Jesus fled to Galilee to escape a fate like that which had overtaken the Baptist; for Herod Antipas was the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, and certainly had full power in his own dominion. To withdraw is here in the sense of

retire; instead of courting the fullest possible publicity in Jerusalem Jesus transfers his activity into Galilee, the Jewish province farthest removed from the capital and in many ways looked down upon by the proud inhabitants of that center. Wisdom and prudence dictate this transfer, which was made in the interest of the work Jesus had come to do.

V. 13. Matthew also reports, in the same general way, that Jesus changed his residence from Nazareth to Capernaum, compare John 2, 12. Again the exact point of time is not the evangelist's concern, but the fact itself as connected with the work of Jesus in Galilee. It seems as if Jesus had planned his extensive Galilean ministry before the arrest of the Baptist, and then when the arrest occurred put this plan into full operation; for he had moved his home, as John tells us, shortly after his visit at the wedding at Cana. **Capernaum** was far more suitable for the purpose of Jesus than Nazareth could be, since it lay on the populous shores of the Sea of Galilee and on the great trade route which extended from Damascus and the east down to the Mediterranean coast. It was easy to radiate out from this center to all parts of Galilee. Matthew indicates this to a certain extent by writing: **Capernaum, which is by the sea;** the Sea of Galilee was full of shipping, and Jesus, as we know, often crossed it in boats. Yet the significant thing for Matthew is not this transfer of residence to Capernaum, but the selection of Galilee for Christ's ministry. This wider outlook upon the whole land appears in the addition to Capernaum: **in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali.** "In the borders," however, does not signify, as Meyer thinks, the boundary line, as though Capernaum lay near or upon the line where the territory assigned to the tribe of Zebulun touched that assigned of old to the tribe of Naphtali. This boundary line lay considerably below Capernaum. "In the borders" signifies the entire country enclosed in these boundaries, and Zebulun and Naphtali are taken together as one ex-

tent of territory. Capernaum lay in Naphtali, but from it the entire region could be readily reached. Those old boundary lines of the twelve tribes of Israel had long since ceased to divide the country; Matthew's mention of these old "borders" is for the purpose of connecting Christ's ministry in this region with the old prophecy of Isaiah, 9, 1-2.

V. 14-15. The purpose clause with which the evangelist introduces the quotation from Isaiah points to Christ's Galilean ministry as the fulfillment of this prophecy. It was such in the full sense of the word. Zahn's idea, that on the part of Jesus this fulfillment was unconscious, when Jesus entered upon his work, is without justification. **Which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet** refers to the *written* prophecy, which, of course, was first uttered orally and after that recorded. The spoken and written revelation is thus constantly identified in the New Test. — Matthew takes the territorial designations out of their construction in Is. 9, 1, and combines them appositionally with the subject of v. 2, not altering the substance of the prophet's words. Thus there are five designations combined with "the people which sat in darkness." The first two are plain: **the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali**, the two regions Matthew himself had indicated by: "in the borders," etc. Then follows: **toward the sea**, literally; "the way of the sea," the sea-road, an adverbial accusative of direction, but used independently, and thus as a nominative. This is not meant to signify merely a thoroughfare, but the region through which this road passed, and the "sea" is not that of Galilee, as is often thought, but the Mediterranean. **Beyond Jordan** is the country to the east of the river in its northern reaches; it is an independent phrase, used as the name for this territory, cf. v. 25. And **Galilee of the Gentiles** is the northern stretch of territory beyond Naphtali. These five designations are general terms for all that large

territory reached by the ministry of Jesus as Matthew sketches it. The radiating center, as a glance at the map shows, is Capernaum.

V. 16. All this region suffered severely during the past ages. Delitzsch writes: "All these stretches of country were exposed since the days of the Judges, by reason of their proximity, to corruption by heathen influences and by subjugation through heathen enemies. The northern tribes on the hither side besides those on the farther side suffered most by reason of the almost constant wars with the Syrians and the later war with the Assyrians, and the deportation of the inhabitants gradually increased under Phul, Tiglatpileser, Salmanassar up to total depopulation." While in Christ's time this region was populous enough, the people of Galilee were to a large extent a mixed race, and their spiritual condition, in spite of their connection with the central sanctuary at Jerusalem, was deplorable in every way, especially also since that sanctuary had long ceased to stand for the true worship of Jehovah. The prophet's description is thus correct: **the people which sat in darkness** (the present participle refers to the time of the main verb which is an aorist, hence: "sat"). They are still called **the people**, using the standard term for Israel as the chosen people, thus distinct from "the Gentiles" or "nations." Isaiah has "walked," for which Matthew uses "sat," a free rendering. By **darkness** is meant the absence of the divine truth of salvation, which had gone out in Jewish formalism and work-righteousness. — Now the remarkable thing is that this most benighted portion of the Jewish land should be chosen to receive the light through the extended ministry of Christ. Isaiah describes the event: they "see a great light," for which the evangelist when the prophecy was fulfilled very properly writes: **saw a great light**. This light is the Messianic salvation embodied in Christ and proclaimed by him. — The parallel statement is identical in sense. **In the region and shadow** are both modified

by the genitive **of death**. Delitzsch: "We must conceive of the apostate mass of the people as destroyed, for if death has cast its shadow over a land, it is a desert. In this situation those who remain in the land see a great light breaking through the black-bordered sky. The people who looked upward vainly, because with cursing, Is. 8, 21, are no more; it is the remnant of Israel which sees the light of spiritual and bodily redemption above their heads." The prophet then describes this light, and in what he says we must note especially Is. 9, 6-7: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," etc. Again the evangelist uses the aorist: **did spring up**, for the prophet's "shineth." The figure is that of a glorious sunrise after a black and dismal night. In both the prophecy and its fulfillment in Christ we must not miss the strong note of undeserved grace. The people were at their lowest ebb, all spiritual light gone, with no hope nor help in them; then God sent them as a heavenly gift the help of salvation in Christ Jesus.

17. From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Prepositions may be used with adverbs, so here, literally: "from then on." An aorist marks the definite time of beginning, emphatic by position: "began Jesus," followed by a present infinitive to convey the continuous work which was thus set in motion: **to preach**, announce as a herald, make proclamation. We still *preach*, which does not mean argue, reason, dispute, or convince by intellectual proof, against all of which the keen intellect of men may bring more or less convincing counter-argument, but we proclaim a message entrusted to us, announce it in herald fashion, and we testify to its truth, thus in a direct way calling on men to receive and believe what we proclaim. — It is evident Matthew wants us to understand that Jesus took up the work of the Baptist and extended it all through Galilee, whither the Baptist had not been sent. Many Galileans had heard John (11, 7-9), but there must have

been entire regions to whom John's message had come, if at all, only by report more or less reliable. Now all are called upon: **Repent ye**, here the present tense pointing to a durative condition. *Μετανοέω* etymologically signifies to perceive or understand afterwards, i. e., too late; then: to change one's mind, and thus: to repent. In the New Test., however, this etymological meaning is deepened to signify a religious change of heart, away from sin and guilt, unto cleansing and forgiveness. "John was to accuse all, and prove that they were sinners, that they were to 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. The word is used in the narrower sense of contrition alone (Mark 1, 15; Acts 20, 21; Luke 24, 46-47), but where this sense is not indicated it signifies both contrition and faith, "the entire conversion of man," as in our text, Matth. 3, 2; Luke 13, 5; 15, 7. "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 fully promised concerning Christ. Therefore, they ought to believe that for Christ's sake sins are freely remitted to them." *Apology*, 181, 29, etc. True repentance is wrought by the law and the Gospel. — The reason for repentance is that **the kingdom of heaven is at hand**. The plural: "of the heavens" is merely the rendition of the Hebrew *schamajim*, and "the kingdom of God" is only a term which points to him who sits in the heavens and whose rule is this kingdom. The term **kingdom** is not to be understood of an organization, but dynamically of the exercise of rule, as it emanates from the King and extends over men. Thus the kingdom is wherever God's Word

and sacraments dispense his saving grace, where these blessings are received and their powers exhibited in men's hearts and lives. This kingdom is utterly different from all earthly kingdoms. The King makes our kingdom; earthly kings are made (and unmade) by their kingdoms or subjects. — Jesus proclaimed: this kingdom **is at hand**, i. e., has come near, and is thus now present. The idea is not that the kingdom is near by still being a little way off, but that it is actually present. We must put aside as altogether unbiblical the notion as though men could repent and thus of themselves get ready in advance, so that when now the kingdom comes they may enter it. The very call to repent, and the divine power which works repentance, are a manifestation of the kingdom's presence and operation. Thus Jesus preached the kingdom, he the great King himself drawing men unto himself. Matthew here gives us only the grand general theme of Jesus' preaching; this he elaborated in many ways, as we see further on, using no less than 32 times in all in a great variety of connections this very term, "kingdom of heaven." — —

23. And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness among the people.

In order to complete the picture of the Galilean ministry Matthew inserts very briefly how Jesus called four disciples to accompany him in order themselves to become fishers of men, v. 18-22. So **Jesus went about in all Galilee**, from place to place. The imperfect tense is descriptive and points to the extended duration of this work. The Baptist had done his teaching at fixed places for certain periods, but Jesus moved about. — **Teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom**, describes the work in detail as consisting of instructive discourses before the audiences which gathered regularly every Sabbath day, and probably at this time already on the second and fifth day of the week, in synagogues to hear the reading of the Scrip-

tures and to engage in public prayers. Since the days of the Babylonian captivity synagogues, i. e., assemblies, had become a fixed institution among the Jews. Besides the service indicated, whenever competent persons were present, addresses connected with the Word that was read were delivered to the people. We know how Paul afterwards used the opportunity thus offered for his work. Jesus began this and practiced it extensively in Galilee. Here again he differed from the Baptist who spoke only under the open sky. But the discourses of Jesus were in substance what Matthew has already stated, a proclamation of **the gospel** of the kingdom, i. e., its "good tidings," since the burden of the proclamation was salvation and life everlasting. Matthew 5, etc., shows how Jesus taught and preached. But the Sermon on the Mount indicates that Jesus preached also the Law, even as the Baptist had done, for this alone is able to prepare for the Gospel proper.—In addition Jesus wrought many miracles as seals of his proclamation, and as tangible evidence that the heavenly kingdom with its blessed powers was actually present. The present participle is like the two preceding it, indicating continued **healing**. The object is doubled, and each has the same modifier: **all manner of disease and all manner of sickness** (weakness, loss of strength). Not a single ailment failed to disappear instantly at Jesus' touch or command. But this mighty work was restricted to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, as the addition: **among the people**, shows. The healing of the Canaanitish woman is related as an exception.

24. And the report of him went forth into all Syria: and they brought unto him all that were sick, holden with divers diseases and torments, possessed with devils, and epileptic, and palsied; and he healed them.

This is a summary of the effect produced by the work of Jesus when it was fully under way. The imperfect tense in v. 23 is now followed by historical aorists; what Jesus began and carried forward more and

more had this effect, that **all Syria** heard the report of it. This means Syria in contrast to Galilee, hence the Gentile regions on toward Damascus, Antioch, etc., which need not surprise us when we think of the active commercial intercourse between these sections and the populous centers in Galilee. — **And they brought unto him all that were sick** does not mean from heathen Syria as a result of his fame, but in Galilee, in one locality after another. People did not wait for Jesus to find some sufferer and heal him, they brought the sick to him at once of their own accord. **All those that were sick** (the present participle of duration) is again entirely general, but now is meant not of kinds of disease, but of individual sufferers. These are defined by the appositional participle: **holden with divers diseases and torments**, the latter afflicted with pains which here are paralleled with the wider term "diseases." Now Matthew names three classes in particular, namely those of the worst type: demoniacs, those **possessed with devils**; he adds: **and epileptic, and palsied**. Meyer, like some modern commentators, is impressed by the arguments offered against the reality of demoniacal possession, and concludes that the first class here mentioned suffered from peculiar afflictions such as mania, epilepsy, melancholia, and the like. These, he thinks, were supposed by the people to be possessed, and could be cured only by Jesus himself, though knowing better, acting and proceeding as if their suppositions were correct. The fact is that Jesus never lowered himself in such a manner to admit in any degree any false notion of the people with whom he dealt. Throughout the Scriptures distinguish clearly between all ordinary forms of disease and the peculiar affliction of demoniacal possession, so also here the epileptic are not counted among the possessed, Meyer to the contrary notwithstanding. Jesus addressed the demons, and these replied to him, and that often in statements which the human sufferers could not have made of themselves. "It is in vain 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 now mean 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 in their own time they neither could nor would say." Horst, *Zauber-Bibliothek*. Matson, *The Adversary*, p. 177, etc., settles the question as to present-day cases, some of which still occur in heathen lands: "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." Christ gave his apostles power to drive out possessing spirits. The superficial idea that he accommodated himself to the views of the people in order to help these sufferers virtually denies his omnipotent power as the Son of God and reduces him to the level of modern "healers." Nor can anyone show why he did not enlighten with his better knowledge, if such he had, at least his chosen disciples, but left them as is supposed under the old delusion. What Jesus told the seventy, when they returned to him after driving out devils also, more than establishes the reality of such terrible possession, Luke 10, 18, etc. — The R. V. uses **epileptic** for the A. V. rendering: "those which were lunatick." The word signifies: "those who were moon-struck," lunatic, demented. All forms of insanity are meant. The miracles wrought upon this class of sufferers are thus especially great, for many cases of insanity have been found absolutely incurable by the most advanced scientific treatment. — The **palsied** are people suffering from paralysis, which may be due to various causes, many cases of which again are beyond human

help of any kind. — **And he healed them**, i. e., without the least difficulty, and without exception. How he proceeded Matthew himself recites at length, giving us a selection of notable instances, and the other evangelists do likewise. Thus the many miracles of Jesus, all these full of the most wonderful grace and mercy, both reflected the character of the message he brought, and sealed it as true.

25. And there followed him great multitudes from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond Jordan.

Of course, this was when the ministry of Jesus was at its height. Decapolis is the region northeast of Samaria beyond the Jordan, named after ten cities which formed a kind of confederation; most of the inhabitants were Gentiles. Among these cities were Scythopolis, Gadara, Hippo and Pella. Even from the capital and Judea many were attracted to despised Galilee. "Beyond Jordan" is again treated as a noun, and designates the east country along the river down to the Dead Sea. We are not told that great crowds came from Syria, though the report of the miracles of Jesus penetrated that far, but all these countries more nearly comprising the Holy Land sent out their multitudes to see and hear Jesus. Such was the mighty audience of this mightiest of all prophets.

SERMON.

Our Savior Jesus Christ was made manifest when he began his blessed Savior work. God himself made known who he was and what he would do for our salvation. That was the first great day of Epiphany.

Since then the work of revealing salvation to the world darkened by sin and death has steadily gone on. In our text we have a comprehensive description how the whole land of Galilee and a number of the adjacent countries began to emerge out of their age-long darkness of spiritual death. The Gospel was heralded through Galilee from end to end. Christ himself proclaimed it in carrying out his great prophetic office. Many heard

and began to awake from their sleep of death. That Gospel still resounds, for Christ committed it to his church and its chosen messengers to carry it to the ends of the earth. It is ours to hear now, and it still reveals, wherever it is rightly preached, all that we need for our eternal deliverance from sin and death. In fact, we are perfectly right in saying that

The Gospel is Our Epiphany To-day.

Wherever the Gospel is preached, there **Christ** is revealed — **the Kingdom** comes — **light** is shed abroad — **repentance** is wrought — and **heaven** is opened — and thus the Gospel indeed makes an Epiphany for us to-day.

I.

By its preaching of **Christ** the Gospel brings to the desperate spiritual needs of men the one and only Savior able to deliver from all those needs.

The land of Galilee was prosperous enough in an earthly way. There were fine cities, trade, wealth, business. One of the main arteries of trade passed through the land from Damascus and the east. There was plenty of religion also, for the people had their synagogues, their central sanctuary at Jerusalem, and an elaborate ritual of worship. They even had the Bible of that day, namely the Old Testament. But in spite of this all, hear the prophet Isaiah's word on Galilee: "The land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people which sat in darkness . . . which sat in the region and shadow of death." What was wrong with Galilee and the countries around it? These people lay helpless in their sins, with the death-curse of sin upon them and knew no way to get rid of their sin and curse. They did not even realize what was wrong and what they really needed. They were like a man dying with some deadly disease, far from any remedy, not even perceiving the deadliness of his malady. So they were drifting on.

It is a picture of the world to-day where men have not yet found the Gospel. Look at the wealth, even the luxury about us, many a man literally faring sumptuously every day. There are churches too perhaps, of one kind or another, even with the Bible in them like those old synagogues in Galilee, and worshippers often zealous enough like the Jews in their day. But there is no Gospel. The sin and the curse on men's souls is not removed; they do not even know that it ought to be removed, to say nothing of knowing the only way in which this can be done. Thus they sit in darkness, and in the region and shadow of death. Their very

earthly prosperity blinds them; with their bodies so well cared for they fail the more to see their soul's desperate need. They are like a ship sailing gaily along, but on a false route, soon to be dashed to pieces on the hidden rocks that lie under the placid surface of the sea they are sailing.

What did Galilee need of old, what do all these peoples of to-day so like those of Galilee need? The Gospel, the Gospel above everything, because it brings us *Christ*, the Savior and deliverer from sin, death, and hell. See him going from city to city in Galilee, preaching and teaching everywhere the Gospel of the kingdom. To-day he sends us that same Gospel, the glad message that he, Jesus Christ himself, the eternal Son of God, has come to save us from our sins and make us forever blessed. Nothing but the precious blood of Christ can blot out and wash away our sins. He and he alone is the propitiation for our sins, taking their curse away before God forever, and putting God's eternal blessing in its place. A man may have untold wealth, wonderful learning, he may be a president of a nation, a ruler of an empire, unless he has Christ and his atoning blood, he is in the darkness of eternal death. A man may live in the church, read the Bible every day of his life, practice a thousand forms of worship, unless in his church and religion he has found the Rock of Ages cleft for him and has his heart taught to sing: "Simply to Thy cross I cling!" his sin and curse remain and he is lost. This, and this alone is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. The Gospel, the Gospel alone is our Epiphany, because it brings us *Christ, the Savior and deliverer from sin*. Oh, let its blessed message fill your soul and make Christ's deliverance wholly your own.

II.

The Gospel is our Epiphany, for by its preaching **the kingdom** of heaven comes to us.

When Jesus went through Galilee we are told that he preached: "The kingdom of God is at hand." And his message is called "the Gospel of the kingdom." The same is true to-day: wherever the Gospel is preached and by it Christ is brought to men, there the kingdom comes, the spiritual kingdom of God. Christ therefore also bids us pray constantly: "Thy kingdom come."

Men are far from the kingdom as long as they live on under their sins, the guilt and curse of their sins. For that means that they are under a deadly influence which must at last destroy them. Their earthly good fortune, whatever they may have of it, is like the flower of the field; the wind passes over it and it is gone—all its bright petals withered and whirled away. The power of sin never

lets go of itself, it clings to the soul and finally drags it down into eternal darkness and night. The terrible thing about it is that, like the men of Galilee, to this day men fail to recognize this fearful influence of sin until it is too late. God must come to their rescue, or they will perish blindly forever.

That is why he sends us "the Gospel of the kingdom." What is this *kingdom*? A new power, different from and higher than any in the world, a mighty, efficient influence from above to free us from our sins. It is the rule and reign of Christ as the king of our salvation, for all this power centers in him and flows from him. And he exercises this power through the Gospel, which therefore the Bible calls "the power of God unto salvation." It is the power of Christ's mercy and grace pardoning our sins, putting us into a new relation, that of children of God and heirs of heaven. It is a spiritual, and hence an invisible power. But to show us how real it is Jesus, when he came to Galilee as the king of salvation, made his power visible to men by healing with a word thousands of poor physical and mental sufferers. "And they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them." These miracles stand for all time as the tangible evidence that when now Jesus declares in the Gospel: "My son, thy sins are forgiven thee," our sins are actually, instantaneously gone, just as were those diseases when Christ spoke his kingly word. What Christ demonstrated and proved so fully when he walked on earth needs not to be proved over and over again. The spiritual power of his rule is established forever. Note well that all those miracles were deeds of deliverance and help; they picture for all time just what is done for our souls when by the power of Christ's grace our sins are taken away — just as completely away as were those diseases in Galilee.

Behold, then, the Epiphany of the kingdom when the Gospel of Christ is preached. In and through that blessed Word the King stretches forth his hand, pierced for your redemption, and takes the guilt from your soul and puts his own righteousness in its place. By that Gospel his blessed hand takes and lifts you out of the devil's kingdom and sets you into his own kingdom as a child of God. A thousand blessings follow, all the gift of his gracious power, all of them conveyed through his Gospel. Oh that we all might realize what a glorious Epiphany came for Galilee, comes for us, when thus *the kingdom* is brought to us by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

III.

The Gospel is our Epiphany when by its preaching it fills our souls with the saving **light** of truth. The darkness of ignorance, falsehood, vain and deadly delusion is driven out, the real knowledge of our lost condition and of what God really does in Christ Jesus for our salvation is brought in. So when Christ preached the Gospel in Galilee "the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up."

The world is full of *darkness*; Galilee is a true picture of it to this very day. Men know neither what is really wrong with them, nor what God really has done and now wills to do in order to help them. Some think little or nothing is wrong. The sun shines, the birds sing, their lives are happy from day to day—what should be wrong? They are like a boat, drifting in the sunshine slowly, steadily down the terrible current of the Niagara river; so long they will drift, then the river drops away beneath them, they plunge into the abyss of eternal death. Some are in trouble or distress of one kind or another, sickness, misfortune, unhappiness. They think, if only this misery were removed, all would be well. They are blind: the woe they now feel so keenly grows out of a deep, bitter root which is bound to send up woes a thousandfold worse in the end. They tug at some little out-growths, and never think of the great poisonous root that sends them out. Others feel that they have a remedy, some religious plan or works, self-invented or learned from others; this they cling to and dream they are safe. Look at the Galileans with their synagogues, their Temple, their sacrifices, fastings, alms, purifications, and yet Christ tells them positively that unless they obtain a righteousness infinitely better they will never enter the kingdom of God. People to-day feel sure of salvation because they try to be good, kind, helpful, charitable, devotional at church, prayer and worship. But Paul, Christ's great apostle, tells us, that he tried all this and more, and found it nothing but dung, with absolutely no power to save his soul. The world is full of such darkness. Deliberately men put their souls into banks that are bankrupt, and think their treasure safe—till it is too late. Deliberately they try to cross the raging gulf of death on a miserable, rotten plank, just because it looks sound and safe; when they make the fatal step, crash goes the plank, and they plunge to their doom with a shriek.

Into this desperate spiritual darkness the Gospel, and the Gospel alone, carries *the light* that saves. It shows us everything as it really is, driving away every falsehood and lie, every deception and delusion. Our wound is deadly, and the Gospel says

so. No man can help himself in the least, and the Gospel says so. But God sends us Christ, his own Son, as our helper with help sufficient to the uttermost, and the Gospel not only tells us so, but brings him and his help right to our souls to cure the wound and make us whole. Does it offend your pride to hear that you, a respected citizen, an honored business man, a fine fellow in many respects, are nothing but a poor, lost, damned sinner in the sight of God? Then keep on lying to yourself, in due time you will discover that what the Gospel said was the literal truth after all, only then it may be too late. Does it seem foolish to your wisdom that the blood of One who was crucified almost 2,000 years ago is your only remedy against sin and the judgment of God? Then keep on trying your own remedies and lying to yourself that they will surely help, in due time you will meet that Christ on his heavenly throne, and then discover that the foolishness of the Gospel was God's own wisdom and light, only then it *will* be too late. But the man who lets the Gospel open his eyes to see the truth as it is, who lets go every false comfort and help, and falls at the feet of the only true Helper, Jesus Christ, oh, how his heart rejoices. He sees and knows that he is safe, and the more the Gospel shines in his heart, the more he finds Christ indeed "the Light of the World," and his Word "a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path," so that his step cannot slide and his soul is brought safely home at last.

The Gospel is our Epiphany, because in all this dark and treacherous world it brings us *light* and truth.

IV.

It is our Epiphany once more because it works **repentance** in our hearts. "From that time Jesus began to preach" in all Galilee, "and to say, *Repent*: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

When the Gospel brings Christ the Savior, the powers of the kingdom, the light of its truth to our souls, all these must work a mighty inward change in us in order to accomplish their great purpose. This inward change is called *repentance*, and means that the soul turns in grief and sorrow away from all sin, and in full confidence and trust to Christ as the Savior from sin. This change is absolutely essential, and nothing can take its place. "Repent!" cried Christ in Galilee. What though his hand touched a man and removed the most terrible bodily affliction, that did not free his soul—the man had to repent. No matter how near we get to Christ now, how much we say we love his Gospel, how close we live to his friends, repentance, repentance alone will make us his own and give us the inward Epiphany we need.

No man can repent of himself. At best, when the bitter consequences of his sin find him out, he can long to be rid of them, and thus with remorse wish that he had not thus sinned. But true repentance means first of all a contrition or sorrow for sin as sin, as an offense against God, so terrible as to separate us from him, to call forth his wrath, judgment, and damnation. God himself must work this in us by his holy law, crushing our hearts by its holy demands and its dire penalties. Woe to him who offends God by his sins! And all our sinful thoughts, words, and deeds do offend him, yea, already our sinful state depraved and stained from our very birth on.

But the terrors of God would drive us to despair when we fully realize what they are, if God did not link the Gospel with his holy law, the precious promise of forgiveness in Christ Jesus. Again we see how no man can possibly repent of himself, for God's promise alone has the power of working in us the second part of repentance, namely the inward assurance of faith, that for the sake of Jesus Christ his Son he forgives our sins, acquits us from judgment, declares us free from guilt, ascribes and gives to us all that Christ has done for us, and thus declares us acceptable in his sight. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." He who trusts this promise of God has all its blessedness. That trust or faith, combined with contrition, is repentance, the inward change which makes us children of God. "Ye are all the children of God," writes the holy apostle, "by faith in Christ Jesus."

This inward change of repentance must continue; there must be, as our Catechism puts it, "daily contrition and repentance." Our whole inward attitude must ever be away from sin and toward our Savior from sin. Therefore, no man can repent and still play with sin or consciously go back and live in it. The love of sin, even of some one pet sin we may have, is the opposite of contrition and the contradiction of faith. Our daily contrition and faith means newness of life, walking in the footsteps of Jesus by his constant help and support.

What a glorious Epiphany thus to escape the curse and power of sin and by the repentance which the Gospel works and maintains in us, to live as true children of God. O let no heart shut out this precious Gospel, but in ever fuller measure take in all its blessed power, for true *repentance* is the one way to eternal salvation.

V.

And now we may add: the Gospel is our Epiphany because it opens **heaven** to us. It is the Gospel of "the kingdom of *heaven*." Its saving power is from heaven and leads us back to heaven.

Alas, men cling to this earth as if they could remain here forever. They let the ties that bind their hearts' affection to this life grow stronger and stronger. And yet how brief is our stay! Like a shadow life moves on; seventy, eighty years at most, it is gone. Then what? Thousands think not and care not. They see their neighbors stricken down, but as long as they themselves are still untouched, they blindly go on. Torn away by the inexorable hand of death at last, what will their end be?

The Gospel is the opposite of all such folly. It is God's message from heaven, not merely to make us think of something higher than earth, but *to open heaven itself for us* and finally lead us thither. There Christ has prepared a place for us—rest, peace joy, blessedness, never to cease. The powers of his grace and mercy which now we feel in our hearts draw us gently away from the things we must leave anyway at last, to those things which shall abide forever, for they are in the presence of God. The change now wrought in us is only the preparation for a more perfect change to come, when soul and body alike shall be swept clean of all trace of sin, and we shall be glorious like the angels of God and like the glorified body of our Lord. This is hope that maketh not ashamed, for, unlike the false hopes so many indulge in, this hope is not built on the mere self-made expectation of men, but on the power and promise of Christ who now awaits us above and will himself carry us thither. With this sure promise in our hearts ours is a constant Epiphany. "That where I am, there ye may be also," lights our daily path, leads us through the shadow of temporal death, and turns to glorious fulfillment when *heaven* at last is ours.

Thank God that the Gospel is our Epiphany, with its Savior, its kingdom, its light, its repentance, its hope of heaven. God keep us ever in this Epiphany and manifestation of his grace to the praise of his holy name.

OUTLINES.

The proper leverage for the sermon on this text will be found in what it says of Christ's preaching the Gospel, with which it is easy to connect the general idea of manifestation as the Epiphany season requires it. We see: How Christ wrought as our Prophet in Galilee—he preached the Gospel—he sealed the Gospel by his

miracles—he brought men to repentance by the Gospel.—How Christ revealed himself in Galilee: men found him a Savior in his message, and in his miracles.—The kingdom twice mentioned in our text invites our theme and division: Christ's proclamation that the kingdom has come—its powers go out to men—change men—open heaven to them; all this by means of that proclamation.—The Gospel is light. So we may preach on the theme: How the light came to darkest Galilee—he brought it by the Gospel—shed it abroad by his constant preaching—filled men's hearts with it in repentance—led them to the light of heaven.

How the Epiphany Light Began to Spread afar.

1. *The most benighted region —*
 2. *Heard the Gospel of the kingdom —*
 3. *Saw its blessed power —*
 4. *And began to follow Christ.*
-

How Christ Revealed the Kingdom of Heaven in Galilee.

1. *He brought the power of the kingdom.*
 2. *He set in motion the work of the kingdom.*
 3. *He dispensed the blessings of the kingdom.*
 4. *He drew men into the kingdom.*
-

Christ's Epiphany in Galilee.

1. *He revealed his grace.*
 2. *He manifested his power.*
-

Why we Ought to Prize the Gospel as our Highest Treasure.

1. *It brings us the Savior.*
 2. *It works repentance.*
 3. *It delivers from darkness and death.*
-

The Epiphany Blessings which Came to Galilee.

1. *The darkness gives way to light.*
 2. *The light reveals Christ.*
 3. *Christ comes with his kingdom.*
 4. *The kingdom uses the Gospel.*
 5. *The Gospel works repentance.*
 6. *Repentance leads to heaven.*
-

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

John 7, 40-53.

Our text is a companion to the one preceding it, since it shows *how Jesus and his teaching is received*. Some openly acknowledge him as the Messiah, so strongly has he attracted them. A large number are in doubt, concluding that at most he can be only "the prophet," distinct from the Christ, who would usher in the Messiah's coming. Equally impressed are the police, who fail to execute their positive orders, and return to their superiors without the desired prisoner. Even in the Sanhedrim one man speaks up for Jesus, and plainly indicates that he is on the way to faith. But the Jewish leaders violently hate Christ without cause and more and more determine to destroy him. The text shows a medley of opinions concerning Jesus — all men assume some attitude toward him. Alas, so few are ready to accept him in true faith.

Jesus is at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, and the last day of the celebration has come. He had clashed sharply with the Jewish leaders, and they had taken measures to arrest him, ostensibly to bring him to trial, but in reality to put him out of the way, v. 32. Jesus fully knew their temper, v. 19, but continued his work in the face of their murderous hostility, for the sake of the pilgrim multitudes who flooded the city at this time. This is the situation into which our text leads us.

7, 40. *Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, said, This is of a truth the prophet.*
41. *Others said, This is the Christ.*

The preposition *&c* with its genitive object is frequently used in a partitive sense as here: "Some of

the multitude," a certain indeterminate number. By the **multitude** is meant the great host of pilgrims from afar, many of them from Galilee, attending the festival in the usual manner of the Jews. This "multitude" must be clearly distinguished both from the authorities in the city and from the men of Jerusalem, i. e., its regular inhabitants. The "multitude" as such was not hostile to Jesus, but decidedly friendly, the leaders fearing to touch him for this very reason. — John reports very briefly what Jesus proclaimed on the last day of the feast; he must have said much more than v. 37-38 record, for the reference in our verse uses the plural: **when they heard these words**. For the multitude Jesus' final statements constitute a climax to all that they had seen and heard of him. They are brought to a decision regarding him. A considerable number emphatically declare: **This is of a truth the prophet**. The adverb "of a truth" shows that they are very much in earnest with their verdict. But the designation "the prophet" here cannot mean "the Christ," since another section of the multitude sets up this claim in contradiction to those first mentioned. The Old Test. reference is Deut. 18, 15 and 18-19. Acts 3, 22; 7, 37, and also John 6, 14 consider the prophet promised by Moses to be the Christ. But John 1, 21 and our passage are meant of the particular "prophet" who, it was thought, would usher in the Christ. Some have concluded that the Jews expected this prophet to be Jeremiah, basing this supposition on Matth. 16, 14, yet the entire idea of Jeremiah's return rests only on the apocryphal legend in 2 Macc. 2, 4, etc. We must note, however, that this rating of Jesus by a part of the multitude as "the prophet" placed him quite high, and thus reflects at least a decidedly favorable opinion of Jesus. Of course, even so it reveals a deplorable and inexcusable blindness on the part of these people. — **Others**, evidently also a considerable number, confessed outright, and **said, This is the Christ**, i. e., the promised Messiah himself. The state-

ment is direct, positive, and without qualification. These people were believers, of course, with faith of various degrees and quality. In many probably it amounted to little more than an intellectual conviction, or a general impression; in others it was a true beginning of faith, but weak and helpless, as we see when objection is raised without their being able to make any reply.

41. . . . But some said, What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was? 43. So there arose a division in the multitude because of him.

These constitute a third party who are sure at least of one thing, namely that Jesus cannot possibly be the Messiah. The negative used in the question counts on no as the self-evident answer. A contrary opinion is implied in *οἱ δὲ ἔλεγον*, and this is fortified by adding *γάρ* in the question, which makes its negative thought a proof for that opposing opinion. These men were applying the instruction they had received in their synagogues on passages like Micah 5, 2; Is. 11, 1; Jer. 23, 5 regarding the birthplace of the Messiah. They knew he could not possibly come from any town in Galilee. Whence he must come they indicate with the same certainty by another question, now with the negative particle which counts on an affirmative answer as self-evident. "The Scripture" here signifies the Old Test. canon, the term being a comprehensive singular. It is appealed to as the final authority, beyond which no man can go. The Davidic descent of the Messiah is mentioned because of its natural connection with David's birthplace Bethlehem, which was definitely designated by the Scripture as likewise the birthplace of the Messiah. Because of the long residence of Jesus in Nazareth the common supposition was that he was born here. Closer inquiry was not made. By recording the appeal to the Scripture which these men make our evangelist intimates that their deduction was correct,

finding it unnecessary to supply that common opinion falsely considered Nazareth the birthplace of Jesus. If the interpretation of Scripture offered by these men had been incorrect our evangelist would most likely have felt constrained to point that out. The simple method he uses in his narrative is quite sufficient to convey to us that he too admits this Scripture proof, both for Jesus' descent and for his actual birthplace, because he fully knew that the facts agreed with the prophecies. "Where David was" refers to his stay in his father's home in Bethlehem before he left that place in later years. — So far the evangelist has used the imperfect tense in introducing the different speakers; this descriptive imperfect shows us the discussion as it went on, and implies that each party held to its opinion.

V. 43. Now an aorist states the definite fact that "a division arose" on account of Jesus among the multitude. The opposing views were not unified in the end when the discussion ceased; the split remained.

44. And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.

Now a fourth class is introduced, distinct from all the previous speakers as well as from the "officers" mentioned in the next verse. How numerous they were we are left to conjecture; they seem to have been markedly in the minority. The imperfect tense: "would have taken," in the Greek points to a will that was not carried into effect; this John also adds in so many words. They had the will, but feared to do the deed. These were most likely adherents of the Pharisees who had given orders to arrest Jesus, and were anxious to hand him over to the authorities. Certain of the Jerusalem citizens had had the same ineffective wish, v. 30. What restrained these men we are unable to say, for the evangelist states merely that no man laid hands on Jesus, attempted to make an arrest. This closes the narrative concerning the multitude, i. e., pilgrims from afar. By far the great majority was favorable to Jesus, but

as over against those who willingly acknowledged him as the Messiah, there were others who willingly would have aided in his arrest.

45. The officers therefore came to the chief priests, and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why did ye not bring him? 46. The officers answered, Never man so spake. 47. The Pharisees therefore answered them, Are ye also led astray? 48. Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees? 49. But this multitude which knoweth not the law are accused.

Entirely distinct from the multitude are these officers, a detachment of official servants of the Sanhedrim, sent out some time before (v. 32) at the instigation of the Pharisees in the high council, formally to arrest Jesus. Those mentioned in v. 44 wished to act on their own initiative, having no commission, but anxious to help the Sanhedrists get Jesus out of the way. These officers have formal and legal orders. We must imagine that they had all along dogged the steps of Jesus, watching closely for an opportunity to close around him and drag him away to prison. They finally return to make report to their superiors. The Sanhedrim is in full session, with even Nicodemus present in his official place. This looks as if the session had been called to be ready to bring Jesus to immediate trial in expectation of his certain arrest by the officers, who quite likely too had been told to be sure to bring their prisoner in by the time this session would take place. The stage is all set, but he who was intended by these men to be the chief tragic actor is not there. The force of police sent out to make the arrest comes in empty-handed. No need to say that they have not obeyed orders. Peremptorily the reason is demanded: **Why did ye not bring him?** The past tense covers all the time they had had since receiving the order; if then at any time they had made the arrest, Jesus would now be at hand.—The answer of the officers is remarkable. They could truthfully have stated that they had failed because of

the danger they would have incurred from the friendly multitude always clustering around Jesus. The Sanhedrim feared these numerous pilgrims themselves, and could hardly have administered more than a mild rebuke to their subordinates. But however this was as regards the multitude, these officers had been restrained by something else, something which made so deep an impression upon them that they openly avow it before the whole Sanhedrim, although they know in advance that they will be severely reprimanded and very likely even punished for admitting what they feel they must. We must note these two points, the impression which lamed the hands of these officers, and on top of that the impulse not to hide, but to avow this impression openly. Both are due to Jesus. So they reply: **Never man so spake.** Cf. Matth. 7, 28. They emphasize his manner of speaking, and the Greek verb too omits reference to the substance of his thought. It is the authority, majesty, power of the speaker which had held these officers back contrary to explicit orders. They state that the manner of Jesus is beyond that of any man they had ever been near; they felt it to be superhuman, if not actually divine. Much as these officers desired to obey their superiors, fearing their displeasure if they failed, here a stronger influence held them completely in check—they simply could and would not lay hands on a man who spoke in this manner.

V. 47. Now the rage of **the Pharisees** breaks loose. They were the ones who had instigated the plan to arrest Jesus, who had had the officers sent out, and it seems had called this session of the council, and now as the upshot of the whole proceeding—this confession of Jesus' power!—**Are ye also led astray?** they burst out. The form of the question is for a negative answer; but this very form is used also when one strongly suspects, and by this form even intimates, that the actual facts are *not* negative, but affirmative. Therefore also the perfect tense: "have ye been misled," i. e., so that

you are even now in that condition? *You — our* officers, who ought to stick to us, and listen to us, and not to the wily tones of another, one whom we despise. This is how they twist the reply: "Never man *so* spake," turning it into the insinuation: "so wily, with such deceit." — This they follow up: **Hath any of the rulers believed on him, or of the Pharisees?** The question form takes a negative answer for granted, this time actually for granted. Observe the superior tone of these "rulers" over against their subordinates, of these haughty "Pharisees" over against these ordinary men. What business had these dependents of theirs to have impressions and thoughts of their own? The aorist of the question refers to a past fact: not for a moment did any of these superior men believe in Jesus, i. e., put any confidence in him. Thus old is the argument which still passes current that in religious matters men of power, authority, and learning cannot err, and that all humbler people ought to be guided by them without any question. It was the argument Luther had to face. Could he alone presume to be right when the pope, the emperor, and all their prelates and princes held the contrary view? Could he alone be right, and they all be wrong?

V. 49. Instead of following the rulers and Pharisees these officers were following the multitude. With the utmost possible scorn the Pharisees therefore add: **But this multitude, etc.** The strong adversative "but" in Greek often stands equivalent to or implies our: No! Zahn translates: "No, only this rabble, etc." The term "multitude" seems to be the translation for the Hebrew *am haarez*, or its equivalent in Aramaic, i. e., the crowd or rabble from the country, a scornful designation for the ordinary people, here the pilgrims from all outlying parts. What were they against the high and holy Pharisees, especially those in the Sanhedrim? Koenig, Hebr. Dict.: *Die breite Schicht der Landbevoelkerung.* — **Which knoweth not the law** = the multitude is so ig-

norant, does not even know the law, much less carefully observe it; but the holy Pharisees made this absolutely their specialty, they were the self-constituted guardians of the law. And these fools of officers were following that miserable, ignorant multitude instead of these high representatives and guardians of the law. — But the heat of the enraged Pharisees almost made them blurt out what they certainly would not have wished to admit outright. There is a break in the sentence. It is started as if it were to be: "But this multitude which knoweth not the law *believes in him.*" Instead, the singular is turned by a jerk into the plural, and for the admission of this damaging fact the heated speakers put a fierce invective: "— accursed are they." Even the sense is broken; for surely, they could not be **accursed** for mere ignorance of the law, just being country people, and not having had all the high advantages of the Pharisees. That "accursed" means: for listening to Jesus and believing in him. In this covert way, as if in spite of themselves, they admit the damaging fact after all. No measures were taken as yet against people of this kind, but compare 9, 22; the Pharisees soon tried to make their curse good. We hear no more about the officers. They seem to have gotten off with this sharp public rebuke.

50. Nicodemus saith unto them (he that came to him before, being one of them). 51. Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth? 52. They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.

If the attitude of the officers surprised the Pharisees, they must have received the interference of one of their own number, right in their own public assembly, with still greater surprise. In 3, 1 we learn that **Nicodemus** was both a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, i. e., a member of the Sanhedrim. Zahn doubts whether the original contained the parenthetical statement: **he that**

came to him before, or A. V.: "he that came to Jesus by night." That is a matter of text criticism. The simple fact is that we must recall what chapter 3 records, in order to understand the action of Nicodemus properly. It is entirely in place for the evangelist to remind us that this is the same man who once came to Jesus by night, attracted by his person and doctrine. Homiletically, as well as exegetically, we cannot dispense with this identification. **Being one of them** merely says that he was a member of the Sanhedrim, and thus might be taken as sufficient for his identification; the fuller statement seems more satisfactory. John 3 does not indicate whether Nicodemus came to faith that night or not. Of course, that chapter, as the entire plan and purpose of John shows, was not written to inform us in any particular way about Nicodemus; its great object is the testimony which Jesus uttered that night, a testimony of value for all time. It contains the strongest warnings against ultimate unbelief, and thus intimates what dangers beset the soul of Nicodemus. It is safe to conclude that Nicodemus did not come to faith that night. On the other hand, he did not fall into settled unbelief — of that our present text is sufficient proof as well as the sequel, John 19, 39. The ignorance, and all the false ideas which hung together with that, for which Jesus chided him, and very likely also his position in Jerusalem and in the Sanhedrim, held him back from faith and open confession. But his soul was still under the influence of what he had heard and what he saw of Jesus, an influence drawing him in the direction of faith. His vision was thus being clarified more and more, and he saw through the baseness and unlawfulness of what his colleagues were trying to do with Jesus. His courage too is such as to make him unwilling to take their guilt, which threatened to become blood-guilt, in silence upon himself. He therefore interposes on this occasion by raising a significant and vital question.

V. 51. Right after the Pharisees had so confidently asserted that not one of their own exalted number believed in Jesus, Nicodemus, one of their number, spoke up in defense of Jesus. So also, right after they had boasted themselves as the great guardians of the law, one of their own number points out that they are actually violating that law in their proceedings against Jesus. These clashes are highly dramatic; John too uses the vivid present tense **saith** in introducing the question put by Nicodemus: **Doth our law judge a man, except it first hear from himself and know what he doeth?** Some questions answer themselves, and this is one of that kind. So also some affirmations are made more affirmative and stronger in their effect, by being turned into a question, that is by leaving the self-evident answer to the opposing party. Nicodemus dealt wisely on this occasion, although he betrayed his friendliness to Jesus, and thus in spite of all could not hope to escape **the odium of his opponents**. The Pharisees had pronounced a hasty curse on "the multitude" and by implication on Jesus—without having legally heard either. Vaunting their own knowledge and observance of the law by sneering at the ignorant pilgrims, they were in the very act of flagrantly violating one of the most elementary precepts of that law. Their hatred of Jesus was thus blinding them and carrying them away. Nicodemus appeals to Ex. 23, 1; Deut. 1, 16, etc. The *Nomos*, or **law**, is personified in its administrators, the judges, and thus "the law judges." The Greek has the article: "*the man*," i. e., the one who at any time may come in question; our idiom requires: "**a man**," or "*any man*." No verdict dare be pronounced by any judge or court without it **first hear from himself**, confront him with the charges and hear his defense. In other words, there must be a regular and proper trial. The result **will be that the court will know what he doeth**, i. e., as a result of a proper hearing the court will be able to render a legal finding; it will be able actually to declare

"what he doeth," i. e., *wie sein Tun beschaffen ist*, fixing either the innocency of his acts or the degree of criminality. Nicodemus as a judge had both the right and the duty to remind his fellow judges of the requirements of the law when they were forgetting them. He avoided any discourtesy, any appearance of arrogating to himself judgment and verdict on his fellow judges, by merely raising the question, thus allowing all to combine in the answer. There is no sign of faith in Jesus in what Nicodemus says, but his contact with Jesus had opened his eyes to the real character of what was being enacted now, and gave him courage to speak out. Most likely the managers of the Sanhedrim had sent out the officers; or, if they had been sent on an order of the Sanhedrim, Nicodemus had not been present. With so many judges constituting this court, it frequently occurred that one or more would not be in their places.

V. 52. The answer Nicodemus gets is as passionate as that to the officers: **Art thou also of Galilee?** Of course, they know that he was not a Galilean, but they basely insinuate that only on this supposition could they understand his appeal to their legal obligations. In Galilee Jesus had risen to great fame as a prophet, and the Galilean pilgrims were the ones who especially acclaimed him at the festival. So these Pharisees jump at the cheap deduction that only a Galilean would rise to the defense of his fellow countryman. Besides this usual interpretation, we must add, that since these Galileans were all members of "the multitude," the Pharisees intimate that Nicodemus must be no better and stand no higher, trying to defend the multitude and Jesus. Does he mean to say he is as ignorant as that multitude? does he want to share the curse they had pronounced on these ignorant people? — That is why they add: **Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet,** to say nothing of the Messiah himself. This reference to the gross ignorance of Nicodemus must be coupled with

the charge of ignorance against the multitude, among which the friends of Jesus were largely Galileans. At the same time this is their return slap at Nicodemus, calling him desperately ignorant himself for having intimated ignorance of the law on their part. "Search" means study and investigate, and the aorist imperative wants him to do this completely. "See" means: convince yourself by such investigation. The emphasis is on the phrase "out of Galilee." Both of our versions read: **arise***th*, although the perfect tense is found in many codices: "hath arisen." It seems almost incredible that these Pharisees did not know that Jonah hailed from Galilee, 2 Kings 14, 25; Nahum and Hosea were also most likely from that country. If the present tense is taken to exclude these, taking the statement not as a general axiom for any prophet at any time, but as a dictum concerning the Messiah alleged to have arisen now, even so their claim is wrong, contradicting Is. 9, 1, cf. Matth. 4, 14, etc. (see the previous text). "Arise" is wider than to be born. Blind passion, as so often, made these men set up false and unwarranted claims, contradicting their own better knowledge. Whether Nicodemus discussed the point further we do not learn. What follows in John's Gospel shows that the Sanhedrim took no further action at this time, and Jesus continued his work in Jerusalem.

SERMON. *used 26*

In the ordinary affairs of life it is the part of wisdom to accept the voice of human authority. Governmental and judicial authority have divine sanction, and when properly exercised are beneficial in the highest degree. The same is true of other departments of life. When the body is sick we want the counsel of a competent physician; in education we listen to the advice of trained school-men; in money affairs the authority of good business men is decisive; when we build a house we need a good architect; when we sow, plant, and reap we need an expert farmer to instruct us. Human authority in all the ordinary affairs of life is of decisive

weight. Though it is never infallible, and hence needs to be tested and tried out, still we know it is the best we have, and we would lose by setting it aside.

But the thing is entirely different when we come to the soul, to religion, to our eternal interests. Can human authority dictate and decide in matters of this kind? Unhesitatingly we reply: It can not! Yet this is exactly what such authority presumes to do, and what thousands of men allow it to do for them. Behold the striking instance in our text, when the High Council of the Jews set up the claim that since none of its exalted members believed in Jesus all lesser men ought to do the same. Their authority they think ought to settle the matter. It fills them with indignation and rage when this was not at once acknowledged. Let us examine.

The Voice of Human Authority in Religion: "Have any of the Rulers or of the Pharisees Believed on Him?"

I. Beyond question this authority **convinces many**.

When men have climbed high in human affairs those who have staid behind naturally look up to them. The men high up expect and demand it, the men below find it proper and profitable. When power is put into the hands of those above they even use it to compel the others, and these yield the more readily, obeying the law of force. It seems to be the world order, some by virtue of position, learning, power, and authority lead, the rest follow, either willingly or by force.

Without further question this relation of superiors and inferiors is extended to include religion. The presumption is that here too the great, high, and mighty ought to dictate, and all the rest ought to bow in humble submission and accept the decisions handed down to them. The Pharisees in our text acted on this presumption. They were certainly superior in every way to the servants who acted as their police officers. They belonged to the High Council or Supreme Court of the Jews; they were rich, influential, learned. They hated Jesus, and wanted to arrest him and put him out of the way. Their decision, they imagine, ought to settle the entire question for all men beneath them, their officers as well as the common people, the multitude who came from the country far and near to attend the great Jewish festivals in Jerusalem. Have any of us believed on him? they ask. That ought to settle the thing for you, is their idea.

This claim of human authority is made still stronger when those who exercise it are men high up in the church and in matters of religion. Surely, then their decisions ought to be final. Those Pharisees in the High Council of the Jews were learned in

the law. They studied their Old Test. most diligently; they carefully maintained all the old teaching and traditions of the fathers before them; they devoted their lives to the most careful practice of all their religious customs; and the people as such looked up to them as venerable, learned, and holy. With authority like that, expert authority we may call it, surely, they ought to know, and men ought without question to submit to them. That was their conviction at least. And thousands agreed with them. This voice of human authority in religion convinced them completely, and they risked their soul's salvation on it.

Things have not changed much since that day. Men of science in the great universities tell us that certain things in the Bible cannot possibly be true. None of them believe these things, they say; and they imagine that ought to be enough for every one of us. Kings and rulers have frequently thought that their people ought to accept their decisions in religious matters without any question. This presumption is especially strong when the men who make it stand at the head of the church like these Pharisees in the Jewish High Council. The pope and hierarchy of Rome maintain as their prerogative, which dare not be questioned, that what they decide in regard to religion all the church ought to accept without the slightest hesitation; and the members of the Catholic Church willingly consent. Protestants often do the same thing, when doctors of divinity, professors of theology in the universities, the heads of church bodies, even preachers in congregations think that their word ought to be taken as decisive, and thousands have yielded to such claims.

But this voice of human authority in religion is false, no matter when, where, or by whom it is uttered and by what multitudes it is obeyed. One is our Master, Christ, and no other. It is in vain to follow leaders teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Even if an angel from heaven brought us a gospel of his own, we ought to call him anathema, and turn from him as from the devil. In religion there is no real human authority, there is only divine authority, the voice of God, of Christ, of his Spirit, of the Word of God, because the true religion is altogether a divine thing, and not a human thing. If all the world should follow the presumptuous authority of men, you and I ought to contradict them all and follow Christ alone.

II. But the voice of human authority **stands contradicted**. Its false assertions are revealed as false, its authority unmasked as bogus, sham, a plain usurpation.

Look what happened in the High Court when the Pharisees, so sure of themselves, asked: "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" They were thunderstruck to dis-

cover that one of their own rulers, and a Pharisee at that, Nicodemus by name, was at least on the way to believe in Jesus. It has always been so. When the proud philosophers at Athens mocked at Paul's teaching of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, one of their own chief men, Dionysius the Areopagite, believed. The holy apostle writes: "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, that means there are always some. It is not so that all the scientists refuse to believe the Bible's teaching concerning creation, Christ's divinity and atonement, and the other great doctrines; there is a goodly number who truly believe. So with all the men in high places. Christ had and still has his victories in their midst. Not all are blinded by their learning, power, and earthly greatness, some lay their hearts with all their attainments in the humble obedience of faith at the feet of Jesus.

The voice of human authority in religion is contradicted also in the substance of its assertion. Those proud Pharisees thought they alone knew the law or teaching of the Old Test. But here they were condemning both the pilgrims at the festival and Jesus with them without ever giving either of them a hearing. They violated one of the most fundamental principles of any court, to say nothing of a Jewish court ruled by the Scriptures. If they did this, could their decision regarding Jesus be called safe? Not for one instant. So also they claimed no prophet could arise in Galilee. And yet their own Bible said that the prophet Jonah came from Galilee; and the great prophet Isaiah wrote that the light of salvation would come from Galilee. That prophecy God fulfilled in Jesus, who was indeed born in Bethlehem of Judea, and not in Galilee, but was sent to live for almost 30 years in Galilee, and in Galilee carried on his ministry of preaching and doing miracles for so long a time that he came to be called the prophet of Galilee. That is a sample of what human authority in religion amounts to. When it sets itself up to assert its own wisdom it goes wrong, so that any man who knows God's Word can expose its falseness. Even those pilgrims at Jerusalem, common people for the most part, had a truer idea of Jesus than these blind Pharisees with all their authority. Some confessed openly: "This is the Christ." They were right. Others thought he was a special prophet to precede the Messiah. They were wrong, but nearer right than the Pharisees. Still others thought, because Jesus came from Galilee, he could not be the Messiah. These seem to have followed the authority of the Pharisees, and this very authority led them directly counter to the truth.

Never should the voice of false authority impress us. Let us get rid of the idea, as if when great human learning or authority

speaks, we are helpless before it. Even those police officers felt there was something wrong about the assertions of the Pharisees against Jesus, for they had heard him speak and had to confess that never man spake thus. Nicodemus openly punctured their claims. When science contradicts the Bible, remember one set of scientists constantly contradicts another; one great philosopher upsets all that the others have said. Thus they tumble down each others' card houses. Why should we bow to their authority, when thus it contradicts itself? But if you take your Bible, you will know beyond any doubt that all this human authority in religion is spurious. To deny sin is never a remedy for sin, as little as to deny that cancer is cancer, leprosy leprosy. To mock at hell is no guarantee that the mocker will not be sent there. To say the Bible cannot be inspired is to talk as if the mouth of the Almighty were muzzled so that he cannot speak to us as he may deem best. To say that God did not make man in his own image, but that man arose from the image of the monkey and the lower creatures, is to make poor fools believe that the effect can be thousands of times greater than the cause. To say that Christ is not the Son of God, and did not redeem us with his blood, is to leave the whole world a mass of miserable dying creatures with no real reason for the existence of any of them — save for such an existence as that of brutes, stocks, and stones. Even a little light from the Bible is able to overthrow these claims of false human authority. Away with the fear of such authority; it enslaves, but if we continue in Jesus' Word we shall know the truth, and the truth shall make us free.

III. Without question or hesitation the voice of human authority in religion **must be set aside**, both when it comes unsupported by Scripture, or when it comes with its perversions of Scripture, and in place of it we must set the true authority of God and his Word and bow to that alone.

What can man know about the things of God when he refuses to listen to God himself? Well says St. Paul to the Corinthian Christians speaking of the time when they followed heathen authorities: "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led." 1 Cor. 12, 2. What were the Ephesian Christians before their conversion? Gentiles walking "in the vanity of their mind, 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." Eph. 4, 17, etc. Christ says of such: "Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil." Do we want to follow such authority?

More seductive is the authority of men when it tries to support itself by perversions of Scripture. Then they try to make their false authority look like the true authority of God. They repeat the trick of Satan when he tempted Eve, turning the word of God around, as if Adam and Eve would not die if they ate of the tree, while God had said they would surely die in that case. So the Pharisees claimed Jesus could not be the Messiah because he came from Galilee, when God had made that very coming from Galilee a sign of his being the Messiah. It is equally so when men deny that Christ is God's Son, claiming the Bible does not teach it; that his blood does not cleanse from sin, because the Scriptures do not say it. All these and other perversions of God's Word are all exploded, if only we will heed what that Word really says.

In the place of the false authority we must put the one true authority, and bow whole-heartedly to that. One is our Master, Christ. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." Ps. 119, 105. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Mk. 13, 31. "It is written," is the true criterion and test, the Word as it stands, interpreted by that Word alone, in its true sense as God gave it to us and meant it for our enlightenment and salvation. Whatever in our own minds and hearts tries to evade or run counter to that Word, by God's help must be subdued and put away. "Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it." Luke 11, 28. He who fails to hear and heed Christ's Word is like a man who builds his life's house on the sand, the floods will surely sweep it away; but he who truly heeds that Word is like the man who builds his house upon the rock, it will never be shaken or moved. Thank God who has given us his Word to be our guide and stay, that forsaking all false human authority in matters of our souls we may rest in his blessed, saving authority now and ever more.

OUTLINES.

Several doors open into the text. Perhaps the most obvious is the medley of opinions concerning Jesus here presented, the whole line from hatred through to true faith. We may then preach on: The many opinions concerning Jesus—a view of them—an analysis—our position.—The text is composed of two sections, one dealing with the people as such, one with their rulers; there is a cleavage of adherents and opponents in both parties, which may aid in making a lay-out for the sermon.—There are several important statements: 1) "So there was a division among the people because of him"—some were simply ignorant of the Scriptures

— some held wrong views of the Scriptures — some were impressed by Jesus, but were still puzzled about the Scriptures — let us learn the full truth and believe in him with our whole heart. 2) "Never man spake like this man" — an impression significant — truer than those men knew — full of most blessed promise, if not destroyed. 3) "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" a question regarding example — authority — personal responsibility.

The Reception Jesus found among Men.

1. *Some hated and rejected him completely.*
 2. *Some had and retained wrong opinions about him.*
 3. *Some were being drawn nearer and nearer to him.*
 4. *Some believed and followed him.*
-

The Debate about Jesus.

1. *Out in the Temple courts among the people.*
 2. *In the assembly hall of the Jewish rulers.*
-

Where do You Belong?

1. *You surely do not want to be counted with his enemies! Look at what they are like.*
 2. *You ought never to be satisfied merely to be one of his friends. See what they still lack.*
 3. *Be one of his true believers and followers! That is blessedness indeed.*
-

There was a Division because of Him.

1. *There always will be.*
 2. *Where will you stand?*
-

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Matth. 9, 35-38.

This text is an old favorite for mission festivals. Here, of course, this narrower application falls away, and its general idea, that of Christ's great *compassion* when he labored as a Prophet among men, ought to dominate the sermon. No finer manifestation of his compassion as a Prophet could be desired. The text thus lies in line with the general idea of Epiphany.

Matth. 4, 12-25 summarizes the Galilean ministry of Jesus in advance. This is followed by an extended sample of Jesus' teaching (ch. 5-7), a selection of miracles of healing (8, 1-17), and a sketch of his varied activities and movements (8, 18—9, 34). Thus Matthew has shown us the great prophet at work. In v. 33 we have a plain Epiphany confession: "It was never so seen in Israel." But v. 34 hints at the coming passion: "The Pharisees said, By the prince of the devils casteth he out devils." At this point our pericope begins, repeating now once more the original summary in briefer form, and then revealing the great Savior motive that prompted all this effort.

9, 35, And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.

We must note the force of the imperfect **went about**, which is also put forward because emphatic. The verb pictures Jesus in the midst of this going about. How and when it will end is left open; that the readers of Matthew will learn in due time. Zahn thinks that "all the cities and the villages" here means to contrast these

with Capernaum. The trouble is that Jesus' "own city" (Capernaum) is mentioned only very incidentally in 9, 1, so that it seems quite enough to think of the towns and villages of Galilee without contrasting them with some special locality. **All the cities and villages**, the smaller places as well as the larger, indicates how thorough was the work of Jesus. Our habit of discounting the smaller places, of being impressed and attracted by the large cities — metropolitan if possible, — does not seem to have had favor with Jesus. He slighted no locality. — The three present participles, coincident in time with the main verb, picture the activity of Jesus: **teaching . . . preaching . . . and healing**. Those preachers who are everlastingly looking for "lessons" in their texts, namely for opportunities to make homiletical applications, as distinguished from homiletical appropriation, will very likely try, in some way, to show that we to-day ought to do the same: teach, preach, heal. The only trouble is that the last of these applications will not work, since Jesus has not given us, either us preachers or laymen, the gift of healing. Instead of dropping into this superficial treatment, let us behold here the Messianic work of Jesus as he performed it in his great calling, in Galilee indeed, darkest Galilee, but in reality for the whole world. That is the first and fundamental view, calling for us to believe in him, honor, and praise him. After that we may inquire what he has bidden us in our position and calling to do; and then there will be no difficulty in separating such teaching and preaching as may be assigned to us from the miraculous healing which is not so assigned now. The work of **teaching** is connected with the **synagogues**. Luke 4 shows us how the Master went about this work, and how the term "teaching" is most appropriate for it. Teaching is instruction, propounding and explaining what is necessary for our salvation, that men may learn to know as pupils, believe, and practice. **Preaching** is different in form; it means to proclaim like a herald,

and is therefore the appropriate term for what Jesus did outside the synagogues when multitudes gathered about him. Not with "teaching," but with "preaching" we have the object: **the gospel of the kingdom**, the good news of the rule and reign of the Messiah; because this is not taught, but simply announced as a glad fact. "The kingdom" is not an organization, least of all an outward one, like the papacy, but the exercise of Christ's power and grace toward our salvation, to culminate in the exercise of his power and majesty above. Therefore, we usually have: "the kingdom of heaven," or "of God." Here the bare term is meant in the same sense, for there is only one kingdom, and all the saving grace, power, and glory is from above.—The simple co-ordination: **and healing, etc.**, places this work besides the other two as a third. In reality it was the seal for both of the others, the visible, tangible proof that what Jesus preached and taught concerning spiritual and invisible things was as genuine as these healings. As in Matth. 4, 23 the different types of diseases and ailments are mentioned, but from the former passage we know that no individual case in any, even the most dreadful types appeared which did not yield instantaneously to the power of Jesus' word. "The kingdom" had thus come beyond any question. The people were right: "It was never so seen in Israel."

36. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd.

We have only the transitional connective $\delta\epsilon$, and the simple participle "having seen," translated more smoothly: **But when he saw.** This, of course, must have been at some specific place and time, but nothing is made of that. All we are given to know is that this occurred somewhere and some time during the busy ministry in Galilee. As so frequently now **the multitudes**, all kinds of people, some even from far away, resorted to Jesus to hear and see. We are free to pic-

ture the particular scene as best we can. Perhaps Jesus stood on some elevation overlooking the gentle slopes below, and these were covered and dotted with people, larger and smaller groups, sitting on the ground or **standing**. For the moment Jesus and his disciples seem to be a little apart from the multitudes, thus affording him and them an opportunity to contemplate the numbers of people gathered before them. Then it was that **he was moved with compassion for them**, the great fact stated by the historical aorist. We read the same thing of Jesus in Mark 6, 34, and how on that occasion his compassion moved him "to teach them many things." The hungry multitudes, Matth. 15, 32, call forth the same feeling, and he is moved to feed them. Great masses of people were not always needed to arouse the compassion of Jesus. Compassion, we are told, moved him to heal a poor leper, Mk. 1, 41, likewise to return alive to a poor widow her only son who was being carried to his grave, Luke 7, 11. "These isolated instances in which the compassion of Jesus is expressly recorded are so much evidence, proving that his heart was ever filled with merciful kindness and feelings of pity for the distressed of every description. Whenever and wherever suffering and sorrow of body or soul met his eyes, his heart was moved with compassion. The compassion of Jesus is one of the deepest, richest, most comforting of all his Savior qualities." Cf. the author's *His Footsteps*, p. 245. We add the following paragraph: "The word which the Scriptures use to express the compassion of Jesus signifies literally: to have the bowels yearning. It is a word to designate the deepest kind of feeling. There is another somewhat like it, yet not so strong; it is likewise translated compassion, but signifies literally: to have sympathy, to feel with the sufferer in his distress. But the former expresses more than a simple sharing or partaking of the sufferer's pained feeling; it shows a yearning and a deep desire to relieve the suffering and to remove the distress. And

we must name yet a third word repeatedly used in the Scriptures; it is also translated by compassion, but signifies literally: to show mildness or kindness. It is the fruit of sympathy with the sufferer, the result of the yearning to help and relieve, it expresses the mild, kind help that is given to the distressed. When we take all three together we have a true and complete description of Christ's compassion." G. Warneck, the great authority on mission work, writes: "Ah, my friends, what is it when the Savior is moved with *compassion*? Oh, if then we could look into his heart! Really the word means: his viscera were stirred; or as we say: his heart was wrenched. Have you ever looked upon some real great case of misery; perhaps on a battle-field, or in a hospital—isn't it a fact, that then in the literal sense of the word you felt a movement of your heart? Well, such a movement went through the Savior's heart, when he saw the people distressed and scattered as sheep not having a shepherd." The viscera to which the Greek term refers are the nobler ones, the lungs, heart, and liver, which were considered the seat of the feelings, such as love, pity, etc.—The reason for this strong feeling is fully stated: **because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd.** The casual or ordinary onlooker would never have seen in that multitude what Jesus saw; it required a heart like the Savior's to see that. The two perfect participles are used like adjectives with the copula. Their tense describes a present condition as the result of a previous act. **Distressed** really signifies: having been flayed; or milder: having the skin torn, like sheep among brambles and sharp rocks. **Scattered**, is from the Greek verb to throw or hurl, throw down. The idea is not of dispersion, but of being thrown down prone and helpless, like exhausted, spent sheep. The verb is used of corpses sunk prostrate on the ground. Both participles are made vivid by the comparison with **sheep not having a shepherd**, just abandoned and left to shift for themselves.

Soon they will look torn and abject, a pitiful sight. What follows shows that Jesus was thinking of the spiritual condition of these multitudes. Such shepherds as they had were no shepherds; their souls received no wholesome spiritual care, for as far as that was concerned they were left to shift for themselves. It is the same to-day wherever the Gospel is lacking and other things are preached and taught. The material condition of people may be good or bad—that is a matter for itself. Destitution and helplessness in this respect always moves our humanitarian age deeply, and its efforts to relieve and remove this condition go to great lengths. But the spiritual or soul condition which forms the counterpart of such physical distress leaves men utterly unmoved. They are literally blind where Jesus sees the desperate realities as they are, and as their effects are liable to go on to all eternity. This, then, is what moves his Savior heart to compassion. In some way he must have uttered what he felt. The description Matthew has recorded is so striking that he must have received it from the lips of Jesus himself, although he does not say it in so many words.

37. Then saith he to his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. 38. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest.

“The compassion of Jesus is nothing like the empty pity and superficial sympathy of the world. Jesus sees deep down into the root of all our human misery; he knows that it all results from sin. It is not the mere suffering alone that touches his heart and softens it in compassion; it is the deadliness of sin showing itself in all these manifold forms of suffering which touches him to the quick and pierces his heart through and through with real compassion. He sees that all our distress of body and soul is only the prelude to the fire that will not be quenched and the worm that will never die. It is impossible, therefore, for his compassion to be inactive.

And it is likewise impossible for his compassion to be satisfied with mere bodily relief of pain and woe." *His Footsteps*, p. 247, etc. The compassion of Jesus is active. It is the mainspring of his own ministry, and it reaches over to utilize us, in such ways as is possible for us, in assisting his ministry. Matthew uses the vivid historical present: **Then saith he unto his disciples.** Of course, he could say only to them what now follows, for they alone in a manner are prepared to understand and to act on his request. — First the two great facts: **The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.** A second figure follows the first, one more adapted to set forth in all simplicity and directness the compassionate thought of Jesus: the harvest ready for the cutting and bringing in, while the hands for the work are all too few. G. Warneck confesses that he often read over the word **harvest** without really seeing what lies open so plainly in it. It is not as if Jesus said the *field* is large, i. e., the field to be tilled and sowed. What Jesus says is different. Zahn stops indeed at the word "harvest," but he speaks only of the gathering of a new congregation from the scattered old congregation of Israel, and of the receptive members in that old congregation. Warneck even follows the old synergistic notion that among heathen people there are some who seek God, and even in their heathendom get so far as to try to reach God, saying, "I will arise and go to my father," etc., Luke 15, 18. No, this is not what the "harvest" means. It signifies no special class of men as they are by nature, but those men in whom the grace of God is operative to their salvation. We must not extend the figure of Jesus beyond its *tertium comparationis* by building it out into the work of sowing, cultivating, and the like. The whole work of grace is pictured as a "harvest," cutting and bringing in the grain. As far as men, then, are concerned this figure views them as under grace and with that grace working successfully among them. Warneck is right in so far as he says, Jesus does

not see merely what we see when he looks at multitudes, i. e., the darkness; the dead bones; but instead of adding that Jesus sees also the yearning of many for God, etc., Warneck should have said, Jesus sees what his work of grace can and will do among these people, he sees his "harvest" there. And this is **plenteous**, large. The number of those whom Jesus wins and will win is by no means small. The situation is like that of some great estate with most extensive fields and loads and loads of grain to bring in. The word "truly" is only a clumsy effort of our English translators to give the force of the little Greek particles which balance the two members of the sentence: "the harvest is plenteous — the laborers are few." No stress should be laid on the English "truly." — As with "the harvest" so with **the laborers**. How many were there when Jesus spoke? First of all he himself, for surely he here counts himself among the harvesters, and not as "the Lord of the harvest." In 3, 12 the Baptist speaks indeed of "his floor," but there the figure is not of a harvest. The preaching, teaching, and healing of Jesus was his harvest work. Besides himself Jesus could count only his disciples, and in fact these were only now ready to be installed as his fellow harvesters, cf. 10, 1, etc. In 10, 7, etc., we read what their preliminary commission was; it was an extension of the work of Jesus in Israel. Of course, now we apply this word of Jesus to our own times and situation. In doing that we ought to keep perfectly clear before us, what the word meant when the Twelve first heard it, and how our use of that word is only an adaptation of it to a new situation.

V. 38. It is certainly in point when Warneck writes, it would be wrong to think all we needed to do is to urge people: Do *you* become laborers! That would be as foolish as to think that mere urging could turn men into statesmen, generals, or artists. James 3, 1: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation." Many sorry labor-

ers have been put at the harvesting by our urging them to undertake the work, instead of following the word of Jesus: **Pray ye therefore, etc.** The harvest belongs to God, and to him alone, and it is entirely his work to supply the laborers. He, not we, in the last analysis must send them. The word "pray" = petition, request. It is surely remarkable that Jesus asks his disciples to pray God to provide laborers for his harvest. Any earthly land owner would attend to supplying laborers for his harvest of his own accord. And surely the harvest of God is of greater personal concern to him than the harvest of any earthly landlord could possibly be. "This is indeed a great mystery, but it is the pure doctrine of the Scriptures, and the day when all things will be revealed, will show us that the prayers of the believers were the means whereby God built his kingdom, in the power of which he sent the laborers, also the true mission laborers into his harvest . . . This is an astonishing condescension of the great God. He does not need us, in the last analysis he does the entire work, we at best are always only the vessels he fills with the power of his grace, and yet it is actually as if everything depended on us, and as if we had performed the work, because in eternity God desires us to have the joy that we have been his fellow laborers." — Warneck. Laborers must be secured by prayer, for they are God's preparation and gift; neither mere urging of men, nor money, will secure them. They must have the necessary spiritual powers, and these God alone is able to produce. — On the significance of **laborers** Warneck aptly says: The multitude of laborers is not the thing. In places, as in Gideon's army, there are perhaps too many. One Paul has done more than many missionary conferences, and one Luther more than all the Councils. One live, active friend of missions is worth more than a dozen half dead societies. What is thus said of missions in particular is true of the whole work here pictured as the harvest. — The clause: **that he send forth, etc.,** is

sub-final, here with *σπῶς* after a verb of beseeching. The verb is very strong, literally: that he *throw out* laborers, etc. (not: drive out, as Meyer has it). We speak of throwing men into battle, into the breach, etc. The same idea of an emergency prevails here. In fact, there can be no greater emergency than one involving souls and their eternal welfare. These emergencies arise when God blesses his work among men, as here the work of Jesus was blessed, multitudes crowding around him, doors opening in all directions. So now at times the harvest multiplies, and laborers are needed to take advantage of the growing success. God's will is to provide the laborers, and he has the means to do so, only his method and order is the one pointed out by Jesus, the prayer of the disciples. The great compassionate heart of Jesus urges us on to feel the same compassion and to lay hands to the precious harvest in the same way as he did, following no thoughts of our own, but only those of "the Lord of the harvest."

SERMON.

No man knows Christ who does not know his compassion. There is compassion among men, a noble, natural feeling of pity for human misery when its torn and bleeding wounds appeal to us. There is a much higher and finer compassion among Christians when instead of merely weeping over the wounds, or binding them up with oil and wine like the Good Samaritan, they follow in the footsteps of Jesus and apply the healing powers of the Gospel to bind up the heart itself and make whole again the crushed soul where the deeper hurt lies. But the compassion of Christ stands supreme. His mighty heart reached out to embrace the whole world of misery and woe. Deliberately he put himself where all the burden of it would fall upon his own soul. Not like some physician who tries to heal a wound while he feels none of the pain himself, but like no other physician with his own wounds he binds up ours, with his own blood he staunches ours, with his own agony he brings us life and joy again. To know this compassion of Christ is to know him indeed, and there is no knowledge so necessary, so comforting, so blessed as this. That is why our text gives us

A Revelation of Christ's Compassion

and calls upon us to

- (1) **See its tenderness;**
- (2) **Mark its strength;**
- (3) **Hold fast its comfort.**

I. "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Here is **the tenderness.**

Every man who was present there on the hills of Galilee saw outwardly just what Jesus saw — a great concourse of people from far and near. No doubt, they found it an interesting sight, and could tell of it with ardor when they got back home again, especially when something now and then happened that drew their attention. If some poor sufferer would try to reach Jesus, perhaps here and there a man lent a helping hand, and then told of that afterwards. But that was about all. Not one man's heart, when he stood looking over those crowds, either while they rested in groups dotting the hillsides, or while gathered in a great mass to listen to Jesus, was moved with compassion at all these people. They saw nothing especial to pity. But Jesus did, and it made his heart *melt with pity*. What was it that he saw? A great flock of shepherdless souls. O yes, they had their great Temple in Jerusalem, their synagogues, their priests and rabbis, but none of these was doing for them what they really needed. They were all poor, lost sinners, and the only salvation from sin was hidden from them, neither priest nor rabbi brought it to them. They were left to seek salvation for themselves, like abandoned sheep in the desert trying to find food and shelter. And left long thus they looked to Christ just like such a flock of sheep would look. "They fainted," which really means they were torn and bruised like lost sheep wandering through thickets and briars and brambles, among jagged rocks and cruel crags. They had sins of all kinds and no way to find pardon and release from them. "They were scattered," that means exhausted, lying spent and helpless on the ground. All their efforts had brought their sinful souls nothing, could bring them nothing. Jesus saw this picture of their souls, as the multitudes were spread out before him, and his heart melted with pity.

Oh, the picture has been repeated endlessly on earth! Men are often prosperous enough in earthly ways, but oh, their poor sin-laden souls! No food nor drink, no help nor shelter, no shepherd to care and keep. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises,

and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." Is. 1, 6. "Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." Ps. 53, 3. Do men see this desperate, pitiful condition when their souls are without salvation from sin? No; at best they see only the outward misery when sin works its consequences, and usually they have no idea of the real cause. They are like the men in that multitude in Galilee, blind as to what is really wrong with themselves and others. O the pity of it! But there is one compassionate heart who sees us all in our need, and not one bit of its terrible woe is hidden from him. It is his heart that still goes out to us all. Oh, mark its deep tenderness. See it melt with sympathy and longing to help us. It is Jesus, our compassionate Savior.

But his compassion is more than pitying tenderness; it is tenderness that *yearns to help and save*. Why was Jesus there amid those multitudes? Why was he not by himself in some quiet, sheltered spot, taking his ease? It was he who had himself drawn these crowds around him. These shepherdless sheep he was calling unto him that they might find in him the Shepherd they really needed. His was a heart not only to feel, but to think, plan, provide, and extend help. Those wounds he meant to bind up, that utter helplessness he would replace with strength. Or, to drop the figure: those poor sinners he would lead to the fountain of pardon and peace; those erring souls he would give the divine truth of salvation. His tenderness was moving him forward on his great errand of compassion, and that errand was to gather these people to himself, cleanse them from sin, and make them pardoned, happy, thankful children of God.

Nor has he changed since that day when he sat on the hills of Galilee and was moved by compassionate yearning to help. He is the same compassionate Savior to-day, and his heart still goes out to all these poor sufferers on earth to relieve them of their burden of sin and guilt, and all the bitter sorrows sin must bring upon them here and hereafter unless he takes that burden away. Hear him still calling: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And they that come experience what so many did there in Galilee, what David of old has put into these beautiful words: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters; he restoreth my soul."

II. For next to the tenderness of Christ's compassion mark its **strength**. "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gos-

pel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among them."

That shows *Jesus at work* in his compassion dispensing the help he has brought. Look at this work—a whole land full of helpless, lost sinners there in Galilee; and single-handed Jesus begins to bring them what they need. Many a weary mile he walked for the sake of those people, many a busy day and week he had thinking only of their interest. No place was too small, that he should have passed it by; yet also no crowds were too great that he did not minister to them all. His heart went out to them in compassion, but in compassion which meant actual deliverance and help. He preached and taught them the Gospel of the kingdom, the Word that shows how a poor sinner may be saved by trusting in the mercy of God and in the merits of the Savior he has sent. He told of the Father who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. He told how he had come to seek and to save the lost, by giving his life as a ransom for many. He told and showed by living examples how he could and would forgive repentant and believing sinners all their sins and make them children of Abraham, yea, children of God. He told how he bestows the life that no death will ever harm, and how that life will be crowned by him in everlasting glory at last. And that men might realize once for all that all these were not empty words and valueless promises he sealed them by almost countless miracles of the most gracious help. Poor sufferers for whom there was absolutely no help from men arose sound and whole at a word or touch from this great Helper, the promised Savior indeed. What a glorious figure, the great compassionate Christ, dispensing help with his own hands through all that spiritually wretched land of Galilee!

O, you will say, would that he would do that yet, come to our greater land America and preach and work miracles here, that we too might be helped! In his own blessed way he has anticipated every wish of that kind, by arranging to put forth *his work through others*. His compassion is behind his words when here in Galilee he said to his disciples: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." As he saw all the need of men, so he saw in advance all that his grace and help could and would accomplish in men. It was like a harvest, ripe for the cutting and hauling in. While his words apply first of all to what was to do in Galilee, we know that his compassionate heart thought of all other lands as well, for he was come as the Savior of the world. And that is why he planned

to do his great work of gathering the harvest by means of helpers, men like his own disciples fitted and trained to preach and teach exactly as he would have them that precious Gospel of the kingdom of salvation to men everywhere. He told the disciples to pray God to send such men. That prayer of theirs was answered by their being sent first. The prayer has gone on and on, and it ought to rise with deepest earnestness and solicitude from your heart to-day: "Lord of the harvest, send forth laborers into thy harvest." Perhaps God can answer your prayer somewhat like he did that of the disciples in Galilee. If he has given you a son who may be trained as a true man of God to help proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ as he wants it proclaimed, then pray that he may send that son and make him the man for this work. Or if you have no son who may thus be sent, pray that he may accept and use your help in getting other men's sons and in furnishing what now is needed for the necessary training. For the harvest is more plenteous than ever, it extends literally to the ends of the earth, and there are still but few laborers as compared with all the work. Let the great compassion of Christ kindle something of the same compassion in your heart, that the great work he began and for which he laid the foundation in his suffering and death may be done by him also through you.

III. When thus the tenderness and saving strength of Christ's compassion reveal themselves to us, a mighty call comes to our hearts to grasp and hold fast **the comfort** of that compassion.

"When he saw the multitude he was moved with compassion on them." Those compassionate eyes are ever upon us also. We are never left alone with the crushing burden of our sins, and with the load of ills that grow out of them and are augmented by the hurts which other men's sins inflict upon us. When we stumble and fall, when men rightly or wrongly turn against us and forsake us, when we are left alone, broken and outcast perhaps, weeping in lonely despair, one great and loving heart beats in tender pity toward us. It is Jesus in his compassion, the Jesus who once walked in Galilee and now looks down from heaven upon us. One of the great painters has depicted him extending his compassionate arms to receive us; and another has shown him with the poor sufferer pillowing his weary head upon his loving breast. These are faint efforts to bring home to us what his pitying heart really holds. Take your Bibles and read from St. Luke's fifteenth chapter the parable of the good Shepherd finding his lost sheep, the parable of the prodigal son received by his forgiving father,

and from the next chapter the parable of poor Lazarus, relieved of all his ills, carried by the angels of God into Abraham's bosom. They all come from the compassionate heart of Jesus and reach out to enfold us too in their saving comfort.

And remember, this is more than the compassion and comfort of men, who may pity us greatly and do what they can to help, but are never able to take the load from our souls. The great compassion of Christ brings us the Gospel of the kingdom, the good news that the power of Christ's grace and mercy embrace us also, to pardon every sin, wipe away every stain, and instate us as the children of his kingdom to live in that kingdom under him as our Savior King forever. That is why he called for laborers to help in his harvest, for true ministers of the Gospel to bring the gifts of his kingdom to us all who need them. When that Gospel now is brought us, let us recognize the compassionate heart of Jesus in it and the precious pardon it brings us from his very heart. That takes the terror from our consciences smitten with the conviction of our guilt, the fear out of death when its dark shadow draws nigh, the despair out of the judgment to come which we know we must face. The Gospel of the kingdom opens heaven's kingdom for us, and bids us enter all its rest, peace, and joy. It gives us this blessed treasure as the unspeakably glorious gift of Jesus our compassionate heavenly King. What of the few ills we have to bear when soon the day will break which is to usher us into the kingdom of eternal blessedness? Look at the compassionate hands which took with divine power so many a disease from poor sufferers while the Savior walked among men. That same power, only in all its fulness, will take the last burden of suffering from us at last and lift us into the eternal happiness where now he awaits us.

Hold fast the comfort of Christ's compassion, and sing his praises every time you are made to feel its tenderness and strength in his blessed Word. It is thus that he comes to you now that you may cling to him in faith, until at last you shall see him face to face and with the multitudes of the blessed join in the songs of heavenly praise.

OUTLINES.

The dominating thought of this text is the compassion of Christ, in fact it fills the text from the first word to the last, and the sermon should be according. If an application is made to compassion on our part, this should be only after the compassion of Christ has been most adequately portrayed. We may

thus use Matthew's own words: "He was moved with compassion"—when he saw the shepherdless sheep (the great need pictured by this figure)—when he beheld the plenteous harvest (the deliverance pictured in this figure).¹ Or, throwing the emphasis on the present time: How the compassion of Christ still goes out to us: in the Gospel of the kingdom—proclaimed by his faithful laborers—to deliver us from our sins (figure of the sheep)—and gather us to himself (figure of the harvest).—The prayer for laborers in God's harvest: Christ's compassion lays it on our lips—our compassion is to utter it—God's compassion will answer it.—The greatest of all harvests: the gathering in of souls—by means of the Gospel—through our prayers—to the praise of Christ's grace.

Christ is Filled with Compassion.

1. *His eyes*—2. *his hands*—3. *his voice* show it.
-

Christ's Compassion Our Comfort.

1. *Our woe touches his heart.*
 2. *Our woe moves him to help.*
-

The Great Harvest Field of the Kingdom of God and What it Requires.

1. *Christlike compassion.*
 2. *Christlike intercession.*
 3. *Christlike work.*
-

The Dimensions of Christ's Compassion.

1. *Deep* as the source of all our woe.
 2. *Broad* as the world of sufferers.
 3. *High* as the help from heaven.
-

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

John 6, 16-21.

Here is a beautiful after-Epiphany text, with its mighty, comforting revelation: "It is I; be not afraid!" The manifestation of Christ here offered to us is that of *power*. Through the howling tempest and the raging billows Jesus walks with divine calm. The unstable waters are made to bear him up; the night to him is as the brightest day; distance does not bar him from his friends. Even when the irresponsible forces of nature threaten to overwhelm us, there in the very midst of them is their mighty Master whom they all obey—why should we fear when him we see? No need to allegorize this text, its natural significance, apart from any figurative use to which we might succeed in putting it, is full enough for the purposes of the sermon. Only let us see Christ here as he bids us see him, and it will be enough.

The momentous day of the feeding of the 5,000 was past. Instead of perceiving the true meaning of that sign, the people, clinging to their earthly ideas of the Messiah King and his kingdom, tried to put them into execution by forcing Jesus to accede to their wishes and proclaiming him a king. This situation Jesus meets by first of all sending his disciples away across the lake in a boat, and then withdrawing from the multitude by going into a mountain himself alone. The multitude thus scatters, and their plan comes to naught. Here our text begins.

6, 16. And when evening came, his disciples went down unto the sea; 17. and they entered into a boat, and were going over the sea to Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them.

What now transpired John relates quite briefly, but again as an eye-witness, putting into the account features not touched upon by the other evangelists, while omitting other parts as sufficiently treated in their narratives. In fact, John writes his account with the plain presupposition that his readers have the other Gospel narratives before them, just as he does in other notable instances. Accordingly, he does not repeat that Jesus "constrained" his disciples to embark and sail away, but he adds the vivid point that **when evening came** they took the boat. With "evening" in the Greek we must supply "hour," thus: "the evening hour," any time between 3 to 6 o'clock, the first evening, or 6 o'clock and darkness, the second evening. Here a time during the second evening seems meant, for presently the falling of darkness is mentioned. The statement: **went down unto the sea**, refers to the going down, of the disciples from the place where the 5,000 had been fed near the shore of the lake, not to any descent of theirs from the mountain to which Jesus had retired. John is writing as briefly as possible reporting only the bare facts, already known, in order to get to the special points on which he desires to lay stress.—The **boat** they entered was the one in which they had come over (v. 1 and 22). The imperfect tense: **were going** describes the voyage as going forward, and for the moment withholding how it ended. **Over the sea** is really: "beyond" it, naming also their destination: **to Capernaum**. Why this place, and just where the 5,000 were fed and the disciples set sail, we cannot say. Jesus had removed them from the foolish multitude trying to make him an earthly king; he had dismissed the multitude and brought its plans to naught by withdrawing himself. Presently he would show his disciples, and also let the multitude infer, what kind of a king he was. In the meanwhile the little vessel with its twelve men is sailing out from the eastern shore of the lake, and toward the setting sun. The water is calm and beautiful. The men, experienced

sailors among them, expect no difficulty in making the few miles to their destination — not long after dark they would arrive at Capernaum. — Some time, apparently not long after starting, darkness set in. **It was now dark** is connected by John with what follows, i. e. the coming of Jesus, not with the start of the voyage, as if that did not begin till dark. There are two pluperfects: "and darkness had already come, and not yet had Jesus come to them." The verb in the previous sentence is a descriptive imperfect ("were going"), and the verb in the following sentence is an inchoative imperfect ("was rising"); the two pluperfects indicate stages in the "going" before they reached the shore. The modifiers "now" and "not yet" help to accent the interval between the first darkness and the final appearance of Jesus which is soon expressed by the vivid historical present ("they behold"). Here we have a past behind a past beyond a doubt from the standpoint of the writer, and that is the very reason why John used the past perfect here. In v. 16 he was content with the aorist in both the principal and the subordinate clauses. He had not cared there to express relative time, to stress the interval at all. These tenses in John 6, 16-21 form a very interesting study. John does, as a matter of fact, use the past perfect more frequently than do the Synoptists. He uses it to take the reader "behind the scenes," and often throws it in by way of parenthesis. (Robertson, p. 904.) Very likely the approaching storm hastened the coming of the darkness and made it more intense. The evangelist writes from a vivid recollection of it. — Commentators have puzzled a great deal about the statement that Jesus had **not yet** come to the disciples, forgetting the relation of this last Gospel to the previous ones. John does not mean that there was some kind of expectation on the part of the disciples that Jesus would come to them either before they started to sail or while they were on the way, or that Jesus had made them a promise on this point. It is folly to read here any kind

of contradiction of the Synoptists. John merely refers with "not yet" to what his readers know from the Synoptists before they read this new account which he is writing. The disciples had been sent away in this boat; what Jesus would do he had kept to himself. They now were sailing on in the thick darkness with a heavy storm gathering. No doubt they were wishing Jesus were with them, but here they were alone—that is what John brings out—his miraculous coming was later.

18. And the sea was rising by reason of a great wind that blew. 19. When therefore they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they behold Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the boat: and they were afraid.

The inchoative imperfect means that the rising of the sea increased more and more. The added genitive absolute: "a great wind blowing," states the reason. This, together with the darkness, sufficiently describes the danger. Matthew writes that the boat was distressed by the waves, the wind being against them; and Mark describes the disciples as distressed with the rowing. At first they had used their sails, since their boat was large and fitted for sailing; but the contrary wind, as well as its violence, with the darkness complicating their situation, soon made them lower the sails and take to the discouraging task of rowing against the violent wind and boisterous waves.—The other evangelists mention the time when Jesus came to the ship, about the fourth watch of the night, i. e. on toward morning, showing that thus they had practically fought against the storm all night long. John adds to this information the short distance they had made by rowing during these long hours of the night: **about five and twenty or thirty furlongs**, or stadia, a stadium being $\frac{1}{8}$ Roman or English mile, hence altogether $3\frac{1}{8}$ to $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles. As to their location with reference to Capernaum or any part of the shore we have no intimation,

and it is safe to assume that, rowing as they did in the dark and in the open lake, the disciples themselves did not know. — Only one thing was certain, they were still far from Capernaum.

The weary night was dragging on, every man wishing for the coming dawn with hope that then perhaps the storm too would cease. This was the moment they beheld the astounding miracle, for which John rightly uses the effective present tense: **they behold Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the boat.** Both participles are in the same picturesque tense. It is all told very simply — just the mighty fact, with no attempt at explanation of any kind. John writes "Jesus," but at first they could have seen only a dim, indistinct figure on the water, moving toward them. Mark adds this feature, and the superstitious fright of the disciples who thought they saw some kind of a spirit or "phantasm." Let us not blame these men too much. The darkness, the hour of night, the storm and danger still in full force, the weariness of the ceaseless heavy rowing, all combined to make them give way to the superstitions still lurking in their minds. What would some who now smile at all superstition have felt and said, if they had been passengers in that boat? Mark adds that Jesus was about to walk on past the boat, and John says only that he was "drawing nigh." Jesus thus did not make directly for the boat, but walked on as if to pass it, in order to give the disciples time to recover from their fright, and also because he wanted them to ask him to enter the boat. In trying to imagine Jesus walking on the sea we must not overlook the storm and the raging waves. These howled and dashed about him, but they did not affect him in the least. He was not tossed up and down — before him, as he moved his feet, a smooth, apparently solid path lay, on which he walked as on the ground. He did not move as a spectre; there was no unearthly light about him, as some painters have imagined. It was simply Jesus, as they had left him the

evening before—only now he was walking on the storm-tossed sea. One might inquire whether Jesus had walked all the way from the shore out through the storm to the boat, or whether he had suddenly transported himself out to the spot where the disciples first saw him. Curious questions trouble some people; it is best to pass them by, for there is not even the sign of a real answer.—One word describes the effect on the disciples: **they were afraid**, scared. The aorist merely states the fact. No exceptions are indicated anywhere as regards the Twelve.

20. But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid.

21. They were willing therefore to receive him into the boat: and straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going.

To calm their fears and dispel their superstition Jesus calls to the disciples in the boat. The other evangelists report that Jesus' first word was: "Be of good cheer," since he, a mighty Helper, was coming to them. When there had been need of bread for the 5,000 the day before, Jesus had helped; now there is need again in their depressed and dangerous condition. But on the miracle of the feeding Mark reports of the disciples that they understood not, their heart having been hardened. But the grace of Jesus tried again and again to penetrate these hard hearts and win them completely and in the fulness of faith to himself. So now he breaks through all their ridiculous fears. With Jesus away from them they might have had reason to fear, at least might have had an excuse for thinking they had reason; but with Jesus coming to them and close by, there was absolutely no reason for fear, only for joy and gratitude. The present imperative: **be not afraid**, is very proper here as signifying the continued absence of fear.—John does not add anything regarding the incident with Peter; instead he tells us more about the landing, which the other evangelists merely mention.—The imperfect tense in **they were willing therefore, etc.**, has caused the com-

mentators a lot of trouble. Taken in its ordinary significance it would seem to leave the question open whether they actually took Jesus into the boat or not; and when this imperfect tense is followed by the matter-of-fact aorist saying that now at once the boat was at the land, it seems more than ever as if John meant to report that the disciples indeed "were willing" to take Jesus in, but did not get to do this. Some commentators, even Keil, admit a difference, or even a direct contradiction, between John and the other evangelists. But this is foolish, when we have all sorts of evidence that John wrote in many points with the understanding that his readers already knew the cardinal facts involved, and he does that very thing in this narrative. Zahn has the solution that the verb *θέλειν* regularly includes also the execution of the thing willed. That is true as far as the verb is concerned, but still leaves the difficulty of the tense, which in any verb leaves the outcome of the action in the air so to say. The matter of the tense is solved when we take it that John at this point also takes for granted what the other evangelists write, i.e. that Jesus actually entered the boat. All that John then states with *ἤθελον* is that to begin with the disciples, who first feared the man whom they saw coming across the deep, had lost that fear, that now they recognized Jesus, and expressed the will and wish that he would step into the boat with them. Zahn rightly draws attention to the fact that evidently John presumes he has answered the question what became of Jesus and how he came to the land. The approach of Jesus to the boat would have been purposeless, and his reassuring words without proper effect, if Jesus had simply walked on upon the water beside the boat, or had suddenly disappeared and then come to the disciples after their landing. No, their fear is gone, they are willing to receive Jesus into the boat, and we know from the other narrators who wrote before John that they did so receive him, and that is enough. There is no contradiction, only John's narrative

is short and takes the others for granted; and the tense stands in its regular significance, as also Robertson agrees. — But now John brings out what the other two narrators had passed over. They report only that the moment Jesus entered the boat the storm instantly ceased. That was due to the will and power of Jesus, and was thus an integral part of the miracle. John does not repeat this feature, he takes it that his readers know. But he adds now: **and straightway the boat was at the land whither they were going.** The aorist of the main verb states the fact. No explanation is offered, just as there was none when we were told that Jesus walked on the sea. Godet is right when he says that Jesus, on entering the boat, did not need to sit down while the voyage was painfully completed by the hard rowing of the disciples. When Jesus stepped into the boat, that instant it was at its destination. But we must not read “whither they were going” in the superficial sense of some place along the west shore nearest to which the boat had been carried. No, we know “whither they were going,” here properly the imperfect. V. 17 positively states: they “were going over the sea unto Capernaum.” In what follows we see that Jesus and his disciples actually did get to Capernaum. John too did not tell us for nothing that the disciples had rowed only about 25-30 furlongs during the long hoisterous night. By that he means to inform us they were still far from Capernaum when Jesus came to them. And now we learn that the moment Jesus entered the remaining distance was annihilated — there was the boat close to the Capernaum landing! Like the sudden cessation of the storm, so this miraculous arrival at their port, was due solely to the power of Jesus. — John reports this miracle in conjunction with the feeding of the 5,000 in his wonderful sixth chapter, not for the sake of these miracles themselves, i. e. merely to inform us that they occurred. His object is far higher. These miracles are a divine prelude and preparation for the following discourses of

Jesus on himself as the Bread of Life. They are aids given in advance to faith, in order that all concerned might believe the words of Jesus and thus have what is far greater than any earthly help.

SERMON.

No man knows Jesus except he know adequately the power of Jesus. The moment we grasp and hold aright that he is indeed the almighty Son of God, that it is literally true, all power is given to him in heaven and in earth, we will read in a new sense every word, especially every promise of his, our faith will become a different thing more nearly like what it ought to be, and our life will assume a new aspect, one of confidence, hope, and joy. That is why in this Epiphany season a special text is introduced to reveal to us the power of Jesus. When we are through contemplating that, we ought to sing as the poet himself did:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let angels prostrate fall!
Bring forth the royal diadem
And crown him Lord of all!"

Think what it means that Christ walked through the raging billows of the sea, with not as much as one drop of spray wetting him, like you walk over some beautiful lawn, through some vine-bordered path, down some tessellated pavement. Think what it means that at his mere will the storm that had howled all the night long with unchecked fury died instantly to a zephyr breeze, and that the little boat which twelve men had been able by main force to row only about three or four miles all night long against wind and waves, at his mere touch was transferred instantly across the far waters to the very harbor it had tried to make. Then apply that to yourself, your troubles, dangers, doubts and fears, your sighs, prayers, faith and hope. It will give you just what we all need: the right idea of Jesus.

Open your hearts then to

The Revelation of Jesus' Power When He Walked Upon the Sea.

I.

First of all, *see it as it is.*

Up there on the mountain side beside the sea the multitude whom Jesus had fed so wondrously that afternoon with only five little loaves of barley bread and two little fishes had wanted to make him an earthly king. That was their idea of Jesus' power and what they thought they might be able to get out of it. Of course, they were impressed by the miracle, but only by the earthly side of it, as Jesus himself tells them: "because ye did eat and were filled." They never saw who he really was; they never grasped what he really brought them; they failed to put that and his other miracles properly behind his words and teaching; they went away with a shallow faith, as poor as they ever were, save for the one good meal they had gotten when hungry. To remove his disciples from any such thoughts, and then once more to show them what kind of a king he really was, Jesus made these men set sail in their boat toward evening to cross the sea to the city of Capernaum on the other side, while he stayed where he was and went up into the mountain again himself alone. So they set sail, those twelve disciples of his, good fishermen and sailors that some of them were. It promised to be a pleasant trip of some two hours at most across the placid waters. They did not know, but Jesus knew what this trip was to teach them. They were to *see his power as it really is.*

They had not gone far till darkness overtook them. Thick, black clouds covered the sky, a great storm set in. The waves so gentle before rose higher and higher and lashed their little craft with angry foam. Hurriedly they furled their sail and put out the oars, keeping head on against the wind to save the boat. The storm never abated, and so they labored on through the three hours of the first watch, through the three of the second to midnight, then on through the next watch another three weary, long drawn hours. Would the day never come? the storm never cease? They were all exhausted when the fourth watch came, with no relief in sight. And in all those weary, dismal, desperate hours they had rowed only some three or four miles, the harbor still far, far away. That was part of the revelation Jesus intended for them. What was all they had or could possibly do, against these mighty forces of nature? Like a nutshell they were tossed on the heaving deep. To see the power of Jesus as it really is we must see that *our power is altogether nothing.* Only when we hold the two together rightly do we see what we ought to see.

Then the miracle occurred. It was the fourth watch. All at once one of the Twelve cried out and pointed with his hand. The rowers paused, and every eye looked in the direction indicated — there walked a man upon the sea! "A specter, a phantom!" they cried; superstitious fear smote them. "An evil omen!" they thought — they would never reach shore. Nearer and nearer came that man walking on the sea, till all at once a voice, calm, strong, masterful, rang out across the raging billows — the voice of Jesus! — "It is I; be not afraid!" The Lord Jesus Christ walked on the stormy sea. The great waves fell smooth as glass before his feet — an even path *formed before him* — *neither storm nor spray* touched him — and so he walked upon the sea! How could it be? There is only one answer, and it went down into the hearts of those twelve men tossed in their little boat: his almighty power controlled the sea, the waves, the storm. Did they marvel when five tiny loaves grew under his hands to be enough for 5,000 men? Here the mighty storm that filled all the sky, the great waters that formed the sea, the rushing of a thousand waves as they piled high and sank low, acted as his humble servants. They beheld *the infinite power of God*, when Jesus Christ, the Son of God walked upon the sea.

But it was the power of God, not to destroy, but to help and bless. Jesus was walking toward the boat. And when the fears of those twelve men subsided, and they called to him to come to them, he walked to their boat — motionless it lay in his smooth path, and without an effort Jesus their Savior stepped in. Then again his power shone forth. All in an instant the storm was gone, utterly gone, as on that other occasion when Jesus had commanded the wind and waves: "Peace, be still!" Nor was this all. While astonishment covered their faces, as the disciples looked, the whole scene was changed. Away out of sight of land they had been a moment before, now their boat was riding at ease in the harbor of Capernaum close to the shore. There were the houses in the dark of the early morning, and a few dim figures moving on the shore. What had happened? Something that we must all learn ever anew: Jesus, the Son of God, their Savior, had used *his power in their behalf*. No wonder they fell on their faces and worshipped him, saying: "Of a truth thou art the Son of God!" O let us too see that power as it is, and worship our Savior God.

II.

The revelation of Jesus' power when he walked upon the sea you must first see as it is, and then **read it into his words**. Here is his mighty word: "It is I; be not afraid!" The disciples could not help but read his almighty power into that

word, for it was being fully displayed before their very eyes when the Savior spoke. But why should they or we ever be afraid when he who here said, "It is I," is ever and ever the same. Always all power is his in heaven and in earth; always all the elements of nature must do his bidding; always countless hosts of angels stand at his beck and call; always every foe lies prostrate beneath his feet. Be not afraid, the Savior's almighty word cannot fail.

Read his almighty power into all that he has done for our salvation. It was the Son of God who took our sins upon his almighty shoulders — he, and he alone could bear them. It was God's great Son who met our enemies sin, death, hell, and Satan and compassed their utter defeat. Who could have fought that fight and triumphed, save he alone? His almighty power carried him on high to sit on the throne of his glory above. Those humble feet that once walked the earth and then the sea, stand now at the throne, where all the angels of God and the souls of just men made perfect worship in endless glory. O all you poor sinners, realize that God's almighty Son is your Savior. Back of all his precious Gospel is his infinite power to make that Gospel just what he says it is — life and salvation for us all.

Read his power into all his invisible work in the world. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose." Rom. 8, 28. There are no laws of nature, there are no oppositions of men, there are no invisible powers of darkness, but what Jesus, our almighty Savior rules in the midst of them. When he wills they grow calm and still and all their rage ceases; when he bids them they bring us where he would have us. With his hand over us, with his heart ever near us, why should we be afraid?

So with every one of his precious promises. When his Word tells us to be "content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. 13, 5, his almighty power is behind that promise and he makes every syllable of it good. "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me," Ps. 50, 15. "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear," Is. 65, 24. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son," John 14, 13. Why do so many of these precious assurances mean so little to us, and why do we fail so often to rely on them? Because we do not read Christ's almighty helping power into them. Because we are always setting limits to that power, as if it can and must help us only in certain little ways that we figure out. Those twelve disciples never dreamed of Jesus coming to them by walking over the sea into their boat;

nor did they dream in all their hours of painful rowing how Jesus all in an instant would take them out of the storm and waves to the very landing in the distant harbor. We sing indeed with fervor:

"Commit thy way, confiding,
When trials here arise,
To him whose hand is guiding
The tumults of the skies."

But unless we keep revelations like Jesus walking on the sea, revelations of his limitless power, before our eyes, our words will after all be empty and bring us no real comfort.

What is true of the promises of earthly help is equally true of the great promises of salvation. "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3, 16. "That every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day," John 6, 40. "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." John 11, 25-26. Too lightly these and similar words of his almighty power fall upon our ears. Their tremendous significance must be reenforced for us by these revelations of his real power, when earth and sea and sky instantly do his bidding, when countless angel hands fly with holy ardor to carry out his slightest commands, when death, the grave, and all the powers of the world to come move obedient to his mere will. Then, and then alone, do we begin to realize the reality of what our almighty, glorified Lord said: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life, freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Rev. 21, 6-7.

To steady our hearts and keep us from sin, let us read the almighty power of Jesus also into every one of his threats. "He that believeth not shall be damned," he is judged already, he shall never see life, he shall be cast into outer darkness where there is howling and gnashing of teeth. Shall we ever think of challenging the omnipotent wrath of him who uttered these threats for our warning? There could be no greater blindness or folly. With David of old let us call to ourselves and all men: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Ps. 2, 12.

III.

The revelation of Jesus' power when he walked upon the sea we must see as it is, read into all his words, and thus also **put it back of our faith.**

We confess it Sunday after Sunday: "I *believe* in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord," but do we show that we really have this faith? When we look close we often find that faith exceedingly languid. It does not run to him in prayer in every need, generally going to other helpers first; it does not worship him in proper humility and trust, with holy ardor and zeal; it does not walk with lively hope, as if heaven were really open above us, and every step taking us nearer to its glory; it will not confess him before men as it should, nor fight the good fight of faith, putting on the whole armor of God, and laying hold with both hands on eternal life; it does not rejoice to run the way of his commandments, strong in love of him, putting on the new man, as indeed created in Christ Jesus unto good works. And one of the reasons of this slowness, coldness, and ineffectiveness of our faith is our inferior idea of the Lord whom we say we believe in and to whom we declare we belong. We must put the revelation of his infinite greatness and power behind our faith.

That morning when the twelve disciples of Jesus climbed out of their boat in the harbor of Capernaum, Matthew tells us, "they came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God." That was an entirely different thing than the effort of the multitude on the previous day to make Jesus an earthly king. What made it different? They realized the divine power and glory of Jesus—that lifted up their faith and made it come out full and strong. It is exactly what we must get out of this and other revelations of his divine sonship and almightiness. Why feel and act as if help for us is doubtful in distress when our Helper is the omnipotent Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us? Why ever feel sad and discouraged, as long as we know:

"When he makes known his pleasure,
The counsel of his will,
That in its utmost measure
Will he at last fulfill."

And this cowardice of ours before his enemies, it is actually ridiculous when we know that they are nothing but chaff which the wind driveth away. And shall our love be slack, our service weak, our good works few and poor, when his almighty love has made us God's own children, and all his heavenly heart is bent on working out our salvation? O let faith realize who it is to

whom it clings, a Friend, Benefactor, Protector, Lord and Master, King and Ruler, who holds all heaven and earth in his hands and whose limitless power is all directed for our highest temporal and eternal good. Put the revelation of Christ's eternal power back of your faith and you will find the strength you need and the joy that will make your life what it ought to be.

Behold the Son of God in him who walked mid storm and waves upon the sea. His power supports his every word. And blessed are they who make that power and the love that wields it the rock of their faith now and forever.

OUTLINES.

The subject of this text on which, of course, the theme must be built, is its inner significance, the revelation it makes concerning Jesus, and the import of this revelation for us as his followers. Some will be inclined to allegorize the text, since this is comparatively easy, but this always loses some of the strength of the text and makes a weaker, if more flowery, sermon. We have displayed here: The infinite and beneficent power of Jesus when he walked upon the sea—what a revelation—what consolation!—Jesus walking on the sea is to give us a proper conception of his greatness—he is the omnipotent Son of God—the all-efficient Savior—our everlasting hope and trust.—Jesus, Master of the storm and sea—what that mastery means—why that mastery was revealed.—One word shines out with supreme splendor in the text, and many will desire it as a theme: "It is I; be not afraid!"—I, to whom all power is given—I, whose power is for your benefit and help—I, whom you must love and trust.—Christ Kyrie, come to us on the sea!—"While the waters nearer roll, while the tempest still is high—"Hide me, O my Savior, hide, till the storm of life is past—"Safe into the haven guide; O relieve my soul at last!"

"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name!"

1. *Realize that power.*
2. *Trust that power.*
3. *Glorify that power.*

The Voice of Christ upon the Waters: "It is I; be not Afraid!"

1. *The voice of power supreme over all the forces of nature.*
2. *The voice of assurance supreme over all our fears.*
3. *The voice of promise supreme over all our need.*
4. *What shall we answer that voice?*

"It is I; be not Afraid!" — Get rid of your Fears.

1. *Not indeed by underrating danger and overrating your own ability.*
 2. *But by learning the power of Jesus and trusting his help.*
-

Why Jesus Walked upon the Sea.

1. *To reveal his infinite power.*
 2. *To prepare his disciples for his Word.*
 3. *To indicate the triumph of his work.*
 4. *To conquer all fear and establish faith.*
-

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

John 6, 30-35.

The Thomasius selections offer us John 6, 26-35 for this Sunday, a text decidedly long, and with varied contents. Verses 24-29 are used in the Eisenach selections for Thanksgiving. The central Epiphany idea is contained in the second half of the text, where Jesus speaks of himself as the Bread of Life. We accordingly restrict the text to verses 30-35, both to shorten it and to focus the sermon completely on Christ's revelation of his *saving grace* in offering himself to us as the Bread of Life. It will be noted that this text connects historically with the previous one. The people followed Jesus to the west side of the Sea of Galilee and found him in Capernaum. It was then that Jesus rebuked them for their blindness to the significance of his signs, and followed this up with his great discourse on the Bread of Life.

Instead of being satisfied with the meat that perisheth Jesus told these people, whom he had fed miraculously the day before, to seek the true meat which abides unto eternal life, which he, the Son of man was sent to give them. This meant that they must believe in him as the Savior sent of God.

6, 30. They said therefore unto him, What then doest thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe thee? What workest thou? 31. Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.

The connective "therefore" states that as a result of Jesus' demand that they believe on him as the divinely sent Messiah and Savior, this counter demand is made on him that he prove to them by a proper sign that he

is sent indeed as he declares he is, and that he is thus the person he claims to be. Most likely someone of the people gathered around him speaks for them all, voicing the general sentiment. If Jesus had told them of a number of "works" they must do, when they asked: "What must we do, that we may work the works of God?" v. 28, very likely they would have been ready to heed him and to start doing these works, even if they seemed difficult; but when he required of them the divine "work" of faith, one that God himself must work in them, they continue to balk. They had seen his miracles, in particular the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and in their way had reacted to this, namely by wanting to make him their earthly king, a Messiah as they had conceived him, thus treating that miracle wholly as Jesus had said of them: "Ye seek me, not because ye saw (and read aright) the signs (in their true significance), but because ye ate and were filled" (merely with earthly bread), i. e. they were bound to be only earthly-minded, and to believe in him only in this earthly way. Now that Jesus insists so strongly upon a faith which they understand from him to be much higher, they feel themselves justified in insisting also on their part upon a correspondingly higher sign. This is the force of **then** in their question. Note the emphasis on **thou** — asking so much of *us*, what dost *thou* do to justify it? They demand an adequate **sign**, betraying by this that they had not understood the great sign they had witnessed the previous day, nor any of the **others** Jesus had done, failing utterly because of their earthly-minded bent to read them aright. They come now to demand in the same blind way a sign such as they would deem adequate — but one that would signify again only their conception of the Messiah. Observe their addition: **that we may see**, with their physical eyes — some stupendous and astonishing wonder. So also they state as the effect such seeing might produce on them: **and believe thee**, the verb only with the dative,

hence merely in the sense: take thy statement to be true. Such a sign as they dream of would not signify what Jesus was, and would therefore not help in producing the saving faith he desired. They themselves have so little conception of that faith that the signs which should have helped to produce it, failed in them, and when they try to speak of faith they get no higher than ordinary credence of veracity. There is a contrast in the addition: **what workest thou?** (i. e. now or at any other time) with the demand Jesus had made on them: "*Work . . . for the meat which abideth,*" etc., purposely employing the same verb. Thus they give him back "the work" and the "working," turning both as a demand back on him. They as much as say that if he will do what comes up to their requirements, they will meet his — little realizing how far they were off the track. The two aorists "see" and "believe" are ingressive: come to see, and come to believe. — To re-enforce their justification, that they had responded to what Jesus had done, and their demand, that if he required anything more *he himself* must do more, they instance what Moses had done, Ex. 16, 4 and 15; Ps. 78, 24. They first state the general fact in regard to Moses: **Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness.** This they substantiate from the Scriptures: **as it is written,** the perfect participle pointing to the present result of the past act of writing. In the Psalm we have "bread of heaven"; in Ex.: "I will rain bread from heaven for you." As here quoted: **He gave them bread out of heaven to eat,** the sense is unchanged, but the object is: "bread out of heaven," i. e. *such* bread ("out of heaven" modifying "bread," not "gave"). The Jews here refer to this great Mosaic miracle as plainly exceeding, as to its visible side and its outward extent, the miracle of the loaves wrought by Jesus on the previous day. The point they urge is in the phrase "out of heaven," which is also the emphatic phrase in their statement. What would or could Jesus offer them to compare with

this, or to exceed it in a visible way, since his miracle in their estimation was a far slighter performance, merely multiplying loaves already at hand, and multiplying them to feed only 5,000? If he insisted on such peculiar faith for them, let him do something in the way of a miracle correspondingly great "out of heaven." There is a shrewd kind of reasoning in this demand, apparently sound, and yet built wholly on the premises of unbelief and its blind earthly vision, and therefore unsound and false to the core.

32. Jesus therefore said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. 33. For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

The falsity of their reasoning is clearly pointed out. Jesus ignores their pointed demand: "What workest thou?" Any such demand will fall away of itself when once they understand what the true Bread really is. This Jesus makes as plain as possible, emphasizing it by the double "verily," and by his voice of authority. **Verily, verily** is the strongest assurance of verity and truth which Jesus gives; **I say unto you** is his voice of divine authority. John alone reports the double "verily," the Synoptists have only the single. The word is Hebrew, and means "truth"; in Hebrew it was used adverbially at the end of a statement or obligation in order to confirm it, much like our liturgical Amen. In an altogether unusual and striking manner Jesus used it at the head of certain declarations, and it seems certain that John has given us in the duplication of the word just what Jesus said in the Aramaic. The Greek has no true equivalent, for *amen* is more than "truly" or "verily" as one may intellectually grasp a thing; there is in it an energetic demand for faith, since this "verily" always refers to Jesus, or to something concerning him, which involves our salvation. "*He covers*

the word, not *the word* him." Cremer. The divine will is behind it, one which, contrary to the humble and weak appearance, will effect and carry out fully what lies in the divine reality present in Jesus. This saving reality is something firm, solid, unalterable, and is to be experienced as such in our experiencing Christ. He who has this experience will have a solid hold and be firm himself thereby. "Verily, verily" is thus the strongest assurance and testimony on the part of Jesus of his own Messianic mission, so that Rev. 3, 14 literally names him "the Amen." Yet "verily" must not be read as an oath, for it is entirely distinct from that. — The point in Jesus' reply to the Jews appears in the twice repeated **bread out of heaven**, made even more clear the second time by the addition **true**, i. e. genuine. In a way the manna could be called "heaven-bread," as in the Psalm, but after all it was only like earthly bread, satisfying only the body while it lasted. The genuine "heaven-bread" is a far higher thing, and these people are to know what it is. **Moses** could not and did not give them this bread, nor even God through Moses — it required one far higher than Moses. The aorist **gave** is sufficient; if we read the perfect "has given" it would be the extensive perfect, implying that what the past act bestowed continued, namely for forty years. — So Jesus declares: **but my Father giveth** (is giving, now) **you the true** (genuine) **bread out of heaven** (i. e. in and through me). There are thus several contrasts: "bread out of heaven," the manna as a bread only for the body, as also the Jews meant it — then "the true bread out of heaven," Jesus as the heavenly Bread, as Jesus meant it. The former indeed a great gift, the latter absolutely supreme. Secondly: "Moses" — "my Father," with no mere human mediator like Moses. Thirdly: "gave" (or "has given," adding to the historical fact the duration of the manna gift for forty years) — "giveth" at this moment. Finally: "out of heaven," which could not be predicated of the manna, since it never was in heaven,

but of Jesus alone who was indeed in heaven and descended from heaven.

V. 33. Jesus explains about this true bread out of heaven, hence the particle **for**. The bread out of heaven in the real sense of the word is **the bread of God** (genitive of origin or author), *das wesenhafte Brot Gottes*, derived in its essence from God. Meyer, Weiss, and others make "bread" the predicate, and read the masculine participle as referring to Jesus: "he who cometh down out of heaven," so that from the effect, the coming out of heaven, one could conclude as to the cause and nature, namely that this was the bread of God. But there is no reason whatever for this unnatural and difficult inversion; the sentence must be read in its natural order, with "the bread of God" as the subject. The article goes with both participles and marks them as descriptive predicates; this genuine and essential bread of God is that which actually comes from heaven and actually gives life to the world (not merely bodily sustenance to one nation for a limited time). The tenses of the participles are the timeless present; as predicates of "bread" they are meant merely to show its quality and character, so that it makes no difference just *when* these actions occur. The fact is, Jesus had already come down from heaven in the Incarnation, and was now and would ever be giving life; only the participles are connected with "bread" and explain "bread," yet the full revelation of who is meant by this bread is still held back. — **Life**, $\xi\omega\eta$, as almost always, especially in John, signifies the higher, the true, the spiritual life, as a possession, or as the life-principle itself which makes us alive so that we cannot die. And the gift of this "life" is **unto the world**, so that the world is to receive and possess it. Note the universality of the divine mercy, the redemptive grace, and the offer of both to men. Alas, that so many reject the heavenly gift of life.

34. They said therefore unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

The connective particle shows that this request is the result of Jesus' words. This, then, was the impression he had made. The respectful address: **Lord**, cannot be meant ironically. Like the Samaritan woman, John 4, 15, these people are impressed by Jesus and what he says in spite of themselves. But just as she betrayed that after all she was thinking only of natural water: "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come all the way hither to draw," so these Jews want this wonder-bread of Jesus "evermore," in order that they may not need to bake or buy any more. They seem to intimate that if Jesus could give them such bread, to take and be able to eat constantly whenever they felt hungry, they would be willing to grant that he had outdone Moses. The R. V. translates **lord** in this place, whereas in 4, 15 the same word is rendered "sir," showing that only a respectful address to a superior person is intended, with no thought of divine lordship. The forward position of **evermore** makes it emphatic. Let the bread be what it will, if it be so wonderful and heavenly they would like to have it served to them every day. Thus there is no comprehension in the request, of either what the bread really was, or of the faith by which alone it could be received. With wonderful patience Jesus continues. He uses the impression he has made in order if possible to deepen it. He keeps on sowing the seed; perhaps long after this living seed will grow and his work after all be not in vain.

35. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Here is the full Epiphany of Jesus. He tells his auditors plainly and directly who he is, and this revelation illumines and makes clear all that he has said hitherto. This is one of the grand *I AM* statements of

Jesus shining like the sun at noonday. **The bread of life** parallels the allegorical "water of life" in chapter 4, and is in substance the same. In 14, 6 Jesus says: "I am the life," which drops the allegory and states the bare reality. Compare also "tree of life," Gen. 3, 22; Rev. 22, 2; and "water of life," Rev. 22, 17. We must identify "the true bread out of heaven"—"the bread of God"—and "the bread of life"; all that is said of each belongs also to the other, especially Jesus' "I am." In the term **bread** there lies the idea of eating, intimating how one may become a partaker of this **life**. But Jesus as the Bread of Life is not only a medium for bestowing life, he is himself and essentially Life; this is what lies in **I am**, cf. also 5, 26.—As plainly as Jesus states who is the Bread, so plainly he now adds what is the eating of this Bread: **he that cometh to me, etc.**, cf. 4, 14; also Is. 55, 1-2. Observe the parallelism as in Hebrew poetry: "he that cometh to me shall not hunger,—and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." **He that cometh** is defined by **he that believeth**, the present participles used as nouns, for which the English has to have its cumbersome relative clauses. The coming is inward, it consists of the confidence and reliance of the heart. **Unto me** and **on me** both have the emphatic form of the personal pronoun, laying all the stress on the person of Jesus ("I am"). The eating = believing. This already settles the question as to whether John 6 deals with the Lord's Supper, which must be denied. The full answer is given in the author's *Eisenach Gospel Selections*, 2nd ed., I, 458, etc., which it is not necessary to repeat here.—The double negative in the Greek, used both with the future indicative and the subjunctive, is the strongest form of negation for anything future; we may render it: shall in no way; '*schlechterdings nicht*'. The figure broadens when to: **shall not hunger** there is added: **shall never thirst**, and the "never" is set over against the Jewish request "evermore." In describing himself as the Bread of Life Jesus intends to speak of

his flesh and his blood, i. e. of his sacrificial death on the cross, 53-56. Here is the anticipation of that two-fold reference. Faith in Jesus is both eating and drinking, and either of these two or both may be used according to the description that is given of faith. The Jews in thinking of some wonder-bread of earth imagined that they would get hungry again after eating it and thus would have to return again and again to the eating. But Jesus tells them that faith in him forever stills all hunger and thirst of the soul. When we have the Life, we have it, and its powers are in us; we do not need to keep getting it anew from a recurrent lack of it, just as the man who is born needs not constantly to repeat that birth. It is what Jesus told the Samaritan woman: "The water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up into eternal life," 4, 14. "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." *Eis. G. S.*, I, 282. "These words ought to be written with golden letters, yea, with living letters (that were better) into the heart, that every one might know where to leave his soul; where he is to go when he leaves this world; or when he goes to bed, gets up early in the morning, or does anything else, that he might know this golden art: Here, with Christ, my soul remains, that I need not hunger or thirst. This man will not lie to me. They are very precious, dear and valuable words, which we are not only to know, but are to utilize for us and say: On this will I go to bed at night and get up again in the morning; on these words will I depend, sleep, wake, work, and cross the bridge. For if everything went to ruin, and father and mother, emperor and pope, monk and cleric, princes and lords were to leave me, and Moses too then could not help me, and I would merely run to Christ, he would

help me. For these words are sure, and he says: Hold to me; if you come to me you shall live. And the meaning of such words is that whoever is able to believe on the one man whose name is Jesus Christ, he has enough and need not suffer hunger or thirst." Luther.

SERMON.

"Ho! all ye starving souls,
That feed upon the wind,
And vainly strive with earthly toys
To fill an empty mind;

"Here wisdom has prepared
A soul-reviving feast,
And bids your longing appetites
The rich provision taste."

When Jesus spread his table in the wilderness with earthly bread 5,000 men were only too glad to sit down and eat, but when he invited some of these same people to eat the heavenly Bread of Life, they turned away—it was not what they wanted. Men still are very anxious to care for and to feed their poor earthly bodies, soon to be turned to dust, but their immortal souls seem not to trouble them at all. And yet what shall it profit a man though he gain the whole world and lose his own soul. Thank God for earthly bread, but thank him a thousand times more that in Jesus Christ he has spread for us

The Feast of the Soul.

That feast is intended for **soul-hunger**.

The people in our text who listened to Jesus telling them of the Bread of Life vaguely felt that there was something beyond earthly bread and treasure that they needed. That is why they said: "Lord, evermore give us this bread." It was the effort of Jesus to make them realize fully what they needed, in order that then he might satisfy that need by giving them himself and the salvation he had brought.

When the children of Israel journeyed through the desert God fed them with a wonderful bread called manna, which he caused to lie every morning, except the Sabbath, in little round pellets on the ground around their camping place. All they needed to do was to go out and gather it, and then prepare it for eating

in all kinds of ways. It was a miracle continued for almost forty years. But Jesus tells his hearers that even this wonder-bread was not the true bread. It fed only the body, it stilled hunger only for a time. It was thus exactly like our own food to-day—for the body, for a little while. And bread is by no means an exception. It is thus with everything earthly—our clothes last for the body only so long, our houses fall into decay at last, our wealth is only for this life, and often takes wings before that life is over, our joys are all like flowers withering in the end. That would not be so bad if we were like the brute creation about us, intended only for a brief existence on earth, their lives then disappearing forever like the flame of a candle when we blow it out. It ceases to exist. But God has given us immortal souls. We are to live forever, and even our bodies are to be joined again to our souls after death and to exist with them to all eternity. The moment we think aright of these things, all earthly treasures and satisfactions appear in their true light—they are for a day, while we are for eternity. And the first question of soul-hunger begins to stir us: What have we that will give us satisfaction, happiness, blessedness forever? And the answer is: Nothing—as we find ourselves here among all the fading things of earth, absolutely nothing!

But soul-hunger cannot stop here. It must ask: Did God make us so? create us for a blessed eternal existence, and yet leave us without the very gifts which would produce that blessedness? We have the answer in God's revelation as to how he made man, in his own image, holy and blessed, in harmony and fellowship with God and heaven, to live eternally in God's presence, like his own holy angels. Why are we not so now?—drifting here amid empty treasures, withering pleasures? You know the answer of God's revelation: sin has ruined and robbed us. It has cut us off from God, from holiness, righteousness, blessedness; it has weighed our souls down with guilt and brought us the certainty of punishment here and hereafter, and the fear that this punishment now already inspires. Sin has even darkened and deadened our souls so that we are blind to our own guilt, indifferent to our own loss and danger, ignorantly satisfied with what we know cannot last, and thus drift to the brink of eternity. Read the 90th Psalm, and you have God's own description of what our life is amid these vanities, far from him in sin. And that is exactly why Jesus comes to us and calls to us, laying bare all our desperate need, and holding up to us the deliverance and satisfaction he has made ready for us. He opens our eyes, he stirs our hearts, that we may see the emptiness of all earthly things and begin to long for release from sin and guilt, for fellowship with God again, and for the life, joy, and glory that shall never fade. That is soul-hunger, and without it there is no salvation. For this soul-hunger

God has prepared the feast of the soul in his own Son Jesus Christ. Behold, he calls you to-day: Come, eat of the true Bread out of heaven; stop trying to find satisfaction where it can never be found, your soul needs what God alone can give you in his Son. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."

The feast of the soul which God provides for you gives you the true **soul-bread**.

What was it that Jesus told the Jews when they came to him the day after he had fed them so wonderfully with only five loaves? He urged them to seek, not the meat which perisheth, but the meat which endureth to everlasting life. And then he offered it to them, saying: "I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

It is a figure, of course, but perfectly plain when we see who Jesus is and what he has done for us. Bread, even that for our bodies, is the gift of God. He alone in his wonderful way lets it grow out of the earth that we may be fed. Even more so the Bread our souls need is his gift. But just as our souls are not from earth and clay, but the breath of God's own mouth, so the Bread they now need in their sinful, sad condition is one that also comes from heaven, from God himself. It is God's only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Do you ask how we need him, and how he is the Bread for our souls? It is because no power on earth, only the eternal Son of God himself, and he only by his holy blood shed for our atonement on the cross, can rid our souls of the guilt and penalty of sin, and thus join our souls again to God as his children forever, and heirs of his eternal joys. We are justified, writes the holy apostle, that is freed forever from the guilt and penalty of our sins, "by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," Rom. 3, 24. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," Eph. 1, 7. We were redeemed, writes St. Peter, "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. 1, 19. Our souls need a Redeemer from sin, a Deliverer from their lost condition, a Savior from death and hell, an eternal and all-gracious King and Lord to open heaven for us once more. This is Jesus who "is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. 1, 30. He is the Bread of Life, the soul-bread we need.

But we must add the Gospel, the precious Word and doctrine in which Jesus reveals himself to us in all his redemptive grace. So he himself proclaimed to the Jews: "I am the Bread of Life." He had his holy apostles continue the proclamation. We ourselves have their word as God made them write it for all time by the

inspiration of his Holy Spirit, and now we are able to read and hear it. When God made his Son the Bread of Life for our souls he meant that this Bread should indeed be ours, for us to partake of it. There may be plenty of the finest bread in the world, and yet people often starve because it is not their bread, but far from them. So, because Jesus and his grace is made ours by his Word and Gospel, this Gospel itself is called the Bread of Life for us, or with the other figure, equally significant, the Water of Life. God's grace is complete, lacking nothing; intending to feed our famishing souls he gave us the Redeemer in the Gospel of salvation, indeed and in the fullest sense the bread from heaven for our souls.

The feast of the soul sets this heavenly bread before us and bids us eat—it is **soul-eating**.

Do you ask how the soul can eat? Jesus gives answer: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." To eat the Bread of Life we must receive our Redeemer Jesus Christ by faith as our only Savior into our souls. To eat spiritually is to believe and trust with our souls.

The whole work of Jesus among men is to make us realize who he really is, in order thus to create confidence and trust in our souls. He comes with his truth dispelling our false notions about sin and its eternal consequences. He comes with his love winning our hearts to appreciate what he has done to atone for our sins. He comes with his greatness impressing us with his deliverance as indeed all-sufficient with God. All three, his truth, love, and greatness, act as a mighty influence to draw us unto him and to awaken faith in us that he is indeed our Savior, and that clinging to him we are safe now and forever. Thus to believe in Jesus Christ is to eat the Bread of Life and to experience its heavenly power.

The soul that eats thus will never hunger or thirst again. How can it? When my sin is gone, my guilt purged away, what more can I want? "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us," Ps. 103, 12. "I, even I, am he that bloteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Is. 43, 25. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." Ps. 32, 1-2. With our sins gone our souls are truly satisfied, for we are then the children of God again. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3, 26. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 1, 12. "And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also

glorified together." Rom. 8, 17. Can our souls desire more than these guarantees of heaven and eternal glory?

Alas, that so many souls will not eat the true Bread from heaven, will not trust the only trustworthy One, but prefer to trust themselves or the foolish words of men who give them other counsel and advice. Can there be greater folly than to cast aside God's Son and rely on our own works, that may seem good to us, but that God has told us are full of sin and even if good could not cover our evil works? Can there be a more fatal mistake than to decline the one pardon which cost God so much and which alone he says will suffice, and try to enter heaven with excuses which we may invent, or the false estimates of sin which others may persuade us are correct? Let no man mislead you with vain philosophy—except ye eat by faith the true Bread of heaven, ye shall not see heaven, nor taste of its joys. Faith saves, because it holds to the true Savior.

And so we add, since the true Bread from heaven is called also the Bread of Life, that the feast of the soul gives us the true **soul-life**.

Sin and death are indissolubly linked together. God warned Adam of that, and when Adam sinned he learned by his own terrible experience that it is true. The soul exists indeed when the curse of sin is on it, but it is shut out from God and blessedness, and that is death. This death is on every soul that lies in sin. A man with such a soul goes on with his earthly affairs as if little or nothing were wrong, for his soul is hidden within him, but there is nothing in his soul save this hidden curse of God. When his earthly life goes out, his soul sinks with the weight of that curse into darkness and night. "Depart from me," says Christ, "ye that work iniquity." "He that believeth not shall be damned."

From this curse Christ, who is the Life, has come to deliver us. But our deliverance can be only this, that we take him, who is the Life into our souls and thus ourselves become spiritually alive again. That is why he calls himself the Bread of Life, which if a man eat by faith he shall live and never die. Here the heavenly Bread exceeds all that earthly bread is able to do, even as God's Son is infinitely greater than any earthly thing we can compare him to. Earthly bread cannot make a dead man alive, it can only help to keep the living alive for a little while; and earthly bread must be eaten daily anew even for this. But Christ taken into the soul dead with sin expels the death and puts life in its stead. Christ made ours by faith joins us by that faith to himself and to heaven, the home of life. No bodily death can harm that life. When we who have the true soul-life in Christ leave our earthly

home, Christ lifts our souls to himself, that where he is we may be also. His word is: "Because I live, ye shall live also." John 14, 19. And the apostle writes: "Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Gal. 2, 20. And again: "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's." Rom. 14, 8. Thus to be the Lord's is to have the soul-life, which shall never die.

Thank God for the feast of the soul which he has prepared for us poor sinners in his Son, our Savior! It is intended for soul-hunger; it brings us the heavenly soul-bread; it enables our souls to eat by faith; and gives us the soul-life that never dies. Blessed are the guests at this feast; they shall eat the bread of eternal joy in heaven.

OUTLINES.

The entire text centers in Christ's declaration: "I am the Bread of Life," so that almost every proper theme will turn on this word. We may take the word itself: "I am the Bread of Life," and divide: 1) "The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven." 2) Which "giveth life unto the world." 3) And "he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."—Or: The Bread of God—Christ—faith—life.—Or: "My Father giveth you the true Bread from heaven."—His Son.—Life through his Son.—Life through faith in his Son.—The Epiphany idea may be utilized in the sermon, since the text presents a revelation of Christ in his saving grace: How Christ revealed himself as the Bread of Life:—he revealed our need of this Bread (for all other bread fails to give us life, even Moses' manna)—he revealed the power of this Bread (it alone bestows deathless life)—he revealed the only way to eat this Bread (cometh to me, believeth on me).

Christ's Wonderful Word: "I Am the Bread of Life."

1. *O food divine!*
 2. *O eating and drinking that satisfies!*
 3. *O deathless life!*
-

The Sign of the Manna and the Reality in the Bread of Life.

- 1 *The earthly manna pointed to the true Bread from heaven.*
 - 2 *The eating of the manna pointed to the partaking of the true Bread by faith.*
 - 3 *The life sustained by the manna pointed to the eternal life bestowed by the true Bread.*
-

The Invitation of the Bread of Life

- 1 *Christ is this Bread.*
 - 2 *This Bread is for the soul.*
 - 3 *The soul eats it by faith.*
 - 4 *And faith has life.*
-

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

John 3, 31-36.

The old gospel text has marked this Sunday by giving us a revelation of the true glory of Jesus, Matt. 17, 1-9. Few of the newer selections offered equal the old text in excellence. In making our choice for this series we keep the Epiphany idea before us, namely that the text must reveal Jesus to us, and we decidedly prefer that this be in some manner *a revelation of his greatness and glory*. This requirement is fully met in the selection here offered. Two of the newer lines of texts offer among the after-Epiphany selections John 3, 22-36. This again makes a long text. A third line shortens the text to John 3, 22-30. Instead of following either, we here retain the second half of the text because it is fully sufficient for our purpose and presents the very Epiphany thought we desire to have.

The disciples of the Baptist are jealous of Jesus who had also begun to baptize and to whom now the multitudes were flocking, v. 26. In complaining to their master about this, they speak as if Jesus were beholden to the Baptist ("he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness"), and as if Jesus' present action were a poor reward to the Baptist. John at once sets his disciples right. In no way could he be a rival of Jesus, or jealous of him, or Jesus under obligation to John. Only men who fail to understand who Jesus really is can entertain thoughts of this kind. But there is another side to the matter, namely the relation of Jesus to men, here in particular to the Baptist's own disciples. Their words show that they are assuming a wrong and dangerous attitude toward Jesus. This must be removed,

his true greatness and glory must be revealed to them, and they must see, believe, and worship. With this revelation the Baptist now proceeds.

3, 31. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaketh: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

The heavenly origin of Jesus makes him absolutely supreme over all men, whoever they may be, for they are all only of earthly origin and hence limited accordingly. This the disciples of John — and we with them — must know on their own personal account. In v. 28 John speaks of “the Christ,” and follows this up by describing “the Christ” as such, allowing his disciples to make the application to Jesus. So here: **He that cometh from above is above all**, is meant of “the Christ,” whoever his person may be, but John has in mind, and his disciples understand, that this person is none other than Jesus, to whom John had borne such decisive witness. John uses *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, which is used so often with special significance of the Messiah; all Jews knew him as the Coming One. Here, of course, the present tense dare not be pressed; the participle is timeless, expressing quality, and since Jesus is here and already at his Messianic work, this participle is in substance the same as *ἐληλυθώς*. The fourth evangelist loves these timeless participles. — **From above** = from heaven, and points here to the divine origin of the Messiah, i. e. Jesus, as John had already most clearly declared this, cf. 1, 34 (text for Epiphany). Being thus the Son of God the Messiah **is above all**. The word “all” in Greek may be either masculine or neuter, and some have tried to read it in the latter sense. But the entire contrast from v. 28 on is one between persons, hence we must understand: is above or superior to all *men*. — In presenting the counterpart to the divine Messiah John does not say again: He that *cometh* from the earth; but simply: **he that is of the earth** (has only an earthly origin, not a heavenly origin) **is of the earth** (has only earthly character or quality). The proposition is self-evident.

A stream cannot rise above its source; the effect cannot exceed the cause. Note once more the timeless participle. — With only earthly character and quality, one who is of the earth can make no higher utterance: **and of the earth he speaketh**. The proposition is general, and we must leave it so. It includes then also every prophet and the Baptist himself. They indeed speak by divine revelation, of which John will have more to say in v. 34. But even so, their earth quality limits them in the clearest manner as over against the heaven quality of the Messiah (Jesus). There is no reason here to think that the Baptist is referring to “earthly things,” v. 12, as possible for a “man of the earth” to utter, while the Messiah alone could utter “heavenly things,” being from heaven. Jesus’ word to Nicodemus cannot be thus transferred to the Baptist’s mouth. Both Jesus and John utter both “earthly things” and “heavenly things,” i. e. both of these kinds pertaining to the kingdom of God. With what difference, is here already implied, and more fully stated in what follows. — Here the great point is, and John repeats it: **he that cometh from heaven is above all**, only that now “from above” is explained by the more definite “from heaven.” The absolute supremacy of Jesus above all men must be held fast, for he is the very Son of God.

32. What he hath seen and heard, of that he beareth witness; and no man receiveth his witness.

There can be no doubt in regard to the reference; it is “what he hath seen and heard” *in heaven*. It is in this respect, too, that Jesus exceeds all other men, for the highest that is granted to them is to speak by revelation and inspiration. Compare v. 13 for the same difference. Grammarians have difficulty with the two verbs, one a perfect, and the other an aorist: hath seen and did hear. Is the perfect aoristic, or the aorist in a perfect sense, or are both just what they are? They certainly can be taken more easily in this their first sense, than in any other. The perfect, then, is extensive:

what Jesus saw in heaven all along; the aorist is just the statement of a past fact: what he heard, when in heaven the Father sent him. With the latter there was a definite, punctiliar word or commission to be heard, hence the aorist is proper; with the seeing this is different, it was something equal during his stay in heaven, hence the perfect. But more important than the grammatical point is what lies in the verb **heard**, as here it is added to **hath seen**. The latter is general, Jesus has seen all that there is to see in heaven, and can tell us about it. But this aorist "heard" is not added to duplicate or merely amplify this general idea, as though Jesus had heard all the lovely music and the heavenly language of heaven, and could now tell also about these things. "Heard" refers to the counsel of God concerning our salvation, to the mission of Jesus by the Father, to the commands the Father gave him, cf. Jno. 7, 16; 8, 28; 12, 49-50; etc. All these things refer directly to our salvation, they are vital to it. Others may obtain some information or revelation concerning these things, in particular God's mission of the Son, and so speak of it to men; Jesus, however, can do and does far more, having seen and heard himself, **of that he beareth witness**. It is the highest, directest, completest testimony, beyond which it is impossible to hope for more. It is thus the final witness, the climax of all. When God sends us his Son he literally comes himself; there is no greater to send. — But the tragedy of it all is: **and no man receiveth his witness**. The "and" is coordinate, but it binds two opposite ideas; the sense is adversative. In spite of the exaltation and supremacy of Jesus and the supremacy and finality of his testimony, the answer of men is unbelief, 1, 10-11. "To receive witness" means to trust it as true, reliable. "No man" is general, not absolute, as the constant use of such terms, especially in the fourth Gospel, clearly shows, besides which, as here in v. 33, the qualifying statements appear without further ado. "No man," however, does

- mean that the world generally, and not merely some small portion of it, rejects Jesus and his testimony. Because he is from heaven itself and his testimony according, therefore the guilt of such rejection is correspondingly great. The Baptist implies this as a warning to his disciples, lest they give ear to such unbelievers, especially the Jewish leaders.

33. He that hath received his witness hath set his seal on this, that God is true. 34. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure.

At this point our usual commentators mislead us, and continue to do so through both verses. Who is this **that hath received his witness?** Who is it that **hath set his seal on this, etc.?** The Baptist does here what he has done in his previous statements, he allows us to infer whom he means. Both the aorist participle and the main aorist verb ("did set his seal"), together with verse 34 ought to have helped in making the correct inference. The Baptist means *himself*. Now there were a few others, beside the Baptist, who also did receive Christ's witness. Since the words used permit us to infer the person or persons meant, and the description, in a fashion, fits also these others, we may add them, but never so as to overlook the Baptist himself, or to miss the weight of the reference he makes to himself. He stands first and foremost in having received the witness of Jesus, in fact he helped the first ones of his disciples to follow him in this respect. And do not let us overlook that he is now speaking to the remainder of his disciples, in order to induce them to take the same step. Commentators forget all this, and much of their comment reads as if the Baptist were merely uttering abstract and general statements, like a man writing a book, not like one talking face to face with a few men to move them to a definite act. John here tells his disciples: *I* received his witness, and *I* set my seal on this, etc. In v. 34 he then adds what his personal

action really ought to mean to these men, he being sent of God and gifted with the Spirit in adequate measure. As regards the future, and the acts of coming believers in also receiving Jesus' testimony, about which the commentators have much to say, as though the aorist "did seal" could be made to include all these also, the simple fact is that John does not speak of them—he just omits to mention them. If we refer to them now, we ought not to maltreat that aorist, but frankly say that we are merely drawing an inference. It is in a way a proper one, but it is no more. — **Hath set his seal on this that God is true** does not, of course, imply that God's being true would not be sufficiently certified without such a seal. He is true, even if all men were to deny it. But a seal is not for the person issuing a document, but for the one to whom it is issued, to assure him. So God adds seals to his truth, not for his own sake, or for the sake of the truth, but for our sake. What is meant by "hath set his seal," as the Baptist here declares it? All these commentators who generalize the whole statement are compelled to do so here likewise. They take the seal simply to be faith, or the saving effect of Jesus' testimony. This to the believers themselves and to others acts like a seal or proof, helping to assure them that God is true in his revelation of Jesus as the Messiah. Here again the actual situation is lost sight of—the Baptist trying to assure his disciples who had begun to find fault with Jesus. Now the Baptist is no ordinary believer; he is divinely commissioned, to him special direct divine revelations were given. He had more than just his own personal faith to append as a seal, he had *his word and testimony as a prophet of God*, the word of the revelation he had received. And that seal ought to have special weight with his disciples. Of course, there is his own faith also, for he could not offer the seal of his office and revelation apart from his own faith. But let us not overemphasize the faith, while we lose sight of the real seal itself. There would

be others like the Baptist in this respect, namely the apostles. But of believers in general, who have only their faith and Christian experience to offer as a seal, little can here be added.

V. 34. If the previous verse upset the commentators, this one adds to their confusion. What does **for** explain? This that our faith acts as a seal? Well, the explanation or proof offered in v. 34 is something on a different line altogether. Only properly related statements can be joined by "for." The case grows worse when the commentators read verse 34 as meaning Jesus himself, instead of reading it, as they should, of John the Baptist. The simple story is this: John tells his disciples, to convince and assure them, that he himself puts the seal of his authority and person on God's truth that Jesus is the Messiah; and then, to establish the weight of this statement more fully, he adds that he, as being sent by God, speaks nothing less than the words of God, and this he can do because the Spirit is given him in adequate measure. It is the voice of the friend of the Bridegroom using to the full his position and office to support the Bridegroom. — **He whom God hath sent** — even Godet and Keil think this must refer to Jesus, the former going so far as to say that only one from heaven could be "sent," which is manifestly incorrect. Read 1, 6 and 1, 33, where John is the one "sent." Compare 3, 31-32, where Jesus is *ὁ ἐρχόμενος*. Now it is true that Jesus too is "sent" and afterwards tells the Jews much about his "Sender." But here Jesus and his being sent is out of line, as both what has preceded and what follows shows. The aorist points to the historical act, when God sent John. — As thus sent — let his disciples note well — **he speaketh the words of God**, the utterances which God lays upon his lips he expresses. Of Jesus we have just read in v. 32 that he "testifies" the actual things he has seen and heard in heaven. Why should this exalted statement, purposely made to lift Jesus above all other men, be now all at

once reduced? But of John this is indeed the highest that can be said: God puts his words on his prophet's lips. He is thus in a class with the prophets who came before him. — How John can utter God's words is explained by: **for he giveth not the Spirit by measure.** It is hard to decide from the Greek whether God is the subject of the sentence, as our translators take it, or whether it is the Spirit: "for the Spirit giveth not by measure," i. e. the words of God. The sense is substantially the same, for the object to be explained is John's ability to utter God's words. He can do so if the Spirit be given him in proper measure; or if the Spirit give him the words. This statement is the one which convinces so many that Jesus must be meant here; they think of the bestowal of the Spirit on him at his baptism. But the verb is **giveth**; this would have to be "gave," the aorist, if the descent of the dove were meant. "Giveth" is continuous, the bestowal of the Spirit (taking him as the object in the sentence) in revelation and inspiration as vouchsafed to the Baptist (and the prophets before him) in their work from day to day. — Nor does *οὐ ἐκ μέτρου* = unmeasured, or in complete fulness, as the Spirit was poured out upon Jesus alone. This old misconception of the phrase has made so many refer this entire passage to Jesus (also our Catechism). The phrase means: not in narrow or fixed measure, as though certain narrow limits could not be exceeded. The giving of the Spirit is free, God gives as he wills (or, the other construction: the Spirit gives as he wills to God's prophets). This indeed establishes that God's messenger John can and does speak God's words, when he points his disciples to Jesus — the Spirit sees to it that he is equipped for this, he is given to John in sufficient measure. The disciples have every reason to believe and obey his words as "the words of God" himself.

35. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. 36. He that believeth on the Son

hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.

After this efficient preparation the Baptist, as one sent of God and given the proper measure of the Spirit, speaks to his disciples this weighty word of God, as the climax of all that he has previously said. Let the disciples note well what the Father thinks of the Son (Jesus) as the Baptist here tells them by the Spirit. Note ἀγαπᾷ, **loveth**, as distinguished from φιλεῖ. This loving goes on and on without diminution or change. It is the basis and adequate reason for the giving; and the perfect tense **hath given** is extensive: for the Son to have and keep in his hand. To give thus **into his hand** means to place completely into his power, for him to do with as he will. **All things** can hardly be restricted here to the things which pertain to the kingdom of God, since no limitation is in any way indicated. The things of the kingdom are the greatest by all odds; then why should the lesser be withheld? Cf. Matth. 11, 27; 28, 18; John 13, 3, which are likewise unrestricted. It seems simplest and quite sufficient to understand this statement of the Baptist of the incarnate Son, just as the Father himself declared concerning Jesus: "This is my beloved Son," Matth. 3, 17. As far as the loving is concerned, who would deny that it constitutes the relation of the Father to the Son from eternity? But the Baptist is not concerned with that, but with the Father's relation to the Son as he and his disciples had that Son before them at the time. Regarding this Son the Baptist echoes the words he had himself heard from the Father. This too explains completely how he came to use that name **Son** for Jesus, cf. 1, 34, and made Jesus equal with God. As regards the giving of all things into his hands, this concerns the Son's human nature, and thus refers only to the incarnate Son. It is set forth in the doctrine of the communication of attributes. With all this clear, what folly for the disciples of the Baptist to think of a competition between their master and

Jesus! What a dangerous mistake on their own personal account!

V. 36. This is brought out still more clearly in what follows. For the Baptist's disciples — as for us — the only thing to do is to listen to "the words of God" from their master and believe with their own hearts in Jesus. With all things in his hand **eternal life** will also be there. This he will have and dispense as the highest gift of the Messiah. This "life" is a present possession of every believer. All that believing includes, now that Jesus' saving work is done, namely trust in his atoning sacrifice, etc., is not yet unfolded in the Baptist's words; it rested, however, in this first faith he tried to awaken, as the full flower in the bud. — The Baptist adds the negative for his disciples as a warning. **He that obeyeth not** signifies the disobedience which rejects the call to faith; the term is equivalent to: not believe. This means rejection of the Messiah and of the life his hand bestows. Such a man shall **not see life**, i. e., experience it by having it, cf. v. 3. But this disobedience is connected with guilt of the worst kind, hence **the wrath of God abideth on him**. In the verb "abideth" there lies the thought that this wrath is upon him now as he refuses to believe, rejects God's holy truth, spurns God's beloved Son. If his sinful state and life made him subject to the wrath of God in the first place, his disobedience to God's saving grace in Christ will only fix that wrath upon him forever. God's wrath is the reaction of his holiness and righteousness against all sin and guilt. The word is anthropopathic. There is no thought of any passion in God, as when men grow angry. God's wrath has often been denied, usually when falsely conceived. But any proper conception of his holiness and righteousness will have no difficulty with the statements of Scripture regarding the divine wrath. — What did John's disciples do now? The evangelist is not concerned with their personal story, only with the revelation the Baptist here makes concerning the great-

ness and glory of Jesus. Let us think of ourselves that we may receive this revelation with the fullest assurance of faith.

SERMON.

used 24

There are many people who have trouble to see why the Bible promises so much to faith and threatens so severely against unbelief. It seems to them as if salvation and damnation ought not to be decided in this fashion. Secretly they feel as if there is a sort of injustice in this decision. Here is a miserable sinner, a criminal perhaps, like the malefactor on the cross, or the prostitute in the house of Simon the Pharisee, and these people believe, and lo, heaven's door swings open before them; while here are men of standing, respected and honored in their communities, like the Pharisees of old, with great men like Gamaliel among them, governors, princes, kings perhaps, whose names adorn history, some of whom men call great, and yet just because they did not believe in Jesus they are to be damned forever. No, we hear some say openly, we believe no such doctrine; either God is going to be kind to all and allow them all to enter heaven at last, or he will surely take all who have tried to do right, and banish only those who are utterly vicious. This is the doctrine that appeals to people, not this old Bible doctrine which makes everything turn on faith.

What shall we say? The doctrine of works is as old as heathenism and the blindness of sin. It is the devil's bait at which these blind sinners like to bite and be caught. It is the doctrine that needs no Christ, no Bible, no church, in fact often enough does without them, or uses them only as a pretense. The damnation of God is sure beyond a question to all who follow this doctrine to the end. But the doctrine of faith is God's own revelation, the central light in all the Bible, the crown of Christ's blessed work, the one hope for every sinner, the joy of all who believe. Here you have it again in the blessed words: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." And here you have this doctrine explained by what precedes it, namely by what one of God's own prophets proclaimed concerning Christ in whom we must believe. Hear his word, and

Let the Greatness of Jesus show you Why Faith and Unbelief are so Decisive.

1. Some people think it is quite a simple thing to enter heaven. Just try to be good a little, and the doors will swing

open. (Will they? Who really knows? These people who think so, or God who dwells in heaven? I believe that God alone knows, can tell us, yea has told us.) What does he say? (This, that it takes God's own Son to admit any one to heaven. He alone has eternal life to give; no man can get it without him. And this is why faith and unbelief are so decisive.

Faith bows to the Son of God, acknowledges that he has the keys of heaven and hell, worships his greatness and mercy, honors his name as the only Savior. What does unbelief do? It ignores, rejects, spurns the Son of God, and declares it will obtain everlasting life without him. Do you see why faith and unbelief are so decisive. (Imagine a great palace which the king has given to his son. Do you suppose any beggar can enter and live there who insults the king's son, mocks at his greatness and goodness, and boldly tries to live there in spite of that? Why, a thousand retainers of the great prince will put him where he belongs with his rebellion and presumption. Those mighty palace gates open only at the prince's command. And he will surely make his word good that he will admit none but those who esteem him for what he is and honor his royal name. That is why we are told by God's Son "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, which hath sent him.")

And so we say with God's holy Word: faith and unbelief are decisive the moment we think of the greatness of Jesus. **Faith honors Jesus the Son of God, unbelief spurns him.** No man can hope to be received by Jesus except he honor him by faith.

2. I marvel at people who think it makes no difference how they treat Jesus' Word and Gospel. They neither read nor hear it; they live and die without paying any attention to it. And they think they will be saved. Will they? They might know if they glanced at that Word. Even honorable men count their word dear. They keep their word. Can God, and the Son of God be less honorable? "He that cometh from above is above all," declares his holy prophet; and again: "He that cometh from heaven is above all." Can he possibly break his Word, just because unbelievers presumptuously deny it? "What he hath seen and heard that he testifieth," says the prophet of God, namely what he saw in heaven, what God himself bade him declare and promise, that he told us in his Word. Do you for one moment think he will deny his own Word, God's own Word, because of any man, to say nothing of wicked unbelieving men?

Now this is his Word: God has opened heaven for sinners under certain clear and gracious promises. The Son says you

cannot enter with your sins, these must be removed. You cannot remove even a single one of them, but the Son says: I will do it for you. It requires my blood shed for your sins in expiation. I have shed it. With it I will wash away your sins now, then you shall enter. That is his Word. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." 1 Pet. 1, 18-19. Now I ask you: having given that Word and promise, which involves his own blood, do you suppose God's Son will keep it?

Unbelief rises up proud and haughty and says: What do I care for the Son's Word? I deny that Word! So unbelief casts it aside, and will not even look at it except to raise objections against it. (What would you do, if you had given your word, at such a price to yourself, with such love and mercy, to miserable sinners who deserve not one syllable of it?) Faith accepts that Word. "It is the very essence of faith to do so; It knows it can enter heaven only on the pardon and grace named in that Word, and it is filled with delight to have it to rely on. That is why Peter of old said to Jesus: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Jno. 6, 68-69. Faith lets the Son wash away the sin with his blood, and holds back no single sin. (It is sure that this is enough, just as the Son says. Will the Son now make good his Word? You know he will.)

And so again you see from the greatness of Jesus why faith and unbelief are so decisive. **Faith accepts the Son's Word, unbelief denies it.** Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his Word shall not pass away. Jesus is God's Son, and only they who are covered by his Word and promise can hope to be received by him.

3. It is surely an elementary fact that any government worthy of the name will suppress and crush rebellion against its authority, and acknowledge only its loyal and obedient citizens. It is simply astounding to see people ignore this fact when it comes to God and his Son Jesus Christ, and imagine they can live and die in rebellion against Christ and still enter his kingdom above. Hear (the Word of God, spoken by the prophet sent by God and to whom he gave his words, and his Spirit in large measure properly to tell us these words.) He declares that "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." (David said the same thing long ago. God declares: "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion." And that King announces: "I will declare the de-

cree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." Ps. 2, 6-9. On his throne of glory Jesus now rules all things, and his divine power is even over all his foes.

Let no man deceive himself because this power is now coupled with patience and does not at once crush the rebels. It is the Son's grace which seeks to win his foes to obedience, faith, love and loyalty. (His apostle writes: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Rom. 2, 4-5.) For remember that this divine patience has its limits. Do you know what happened to the ancient world when it persisted in its rebellion against God? It was destroyed in the flood. What was done with Sodom and Gomorrah when its cup of disobedience was full? Fire and brimstone from heaven consumed it. And when the Jews would not have this man Jesus to rule over them, exhausting the patience of him to whom God had given all things, Jerusalem was razed to the earth, not one stone left upon another, and the Jews made a sign to all coming generations, without a country, without a government, scattered over the face of the earth, but still Jews, separate and distinct from all other people. Those are the Son's warnings against all who rebel against him. Unbelief is rebellion against Jesus, the Son whom the Father loves and has given all things into his hands. It laughs at the authority of him who when he had risen from the dead and was about to ascend to his throne above declared: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Unbelief ignores that power, orders its life contrary to it, and yet thinks this Almighty King whom it scorns must admit it to heaven. ³⁴ Will he do it? For this very reason that he may bar all rebels out the Father gave him that power. Faith bows to the divine authority of Jesus. With David it kneels at his feet and calls to all men: "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." Ps. 2, 12. Faith obeys the voice of this heavenly King and worships his glory. Its one delight is to do this forever. Therefore, whosoever believeth shall be saved.

Here once more see by the greatness of Jesus why faith and unbelief are so decisive. **Faith bows to the Son's rule, unbelief rebels against it.** As surely as God's Son has all

power, so surely will he cast all unbelief from him and receive to himself only those who come to him by faith.

4. Men like to receive gifts. Our children are happy at Christmas time because of the gifts they then receive, and older people are just as happy to receive them. Make a man some costly gift, one which fills some great need of his, and see how he will act? Give a poor pauper clothes, food, a fine home, and a sackful of money—what will he say? Give some poor prisoner liberty and honor again—what will he do? Lift some sufferer from his bed of pain, out from the shadow of death, to life, health, and happiness—what response will you get? But one of the incomprehensible things among sinful men is that the moment the Lord Jesus comes to lift them out of the beggary, bondage, and deadly malady of their sin many of them hurl his gracious hand away and scorn the gift. And when he shows them that this gift is nothing less than eternal life, a gift so great that only God's Son can give it, because all things are in his hand, a gift so precious that it cost his own blood before even he could bestow it, for this very cause they will have none of it. Where every reason in the world, and the most elementary good sense prompt to instant acceptance of such abounding grace of God, unbelief refuses, and proudly declares it will do without it, or earn life and salvation with its own efforts.

Of course, for any man to accept this gift he must admit that he needs it and that he cannot get it by his own reason or strength. That is just what unbelief will not do, although it is so plain that a child can understand our plight. Unbelief will not have heaven itself if Jesus must give it. But faith acknowledges our poverty, guilt and bondage, our doom and damnation under sin, and when the Son of God comes, mighty to save and to bless, with his blood-bought gift of heavenly life and salvation, faith grasps it with both hands, crying: "Lord, I believe, help mine unbelief." Faith hears with joy the divine declaration: "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." Eph. 2, 8-9. Faith presses to its bosom the precious promise of Jesus: "Because I live, ye shall live also." Jno. 14, 19. And then faith overflows in gratitude, worship, and praise. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift." 2 Cor. 9, 15.

What will the mighty Son of God do meeting this double response to his heavenly gift? What would you do if you offered such a gift? Here is the answer: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Yes, the greatness of Jesus shows why faith and unbelief are

so decisive: **faith takes the Son's gift, unbelief casts it away.** Woe to the world because of unbelief; none of these men shall taste the heavenly supper of the King's Son. Only they who let him fill their souls with faith and grace from on high shall taste the life that is joy eternal.

5. All that we have said culminates in the significant associations which faith and unbelief produce, and it is surely remarkable that anyone should refuse to see their significance. Here is God's holy prophet, St. John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus, proclaimed him as the Savior, and turned his disciples, and tried to turn all other men to him. The company thus formed continues to this day. Faith draws men to the great Son of God; faith binds them together as his followers. They are one in Christ Jesus, of the household of God, no more strangers and foreigners to him and his kingdom.

Unbelief does the very opposite. When St. John pointed the Pharisees and Sadducees to Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world they went in a different direction; they would not be identified with his followers. And this has gone on likewise to the present day. When Christ's confessors assemble, the crowd of unbelievers is found elsewhere. Song, praise, prayer, confession, preaching, benediction resound, unbelief loves different music. See its halls of pleasure crowded to the last place — standing room only. See its secret assemblies with rituals and ceremonies minus Christ. Anything to occupy the soul so it may remain far from the blessed Son of God.

Does that mean nothing? Will the eternal Son of God ignore it when he himself and his blood-bought salvation form the line of divisions? It is impossible. Coming events cast their shadows before. The associations into which men settle here will continue hereafter. When the last great day comes the followers of Jesus will still be his followers and he will acknowledge them as such, and the despisers of Jesus will also be such, and these too will he treat as such. Then as now they will not, cannot stand together; the one will be placed at Christ's right hand, the other on his left. For "he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not shall not see life." They who loved the narrow way will reach its shining goal; they who were determined to keep to the broad way will not be able to avoid the terrible destination to which it leads. If Jesus were nobody, if his salvation were little or nothing, then it might make no difference whether in faith you joined his followers, or in unbelief joined other unbelievers.

But now the eternal greatness of Jesus shows us why faith and unbelief are so decisive: **faith joins to his followers,**

unbelief joins to his foes. The ways that part here into faith and unbelief end over there in eternal salvation and eternal damnation.

That, then, is the reason why the Bible promises so much to faith and threatens unbelief so severely. They who reject Jesus, the eternal Son of God, their Savior, deny his Word, rebel against his rule, cast away his gift, scorn his followers, cannot stand beside those who honor that Son and Savior, accept his Word, bow to his rule, take his gift, and remain among his followers. Put away the notion as if this were a question about a few poor human works more or less. It is a question of the great eternal Son of God and of the relation of your immortal soul to him. Let his grace make that a relation of faith, then and then alone heaven is yours.

OUTLINES.

The main avenue into this text lies in its statements on the greatness and glory of Jesus. Back of these statements is his divinity—he is the Son. But his greatness here shines out in the revelations he is able to make, in the power that is placed in his hand, in the life he is able to give, in the judgment he will surely render. These statements as they stand may be used to outline the sermon. Any one of them may be lifted into prominence so as to embrace the rest. We add one tentative suggestion: Eternal life is the gift of the Son: this he brought from above—offers by his grace, Word and Spirit—assures by his power.

Christ the King of Salvation.

1. *His royal descent.*
2. *His royal rule.*
3. *His royal gifts.*
4. *His royal servants.*

The Revelation of the Son's Greatness and Glory.

As displayed in his *person*—*Word*—*rule*—*supreme gift*.

The Eternal Supremacy of Jesus.

1. *His revelation is supreme.*
 2. *His salvation is supreme.*
 3. *His domination is supreme.*
-

THE LENTEN CYCLE

(277)

SEPTUAGESIMA.

Matth. 5, 1-12.

Septuagesima and Sexagesima are counted in with the Lenten cycle which embraces these and the following Sundays together with Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Still Septuagesima and Sexagesima occupy an intermediate position. The Lenten season proper begins with Ash Wednesday. Quinquagesima, also called Estomihi, however, though preceding Lent, is used to usher in the Lenten season, as the old gospel text for that day plainly shows. We must also observe that Lent as such does *not* include the Sundays which are treated throughout as festival days, like all other Christian Sundays, although during the time of Lent the liturgical Hallelujah is omitted from the Sunday services. These Sundays, therefore, are never used to expound the Passion History or any part of it. No series of gospel texts has selections from the passion story; this is always reserved for special Lenten services, the preacher choosing his own series of texts. The writer's judgment is that, as in the Eisenach Lenten selections, the best texts for the Sundays in Lent are those which present some noteworthy reference to the Passion of Christ. The Lenten texts herewith offered attempt to carry out this idea. A review and grouping of these texts follow in the introduction to the text for Quinquagesima. Here we note that the texts offered for Septuagesima and Sexagesima are taken as a pair. The first is marked by the repetition of the word "blessed" and speaks of *the blessedness in store for the faithful in Christ Jesus*. Contrasted and paired with this is the second text which announces *the woe in store for those dis-*

obedient to Christ Jesus. Both texts have been listed for Septuagesima; but an examination of all the offerings for Sexagesima failed to secure as suitable a companion for our Septuagesima text as the one here taken for that place.

In chapter 14, 12, etc., Matthew gives us a summary description of the entire ministry of Jesus in Galilee, cf. the text for the First Sunday after Epiphany. This he follows up by giving us samples of the teaching of Jesus, of his miracles, and of his general activity. Thus he offers us the extended discourse called The Sermon on the Mount, the opening section of which, the so-called Beatitudes, constitutes our text.

5, 1. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain: and when he had sat down, his disciples came unto him: 2. and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying —

Neither time nor place is specified. All we have is the transitional *καὶ* and such conclusions as we are able to draw from the presence of the multitudes and from the discourse itself. It seems certain that Jesus is at the height of his ministry; his disciples are gathered about him, most likely the Twelve, although 4, 18-22 states only the preliminary call of four, and the formal commission of all of them is reserved for 10, 1, etc. Yet the manner in which Jesus parallels his disciples with the old prophets, 5, 12, indicates that when the Sermon was spoken the Twelve were already chosen. This is corroborated by the subjects treated in the sermon, which presume a definite degree of advancement on the part of the disciples. Various commentators think that Jesus in a manner inaugurated his work by this grand Sermon, but the little Matthew says about the auditors present, cf. also Matth. 7, 28-29, and especially the Sermon itself, fail to substantiate this view. Matthew does *not* follow a chronological order. The fact that the Sermon is presented as the first sample of Jesus' teaching says nothing as to the time of its delivery. We do

not know the mountain here mentioned. The definite Greek article seems peculiar, and linguists like Delitzsch emphasize it: "the New Test. Sinai"; Ewald: "the mount of sacred history"; Meyer: "the known mountain" — though the fact is apparent that the readers of Matthew did *not* know which mountain is meant. Zahn compares this article to our idiom: *in den Wald; auf das Feld*, when no special wood or field is meant. That will have to content the grammarians. The Greek article with "multitudes," however, plainly points back to 4, 25, and greatly strengthens the inference that this Sermon was spoken at the height of Jesus' ministry. — It was customary for teachers and preachers to sit in those days. In the Greek of this period the genitive absolute is used even when the subject is already mentioned, as here; the classics use this genitive only with a new subject. A fuller picture of the scene may be gathered from Luke 6, 12 etc. Matthew marks the impressiveness of the occasion by adding the phrase "he opened his mouth." The verb "taught" matches the term "disciples" or pupils, and the tense is the descriptive imperfect. The Sermon is addressed to the disciples, but the remark at the end shows that it was spoken in the hearing of the multitudes. This does not mean, as v. 12 plainly shows, that the multitudes were also addressed by Jesus, they were merely permitted to hear what Jesus told the Twelve, though, of course, they could gather much for themselves from what they heard.

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven.

"This is a beautiful, sweet, kind beginning of his teaching and preaching. For he does not come like Moses or a teacher of the Law with commands, threatening, and frightening, but in the kindest way with nothing but inducement and invitation and lovely promises." Luther. "And that first of all he desires just recipients of his salvation-gift, in order thereupon to make of those so blessed, people who in their life also do the Father's

will, this fundamental difference between Law and Gospel, between the mount of wrath, Sinai, and the mount of mercy at the Sea Gennesareth, is most attractively and consolingly stated in the first of the Beatitudes." Besser. The simple fact ought to be acknowledged that there are *eight* beatitudes, not seven (Meyer, and others) or ten (Delitzsch), and this means that no symbolism goes with the number. — **Blessed**, intoned again and again, sounds like bells of heaven, ringing down into this unblessed world. What the word here is intended to convey the statement which it ushers in plainly indicates. So in each of the sayings. Only we must note well that all this is the blessedness of Christ's Messianic kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, or of God, which Jesus came to bring. Always this blessedness is a present possession, though in part it rests on the promises of future gifts. This shows too that the blessedness throughout is spiritual, hence true and abiding, unlike the blessedness which the world seeks and enjoys, one for this life only and inhering in transient possessions and conditions. Soul-blessedness is not valued by those who scarcely know that they have souls, at least give their souls no further thought and care. "Blessed," μακάριος, like its opposite "woe," οὐαί, *vae*, is neither a wish regarding a coming condition, nor a description stating in itself a present condition, but the expression of a judgment regarding the persons designated, stating that they are to be considered or esteemed as fortunate. And it is Jesus who here renders this judgment on certain men, a judgment absolutely true, though all the world may disagree. — The remarkable thing is that Jesus calls those people blessed who in the judgment of the world seem to deserve this designation least of all. The world has always been blind to what constitutes genuine blessedness. Its coin is counterfeit, and since it passes no other it does not even recognize the genuine gold. — Blessed are **the poor in spirit**. The word πτωχός is from a verb which signifies cringing, stooping, like a beggar seeking alms. The Hebrew equivalent is found

in-Is. 61, 1. The added dative is like the one in v. 8, a dative of relation: "as regards the spirit." It cannot mean: poor as lacking the spirit; or: poor over against the (Holy) Spirit; or: poor in a spiritual manner (for the dative is not the same as the adverb would be, or the equivalent adjective). A close translation would be: "poor or beggars with respect to the spirit"; or, copying Luther's rendering in v. 8: *die armen Geistes sind* (Zahn). The beggar attitude of the people here meant may or may not be connected with material poverty or earthly misfortune; they are such as have come to realize that their souls are destitute and miserable; they approach God in the attitude of the beggar who has nothing, realizing that all help and every true possession of their souls must come and can come solely from God and his grace and mercy. They bring nothing to God but their complete need of his help and mercy. "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word," Is. 66, 2. The poverty here meant is not one against which the will rebels, but one under which the will bows in submission; it is not merely a state or condition, but an attitude of the soul over against God; it is an attitude growing out of the profound realization of utter helplessness and beggary as far as any ability of self is concerned. This is the poverty of true repentance which the Baptist and Jesus preached, the basic attitude toward God of all the godly. This beggary in spirit the disciples of Jesus had attained through his and the Baptist's teaching; it was the attitude in which they forsook everything else, followed him, looked to him, and constantly received from him alone. — This Jesus calls "blessed"; it is the estimate he puts upon it. Why? **For theirs is the kingdom of heaven**, theirs in the sense of theirs alone, shutting out all who come before God in a different attitude. One of the strange things in exegesis is that commentators contradict the very text they are to commentate. The inspired text reads: "is" = is *now*; Meyer writes: as a cer-

tain *future* possession, and thinks he is justified in this because the following verses have future tenses. But how about v. 10 again? Zahn arrives at the same goal by a different and more learned route. He considers the copula timeless, goes back to the Aramaic where it was absent altogether, combines all the statements here given on the kingdom, stressing the future tenses in 4-9, and concludes that "kingdom" here is eschatologic: "the world as it will be, when it has become God's again, in the regenerated world of the future," which is evidently chiliastic, Zahn being a chiliast, as his comment on other passages shows. So these poor beggars are to stay beggars, their spirits empty, giftless, unsatisfied, till that grand earthly kingdom of glory is ushered in with its glorious thousand years! It is contrary to all that the Gospel reveals of God. He feeds and satisfies the poor, Luke 1, 53; he does it the instant they come to him; and not with promises only of future bread; we are to eat now, and we do eat the Bread of Life, possess the treasures of the kingdom. For the kingdom which the Baptist and Jesus proclaimed as at hand is "within you," Luke 17, 21 — an actual *present possession*. Christ's kingdom is one of grace and glory combined; the grace is here now, the glory is not yet revealed, 1 John 3, 2. The word "kingdom" too must not be taken in the sense of an outward realm only, as we speak of earthly kingdoms thinking of land and people; this "kingdom of heaven" centers in the king, Jesus Christ, and in the powers of grace, might and glory that go out from him. Where he is there the kingdom is, because there is his exercise of kingly grace and power. Now the rich and proud in spirit resist that exercise as it would work in and over them for salvation. The poor in spirit cry out for that exercise of his saving grace and help. It is impossible that the King should let them go on crying — he fills their hands and hearts at once. Whatever he has in store for them in the future he has enough in addition for all their present needs. Thus the *poor* in spirit be-

come *rich* toward God, Luke 12, 21. Their riches consist in Christ's grace, pardon, adoption, sanctification: "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," Eph. 1, 3. Not that these gifts now end the attitude of the poor in spirit, so that this term no longer describes them. The case is this: as long as we live in this world of sin, and in spite of all grace "sin daily," so long our poor hands are outstretched to God's grace in Christ, daily receiving grace for grace. And the flow of God's grace goes out and can go out to us only as long as we keep that attitude, to which God himself has brought us and in which his grace works to keep us. Thus the kingdom is ours *now*, and being ours, in its progress it will bring us all that God still has in store for us.

4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Jesus expresses the same judgment on those mourning. The verb is used of loud mourning, of the lament for the dead, or when a severe and painful loss has been inflicted upon us; sometimes weeping is added, and the opposite is laughing. Meyer and Zahn both insist that this cannot be mourning for our own sins, the sorrow of true contrition. Why not? Do our sins inflict no loss upon us? do they not rob us of what is dearer than relatives, money, or any other good? Why draw such a line? Only, it is true, this lamentation of contrition does not exhaust the term. It is general and includes all grief and sorrow due to the power of sin in the world as this inflicts blows, losses, and pain upon the godly. It includes every wrong done us, as well as every painful consequence of our own wrongdoing. It is almost self-evident that this mourning is not like that of the world, which howls loud enough when its sins find it out: "but the sorrow of the world worketh death," 2 Cor. 7, 10. Behind this lament of the godly is the recognition of the merciless power of sin, of our helplessness to ward it off and escape it, and hence there follows the appeal and cry to God to aid us in our distress. **They that mourn** is a

present participle. As far as contrition is concerned, let us keep in mind the first of Luther's famous 95 Theses, that our entire life must be a continuous contrition and repentance; and in general Acts 14, 22: "that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." In fact, all the tribulation passages belong here, Matth. 13, 21; John 16, 33; Rom. 5, 3; 2 Cor. 1, 4; Rev. 1, 9; etc. — But how can people constantly lamenting be called "blessed"? The answer is sufficient: **for they shall be comforted.** The passive includes an agent: God shall comfort them. When? for this now is a future tense. Those commentators who see the kingdom through chiliastic spectacles reply: in that glorious earthly Messianic kingdom to come, when all the forces of evil shall be conquered, when all the Christians shall be triumphant at last. So long then these mourners must wait before they can actually get hold of the comfort! All they have now is this prospect of a far away comfort! But Jesus said: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you," and how he came we read: "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord," John 20, 20. No; this chiliastic comfort kingdom is nothing but a mirage. The future tense here used, "shall be comforted," is no support for it. The tense explains itself in that the comfort always follows the tribulation and the lamentation. Remember the "little while," John 16, 16. The greatest of all comforts, is the absolution pronounced upon contrite mourning sinners. Without this all other comfort is in vain. Besser very properly sums up the entire comfort for our present state: "here with the comfort of faith and patience and many a refreshment, there with the seen joy of the redeemed in the Lord." God's Word, help and support comfort us in the tribulations we now endure. Without this comfort the promises of distant future relief would not be effective; but with this present relief they aid mightily in supporting us. Here too we must hold fast, that as our lament rises to God, he lets adequate com-

fort follow, and this continues as long as the godly are in the vale of tears. Luther writes: "Start to be a Christian, and you will soon learn what mourning and lamenting is. If you cannot do anything else, take a wife and proceed to get your living in faith, so that you love God's Word and do what in your station is commanded you; then you will soon experience that things do not go as you would like, and there are constant hindrances and obstacles, so that you will soon get enough suffering, and must see what makes your heart ache. Preachers especially have to learn this well and practice it daily. . . . Therefore, whoever does not want to be altogether a child of the world, and wants to have part with Christians, let him have his name put on the roll, to help sigh and mourn, in order that he may be comforted, as the promise reads. The bitter little cup is to be mixed and mildened with honey and sugar, which is the promise, that this is pleasing to Him, and that He pronounces them blessed, in addition to which they are to be comforted and all mourning taken from them yonder."

5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

The best commentary of this beatitude is Ps. 37; note v. 11. **The meek** are the mild, gentle, patient. The word refers to an inward virtue exercised toward persons. When wronged and abused they show no resentment, do not threaten or avenge themselves. The opposite of "meek" is vehement, bitter, wild. Jesus is the greatest example of meekness.—The surprising thing is the paradoxical assurance that the meek **shall inherit the earth**. The text does not say: "the *new* earth," yet commentators seem to like this interpretation, referring the entire statement to the coming of the glory kingdom. But read Ps. 37: the wicked shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb—evildoers shall be cut off—yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider

his place, and it shall not be — and so the story of the wicked goes on. Not much inheriting of *this* earth according to the Psalm. Alongside of this story of constant loss, defeat, and death put the Psalm's story of the meek, who are cautioned not to vex and distress themselves when the wicked grow haughty and appear mighty and great. It is a story of suffering indeed in part, but also one of constant divine blessing in *this* life, and in *this* earth. Our third beatitude so literally repeats the assurance of this Psalm, v. 11 and 22, that it will not do to say the temporal blessings promised in the old covenant to Israel must not be taken as promised equally in the new. When one compares the history of the Christian church with Israel's history, we of the new covenant have fared well indeed in temporal blessings. Meyer's idea that "earth" equals Canaan, and thus has its only counterpart in the heavenly Canaan is hard to square with the Psalm or the actual blessings of the meek. And always it is true: "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked," for his little is with God's blessing, and *their* much is with God's curse. The only point to observe is that we must not expect every meek follower of Jesus to have much of earth; for our meekness often shines by its absence, our covetousness and refusal to suffer for Jesus' sake necessitates God's disciplinary measures, and God has his purposes in our lives which go far beyond temporalities. But the promise to the meek stands, they survive where the violent often go down in blood. And that is enough. Chemnitz writes that God lets his children find a little nest on the house that is meant entirely for them eventually. And Luther is right on our passage when he says that it adds the promise of "temporal life and goods on earth."

6. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Here is the same order as in the Lord's Prayer, first the fourth petition about bread, then the fifth about

forgiveness of sins. **Hunger and thirst** are quite commonly used to express strong desires of the heart for some higher possession. Zahn includes the idea that one could not live without the good so desired, which is true at least of the hunger and thirst after righteousness — no true life is possible without this good. Both participles are durative present tenses: this earnest desire for righteousness continues, in fact is to increase in the godly. Daily we pray for forgiveness, and daily God richly forgives our sins. The man who is blessed is so for the very reason that this hunger and thirst never cease in him. If they should cease, no longer would Jesus esteem him blessed. Perfectionists find very little comfort here. — The object is mentioned: **righteousness**, an unusual accusative with intransitive verbs. "Righteousness" is the quality or condition of one who is "righteous," who satisfies the claims and requirements of the norm of right; here, evidently, of the divine norm; it is the opposite of lawlessness or a state contrary to the law, the opposite of sin, and of impurity. Now man is by nature and in his whole life altogether opposed to the divine Law, sinful, and impure, without true righteousness, and without ways and means of removing his sinfulness and guilt and securing true righteousness. The wisest of the wise has never discovered a way to turn a guilty, sinful soul into a righteous one. But this wonderful thing utterly beyond human ability, is brought about by Jesus, who wrought out in his holy life and sacrificial death a righteousness which fully meets the divine norm of right, one which by the imputation of God is imputed to the sinner through faith and thus renders him acceptable at the bar of the righteous judge of all the earth. To continue hungering and thirsting after this righteousness implies that the persons meant know of this righteousness and have tasted of it. They know and feel that they cannot live without it. This hunger and thirst implies likewise that as poor beggars they

constantly come to God and turn toward him for this righteousness, since he alone, who has prepared it in his Son, can bestow it upon them. "Righteousness" here cannot mean right as a power in the world of men generally and in human affairs, for hunger and thirst here is used of personal desire and longing. This also shuts out the interpretation of "righteousness" as a virtue, i. e., the so-called acquired righteousness, when godly people live righteously in the world; for the passive "they shall be filled" points to an agent who bestows this righteousness. — The verb **they shall be filled** is future, but evidently again not a distant future referring to the kingdom to come, but one of the satisfaction following hard upon the hunger and thirst. The moment faith is kindled that moment righteousness is declared; there is no interval. Meyer wants to put us off till the Messianic judgment (Matth. 25, 34) declares us righteous; we would die of hunger and thirst till then. In fact, the constant bestowal of Christ's righteousness keeps the hunger and thirst for it alive. We are satisfied, but we want this satisfaction "daily," as Luther so simply puts it. The verb is very strong; it is used originally of animals who are fed with hay and fodder, then of food for men. So we shall be fed to the full on the boundless righteousness of Christ. This indeed is blessedness.

7. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

The three beatitudes which now follow deal with three virtues of the godly, and thus belong together. We may also combine the first four as looking toward God; then the last four as looking to our relation to men. **The merciful** are the same godly people who are meant in the previous beatitudes. Luther has well said that in all the beatitudes faith is presupposed as the tree on which the fruit of blessedness grows, and as the sum of all. This, then, is not mere natural mercy as we also find it among men, but the mercy growing

out of our own experience of mercy from God. God's mercy toward us must make us merciful likewise, Matth. 18, 21, etc. Mercy always has to do with the misery, pain, and distress of men; it seeks to relieve and remove this. — **Shall obtain mercy** is a future passive, like the previous verbs, with God as the implied agent. Augustine has the beautiful thought that thus God rewards and crowns his own gift of grace working out in our deeds. First he makes us merciful, and then he blesses us for being merciful. This beatitude has stimulated God's people to all kinds of eleemosynary work. It is well known how absolutely bare of even the idea of mercy many heathen religions are. The mercy of unchristian men about us, such as it is, relieving only physical distress, is an indirect result of the Christian religion, never an outgrowth of the natural human heart. The real cruelty which slumbers in the natural heart, when occasion calls it forth, is often appalling.

8. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Zahn's method of attempting to determine just what **pure in heart** (the dative here as in v. 3) means, an examination of the other passages in Scripture containing this designation or its equivalent, is commendable. He compares Gen. 20, 5-6; Ps. 24, 4; 73, 1; 1 Tim. 1, 5; 2 Tim. 2, 22; 1 Pet. 1, 22, and concludes that "pure in heart" = *sinceritas* or singleness of heart, using the LXX for the Old Test. passages. Noesgen points to Ez. 36, 25-26 and Acts 15, 9 to show that a pure heart = one free from guilt, and then to the two Timothy passages and John 13, 10 for the addition: in consequence morally clean. Those who pay only casual attention to a study of the original text, or follow the usual translation, read "pure in heart" = sanctification in the narrower sense. Of course, only perfectionists think here of complete sinlessness, "total sanctification" or "the second blessing" as they call it. In determining what the designation means we must undoubtedly note the position of

this beatitude in the whole chain, following the one on mercy to our fellow men and preceding the one on peacemaking. These beatitudes are not a loose jumble, but an ordered set. We have had justification as the crown of the first four; we cannot have it here again in the sixth. Noesgen's reference to the cleansing from guilt belongs together with "righteousness." This narrows the question down to a choice between the general purity of a sanctified Christian life and the specific virtue of Christian sincerity. We need not hesitate long: a "pure heart" is one governed by pure motives in its dealings with men (Wohlenberg), without selfishness or hypocrisy (Stellhorn). A heart of this kind is one sanctified, for only such a heart can rise to the full purity of motive in its acts towards others. Nothing is lost by thus specifying the purity, since this can be done only on the general basis of Christian holiness, which underlies already the specific virtue of mercy in the preceding beatitude. — **For they shall see God** finally gives us a blessing which plainly belongs to the other world. The Scriptures promise the glorified saints a *visio Dei*. This will be a direct and immediate knowing, such as will be possible for the eyes of the glorified saints. Not indeed a looking into his invisible essence, but a beholding of his glory, causing in the saints the most ineffable bliss. The hearts that here loved purity shall be blessed with this beatific vision of the All-Pure.

9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

Compare Eph. 4, 3; Rom. 14, 19; I Cor. 14, 33; Heb. 12, 14, etc. Peaceable themselves and seeking to live in peace if possible with all men they work to keep and make peace wherever this is threatened. Only we must keep in mind that this is the work of true Christian hearts who follow the footsteps of the Prince of Peace. Nor is this peace at any price, ignoring confessional principles, and weary of contending for the faith once delivered to the saints. These are no unionistic peace-

makers combining contrary doctrines by agreeing to disagree. Truth is first, peace with men is second. Friends are dear, the Word of our greatest Friend dearest. There is no "blessed" for the disrupters of the church who insist on their false views, nor for those who count the peace and fellowship of their fellow confessors of slight value, so they may run after other fellowships. The peace of the church is a blessed possession, we cannot guard it too closely. So with contentious, stubborn, obstreperous church members — this beatitude should help to make them impossible. Wherever strife rises in the world Christ's followers should work for peace, but always in the spirit of their great Master. — **They shall be called**, like the other passives, implies: by God; for he alone can bestow the title, and give what it implies: **sons of God**. Chiliasts again think of their mirage kingdom, and make "sons of God" a special rank in that kingdom. Others too think only or chiefly of the other world, Zahn especially, because the verb implies that the persons so called shall appear as what they are called, which seems to say that *men* will call these peacemakers "sons of God." In 1 John 3, 2, we are called "sons of God" (children) now already — *God* calls us so. Men may also do so when they see the spirit that animates us. Eventually, of course, all that we have of God's gifts and blessings at present shall be ours in perfect fulness and in highest degree.

10. Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Blessed are ye when *men* shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Here the word "blessed" occurs twice, but in the nature of a repetition, and thus of an emphatic conclusion for the whole line of beatitudes. The perfect

participle seems peculiar: **have been persecuted** (A. V. translates less strictly: "are persecuted"); it would indicate a condition beginning in the past and continuing, perhaps still continuing (the extensive perfect). As true followers of Christ they will, of course, 'be persecuted only **for righteousness' sake**, not for any wrongdoing. Crimes may be charged against them, law breaking, and the like, but these will be false charges, perhaps the laws invoked themselves wrong, or wrongfully invoked. For righteousness' sake = innocently, they having done only what was right. They may thus lose life, liberty, or other earthly good. Men may pity and commiserate them. Jesus calls them blessed; because, whatever they lose **the kingdom of heaven** is theirs still. This makes up for it all. — But this is by no means all. Jesus repeats this beatitude with amplifications and pointed changes. In the first place he makes the application to his present disciples: **blessed are ye**, showing us how to apply all these beatitudes to ourselves. Instead of the one verb he uses three: **when** (= whenever, implying numerous cases) **men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you** — all aorists referring to specific cases. "Reproach" = blame; as a result: "persecute" or hound; and after that: vilify by saying all kinds of grievous things about the people they have hounded. Instead of the former "for righteousness' sake" we now have: "falsely, for my sake" = without your being guilty, by lying against you, by misrepresentation, and because you followed me and my divine teaching. Jesus himself spoke of this hatred of the world as he and his followers would experience it, when he was about to leave his disciples, John 14, etc. Thus the picture is filled in with more detail. — Instead of lamenting, Jesus tells his disciples to **rejoice and be exceeding glad**; and the present tenses mean that they are to continue in this gladness. The second verb is stronger than the first, their joy is to rise to the highest pitch. — Their **reward** or pay for

all this is **great**, and this reward is **in heaven**. It is laid up there now like a safe capital drawing interest, to be paid over to them in due time (Zahn). It is the greater glory in store for them. The Scriptures distinguish thus the martyrs in Christ's cause, Acts 22, 22; Rev. 2, 13; 17, 6; 20, 4. — In explanation of this reward Jesus mentions **the prophets** of the old dispensation as the most notable examples of such martyrdom, and ranges his disciples alongside of these. This appears more clearly in the Greek: "the prophets, the ones before you," i. e., whose true successors you are. Beyond question these shall have the highest glory in heaven, and the martyr apostles, followed by all in due rank who suffered in their various stations for Christ. So they are to rejoice, not in spite of their suffering, but because they are accounted worthy of the honor. Acts 5, 41. The wounds of the martyrs are their medals of honor. In war promotion for bravery is rapid, and there is plenty of war against the army of Jesus. Still, many people are afraid of a few scars for his sake. Read 2 Tim. 4, 7-8.

SERMON.

The kingdom of heaven is full of blessedness!

Yes, you may say, that kingdom far away beyond the skies; and a sigh fills your heart that you are here below amid the sin and misery of earth. Hear then that the kingdom of heaven has come to earth — Jesus the King brought it and all the blessing that is in it. He brought it both to awaken and then to still that sigh in your heart. Here in his Word he opens the door of that kingdom wide, lets all its blessed treasures sparkle before us, reaches into our very hearts to draw us into that kingdom, and having drawn us to keep us in it and make us partakers of all its blessings. Blessed — blessed — blessed! *you* are to be blessed, your immortal soul, your whole life, now, every day that you live, and forever.

But how? Indeed there is a secret about it, for thousands have looked at these beatitudes of Jesus, have heard them preached on and perhaps have in some fashion preached on them themselves, and yet have failed to discover the secret, and remained unblessed. What is

The Secret of Jesus' Beatitudes?

It is a double secret. The key to the first four beatitudes is just the one word: **Receiving**. The key to the second four is the additional word: **Returning**.

I.

How can any man say that the poor, the mourners, the meek, the hungry and thirsty are blessed, when it is all too evident that these are the very ones who lack everything, have lost everything, and thus are not blessed, but unblessed? But Jesus does say it, and his words are true beyond the shadow of a question. He purposely says it in a way that sounds strange, even contradictory to ordinary ears, in order to challenge attention and make us seek and discover the secret of his words. And that secret when discovered lights up his words like heavenly sunshine, revealing them to our hearts as the inner truth of all God's grace and gifts to us poor sinners. I have told you the secret. It is **receiving**, just receiving, nothing but receiving, from the gracious hands of God through our great Mediator Jesus Christ.

Of course, this means *real* receiving, not like when you give somebody a Christmas gift that really he does not want and takes only with his hands, wishing that you had kept it. Such a thing is impossible with the kingdom of God and its blessings, for here the receiving is one of the soul, either an actual receiving or none at all. There is no sham receiving for the soul. Between God and your soul no pretense is possible.

And now you see why the poor in spirit are blessed. These are souls who have come to realize their poverty, stripped and robbed of every true inward good by sin, standing as absolute beggars in God's sight. Whatever they have is only temporal, counts only for this life; if it be ever so much, money, goods, friends, kingdoms and crowns even, it does not count one particle for the soul or the hereafter. The moment a soul realizes that, ceases to deny, forget, or hide it, but comes just as it is to God, bringing nothing but its emptiness, loss, absolute need, that moment, though it seem utterly unblessed, Jesus declares it blessed, for the soul that comes thus can do the one essential thing which none other can do—it can receive; and the whole secret of the kingdom is to receive, just to receive, just to let God give, not one or two helps, but everything, absolutely everything. Blessed are they that have nothing, for coming thus God can and will give them everything. Blessed are the beggars that come with their souls as beggars to God, for to these alone can and will he give his kingdom and in it make them kings.

To teach us this secret Jesus adds the mourning. When we realize just how beggarly and destitute our poor sinful souls are, we are bound to lament. How can we help it—unless we want to deceive ourselves? But this very sorrow and lament opens the door for God to give us the true comfort he has prepared for us, the cleansing from sin through Jesus' blood, the adoption as children in his kingdom and all the cheering gifts and promises which go with that. It is once more the secret of receiving and just receiving. Dropping all false comforts, simply coming with no comforts of ours to God, for him to comfort us in Jesus, our Savior.

The same secret lies in the blessing of the meek. The soul that feels its poverty and is filled with lament will not act proud, mean, arrogant, vengeful toward others. Filled with its own utter unworthiness that soul will be humble, suffer wrong patiently and without resentment, like Jesus who reviled not when he was reviled, nor threatened when he suffered, but committed himself to God. But this very meekness which puts itself into God's keeping Jesus calls blessed, for it is again the attitude of receiving, just receiving. The meek shall inherit the earth—God himself will make a place for them, and they shall hold it as a gift and heritage from him. "A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked," for he has it with God's blessing, and the wicked have all that they grasp for themselves only with God's curse. That is why they cannot prosper in the end. God's promise to his children stands, that when they seek first his kingdom and righteousness, he will add unto them all other things; the Bread of heaven will have beside it the bread of earth. Only the great Giver ever makes the greatest gift the chief thing, and adds the lesser gift in such measure and manner as will aid us in having and holding the greater one, and the meek are ever content with the portion of earth which he assigns.

And so the first circle of the beatitudes closes by naming this highest gift directly, in order that none of us may mistake it. It is righteousness; and beneath it shines this secret of receiving, just receiving, once more. Righteousness is the approval of the heavenly judge. The terrible mistake of men is that they think they can win or earn that approval by efforts of their own. Everlastingly they bring their virtues, good deeds, charities, sacrifices, hundreds of them just self-invented, saying to God: Surely, O God, now I have done enough and you must let me pass! But all our righteousnesses are filthy rags. Blessed is the man who has learned that, and comes as he is to God:

"Just and holy is thy name;
I am all unrighteousness:
False and full of sin I am;
Thou art full of truth and grace."

His one plea is: "In my hand no price I bring." But will not God cast out all who come thus? That is the secret of the beatitudes. They who have no righteousness of their own, and do not try to deceive themselves and God as if they had one, but hunger and thirst after righteousness, holding their empty hands and hearts out to him, to them God himself gives the righteousness he has prepared for them, the all-sufficient, perfect, divine righteousness of his Son Jesus Christ, who paid his life to purchase it for us. They shall be filled is Christ's assurance—their souls shall shine with this righteousness and taste heavenly satisfaction. Daily and richly God will bestow it upon them, giving them in Christ Jesus grace for grace, till at last they stand in the glory of everlasting righteousness in the kingdom above.

That is the secret of the first four beatitudes. O learn it by the grace of God! The kingdom, its comfort, its earthly blessing, above all its blood-bought righteousness, no man can have except God give him these true riches of the soul; and it is impossible for God to give them, impossible for us to have them, except by our learning this secret of his giving and our simply receiving them. Blessed are they who let God give, for they indeed shall receive and possess.

II.

And now the other side of the secret. The reflex of God's giving and our receiving the true soul treasures is that inevitably there follows a **returning**. No soul can receive the treasures of God's kingdom without returning to the Giver a life filled in some measure with the power and fruit of these treasures. Thus the last four beatitudes grow out of the first.

The soul that has tasted the mercy of God in Christ Jesus through his pardon is bound to show mercy to others. Therefore, blessed are the merciful who return to God this fruit of his own mercy to them. For Christ's sake they forgive those who wrong them, bearing no grudge or ill-will. For his sake they help the needy, relieve the suffering, clothe the poor, aid the stranger, and try to relieve the misery caused by sin in the world. And doing it for Christ's sake they ever direct those who suffer to the fount of mercy they themselves have found. And lo, the God who made them merciful through Christ rewards them for showing this mercy, by letting his own mercy continue to bless them. It is a secret indeed—returning because we have received and thus receiving again.

But beware lest you do any of this returning with secret mercenary thoughts, with a selfish, hypocritical reckoning as that you will do this or that for God in order that you may get more in

return. That is a cunning trick of the world. Only the pure in heart, who are true and sincere shall be blessed. For God ever sees the heart and its secret intent. If there is true gratitude and love to him who has done all for you, his blessing is bound to follow. They who reckon always on what they shall get, shall be told to take what they got and go, as Christ told us in one of his parables. But the pure in heart, the faithful and sincere shall see God. "Come ye blessed of my Father," says the Savior, "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." As his true children the Father will assemble them about him, and they shall be filled with the bliss that goes out from his heavenly presence.

Next to mercy and purity of heart Jesus puts the spirit of peace in our return to God. Blessed are the peacemakers, who have tasted of the peace of God in Christ Jesus which passeth all understanding, who have thus learned to love and follow the heavenly Prince of Peace, and in the power of his peace now work for peace on earth among men. As far as in them lies they live at peace with all men, and help others to forsake quarrelling, strife, contention, and war, both within and without the church, pointing them to the true fountain of peace which they have found. Can we make any other return to him from whom we have received so much? But even as we make it Jesus says God's blessing is the answer from above. We shall be called the sons of God, acknowledged as his own true children and heirs of his eternal kingdom of peace. What a returning, followed again by such receiving!

Yet let no false expectation mislead God's children while in this wicked world. Though they be merciful, sincere, lovers and makers of peace, and preach and live the Gospel of peace, for this very reason they will be hateful to the world and meet its persecution in countless ways. As the wicked world crucified Christ, because he wanted to turn it from its wickedness, so it has no use for the Gospel of Christ and its followers when they try to do the same thing. This hostility slumbers at times, but it is always there, and who knows how much of it we are to bear? The more we stand for the Gospel of the kingdom in its fulness and truth, the more will we have to suffer for it. Let no man think the days of the martyrs are past, they always return. But is this not sad and deplorable? Jesus answers with a double blessedness, and adds: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad!" How can he? Because this very suffering places us correspondingly higher in the kingdom, along with the martyr prophets of God in the olden times. "Great is your reward in heaven," in fact, greater than we can now conceive. All God's children shall enter heaven and shine there as the very stars now shine in the sky, but some shall shine with a

greater glory, even as one star now surpasses another in glory. So shall they who suffer innocently, for righteousness' sake, for Christ and the Gospel's sake, shine above with greater glory. 'Again it is a most wonderful returning. We who ought to be glad to suffer everything for him who suffered so much for us, shall have this undeserved and abounding reward for the little we may be counted worthy to endure for him.

That, then, is the secret of the beatitudes of Jesus — a divine secret. Grasp it in true faith; it is Jesus' blessed revelation: the secret of receiving, just *receiving*, without a shadow of money or price, from the infinite grace of God in Jesus, followed by the secret of *returning* from what we have thus received, only to receive still more. Blessed are you if the revelation of this secret is not in vain for you!

OUTLINES.

This is one of the great texts in the Bible and should be treated as such in preaching. We may take it as a string of jewels which Jesus places on the neck of the believer: The chain of blessings in the Beatitudes. Both ends are fastened by the diamond of the kingdom, the sum of all the blessings, and there are pendent from it three great plain jewels: grace; care on earth; imputed righteousness; and three jewels banded in gold: mercy answered by mercy; purity coupled with the vision of God; peacemaking and the name of sons of God. — There is a straight perpendicular split down through the entire text: first the persons are named and described; then the blessing is pronounced. Each of these halves again divides horizontally in the middle, the first half dealing with the essentials of faith, the second with the central marks of the life. Divisions for the sermon may be made accordingly. — One may use the figure of the ladder: the heavenly ladder in the Beatitudes: the rungs upon which we lose ourselves; those on which we find God (Ahlfeld). — Or we may take the figure of the seals: The seals of divine blessedness — treating the eight seals in simple order, or in two groups.

The Portal of the Kingdom with its Inscription: Blessedness.

1. *It is open to all who lack blessedness.*
2. *All who enter receive blessedness.*
3. *Those who have entered continue in blessedness.*

**The Great Question which the Beatitudes leave with
all of us:**

Is this Kingdom of Heaven Yours?

1. *Do you answer its requirements?*
 2. *Do you enjoy its possessions?*
 3. *Does its power appear in your life?*
-

The Key to the Kingdom of Blessedness.

1. *The grace which prepared this blessedness.*
 2. *The grace which bestows this blessedness.*
 3. *The grace which works in and through this blessedness.*
-

The Kingdom of Christ is Full of Blessedness.

1. *It is full of blessedness when we look at our faith.*
 2. *It is equally full of blessedness when we look at our life.*
-

SEXAGESIMA.

Matth. 11, 16-24.

Our Sexagesima text is the opposite of the one for Septuagesima. There the sun was breaking through every cloud until its effulgence filled the whole sky; here the clouds are gathering thick and black, the lightning flashes, we hear the distant thunder roll. For this is a text on unbelief and the judgment awaiting it. Christ points to *the woe in store for the disobedient and unbelieving*. As the former text invited to faith and a life of faith, so this text warns against unbelief. It is the necessary reflex of the previous text, and one our age surely ought to take to heart.

John the Baptist has just sent a committee to Jesus in regard to the serious question that was troubling him as he lay there languishing in prison. The committee has its answer and leaves, whereupon Jesus characterizes John and his work in words of highest praise, placing him above all the prophets of the Old Test. as God's chosen messenger to usher in the era of the Messiah. From this praise of John, Jesus easily and naturally turns to the reception which the Jews accorded this prophet, and since John's work was done, and the work of him whom he came to announce already considerably advanced, he includes himself and his own work.

11, 16. But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the marketplaces, which call unto their fellows, 17. and say, We piped unto you, and ye did not dance; we wailed, and ye did not mourn.

The opening question is deliberative, hence has the subjunctive. Jesus is thinking to find a fitting illustra-

tion or likeness by which he may bring home to his hearers their treatment of both the Baptist and himself. In doing this Jesus has in mind, and we must have likewise, what he has just said in praise of the Baptist. By **this generation** is meant the nation then living who had been given the mighty message of John. At first they were stirred by John's appearance, preaching, and baptism, but this eventually turned to indifference and fault-finding. — Jesus, of course, has no difficulty in finding the proper comparison. He states it in the form of a parable, and then follows this up by interpreting the parable himself. The parable is quite simple and plain, if commentators would only leave it so, instead of inverting it, or spoiling the *tertium comparationis* by bringing in another set of children and making "this generation" like both. The words are entirely plain: **It is like unto children sitting in the marketplaces**, whose actions are then described. The large, open marketplaces were convenient playgrounds for the children of the neighborhood when the market was not in progress. A band of such children Jesus has in mind as a true illustration of the Jewish people in their treatment of the Baptist and himself. The point of likeness is in their conduct and action: **which call unto their fellows** and utter all kinds of complaint against them. *They* tried to direct the play, first one way, then another, as their mood and fancy dictated. They expected the other children to be swayed accordingly, and when this did not ensue they pettishly called out and blamed the others. **We piped unto you, and ye did not dance.** The aorists state the simple facts. They insisted on playing "wedding" or on playing "dance," copying what they saw in their elders, as children always do. So they "piped" or "fluted," imitating the flutes used for wedding processions or dances, either by blowing little whistles they had made, or by merely whistling together. The idea in this part of the parable is joyousness, festivity. Piping was done at festivities of various kinds, like religious services and especially also proces-

sions. And that is how dances are mentioned in this connection. If mention is made of dancing in the sermon it will be necessary to make brief and proper explanation since Jewish dancing was totally different from the abominable modern dance. It was a natural and beautiful expression of enthusiasm or joy in festive occasions, and had nothing to do with the approach of the sexes to each other as at present. Compare Ex. 15, 1 and 20. Fausset: "The woman nearest of kin to the champion in some national triumph or thanksgiving . . . led the choir of *women*." Jud. 11, 34; chapter 5. Moses led the choir of *men*, likewise Barak. Some song or antiphonal refrain was used "Dancing accompanied festivity of a secular kind, Jer. 31, 4 and 13; Lam. 5, 15; Luke 15, 25, especially that of women and children, Job 21, 11; Matth. 11, 17. Dancing by men and women was unknown; as indeed the oriental seclusion of women from men would alone have sufficed to make it seem indecorous." The dancing of Salome at Herod's birthday celebration was a lascivious performance copied from the degenerate Gentile courts of the day, and stands out as an ugly smudge on the purer customs of "this generation." — From a game of joy these children veer to one of sorrow: **we wailed, and ye did not mourn.** The first verb is the one from which we have our word threnody. The Jews wailed thus over the dead; in fact, this wailing was made a regular profession by certain women, who were then hired for funeral occasions, Mark 5, 38; Luke 8, 52; Matth. 9, 23; Eccles. 12, 5; Amos 5, 16. "It was an occasion of studied publicity and ceremonial," Fausset. The verb translated "mourn" is in the middle voice and signifies to beat oneself, breast, head, or hips, in sign of great grief and distress of mind. So these children set up their mournful wailing in imitation of the "mourning women," intending that their partners should join in the game thus set, by acting as the bereaved, striking their breasts in pretended grief. The point in the parable is the assumption of leadership by these chil-

dren and then veering, as the notion struck them, from one game to another, the one the opposite of the other. Like such children governed by passing notions, swayed by varying moods, expecting others to follow them in this, and setting up complaint when the others do not follow, is "this generation."

18. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil. 19. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold, a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! And wisdom is justified by her works.

The "for" ushers in the explanation. This, however, has helped to mislead especially the older interpreters. They think the children who first piped and then wailed point to Jesus, who came eating and drinking, and to John who came neither eating nor drinking; and the children who refused to play point to the Jewish people who refused to heed Jesus and John. But the parable has this significant heading: "Whereunto shall I liken *this generation* (not myself and John)? It is like unto children, etc." This is too direct to be reversed. Nor does Jesus picture himself and John as veering from one extreme to another, and then complaining that people are not ready to do the same. Moreover, the piping is first in the parable, the wailing second, but the stern Baptist came first and is named first by Jesus, and he himself second. This shuts out the old interpretation, as though Jesus and John did the piping and the wailing. It was just the other way around: John and Jesus would not accommodate themselves to the fickle multitude with its moods and notions. The parable is not to describe the small success of John and Jesus with this generation, but, as Zahn also correctly puts it, the superficial and childish way in which this generation passed judgment on both men. The use of the two opposite games mentioned is indeed to refer to the two opposites, John and Jesus, but not as in straight parallels, like this: = , but chiasmatically, like this: X , for which reason also piping and Jesus are

first and last, wailing and John in between. These Jews were like silly children who could so little understand the times in which they lived, and the signs of these times, that they wanted to pipe and have everybody dance when God sent them the Baptist; and when he refused to join them in that game, they called him morose, intolerable, having a devil, and turned from him aggrieved and disappointed. Likewise these people failed to understand the golden days of Jesus, which God sent them. Then they were bent on the game of wailing, swinging right to the opposite, and complained, and criticised Jesus for not joining that game by fasting, traditional Sabbath sternness, etc. So they had no use for him either. — **Neither eating nor drinking** is a brief description of John's asceticism, who lived as a Nazarite. His whole appearance, this constant silent rebuke to his generation, soon displeased them. Here we learn how far this opposition went: **He hath a devil**, an evil spirit has upset the poor fellow's reason. Compare Jno. 8, 48 on the same slander against Jesus. — **The Son of man** is Jesus' Messianic name: he who comes as man, yet is more than man. Dan. 7, 13: "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven," etc. This passage gives us the answer why Jesus called himself so constantly "the Son of man." There is more here than the reference to his human nature or to the Messianic office. "One like this Son of man" means One who is really more than man, though in the form of man. It is *the Son of God in the form of Man*, and as such he is the Messiah. Cf. *Eis. G. Sel.*, 2nd ed., I, 36-37. — Came **eating and drinking** is worded so as to state the exact opposite of the characterization given to John. The two men were opposites in this respect. Jesus moved freely among men, ate and drank with them on all manner of occasions. Of course, he observed most carefully and properly all the divine ceremonial laws in this conduct of his, although he scorned the foolish traditions of the elders as "commandments of men." Instead of understanding the pur-

pose of this difference between the messenger of repentance, sent in the spirit of Elijah (v. 14-15), and the Messiah himself, made in the likeness of men and found in fashion as a man (Phil. 2, 7-8), the Jews abused both. What they called for in the one, they would not allow in the other; what they condemned in the one, they demanded of the other. The reason was their superficiality — they literally did act as children, basing their "equally discourteous and unjust criticism on the mere outward appearance of their life," Zahn. This is what the parable of Jesus is intended to expose and castigate. — With slanderous exaggeration and falsehood they add to the vilification of John one equally vicious of Jesus: **Behold, a gluttonous man**, *φάγος* or with the other accent *φαγός*, *ein Fresser*, **and a winebibber**, one who indulges overmuch in wine. The latter epithet seems to have as its basis the fact that Jesus was no total abstainer in the modern sense, wine being a very common beverage at all Jewish feasts, and used also at the Passover and in the Jewish sacrifices, the latter by divine command. Jesus scorns to enter any kind of defense against these vilifications of himself and his forerunner. — The final statement has caused much perplexity: **And wisdom is justified by her works**, cf. Luke 7, 35. The first question is the reading. Is it "works," or is it "children," A. V.? The textual authority is for "works" in Matthew, and for "children" in Luke, cf. Souter's text, and Zahn's *Kommentar*, note, p. 436. And we must translate: "is justified," not: "is condemned," as has been suggested, changing the sense into its opposite. The "and" is in an adversative sense. Note that the verb has the emphasis and is an aorist: "has already been justified." Instead of saying the two men have been justified and cleared from these foolish, childish aspersions, by their own works, even as the fruit shows the character of the tree (7, 15-20), Jesus says **wisdom** has thus been thus justified. He personifies "wisdom," which reminds us of Prov. 8, the *Chokma*, which is the Son of God. This divine Wisdom wrought

in John, and we may say, was incarnate in Jesus. The "works" it wrought are the source from which its own justification is drawn—note the preposition *ἀπό*, not *ἐν* ("by").

20. Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.

"Then" is at about this time, leaving us in doubt whether this portion of Jesus' discourse followed immediately after the one on John, or was spoken separately. **Began** means that this was the first word of this kind, but others like it followed later; Meyer reduces it to mean only an elaborate form of statement. The verb translated **upbraid** signifies to blame, heap reproach upon. The words that fall from Jesus' lips are hard, harsh, like terrible blows. Let no one be surprised—the gentle Jesus is also a mighty Jesus. The divine power behind his "blessed" in the Beatitudes is equally behind this first and every following "woe" over the cities and men who spurned that blessing. When Jesus blames entire **cities** it is evident that any of the people who believed are excepted, as was Lot in Sodom. **The cities in which most of his mighty works were done** are named in the following woes, and we see how from this populous center at the Sea of Galilee the work of Jesus radiated in all directions, shining however most brightly in this Galilean center. As an aid to the understanding of what follows we ought to observe that Jesus mentions nothing but his miracles in this case, not his Word. He deals here, therefore, not with the full effect of his work, which should have been complete faith in him—in fact, faith is not mentioned in the entire section, just as the Word is omitted throughout. The term used for the miracles is also significant, *δυνάμεις*, power-deeds, **mighty works**, not *σημεῖα*, signs. The latter designation is the one usually combined with the person and Word of Jesus as productive of faith. Here Jesus remains on a lower level; he deals only with the first and natural impression which

his works of divine *might* ought to produce in men's hearts. These works ought at least to check and halt men in their careless course of sin, like the men of Nineveh were halted in their wickedness when Jonah announced the destruction of their city for their sins, bringing them nothing but the condemnation of the Law, without a word of Gospel. So here, these works of might ought at least to have frightened the sinners in their course. But this even they failed to do. To be sure, this first step should have been followed in due order by other steps. Not even the first step was achieved by Jesus' effort. That is why he utters these hard words of woe. **Because they repented not** contains an aorist, as we see from what follows in the sense of an act of contrition. The word "repent" is thus used in a narrow sense. The entire passage is clouded and misunderstood when repentance is taken in the wider sense of contrition and faith combined. Works of might may indeed, and should, produce contrition, terror of conscience at the thought of God; they cannot add faith. Naturally, where this first effect is absent, all other intended effects will be likewise impossible.

21. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22. Howbeit I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you.

Chorazin is mentioned only here, and Bethsaida only a few times, as the town near which the 5,000 were fed, and where a blind man was healed. Both cities were in the same general locality and near to Capernaum. Jesus' own statement here is sufficient as regards the miracles he wrought in these places, although none are recorded of Chorazin, and so few of Bethsaida. The many summary statements as regards the number of Jesus miracles must likewise be noted in this connection. **Woe** is an interjection, used here with the dative.

In reality it states a judgment by him who utters it upon those to whom or over whom it is spoken. What this "woe" expresses the context makes plain, namely deserved punishment for hardened wickedness of heart. — **For**, or because, states the reason on which this judgment of woes is pronounced. This is in the form of a regular conditional sentence, expressing unreality in the past. Two heathen cities from the Mediterranean coast are put in comparison with these two Galilean cities. Both Tyre and Sidon were known as wicked places, the former having its doom pronounced by the Old Test. prophets; nothing was to be left of it but "a place to spread nets." Sidon was twenty miles from Tyre. The remarkable thing is that Jesus says, these heathen cities **would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes**, if the same works of might had been done in them as were done in the two Jewish cities. In the first place we must note that this statement of Jesus deals with things possible, included also in the omniscience of God. Because things possible are considered as lying between things absolutely necessary (God himself) and things free (such as actual human actions), this knowledge was called *scientia media*—under certain conditions certain things would have been possible, which, however, for lack of the conditions did not become actual. In the second place, and this is the more important feature, here, as Philippi states, spiritual repentance and conversion is not considered, but only an outward desistance from gross sins and crimes, the so-called *peccata clamantia*, sins that cry to heaven, the kind of sins which made Tyre and Sidon infamous. Putting away such sins does not result in salvation, only in deliverance from the severe temporal penalties which they involve, as we see in the case of Nineveh. Compare also the repentance of Ahab, 1 Kgs. 21, 27-29, and how he was spared. The entire case of Tyre and Sidon thus lies in the realm of divine providence, not in that of saving grace. This answers the question that one might

put: Why were not such "mighty works" then done in Tyre and Sidon? This belongs to the secret will of God, concerning which we must not inquire. Besides this, with eternal salvation not involved, we know from what Jesus here says, and from similar statements of Scripture, that God's judgment takes into account the measure of warning given to the sinner, and portions its severity accordingly. The **sackcloth** was a dark, rough, sack-like garment worn next to the skin, the outward symbol of remorse, contrition, and deepest mourning. A second symbol, often combined with the other, is to sit down or cover oneself with **ashes**, Job 2, 8; etc. — What was not done in the case of Tyre and Sidon to rid them of temporal punishment will be taken care of with all due justice in the final judgment, Jesus assures us: **I say unto you.** As compared with Chorazin and Bethsaida, **it shall be more tolerable**, easier to endure, for these heathen cities **in the day of judgment**, when the final reckoning is taken and the eternal punishment is apportioned. In reckoning the amount of guilt, every element will be duly counted in, also what Tyre and Sidon would have done, as compared with what Chorazin and Bethsaida did do, including the warning of the "woe" here pronounced plus any effect it might bring forth:

23. And thou, Capernaum, shalt thou be exalted unto heaven? thou shalt go down unto Hades: for if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in thee, it would have remained until this day. 24. Howbeit I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.

There is a climax in this statement concerning Capernaum, for of the three Jewish cities it was the most favored, being Jesus' "own city," whither he removed his mother from Nazareth. Naturally, even greater and more numerous works of power were done here; yet here too in vain. The best texts place *μή* be-

fore the parenthetical clause, which should thus be read as a question implying that a negative answer is in the questioner's mind: **shalt thou be exalted unto heaven?** — thou surely dost not expect to be so exalted or lifted up, on the strength of having been mine own city and so highly favored? The A. V. reads the Greek without the question word, and thus makes the statement declarative, changing the future passive verb to a passive aorist indicative or an aorist participle preceded by the feminine article: "that wast exalted to heaven," translated loosely: "which art," etc. Jesus implies in this question that really Capernaum could and should have secured such exaltation. There was no reason in the world, except Capernaum's own wilful resistance, 'to prevent her from attaining such a height. What about us who have now the very highest possible gifts of grace in the fullest measure of the Gospel? — But no; the divine Judge declares: **thou shalt go down unto Hades**, into eternal damnation, and that without the least mitigation. The word **hades** (should have no capital, in spite of the R. V.; as little as hell should be capitalized) = the unseen (the negation of the Greek verb "to see"). The LXX used it to translate *schol*. About both of these terms an endless amount of error has been promulgated, not only by Russell and similar fanatics, but also by Catholic and Protestant theologians, some of whose vagaries have crept into Lutheran books and papers; the author has found them even in S. S. lesson leaves. The facts are these. The Old Test. *schol* is used as a general, indeterminate term, much like our "beyond," or "hereafter"; thus = the realm of the dead in general. There was thus attached to *schol* all that makes departure from life, death, parting, etc., sad, even for godly men. This general significance justifies the translation "the grave" in certain connections, namely where only the general idea of removal from this life obtains. But the Old Test. uses *schol* also in a specific sense, as the place for the wicked, who go down in terror

to *scheol*. In these connections the translation "hell" is proper. Only we must keep in mind the manner in which *scheol* was used, and how the context gives it color and meaning. The Greek equivalent for *scheol* in the latter sense is *hades*. It is the best the LXX translators could do. "Hades" is narrower than *scheol*. In the New Test., with its fuller light, "hades" is hell, the place of the damned throughout. Its opposite is heaven = paradise, the place of the blessed. Philippi lists all the passages (*Glaubenslehre* V. 57) and concludes: "In all New Test. passages *hades* and *gehenna* must be identified or can be." The latter is said concerning Rev. 20, 14, where the final consummation of damnation is described as the casting of *hades* into the lake of fire. There are only two places in the other world: heaven and hell. There is no intermediate place. It is papistic to speak of "hades" as an intermediate place with two compartments, one beneath, the antechamber of hell, the other above, the antechamber of heaven, this second antechamber called paradise. Some even get a double paradise in this way, since they cannot avoid making paradise in some connections = heaven, and yet insist on that intermediate place in "hades" as also paradise. Others have this "hades"-paradise empty now, claiming that Christ at his resurrection or at his descent into hell transferred the souls there into heaven. They do not report, however, that a "for rent" sign has been hung in the empty windows! This entire piece of speculation — for it is nothing more — is an ugly blot on the true Christian hope, and returns to the lies we Protestants left behind us in Rome 400 years ago. There is no mistaking what Christ meant when he consigned Capernaum down to "hades" — certainly not to a preliminary hell, but to the real abode of the damned. Nor is this merely a *condition*, as other speculators desire. People in a certain condition are bound to be in a certain *place*, one in this case matching their condition fully. — Christ again fortifies his judg-

ment by stating its grounds, using this time the city of Sodom in making the comparison. Its judgment had overtaken it long ago. Sodom stands as a type of the final judgment of the world. But again, with the divine *scientia media*, Jesus declares that if Sodom had seen such mighty works as Capernaum saw, **it would have remained until this day**. This statement shows clearly what Jesus meant with the word "repent" in making these comparisons. Sodom would have desisted from its crying sins to the extent at least that God would not have had to wipe it out utterly as he did. Only of this Jesus is speaking. — And so he adds on Sodom the identical statement he used for Tyre and Sidon. The divine justice will reckon in what Sodom had and what it did not have, what it did accordingly and what it suffered here for doing that. And thus **it shall be more tolerable** even for Sodom at that day than for Capernaum. Sodom did resist the warnings of Lot, but Capernaum resisted all the miracles of omnipotence wrought in its very midst by God's own Son. There shall not be the slightest inequality in the justice of this judgment.

SERMON.

Jesus loved comparisons, because when properly handled they are highly effective. He uses two of them in our present text, the one is the play of children in the marketplace, the other the stern realities in the history of heathen cities. In both of them he goes to the root of things, reaching men's consciences and hearts. By his effective comparisons he exposes the hardness of men's hearts, if possible by his mighty words to break down that hardness and put repentance in its stead.

If Christ should speak of our generation would he use the same or similar comparisons? He surely would, for these things were written for our learning that through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope. In fact, these comparisons are offered to us that we to-day may apply them to ourselves. Christ wants us to ask of our generation, as once he did of his:

Whereunto shall we Liken our Generation?

The answer is plain: *Use first the figure of the wayward children in the marketplace; then add the reality, the cities of the Jews and Gentiles of old.*

I.

We know how children like to copy their elders. But do we know too how many times they illustrate the very spirit of their elders? That is what Jesus saw when he watched them playing in the cities where he wrought his greatest miracles. Many a time some of them were bound to play wedding, and when the rest would not follow and skip in dancing to their whistling of the wedding march, they complained. Again, some determined to play funeral. They started to wail like the old Jewish mourning women hired for that purpose. They demanded that all the other children should beat their breasts like the Jewish mourners used to do. When these others would not those who started the game complained again. It was exactly the way their elders acted when God sent them the Law and the Gospel through the great prophet John the Baptist and through his own Son Jesus Christ. They wanted to play wedding when John preached repentance to them; they wanted to play funeral when Jesus preached the kindly grace of the Gospel of salvation. Mark it: they felt that *they alone* had a right to choose the game. God had to do as they saw fit; and because he did not, and in fact could not, they complained and turned from him. They called his prophet and his own Son hard names when these did not do and say what they wished. They wanted the Law of God changed to suit their notions, and the Gospel of God altered to meet their whims. Thus it was that they lost both. They were like their own trifling children, never realizing their hour of grace, refusing all that God was offering them.

Is our generation like that? Alas, it is! The way of salvation has not changed, cannot change. It is still as narrow as the true repentance which the Law would work. But men cry out against it and demand to have it wider so that they can keep some of their sins. It is still as wide as universal grace, admitting every poor sinner who repents. But men object to that and will not go in alongside of this or that other great sinner. They want the way narrowed by setting up their own good deeds and righteousness before God. Always there is this presumption of men that *they* know, and that the way to heaven must be as *they* say, as *they* want it. They will not listen to the divine Word; they change that to suit themselves. And when we refuse to change it with them, they revile us and oppose us, as once they did with John the Baptist and God's Son Jesus.

Let God's Word attack the worldliness of men, and see whether they will leave it. They must have their carousing and dancing, their shows and plays, their Sunday amusements and other so-called good times, no matter how much sin and godlessness is involved. Do not be so strict! is the cry constantly raised. Let the Law show men their natural depravity, and the impurity of their hearts. At once you will hear complaint. The old-pride begins to boast of good intentions, of a better self, of goodness in this and that, of excellent deeds here and there—like some of these Gospel-less preachers, who praise every miserable sinner they bury and somehow squeeze him into heaven. Never for a moment will this blind pride see that all such boasts are hollow, for the very thoughts and desires of our hearts are stained and diseased with sin until Christ cleanses us. Let God's Law point men to their individual sins, the one to his anger and oaths, the other to his lies and hypocrisy, the third to his selfishness and greed, the fourth to his shameful thoughts and lusts, the fifth to his touchiness and pride, and all of them to their lack of the fear and love of God, to their distaste of his Word and ways, and what will you hear? Men will tell you they do not want that kind of preaching, they will revile you, do without preaching, but go on in the same old wicked course as before.

But surely they like the Gospel? They treat it in the same way. It is preposterous to them that Christ's blood should take away our sins—they think it ought to be done, if necessary at all, in some other way more to their notion. They feel it an insult to be asked to come only as humble sinners to God's mercy-seat in Christ; if they deem it necessary to come at all, they want to come as they think would be proper and fit. When God reveals the mysteries of the Gospel, his own wonderful being, the holy Trinity, his Son both God and man, the cross as the only door to heaven, the sacraments as fountains of salvation, regeneration in Baptism, Christ's body and blood in the Holy Supper, what happens? The haughty reason of men sets itself up to judge these divine mysteries. Just like foolish children people think they know better. In thousands of cases they follow their own folly and deny what God reveals. Nor does the life outlined by the Gospel meet their superior approval—to love and worship God is too much trouble; to read and study his Word takes too much time; to sing, pray, hear, confess, and give—well, they know something better than that. Such is the story of the Law and the Gospel in our generation.

Now the great question is how much of this picture of Christ's generation and our generation is duplicated in us. Look close—are you really in accord with God's Holy Word as John the Baptist of old and as Jesus have brought it to you? At how many

points do you dislike it, set it aside, conveniently forget it. love, trust, obey something else? Do you give it the time and attention it ought to have? Do you feel the loss, the shame, the regret you ought to feel when you fall short of what this Word sets before you? Is your soul's hope really based on the cross, and on the cross alone, and your life bound fast inwardly to Jesus as your Savior alone? Christ drew this picture of his generation for you. Make it the mirror for your soul, and whenever you see the sins of his generation repeated in our own generation, then always ask first of all how much of just that sin and folly is still left in your own heart. Cleanse that away by the grace of Christ, and then help others do the same.

II.

Whereunto shall we liken our generation? Its distaste of God's Word and ways is coupled with its hardness of heart, and therefore we must bring in comparison with it, not a figure only, but also *the reality of the old Jewish and Gentile cities.*

It is Christ, the infinite Judge himself, who here tells us that the Jewish cities in which he did his mighty works showed themselves worse, far worse than the old pagan cities, like Tyre, Sidon, and even Sodom itself. How can he say that? Because unbelief is worse than blind pagan idolatry, and obduracy against all the grace and salvation in God's Son worse than open pagan shame and vice.

Surely, Tyre and Sidon were evil cities. Their people practiced the most abominable form of idol-worship, that of the monster god Baal, burning their own children in his iron arms, wallowing in lust to honor that god. And Sodom was worse still. Its sins literally cried out unto heaven. Its licentiousness was so extreme that to this day for some of its unspeakable sins we have only the name sodomy. God's doom was pronounced on Tyre and Sidon; there is barely a trace of them left to-day. And Sodom with its sister city Gomorrah was overwhelmed by a rain of fire and brimstone from heaven, so that the very ground on which it stood was consumed, and to this day all that locality is a dead, lifeless, salty waste on the shores of what is rightly called the Dead Sea.

There is no question about the abominations and crimes of these old heathen cities, and of their merited destruction. But in one vital point, Jesus tells us, they were not as bad as were the cities of Jesus' own nation where he lived and labored so long. They were not so obdurate, not so hard and desperate in their resistance. Works as mighty as those Jesus did, he himself says, would have made at least some impression upon them; but all these works of his made no impression upon the adamant hearts of his own Jewish cities. All his works did not stir their unbelief, did

not shatter their self-righteousness, did not frighten them of God's judgment, did not lower their unholy Jewish pride. What if they did not worship Baal and do the vile sins of Sodom — the one thing that was worse than that they did: cast the miracles of the Son of God aside, spurned his work and his message, and after his work stand farther from God than before. As great as the light is against which men sin, so great is their guilt, so great shall be their judgment. As great as the measure of grace is which men receive, so great is their sin when they obdurately resist that grace, so great also is their judgment. "That servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Luke 12, 47-48.

That is what makes this comparison so pertinent to us. Where do we stand? Far above Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom. We are in line with Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, in fact, we are given more even than these. Ours is the whole Bible, the completed work of Christ, the entire Gospel of grace in Christ, the church with all its ministrations and gifts, the long ages of its history and the cloud of witnesses, and martyrs even, that grace it. Now what is the result of all this grace in our cities? Thousands will not even go near the church, though its bells din constantly in their ears; will not even read the Bible, though it is scattered in millions of copies; will not even name the Holy Savior's name in prayer; will not acknowledge that from the Gospel alone flow even the temporal blessings they enjoy. Woe unto this generation of flinty hearts and dead consciences! It shall be more tolerable for the men of Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom in the final judgment than for them. Yes, there are others. They have their religion, their temples, their lodge chaplains, their rituals, their teachers, their so-called services. They may use even the holy name of Jesus. But how? His cross and blood, his holy ransom and sacrifice they eliminate. They have emptied the Gospel of all its Gospel truth; they have put in place thereof the old heathen philosophies, the old prideful Jewish self-righteousness and Phariseism under new names. It is thus only another form of the same old obdurate blindness and resistance to light and grace. Woe unto this generation of sham Christians, perverts, not converts of the Gospel! It shall be more tolerable for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom in the final judgment than for them. Would that the rest were true as they should be. But even among these many confess with the lips and deny with their hearts; join the church, but fail to join the Savior; hear his Word, but fail to do it. All

this is open and plain in the sight of the eternal Judge. Woe unto these also, who cry Christ while thus they deny Christ! It shall be more tolerable for Tyre, Sidon, and Sodom in the final judgment than for these.

Mark well then what this comparison means, between those who had so little and those who have so much. How you treat what you have decides now, will decide then. Oh that we would wake up from this sleep of indifference as if the grace of God and all the gifts that go with it are a cheap thing with which we may do about as we please, and suffer little in consequence. Away with this coldness and hardness that lets all God's grace slip off from it as water from a stone. The very abundance of our grace multiplies the responsibility from which we cannot escape, once that grace has come to us. But O the blessedness of its possession, when our eyes are opened, our hearts melted by repentance, and the power of that grace becomes effective in our hearts and lives! No longer like foolish children do we call for this or that, while the true treasure is not even seen. No longer like the blind heathen do we stumble in the darkness only to disappear at last in night. Nor like those obdurate Jews do we cling perversely to our sham righteousness, only to receive the greater condemnation for rejecting the true. He who knows what the grace of God really means has his soul cleansed, his life drawn upward to God, and an eternity of bliss awaiting him at death.

Those children in the marketplace, those cities blessed so highly, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, are set for our warning. God grant they may not be set thus in vain.

OUTLINES.

The text is largely negative. The negative always presupposes the positive and cannot be properly presented and understood without. The sermon will thus take care to present the proper measure of positive truth in expounding this negative text. — The text falls naturally into two sections, which may govern the sermon accordingly. The first section: men's distaste of the Word; the second: men's obduracy of heart. So we may cast the theme: What is wrong with our generation, and how may we escape that wrong? Against men's distaste of the Word let us put true love of that Word (knowledge, faith, obedience) — and against men's obduracy let us put true repentance. — The text is treated also as a call to repentance. Christ's Woe on the Jewish cities a call to us to repent: recognize his grace and gifts to you (Law and Gospel, John and Jesus; more even than the Galilean cities of old) — take warning from others (their distaste of the Word; their hard-

ness of heart) — repent of our sins and believe. — Christ's woe marks the text. When Christ began to cry Woe to his own generation: he meant to warn them of their growing guilt and impending judgment — he meant to turn them to his grace and pardon.

Christ and the Spirit of our Times.

1. *He shows what is wrong with this spirit.*
 2. *He announces what will become of this spirit.*
 3. *He reaches out to free us all from this spirit.*
-

Christ's Woe on this Generation.

1. *Let its fickleness turn you to the wisdom of Christ.*
 2. *Let its obduracy warn you to heed the mighty works of Christ.*
 3. *Let its judgment drive you to accept the pardon of Christ.*
-

When Christ Called Woe to the Cities of Galilee.

1. *He exposes our guilt.*
 2. *He warns us of judgment to come.*
 3. *He moves us to repentance.*
-

Which is the Worst Sin?

We may look at it from different angles.

1. *To reject God's Word* — avoid it by gratefully accepting that Word.
 2. *To remain obdurate* — avoid it by true repentance.
 3. *To despise and neglect God's grace* — avoid it by thankfully trusting that grace.
-

Matth. 21, 33-44.

"Behold, we go up to Jerusalem," is the solemn announcement of the old gospel text for this Sunday, the forerunner of Lent. We can do no better than to follow this lead in any line of texts we may choose. The one presented here is comprehensive, outlining in a parable the character and course of the Jewish people which culminated in the crucifixion of Jesus. Jesus here shows us: *the way which led him to the cross*. The text for Invocavit, Jno. 2, 18-22, likewise speaks of the Passion, but brings out more clearly what the previous text in its closing verses added apart from the parable and in a more veiled form: Jesus shall die indeed, but *the Passion is a victory and no defeat*. In both of these texts the Passion is not viewed in a detached way, but in its connection with the resurrection. Thus also in the text for Reminiscere where, following this view, Matth. 12, 38-42 presents *the Passion as the culmination of all the signs of Jesus*, that sign without faith in which all other signs must be in vain. For Oculi there follows a text which does not mention the Passion as such, but shows us Jesus as he is on his journey to Jerusalem to enter his Passion, Luke 19, 1-10. This text culminates in the word: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost," which may well be taken as expressing most adequately *the divine purpose of Christ's Passion*. Laetare has John 12, 27-33, a text which is admirable in various ways, and mentions the Passion directly in its last verse. Its great thought, however, comes out in the word "glorify" and in the Father's answer to the Son. The subject here, we may say, is *the glory of Christ's Passion*. Judica puts us into the council of Christ's

enemies, John 11, 47-57, but it reveals to us in the remarkable word of the High Priest, what all the Passion-History substantiates: *God's counsel in Christ's Passion*. — Then comes Palm Sunday with John 12, 12-19, a reminder of the old gospel text for this day, one which surely will please both preacher and congregation, especially if this day be used — as it ought to be — for the confirmation of the catechumens. It speaks to us of *the honor which is due to Christ for his Passion*. The text for Maundy Thursday naturally deals with *the Lord's Supper as the blessed fruit of Christ's Passion*. The climax of the entire Lenten cycle is the last text, for Good Friday, which both in the old gospel series, as well as in many of the newer ones is left entirely to the preacher's choice. Our choice here is the narrative of John describing *the death of Christ, the climax of the Passion*. Each of these texts has its own setting and its individual features, which the sermon will naturally utilize. Yet in each case the dominating thought of the text ought to be clearly apprehended and stated in its simplest form, in order thereby to give the sermon the point and power it ought to have for the day for which it is set, at the same time keeping the natural and proper connection with the texts and sermons which precede and which follow.

Jesus has made his royal entry into Jerusalem, cleansed the Temple a second time, wrought miracles there, and taught publicly in the face of the opposition of the leaders of the Sanhedrim. He returned on the following day and was confronted by a delegation from the Sanhedrim, who interrupted his teaching and demanded to know the authority by which he acted, and the person investing him with such authority. Instead of a defensive attitude Jesus takes the offensive by his counter question concerning the Baptist which exposes the attitude of these Sanhedrists toward the authority concerning which they here inquired, an authority both fully known to them and yet disregarded by them. With the Sanhedrists still before him, and the people likewise

whom he had been teaching, Jesus speaks two parables, both of which are directed against these miserable Jewish leaders, the first, on the two sons, exposing their personal attitude toward the person behind the authority which had commissioned Jesus, the second, our text, exposing their official scorn of the same authority. In the latter Jesus states fully and clearly how his path will lead to the cross.

21, 33. Hear another parable: There was a man that was a householder, which planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country.

Did the Sanhedrists turn to leave? Jesus was not quite done with them. He commands them to hear another parable, and so they are held till Jesus is done with them. — A few simple strokes and the entire picture is before us in vivid, plastic form. It is drawn so as to remind us of the striking parable in Is. 5, 1, etc., yet as the action unfolds we see that Jesus develops it in his own way. Isaiah makes Israel as such guilty, Jesus the leaders of Israel. Jesus calls the person he describes a **householder**, one in a position to have a vineyard, yet not great and high, like a prince or king. He is a man of position and wealth with servants and a son and heir. He does not buy the vineyard, we are told he **planted** it, secured the ground, set the young plants, cultivated and cared for them till the vineyard could be leased to the husbandmen. It is one of those touches which help to make the picture very true, showing God's personal care and interest. The **vineyard** is Israel, which at once shows what all it required to make this people one that could be given such a name. "The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant." — What store this owner set by his vineyard we see from the protection and equipment he gave it. He **set a hedge about it**, not merely for ornament, but for protection, for "hedge" = fence, paling,

stockade, to prevent trespassing and harm to the vines. There is little trouble here: Israel was indeed well fenced in. Eph. 2, 14 describes the Law as "the middle wall of partition," dividing Israel from the Gentiles. This it did most thoroughly with all its regulations and ceremonies, so that the very minds of this people were kept sundered and separated from all their Gentile neighbors. This purpose of the Law was aided in accomplishment by the geographical position of Israel, tucked away in a safe corner of the world almost by itself, the high Anti-Libanus on the north, the Lakes and Jordan on the east, the desert on the south, and the Great Sea on the west. — Next to the protection the equipment: he digged **a winepress in it, and built a tower**, in oriental fashion. The vineyard was extensive enough for that, covering a goodly piece of ground. The vineyard was not merely for the grapes, but to furnish wine, and thus to produce a fine income. The *ληνός* need not be a winepress, it is any receptacle in the nature of a tub or trough. The digging of it here suggests that the receptacle was to catch the juice when pressed from the grapes. This at times was cut into the rock, or if dug into the ground it was walled by masonry. The tub for treading out the grapes being erected above it, with a screened opening to let the juice run out. Fausset writes: "The two vats were usually hewn in the solid rock, the upper broad and shallow, the lower smaller and deeper." The "tower" was built for protection, a shelter for the watchmen, and a storehouse at the same time. The vineyard thus lacked nothing in the way of equipment. This must suffice as regards the interpretation. — When all is done the owner **let it out to husbandmen**, tillers, here evidently men who made vinegrowing a business. The second aorist 3rd p. s. is written frequently in many texts as here: *ἐξέδωκε*. On what terms the vineyard was let we may gather from the following "his fruits." Meyer, however, thinks a cash rent is implied, but without sufficient ground. —

The reason for renting out the vineyard is explained by the addition: **and went into another country** — all one verb in Greek, signifying that he left home, i. e. his people, thus suggesting both distance and a considerable length of time. Luke mentions the latter: "a long time." This imagery pictures God's direct and personal work in leading Israel from Egypt to Canaan with his own hand, and how he then placed his people in the care of spiritual guides and leaders. By the latter are meant those whose office was continuous, as distinguished from the prophets sent at special times and with specific messages.

34. And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits.

We need not trouble about **the season of the fruits**, as though this does not correspond exactly to the reality, since God requires fruit constantly. Grapes are fruit not only when ripe, but also while growing, and God gives fruit time to develop as in nature, so in our hearts and lives. As far as the parable is concerned there was no trouble about the vineyard, it had its full measure of fruit. Jesus is not dealing here with the fruitfulness or unfruitfulness of the vineyard; that is done in Is. 5. Here, therefore, "the season of fruit" is meant as referring to the "husbandmen"; it is the time of reckoning for them, when *they* must produce. All through we must keep our eye on these men, who are the pivot of the parable, and not stray to one side by treating some feature of the parable in an independent manner. — **He sent his servants**, not to the vineyard to gather the fruit, but **to the husbandmen**. The "servants" are thus plainly distinguished from the "husbandmen." It is plain that they are distinguished as *sent*, the others were in permanent charge. These "servants" are evidently the prophets who were especially commissioned by God. Jesus says, they were **to receive his fruits**. The added possessive should be read as referring to the

owner of the vineyard, not as referring to the vineyard: "its fruits." And again we ought not to stress the interpretation of this fruit, as Trench, following Ols-hausen, does. Least of all dare we interpret fruit here as they do, only of the product of the Law, as bringing forth "the need of a redemption," with the unthinkable addition: "the servants appear as those who seek for these spiritual needs, that they may link to them the promises concerning a coming Redeemer." Israel had these promises not only in the prophets, but in its entire economy. It had Law and Gospel combined, and the fruit desired is faith, just as much as contrition. The need alone was no fruit. God also arranged from the beginning that every spiritual need should at once find its satisfaction in his grace. But this is a sidematter here. The *tertium comparationis* deals with the husbandmen.

35. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. 36. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them in like manner.

Plainly the subject of fruit is dropped, and an entirely different point is urged: the attitude and action of the wicked husbandmen toward the owner of the vineyard as represented in his servants — really: "bond-servants," owned by him personally. These husbandmen act as if the vineyard belonged to them. But it is only part of their presumption; for they do not merely send the servants away as making unwarranted demands — they beat, kill, and stone. This is intended as a climax, as Bengel indicates by adding to the stoning: *specie atrox*. But the point is the murderous violence, growing in intensity as it proceeds. Even the shadow of an excuse, the least pretense of right is absent. There is nothing but bare, ugly wickedness of the worst type. It makes no difference that husbandmen of leased vineyards do not usually proceed thus, or that no actual case like this is on record. When the Lord uses the imagery

which his hearers know, in a way which goes frankly and openly beyond what is usual or even exceptional under that imagery in actual life, he thereby teaches us that the spiritual things pictured are really in a class by themselves. So here. When were husbandmen ever so wicked? The hearers might have exclaimed: Why, we never heard of such a thing! Of course, they had not. But that is the very point Jesus wishes to make. He is picturing with such paint as this parable affords the unheard of wickedness of the Jewish leaders who murdered the prophets sent for their own salvation and that of Israel. It is disappointing indeed that interpreters like Trench and the better commentators fail to see these and similar things. "Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city." Matth. 23, 34. "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers." Acts 7, 52. "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; . . . of whom the world was not worthy." Heb. 11, 37-38. Trench reports: "If we may trust Jewish tradition, Jeremiah was stoned by the exiles in Egypt, Isaiah sawn asunder by king Manasseh." — The mention of the first three servants in v. 35 leaves it undecided whether they came together or in succession, i. e. as far as the picture is concerned. That there was no time interval we learn without question from v. 36: **Again, he sent other servants more than the first.** Here in miniature we have the long succession of prophets sent to Israel. What the Jewish leaders did to them through the long course of years is here put into two sendings, first of three servants, then of a greater number. This sending of delegations seems to point to

the standing of the sender, a man with numerous servants, as also the vineyard is leased to far more than one husbandman, it being thus extensive. Otherwise the entire course of Jewish history during which the prophets were made martyrs is indicated merely by the adverb "again." Once more, however, we meet the disparity between the action here described and the usual or even exceptional occurrences in life. Whoever heard of such an owner, sending other servants when the first were maltreated and even killed? Any other man would at once have resorted to strong measures. It is the very thought Jesus means to convey: the patience of God exceeds a thousandfold all the patience of men. There is no human comparison which is really adequate to picture it. It can be done only as Jesus here does it, by frankly exceeding all our experience in the case involved.— There is no change in the husbandmen: **and they did unto them in like manner.** The later Jewish leaders were not different from the earlier ones. Each generation allowed the deeds of its fathers by repeating them. Instead of taking due warning from their fathers' crimes they, by thus allowing, or consenting to them, practically make them their own, and then add new ones, thus piling up their guilt even beyond their fathers.

37. But afterward he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. 38. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. 39. And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him.

If the proceedings thus far have been astounding, they now certainly reach the climax. Where is the earthly father who would send *his* son as God sent his? But here the parable can say it, and is therefore made to say it, because God did so send his Son. Perhaps, it is well to note here, how the question of fruit has fallen into the background. The owner thinks of something else, namely: **They will reverence my son** — the

verb a second future passive from *ἐντρέπω*, to have regard to someone, show esteem, reverence, be ashamed. In a way the mission of the son is like that of the servants—all were *sent*. So Jesus and the prophets. But here the likeness ends. The prophets were servants of God as a result of their being sent; Jesus is sent as a result of being the Son. In one case the mission makes the man, in the other the Man makes the mission. Trench is right, we need not trouble ourselves at this point about the divine foreknowledge, how the householder could send his son saying what he did, when in reality God knew just what those Jewish leaders would do. But we must not stop as Trench does, saying it is the old problem of man's freedom and God's foreknowledge, which for us is simply unsolvable. The matter is far deeper. God did not send his Son merely foreknowing what would happen; he sent him for the very purpose that this should happen. This is the problem of eternal, infinite love, besides which any problem of foreknowledge pales. The latter may wrack our brains, the former overwhelms our hearts with its saving power. Only the parable is too weak to bring in all this boundless measure of truth. All it is able to do is to lead us up to it.—What now follows is prophetic: Jesus is telling his own murderers in advance just what they will do. It is a parable, and therefore is able to display openly what the enemies of Jesus kept mostly under cover. There is, of course, no shadow of reverence. These husbandmen have practiced upon the servants, it seems, the better to dispose at last of the son. What was done to the prophets was a kind of training for what was finally to be done with Jesus. **They said among themselves**—it was too base even for the hardened Jewish leaders to say it publicly, Jno. 11, 47, etc. Trench does not think that the foes of Jesus, even in their most secret counsels, admitted one to another what Jesus here says, yet he thinks they thought it in their hearts, namely: **This is the heir;**

come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. The fact is, however, that they did utter these very thoughts to each other, even as Jesus says. Read carefully John 11, 47-48; 50; 53. Consider how many times, and in what direct and telling ways Jesus proved to them that he was indeed the Messiah, "the heir," and always they were silenced, convinced against their will. This very heir they did not want, because that would lose them, as the wicked fellows they were, **the inheritance**, their wicked dominion of the people. Jesus was not killed in ignorance, but with due knowledge of his murderers. They knew how far apart he and they were, hence how they could not have even the least share in the inheritance if he should remain. Not at this point was there any ignorance on their part, nor any reticence over against each other. There was ignorance indeed, namely the ignorance which blind unbelief and hostility against Jesus always involves, an absolute shutting out from their own view the spirituality of the inheritance, the true inwardness of the rule they tried to snatch away from Jesus by murdering him. That this inner reality of the outward economy in which they held power was the decisive thing, and that the outward could never be held with the inward not in their possession and not even seen by them, that they did not know. And so they thought they had succeeded when they had indeed compassed their design and murdered Jesus, only to be rudely shocked even in their obdurate blindness and hate when the news came that Jesus was risen from the dead. In his further elucidation Trench is correct: "What God had founded, they would fain possess without God and against God" — for note the godless means they employed, — "and imagined that they could do so; for indeed is not all self-righteousness an attempt to kill the heir, and to seize on the divine inheritance, a seeking to comprehend and take down into self that light, which is only light while it is recognized as something above self, and whereof man is permitted to be

a partaker; but which he neither originated, nor yet can ever possess in fee, or as his own, or otherwise than as a continual receiver of it from on high; a light too, which, by the very success of the attempt to take it into his own possession, is as inevitably lost and extinguished as would be a ray of our natural light if we succeeded in cutting it off from its luminous source?" They wanted to possess the branch on which they sat by sawing it off from the tree which bore it. — And so the unspeakable deed was done: **And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him.** Note that "they took him" — it was literally done. Nor does Jesus add merely: "and killed him." There is that significant: "cast him forth out of the vineyard." Meyer may call this one of the points not to be sought in the reality, but this is nothing but superficiality, for Heb. 13, 12-13 expressly states that Jesus "suffered without the gate," John 19, 17. What this signifies Trench states: "Cut off in the intention of those who put him to death from the people of God, and from all share in their blessings," 1 Kgs. 21, 13; Acts 7, 58; 21, 30.

40. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen? 41. They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men, and will let out the vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their season.

Instead of completing the parable himself Jesus lets his hearers do so by raising the question what the lord of that vineyard will finally do, cf. Is. 5, 3. He must have told the story so dramatically that he held the minds and emotions of his hearers, and thus at once secured the proper response. We now hear the owner called **the lord of the vineyard**, hinting more nearly at his true greatness and the greatness of his son. The imagery of the parable will not allow the son, who has been killed, to take the final reckoning. When the parable makes God do that, we know how he will do it —

through his Son. So the imagery is true, but does not tell it all. — There is a play of words in *κακοὺς κακῶς*, imitated in the translation: "*those miserable men miserably* will he destroy," the object and adverb emphatically forward. The answer was correct: Jerusalem was utterly destroyed at last. — But how about the vineyard now? The people, of course, are able to think only of the old arrangement continued in the old fashion of letting the vineyard out to other husbandmen. That shall indeed be done, v. 43, but the developments will include more.

42. Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures,

The stone which the builders rejected,

The same was made the head of the corner:

This was from the Lord,

And it is marvelous in our eyes?

The parable is dropped, its possibilities being exhausted, since it could not bring in the resurrection. Christ's hearers — the people, hardly the Sanhedrists present — have themselves rendered the proper verdict on their leaders, and the Sanhedrists have heard it, heard it from their own subjects, not from Jesus. It resembles the man who was condemned out of his own mouth, Luke 12, 22; cf. 1 Kgs. 20, 41. Before Jesus endorses this verdict he adds the other point still needed, using a portion of the Messianic Ps. 118, 22-23, and raising the question whether his hearers had ever read that — which, of course, they had, but by the question implying also whether they had really understood it. — The Psalm may have been composed to express the joy of the people when after their captivity they were again laying the corner stone for their Temple, or when they were again dedicating the completed structure. But it contained the prophetic words which Jesus now introduces, words to be fulfilled shortly. There will be more than the deposing of the present murderous

leaders of the Jews and the substitution of better men, there will be an entirely new structure. The old covenant shall be replaced by a new one of which Jesus shall be the corner stone. He is **the stone which** (λίθον ὄν, inverse attraction) **the builders rejected**, by this new figure repeating the chief fact of the former parable. In their official capacity as builders they threw out Jesus as totally unsuited to the structure of God's temple as they conceived it. But what happened? That very stone was made **the head of the corner**. The passive includes an agent, who is named in the following line. The death of the Son does not eliminate him. On the contrary, by that very death he will be what the new structure needs. The idea of a corner stone has often been inadequately put, as when Meyer makes it "the bearer and support" of the entire building. No corner stone ever is that; to say so is to confound the corner stone with the foundation. Jesus may indeed be called the foundation itself; but when he is called "the head of the corner," this is a different thing, as Eph. 2, 20 shows, where Jesus is the corner stone, but the apostles and prophets the foundation. The significance of the corner stone lies in this that it is set at the chief corner and thus by its angles governs every other vital angle in the entire foundation and structure. This Jesus does in the spiritual temple of God, in the new covenant. — Men never would have thought or done this: **This was from the Lord**, from Jehovah himself, the execution of his wonderful plan. The Greek: "from the Lord came this," puts the emphasis at both ends of the sentence. The feminine αὐτῇ, as also the feminine for "marvelous" slavishly follows the Hebrew which has no neuter for abstract ideas, but uses the feminine. Rightly the Psalmist adds: **And it is marvelous in our eyes**, causing wonder the more men look at it and realize what was done.

43. Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a

nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. 44. And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust.

"Therefore," for this reason—because the son killed by the husbandmen, the stone rejected by the builders, did not remain killed and rejected, but—speaking of the stone alone—was made by God himself the head of the corner. **The kingdom of God** is his power and grace with what it works. Dropping the parabolic past tenses Jesus speaks directly: this kingdom **shall be taken away from you** by God. Hitherto it had been confined to the Jews, even including the ministry of Jesus, but it was to be taken from them—the **you** including now both the leaders and the people. Israel as a nation was no longer to have what it had so shamefully abused. **And shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof** does not mean to substitute some other single nation for the Jews. The word *ἔθνος* is used merely as a counterpart to the Jewish nation. This new **nation** was to be the spiritual Israel gathered from all nations, also including many Jews, but only on a par with the rest; for which reason also the new "nation" is described as "bringing forth," doing or producing, "the fruits" of the kingdom, the latter term reverting again to the parable and thus connecting up the entire discourse.—We pass by the textual question involved in v. 44. While it is absent in a number of codices, a glance at Souter shows that many and quite important ones have it. The figure of the stone is here used in a new direction, not as lying in its place on the vital corner, but as the object of hatred and opposition, now carrying this thought to its final conclusion. **He that falleth on this stone** describes what one who rejects Christ really does, he only hurts himself: he **shall be broken to pieces**, crushed together. This and the following statement announce the positive punishment that follows opposition to Christ, rounding out the previous negative idea of the loss of the king-

dom. Trench thinks a man "might recover himself" from such a fall, "though with some present harm," and the language does not exclude this possibility. — But the stone, hitherto spoken of as inactive, can be viewed as active, since a stone too can fall. This Christ utilizes: **on whomsoever it shall fall**, bringing the wrath of God in full measure against his wicked opposition, **it will scatter him as dust**, like the winnowing fan when it powders the chaff and makes it fly in fine particles.

SERMON. *med'24*

This Sunday places us on the threshold of Lent—next Wednesday we enter that sacred, solemn season. It is the time when we and thousands of our fellow Christians meditate on the holy Passion of Jesus, following in thought the way that Jesus went till for our advantage he was nailed to the cross. While the Passion History as such is thus bound to occupy our thoughts in a special degree, it is Jesus himself who expands our vision to take in all that his mighty sacrifice involves. He does it in the parable before us, and in what he adds from the 118th Psalm concerning the chief corner stone. The way which led Jesus to the cross reaches far back and is wonderful in every feature of it. Let me trace it for you in

The Story of the Wicked Husbandmen: the Way which Led Jesus to the Cross.

It is a way **dark with sin**.

Who is this man that planted a vineyard, made it safe by a strong protecting hedge, equipped it with a winepress and a guard-tower, and then let it out to husbandmen to care for it and return to him his portion of the fruit? It is God who made Israel of old his chosen people, gave them his Word and grace, sheltered them from all the idolatrous nations round about, (appointed) them a priesthood and spiritual leaders, in order that he might have from his people the fruit of faith and a holy life, and finally use them in sending salvation to all the world. What was the story of that vineyard, the history of the chosen nation? Jesus tells us. (The very leaders of the Jews turned against God and used their position to make themselves independent of his grace and blessed plans.) It is a story of sin, dark from beginning to end, and growing darker as it proceeded. For these servants sent

by the owner of the vineyard to receive the fruit due him are God's holy prophets, sent to the chosen people one after the other. What did they receive? Instead of faith, abuse; instead of obedience, murder. The great prophet Jeremiah, Jewish history reports, was stoned to death by the Jews, and the still greater prophet Isaiah was sawn asunder by order of the Jewish king. What a story black with sin! No wonder Jesus cried out: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee!" And afterwards the martyr Stephen: "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them, which showed before the coming of the Just One."

That dark story of sin shows us: the way which led Jesus to the cross. When Jesus spoke this parable he had his very murderers before him, a delegation of the Jewish High Council or Senate. In this parable he tells these men to their faces how they will complete what their wicked predecessors had done in killing the prophets, by killing him whom God had sent them now, namely his own Son. Jesus means himself when he says that last of all the owner of the vineyard sent his own son to the husbandmen, but instead of reverencing him, they hated him worst of all because he was the son and thus the heir and rightful future master of the vineyard; and they cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. That is the story of the cross as it was actually enacted four days after Jesus spoke these words. The Jews took Jesus out of the city and crucified him on Calvary. Their black course of sin culminated in this most terrible crime of all. The people who should have been God's people cast out and slew God's own Son.

To see the story again, as Jesus here paints it for us with a master hand, must rouse our highest indignation. We feel like calling down all God's holy vengeance upon these men who cast out God's own Son. But it would be a desperate mistake to think that only the sin of these Jews is so black as to reject God's own Son. The fact is that their sin is the revelation of what lies in all sin, in yours as well as mine. Sin has no use for God, for his Word, or any of his messengers, least of all for his Son. These are all in the way when we want to do in sinning as we please, robbing God of the fruits of faith and obedience which we owe him. And so every man, by the measure of sin that is active in him, seconds and supports what the men of Jerusalem did when they rejected God's Son. As it all came from one source, so it is all in reality one thing, this sin which is in men's hearts. It is one wicked devilish power that affects us all. Look not then merely at the hands which led Jesus to the cross, but at the sin which moved those hands and ruled those hearts, and see that this is the black

thing in your heart also. Every sinner connected with the tragedy of Jesus' death is a real representative of every other sinner in the whole world. Thus our sin slew God's Son. Well has the poet sung:

"O Lord! it was my burden
That brought this woe on thee."

And that is what it means to hear that the way which led Jesus to the cross was *black with sin*.

Thank God, it was also **beautiful with grace**.

It was grace which planted that vineyard and planned to make the whole world a beautiful vineyard at last. It was grace which sent those servants, continued to send them, and finally sent even the Son. Now Jesus knew when he spoke this parable that in all the world never a man would do what he said this owner of the vineyard did. The very first servant any husbandmen would kill for an ordinary owner would make him use at once all the force of law against such men, and the last thing he would think of doing would be to place his own son where men like this could touch him. But this is the very thing Jesus wants us to note, for it reveals to us the full mystery of God's grace.

Here is a world full of sinners, all infected completely by the same black, hideous thing coming out in every one of them in all sorts of ways, and the whole of it opposed to God, denying him all that is due him, wanting to use all his gifts in its own godless way. Why does not God strike down all these sinners at once with the terrible might of the just and holy law at his command? Why does he wait one single moment, plant a vineyard, send his Word, his servants, his own Son even to men like that? There is only one answer: it is the unsearchable grace of God!

We deserve absolutely nothing—God brings and offers us everything. That is grace. We should be cast into outer darkness—God invites us into heaven, even sends his Son to bring us in. That is grace. With the devil from whom our sin comes we should gnash our teeth in hell—God opens his hands and heart to us to lift us to his own bosom. That is grace. But the very highest light of this grace is, that God did not withhold even his own Son, but sent him where his prophets had been killed before, sent him for our sakes, sinners that we all were in order that his grace might have its desire in the salvation of these unworthy, guilty, damnable sinners. Who can understand it? It would be utterly incredible if it had not actually all been done, and were not told us by God himself. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in

him should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is not expected that we should understand it; it is the mystery into which even the angels delight to look. For it is all unspeakably beautiful. This grace and love of God is his highest glory. Nothing else even in God is equal to it. "God is love"—our poor human lips can say no more. The whole way which led Jesus to the cross is illumined by this heavenly light; it is all *beautiful with grace*.

But that means more, as in speaking of it we have already indicated. This way to the cross is one **straight with purpose**.

When we hear this parable of the wicked husbandmen it almost looks as if God's grace, marvelous though it was, was after all defeated in its blessed purpose. And when Jesus lets his Jewish hearers complete the parable, all they know to add is that those miserable husbandmen must be slain, and others put into their place. They leave out the main thing, that Son whom they cast out and slew. Jesus adds what they omit, namely the victorious purpose of God as it centers in himself, the Son. There shall indeed be a vineyard of which the lord of the vineyard shall have delightful fruit; there shall be faithful husbandmen who will work for and bring to him that fruit. That very Son who was slain shall bring it to pass.

"Did ye never read in the Scriptures," asks Jesus of his Jewish hearers, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes." The figure is changed. There shall be a wonderful building, a temple of God built of human hearts cleansed from sin, in whom God can dwell. His blessed purpose shall be accomplished indeed. Do you ask how? Look at the corner stone of that building—it is the stone rejected of the Jewish builders, Jesus, whom they slew, whom God made the head of the corner. As the corner stone controls every angle in the building, so Christ controls all these hearts that form the temple of God. God made him the head of the corner by making him the Savior of sinners, by making his death the penalty for our sins, borne by him who could bear them without perishing forever, instead of by us who would have perished in bearing them. He is the propitiation and satisfaction for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world; God laid on him the iniquity of us all. Therefore God also raised him from the dead, and set him forth to all the world as the one hope and help of sinners. "It is marvelous in eyes," sang the Psalmist, and we echo his words. God alone could have formed such a purpose and plan for our salvation. God alone could have carried it into effect.

See it then in all that was done by these wicked husbandmen; God used their wicked deeds in making Jesus our Savior from sin. The way that led him to the cross is *straight with purpose*, God's purpose of grace.

One thing more we must add: it is **glorious too with power.**

God rules in the midst of his enemies. Those Jews of old tried to defeat him, to set themselves up in spite of him. They murdered his prophets and slew his own Son; they thought they had triumphed. Of course, in all this they still claimed to be children of God; but whoever goes counter to his Word or tampers with that, no matter what he may claim, is against God. Men still do the same thing to-day and think they can succeed. The patience of God endures this opposition, but when his hour comes his mighty power will show itself. Well said those Jews, when Jesus moved them by the picture of the wicked husbandmen: "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let his vineyard to other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus gave them back their answer: "I say unto you, the kingdom of God shall be taken *from you*, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." He was on the way which led him to the cross indeed, but that way was glorious with power, for all these enemies the power of judgment. Soon Jerusalem would lie in smoking ruins, the Jews be scattered like chaff, their spiritual leadership gone forever. That mighty corner stone Jesus Christ — whoever falls on him in opposition shall have a brief triumph only, he shall be broken by that stone's power, and the foe upon whom that stone shall fall in judgment will be ground to powder like the dust at threshing time. Mark well the way which led Jesus to the cross, its every step, as Jesus shows, is covered by his power.

Who now is in the place of those Jews crushed by Christ's power? Who is this "nation" to whom the kingdom should be given, bringing forth the fruits of it? this wonderful building with the rejected stone as the head of the corner? That little band that wept with broken hearts when Jesus was slain has grown to a vast host through all these ages down to the present day. They are all those who follow Jesus in true faith and loving obedience as their Savior. Of them the holy apostle writes: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." 1 Pet. 2, 9. The very gates of hell shall not prevail against them, for the power of Christ is over them to keep them safe from every foe.

Only let us see that we bring forth as we should the fruits of his kingdom, we his people and our husbandmen, our preachers and pastors in the church. If Christ's power overwhelmed the falsity of the Jews of old, it will do no less with those who prove untrue to-day. But if we let his grace fill us with fruit, that power will bless us to the end.

Once more the way which led Jesus to the cross is revealed to our eyes in this parable of the wicked husbandmen. May we see it as it is: dark with sin—beautiful with grace—straight with purpose—glorious with power. That way Jesus went for us, that he might reach our hearts, free them from sin, fill them with his grace and gifts, and thus make God have fruit of us now and in eternity.

OUTLINES.

It is remarkable how men succeed in preaching on this text without putting Christ into the center. One for instance has for his theme: The History of Israel in brief; followed by three parts: the vineyard, God's kindness; the servants, God's patience; the husbandmen, Israel's guilt. Yet the very climax and point of the entire parable and text is the SON.—Certainly: Christ foretells his own Passion in the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen: The cause of it—the fact of it—the result of it.—Christ cast out and slain: the enormity of this deed—the divine purpose in this deed—the glorious outcome of this deed.—We may indeed put the wicked husbandmen into the foreground, if we do not let them obscure the figure of Christ. Perhaps a division like this will answer: When we think of the wicked husbandmen: let us think of sin—of God's grace in Christ Jesus—of his kingdom—of his judgment.—Or: The Story of the wicked husbandmen: what they had—what they did—what they lost—what they got.—Why did Jesus speak this parable of the wicked husbandmen? It was a mighty warning, though in vain; it was a great prophecy, and it came true; it was a glorious promise, and it has been amply fulfilled.

How Jesus Entered his Passion.

He knew:

1. *The awful wickedness causing it.*
2. *The divine counsel controlling it.*
3. *The terrible tragedy crowning it.*
4. *The eternal triumph following it.*

The Wicked Husbandmen and the Passion of Christ.

Behold here:

1. *The sin for which his death was rendered.*
 2. *The sin by which his death was brought about.*
 3. *The sin over which his death triumphs.*
-

The Story of the Son and the Stone.

A story of sin — of love — of redemption — of grace triumphant — of judgment.

The Great History of which Christ's Cross is the Center.

1. *The Jewish history which led up to that cross.*
 2. *The cross itself.*
 3. *The Christian history which flows from the cross.*
-

INVOCAVIT.

John 2, 18-22.

This and the previous text are opposites in so far as the latter puts us at the end of Christ's ministry, while this takes us near its beginning. Both texts belong together, since the one before us was uttered when Christ was challenged after his first cleansing of the Temple, and the other after he was similarly challenged the day after the second cleansing. It is noteworthy that both times the answer of Jesus to that challenge includes a prophecy of his death and resurrection. As regards the resurrection the previous text only implies it; our present text, however, makes it most prominent. This gives the text its distinctive tone; it has the note of victory in it: *the Passion of Jesus is not a defeat, it is a glorious victory*, and we are to share in the spoils.

The Savior, still quite unknown, especially in the capital, had left Galilee after a brief ministry to attend his first Passover in Jerusalem as the Messiah sent to be about his Father's business, now in an official capacity. Finding his Father's house turned into "an house of merchandise" he made short work of the trespassers by driving them out bodily with a scourge. This brought him face to face with the authorities, and the antagonism began that would end in his death.

2, 18. The Jews therefore answered and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things?

The verb translated **answered** does not imply a previous question, but is constantly used of a statement made as a result of some occurrence or some fact. So here, the act in question causing the Jews to address Jesus is his cleansing of the Temple. They wanted to

know about that. John uses two finite verbs in this case, not making one a participle as in many other instances; this makes the introductory words more formal, laying a little more weight on what is thus introduced as said. John likes the resumptive **therefore**, *οὖν*, after parenthetical statements, here after the explanation offered in v. 17. He thus connects up again with the action of the narrative itself as it stood in v. 16. With the Temple cleansed, all the animals and sellers, and the bankers out, these official interrogators appear. — John merely writes **the Jews**. A careful reader of his Gospel will soon note that almost throughout there is something hostile in this appellation. In itself the word denotes nationality, the men of Judah; and since after the captivity those who returned were mostly from this tribe, it stood for the entire nation as a nation, with "Israel" as the name marking that nation's high religious privileges. In 1, 19 already there is nothing friendly about "the Jews," and the tone of hostility is very marked in our passage. We are left to infer who the persons were confronting Jesus. Evidently some of those in authority, if not members of the Sanhedrim accompanied by some of the Temple police, then at least some of the latter under the so-called captain of the Temple. The interference of Jesus had caused no little commotion among the many pilgrims and others who witnessed his summary proceeding. So these authorities are on hand. — The question put to Jesus is based on the assumption that he has no official authority to proceed as a public reformer of the established Jewish customs and cultus. An unknown layman and visitor cannot be allowed to take matters into his own hands. A second thought behind the question put to Jesus, and one that helps us grasp why Jesus met no interference from the traders and changers when he drove them out, is the general Jewish expectation of a "reliable prophet," who when he would come would either confirm their cultus arrangements, or establish better ones; for which reason

also many of the rabbis attached to their decisions the formula: "until Elias comes." This thought lies also behind 1, 21. The Jewish authorities, therefore, are quite careful in their proceeding with Jesus. They ask for his credentials, and take it that these must consist in some **sign**, i. e., miracle, of a nature to vindicate his right to interfere in the Temple arrangements. We may read either: "What sign showest thou us?" or: "What showest thou us as a sign?"

19. Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

The answer of Jesus is a refusal to furnish a sign, in the sense in which the Jews conceived and demanded it. Zahn gives us this explanation: "Instead of inquiring after the inner justification of his remarkable proceeding, the Jews demand outward credentials, and they who are responsible for the order and dignity of the cultus entrusted to them thereby show that they do not mean to repent and will not repent." Riggensbach, in his *Life of Jesus* remarks that it matches exactly the manner of the Pharisees to demand an unspiritual outward miracle as a credential for a deed which appealed in an inward manner to the conscience; once started in this direction, they could find fault with any and every sign, could pile one demand upon another, and never be content; just as they did the very day after the wonderful feeding, asking again: "What sign showest thou then?" Jno. 6, 30. When unbelief asks a sign to convince itself, it does it to reject every sign that could be given it, save one. So whenever unbelief made its demand on Jesus for a sign, he did the only thing possible, he pointed to that one sign, which even unbelief will have to accept — the sign of the judgment. Jesus did signs enough, but these leaders, even while they admitted them (11, 47), accepted none of them; when at last the Temple would fall about their ears and the wrath of God descend upon their guilty heads, then too late they would know that Jesus was the Messiah

indeed. The answer of both Zahn and Riggenbach to the question why Jesus thus refused the sign demanded, must be set right as here indicated.—And this at once explains another point which all the commentators the author has examined simply leave aside and fail to touch: why Jesus answered as he did by a veiled reference to the coming judgment. The unbelief that rejects the proffered grace is bound to stay in the dark, God means to leave it there. So indeed it is pointed to the sign which shall crush it at last, but never as though that sign could or should change it into faith. When that sign comes, it will be too late for faith. Even the premonitions of the sign of final judgment, which faith is only too glad to heed, unbelief scorns like all the signs of present grace as not sufficient to meet its exacting demands.—The reply of Jesus, therefore, fits the men who make the demand. They want a convincing sign, one that will convince *them*. Well, Jesus has one, of course, only one. They cannot get that now, but in due time they shall have it. What that is they are told in a way to pique their curiosity. If told outright they would only resent the telling; but told in the way Jesus tells it, his words will stick to their minds and secretly haunt them with their mysterious, threatening meaning. Jesus could the more easily do this as the Semitic mind loves mysteries and often uses enigmatical words which require that the hearer either have the secret key or go to search for it and find it. These Jews could have found the key to the enigma given them here, if they had allowed the grace of Jesus to enlighten their hearts at any time during their day of grace. The disciples found that key, as v. 22 shows, but the Jews, because their unbelief grew only more intense, never found it (Matth. 26, 61; 27, 40; Mark 14, 57; 15, 29) until too late.—Like a flash of lightning, Godet rightly says, this answer of Jesus illumined an awful abyss, and cast its glare into regions of thought which still lay in darkness to every mind except his

own. The word about destroying this Temple reveals the inner character of the whole Jewish treatment of Jesus, and the one following, about the raising up again of that Temple, unveils in all its greatness the work Jesus had now begun. The form of statement employed is that of a *maschal*, the Hebr. term for what we might call *Sinnspruch*, a veiled and pointed saying, sometimes equal to an actual *chidāh*, or riddle. There is no question, as all the following history shows, that the word did its work, sticking to the minds of these Jews to the last, and plainly causing them no small discomfort for all their violent unbelief. — **Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up** — an imperative followed by a future indicative, the second action contingent on the first. The aorist imperative points to one decisive act. The word for **temple** is *naós*, the sanctuary proper, comprising the Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies, and thus distinct from the *τερόν* which embraced the entire Temple area with its various extensive courts and structures. What follows shows that the words: "*this* Temple," could not have been spoken with a gesture pointing to Jesus' own body; Jesus speaks of the sanctuary before the eyes of all, the material Temple with its white marble walls and its gilded roof and pinnacles sparkling in the sun.

20. The Jews therefore said, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days? 21. But he spake of the temple of his body.

The Jews, of course, did not grasp what Jesus meant, but their misunderstanding was not in applying the words to the Temple building, as though Jesus had not meant that building. Even the disciples did not grasp the *maschal* at the time, as v. 22 shows. The Jewish Temple was originally built by Solomon, and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. It was rebuilt under Nehemiah and Ezra on the ruined site. While not again destroyed, its inferior condition led to a gradual re-

building from the foundations up on a grander and more elaborate scale under Herod (called therefore also Herod's Temple). About 2 years, beginning 20 or 19 B. C., were spent in preparation, 1½ in building the Porch and the sanctuary with its Holy of Holies (16 B. C.); 8 years later the court and cloisters were finished (9 B. C.); other parts followed up to the time of our text. The whole work was not considered completed until A. D. 64. The 46 years = 20 up to the Christian era (when Jesus was 4 years old), plus 27 up to the beginning of Jesus' ministry, when he was about 30 years old, thus giving us about 46-47 in all. The chronological questions involved are more or less complex and intricate. Compare Josephus, *Ant.*, 15; 20, 9, 7, where we are told that at the last yet more than 18,000 workmen were engaged.—The temporal dative: **forty and six years**, views the entire time as one, to which corresponds the constative aorist: **was in building**, the whole extended work viewed as one past act. In the phrase: **in three days**, the preposition lays stress on the time length, here, of course, so brief a length. The imperfect tense: **he spake**, really: "he was speaking," dwells on what Jesus said, as one turn's over in his mind the meaning of what he is uttering, for his hearers to do the same thing.—The solution of the *maschal* is offered us by the evangelist himself in the key: **he spake of the temple of his body**. Even this key has mystified many commentators, especially the critical minds, who tamper with the divinity of Christ and reject what they are pleased to call "the two natures theory." One way, we may remark here, of undermining any Scripture truth is to label it a theory; thus we hear of "the two natures theory," "the inspiration theory," or "the verbal theory," "the substitution theory," and the like. These men fare just like the Jews in our text, they remain in the dark with their unbelief, even though they write commentaries to enlighten believers with their wisdom. The Temple as the house in which God dwelt among his

people was a type of the body of Christ, in which the Godhead dwelt and tented among men, John 1, 14. The Temple and Jesus thus belong together, the one is the shadow of the other. It is very evident that the final and definite rejection of the substance must thereby also lose the shadow. **Destroy this temple** was a command that sounded blasphemous to Jewish ears, for what Jew would think of such a thing? and that now when so many years had already been spent in reconstructing it. Mark it that Jesus does not say that *he* will destroy it. The command does not mean either that Jesus *wants* the Jews to do this terrible thing, it has in reality the opposite implication, namely that he does not want them to do it, but that for some reason and in some way the Jews are going to do this in spite of anything that might deter them. Jesus implies that he knows what this secret impelling force in the hearts of the Jews is, their unbelief and opposition to the true Messiah, the divine reality for which the Temple stood, without which it would be an empty, useless shell. The command of Jesus, therefore, signifies: Go on in your evil course, and you will be given the sign you are calling for, one that will really convince you. The imperative is not merely concessive or conditional, as if Jesus meant only: If you destroy this temple. It reckons with the wicked unbelief of the Jews as a deplorable fact that cannot be changed, just as Jesus reckoned also with the treachery of Judas, when he told him in a similar command: "That thou doest, do quickly," Jno. 13, 27. We have a third command of this sort: "Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers," i. e., since you are determined to do so, Matth. 24, 31. The terrible deed of destroying their own Temple the Jews will perform by rejecting and killing him who was the divine reality for which the Temple stood, which with all its services it was to serve. It was by means of **his body** that Jesus dwelt among men; his human nature joined God's Son to us as our

Savior. His body is thus **the temple** in and by which we have this Savior. That body of Jesus was prefigured by the material Temple of the Jews; it was a sort of substitute for it until the fulness of time should come; it was a promise of the true and everlasting connection our Savior-God would make with us sinners by means of a more sacred temple or dwelling-place, namely our own human nature, assumed even with a material human body, but in altogether sinless form, when he was made man for our sakes. Now at this time when Jesus had cleansed the Temple and was confronted by these guardians of the Temple, there stood side by side the beautiful type and the heavenly anti-type—the Temple, and the Son of God in his human body. The promise was at last overtaken by the fulfillment. But instead of being impressed by the Savior whom their own Temple had pictured to them so long, they meet him in that very Temple with an incipient hostility which would grow into violent rejection. Can they have the type, when they reject the antitype? can they keep the promise, when they reject its fulfillment? What is the use of a beautiful photograph of father or mother, when the person himself, the moment he appears, is thrown out with abuse? By killing the body of Jesus the Jews would pull down their own Temple. It was impossible for that Temple to go on pointing to the human body of the divine Savior when that Savior had come and been finally rejected, i. e., go on pointing thus for men who had made the final rejection. The rejection of that Savior meant judgment (Matth. 26, 67), and thus also the taking away of the Temple.—This explains also the promise: **and in three days I will raise it up**. The manner of the rebuilding must match the manner of the destruction. If then the Temple is destroyed in the person of the Messiah, it must also be erected again in his person. This erection Jesus will effect; it is by his rising from the dead. The Scriptures use both expressions of this *opus ad extra*: God raises

him up; Jesus himself rises. Thus the sign which the Jews demanded will be given them, a sign of infinite grace for all believers, but of final judgment for these his enemies. By the resurrection of Jesus all that the Temple foreshadowed and prefigured in pointing to the body of the divine Savior will be fully effected and forever established. In Jesus God and man is connected, for in him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, Col. 2, 9, and having removed our sins he is now the head of the church forever, Eph. 1, 22; Col. 1, 18. But for the Jews this crowning of Jesus' mediatorial work through his body and its resurrection, since they had finally rejected him, meant judgment. All their efforts to maintain their Temple and cultus in opposition to what all this stood for would be in vain, for that very opposition would pull it all down. Therefore too that material Temple would not be rebuilt, least of all by Jesus. It would serve its last purpose in its destruction, carrying with it those who destroyed it. In and by the resurrection of Jesus the further promise the old Jewish Temple contained would be realized: there would be a true spiritual temple of God's people with a new cultus in spirit and in truth (4, 21-24), needing no more types and symbols since this is the promised substance itself. Zech. 6, 12-13; Heb. 3, 3.

22. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spake this; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.

Christ's *maschal* remained in the memory of his disciples, but unsolved, until his actual resurrection made the whole enigma clear. And this brought them to believe **the scripture and the word which Jesus had said.**

The dative used here after πιστεύειν means that they believed that the Scriptures and Jesus' word in conjunction with each other, corresponding with each other, were true. This placing of the Scriptures first is significant. We see it frequently, Jesus doing the same thing. Compare 20, 9, which tells us that if Peter and John had

known the Scriptures they would have believed before running out to the sepulcher; also Luke 24, 25, etc., and 44, etc. The *γραφῆ* is the Old Test. canon, to whose prophecies of the Messiah the true Messiah when he came had to correspond exactly. To this closest correspondence Jesus constantly pointed. Unbelief would not see it, because unbelief in the first place made of those prophecies something to suit itself; thus it blunted and evaded the correspondence in spite of all that Jesus could do. What portion of Scripture John has in mind he does not indicate; it is not necessary — we may take any of the resurrection promises. When John mentions the disciples in this connection he evidently includes himself. This story of faith is part of his own life-history. Great was the triumph of Jesus, and John with his fellow disciples shared in it through faith.

SERMON.

Is the gospel really true? Sometimes a kind of unbelief stirs in the hearts of Christians even and tries to raise that question. We know that men around us raise it openly, and we know too the scoffing answers they give. The Gospel is true. It bears its own unmistakable stamp of truth in every part of it. Every one of its gracious gifts and blessings proves it true. They know who have these blessings. Is honey sweet? Taste it, and you know it is. The Gospel says it is sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. They who have tasted it know and need no further proof. Is sunlight bright? They who go out and live in it know. The Gospel light says that it is brighter than the sun, as bright as God himself in his grace. They who walk in that light know. But there are men who are not satisfied with this proof, they demand something more decisive still; and they act as if they are going to be aggrieved if they do not get it. Well, they shall have even what they want —

The Sign that Decides.

Long ago, with men then exactly as now, **unbelief demanded that sign.**

Jesus had come as the Messiah and Savior promised of God by all the prophecies he had given his chosen people for a thousand

years. Everything about him and his Word and work proclaimed him the Savior. But there were men who loved their sins so much that they wanted to take them along to heaven, and when this Savior came who was determined to separate them from their sins in order really to prepare them for heaven, they refused to believe in him as the Savior, and challenged him for a sign to prove that he really was the Savior. They wanted a decisive sign, not one which might be enough for willing believers, but one which would convince even them, the most unwilling and unbelieving. "What sign showest thou unto us?" they said, "seeing thou doest these things," claiming thou art the Messiah and Savior. It almost had a sound as if they were really fair. But in fact it was a denial of all the proofs Jesus had offered them in his heavenly grace, a denial of any proofs which his grace could yet add. For only unbelief, set on remaining unbelief, will ask to see a sign decisive beyond the signs of divine grace in Christ Jesus.

Let us learn that. There are two ways of asking for signs in regard to Jesus and the Gospel. The one is like the question of the frightened jailor in Philippi: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" or like the cry of the anguished father from Capernaum: "Sir, come down ere my child die!" or like that other father named Jairus: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" or just like that wail of the Syro-Phenecian woman: "Lord, help me!" All these and others who feel their great need and helplessness, especially those who let God show them the terribleness of their sins, demand no extreme sign at all. They grasp at the grace that is offered them in Christ Jesus and find it satisfactory and blessed indeed. Like a hungry man, the bread is sweet to them; like a man sick unto death, they willingly submit to the healing hand of the physician. It is different with unbelief. It has no such inward desire, and refuses to have God awaken anything of the kind. If ever people of this kind feel a sense of need, helplessness, misery, they think they know where to get sufficient relief themselves, and with that they shift along. The humble bread of grace is the very thing their proud hearts will not taste; the sin that is ruining their souls like a deadly disease, they have learned to love so that never in the world would they have it cut out by repentance, and true righteousness put in place of it by faith in Jesus. And when Jesus comes to these people, they demand more than his heavenly grace, help, and redemption is able to do, as a sign that he is indeed the divine Savior. It is not true that they would believe, if only a sign decisive enough could be furnished them. There is no sign to bring about faith and salvation, except the signs and works of grace. When John the Baptist in prison was troubled with doubts in his mind, whether Jesus was really the Savior, or whether there should be another, what answer did Jesus send him

to revive and satisfy his faith? This blessed answer of his works of grace: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Matth. 11, 5-6. Let us learn to distinguish clearly, even in our own hearts, between the voice of faith, and the voice of unbelief. Only the latter demands the extreme sign, the last sign that decides.

Now prophecy promised that sign.

Since unbelief is bound to have it, unbelief shall have it. It is the sign of Christ's victory, and thus the judgment of unbelief. And that is the sign that decides forever.

When the unbelieving Jews challenged Jesus for this sign he did not say there is no such sign. That is perhaps what they expected, intending then to scoff more than ever. The fact is that Jesus had this very sign in readiness; he would work it in due time. And so without a moment's hesitation he answered their challenge: "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up again." This was the sign promised by divine prophecy which would settle forever even their unbelief. The answer of Jesus astounded the Jews. This beautiful Temple of theirs — they pull it down themselves? — when they were even now rebuilding it part by part, and had already at enormous cost and labor spent no less than forty-six years at this work? It sounded preposterous to them. And then Jesus saying he would raise it up in three days — would he use some superior magic, and do in three days what had already taken forty-six years and promised to take many more years still? They thought his prophecy absurd. That is the trouble with unbelief, it is blind. They did not see the evident mystery in Jesus' words, which the apostle John points out to us, when he says that Jesus was really speaking of two temples, that grand Temple of the Jews and the temple of his own body. These two belonged together, and in what would be done by the Jews and by Jesus with these *two* temples they would get the promised sign of Christ's eternal victory and of their own eternal judgment, to the everlasting undoing of their wicked unbelief. It was a mercy that the sign was delayed for a time and not wrought at once as the Jews demanded. By being given the prophecy of it first they were warned to desist; the time of the many signs of grace was continued, for there were those who would accept them and believe. Only when the measure of unbelief would be filled up, then — but then without fail — the final decisive sign for them would come.

The prophecy of the decisive sign which Jesus gave in answer to the challenge of the old Jewish unbelief is a portion of the proph-

ecy of the same sign, only in still greater proportion, and with a decisiveness absolutely final, which is awaiting all unbelief now. For at his trial, when the Jews were condemning Jesus to death without a cause, he told them, and with them all unbelievers: "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Matth. 26, 64. What the Temple destroyed and raised up again stands for will take place as surely as did the destruction of that Temple, and the raising up of what that Temple signified. Thank God that here too there is a time of grace which delays the coming of the all-decisive sign, and now too multiplies the signs of pardon and grace in the Word and church of God, so that many are won from unbelief to faith. But those who in spite of warning and in scorn of all grace go on in unbelief shall not be disappointed in the end—they shall get the decisive sign, even as the Jews got their preliminary portion of it.

The word of Jesus came true: **fulfillment wrought that sign.**

The Jewish Temple was a wonder of God's grace, for in it and by it God dwelt among his people. But blessed as that was, no temple of wood and stone could really join sinners to the God of holiness and righteousness. It would require a better temple than that. Therefore, God had arranged for the Temple of the Jews to be for them a picture and image of that real and everlasting temple by which he would indeed join himself to us, purge away our sins and make us acceptable in his sight. That blessed temple foreshadowed and promised by the Jewish Temple was the human body of the Son of God by which he would work out our eternal redemption. In Christ dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. That body of Christ was the temple in which our sins would indeed be removed, the temple by which we indeed might come to God.

Now you will understand the decisive sign which Jesus gave the Jews, and what that sign means also for us to-day.

The Jews hated Christ and all he brought them of divine grace and pardon. They took the holy temple of his body and nailed it to the cross. That is how they treated the true temple of God in which salvation came to them. Do you know what that did to the Temple which foreshadowed Christ? It destroyed that Temple also. They had worked forty-six years at it already; they worked forty-six years more. Then, six years after they had it done, the terrible fulfillment of Jesus' words came. By their own unbelief, by trying to destroy the true temple of their own Savior's body, their nation was destroyed, they were driven from the Holy Land, Jerusalem and their grand Temple leveled to the

ground, not one stone left upon another. Their own unbelief had destroyed the Temple—and themselves! It was impossible for them to destroy the true temple of the body of Jesus. They killed him indeed, but on the third day Jesus raised his own body from the dead, glorified it by divine exaltation, then rose to heaven and sat on the right hand of God,—our Redeemer, our Savior, our mighty Lord and King forevermore. His judgment brought the fruit of the Jews' unbelief upon their heads. In that destructive and terrible judgment they had the decisive sign they had clamored for, rejecting every sign of grace. Then their scoffing stopped, but the hour of grace was gone. They had lost both temples, the one that pointed them to Christ, and Christ himself.

When Christ lifted the temple of his body from the grave and glorified it with divine power, then, St. John the apostle tells us, he and his fellow disciples recognized his great victory with the eyes of faith and remembered that this was the beginning of the sign of judgment which Jesus had promised the unbelieving Jews. They knew then that the destruction of that other Temple would come indeed and with it the destruction of those who in unbelief had demanded the fatal sign. It is written for our warning in these latter days. For now Christ sends out once more his Gospel and grace, but now to all the world. Remember the decisive sign in Jerusalem. It will be wrought once more, and then for the last time, for the new unbelief that will not accept the grace of Christ—the sign of another judgment, not for one evil nation alone as then, but for all the world of unbelief, finally and forever.

With the holy apostles of Jesus faith to-day is warned by that sign.

Behind the blessed grace of Jesus there stands his power and majesty. He who died on the cross sits enthroned on high. Let no man treat his sweet words of pardon and forgiveness, his glorious words of eternal promise lightly, or demand any other sign than the work which this grace is now doing in lifting men from sin and restoring them once more to God. If ever a thought like that comes to our minds, let a look at the Jews as we see them to this day satisfy us—their Temple gone, their nation scattered over all the earth, outcast of God, yet preserved, a sign for all times and all men of the just judgment that overtook their wilful unbelief. Many an effort has been made to build their Temple in Jerusalem again; in all these hundreds of years those efforts have never succeeded. And just as certainly as that judgment came to the Jews, so certain will the final judgment on all who refuse to believe now. They who demand more proof to remove their unbelief shall surely receive it in the end. When the Son of man shall come in his glory with all the angels of God about him,

and shall sit upon the throne of his glory to judge all who have rejected him—then indeed all doubt shall vanish, but not in faith and joy, but in consternation and terror.

From that judgment faith alone delivers us. It knows that no sinner can escape his guilt except by the pardon of him before whom all sinners must appear in judgment. That pardon he bought for us with his blood and death on the cross, bearing in his own body the penalty of our sins. That pardon he offers us and now makes our own by faith. It is fatal to reject it, to raise up doubts, to hold fast to objections, to demand other proof than that which love and grace have provided. Let those who will, appeal to the sign decisive, and rejecting the warning of grace, meet the overthrow lying in their own demand. Faith takes the warning, is satisfied with grace, and lives in the joy and hope it gives.

Yes, there is a sign that decides. On the day of judgment unbelief will cease. Blessed are they for whom grace and faith are enough.

OUTLINES.

Nesselmann has the theme: "Christ's Great Word of Consolation: Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up," which he applies first to the *natural* body of Christ, and secondly to his *spiritual* body, the church. The second part, naturally, is largely inference. Three gates open into the heart of the text. The central portal appears in what Jesus said of the Temple, illumined by the word of John on "the temple of his body." Christ's mighty word on the temple of his body—a crushing reply to unbelief—a glorious ground of faith. The mystery of the temple destroyed and raised up again: it is the mystery of Christ's passion and resurrection—it is the mystery of his judgment on the Jews and on all unbelievers. The second gateway is the strong note of victory. The victorious word of Christ: "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up!" He spoke of the victory of his grace—and of the victory of his judgment. Or, we may say in a simple manner: Christ reveals the victory of his passion and death: a victory which established salvation—crowned faith—sealed the doom of unbelief. The third gateway is the question regarding the sign: The supreme sign—Christ's passion and resurrection: its supreme grace—its supreme power—its supreme effect.

The Prophecy of the Two Temples.

It foretells:

1. *The certain judgment of unbelief.*
2. *The equally certain joy of faith.*

The Temple of Christ's Body.

1. *Destroyed on Good Friday.*
 2. *Raised up on Easter Morning.*
- Koegel.
-

The Riddle of the Two Temples.

1. *Its answer is the Christ who died and rose again.*
 2. *Blessed are they who find the answer in time by faith.*
 3. *Woe unto those who find it too late because of unbelief.*
-

The Indestructible Temple.

1. *The body of Christ in Which God dwells.*
 2. *The hearts of all in whom God dwells through Christ.*
-

Christ Announces his Victory: "Destroy this Temple, and in Three Days I will Raise it up."

1. *It is his victory for us.*
 2. *Shall we share it with him?*
-

REMINISCERE.

Matth. 12, 38-42.

At first glance this text might be taken as nothing but a parallel of the previous one, for in both of them Jesus is asked for a sign, and in both of them he alludes to his Passion and resurrection as the only and final sign he will offer. But the two texts differ widely in the significance placed upon the sign thus offered. In the former text the emphasis was on the judgment involved in the destruction of the Jewish Temple through the unbelief which tried to destroy the temple of Christ's body by nailing that body to the cross. The typical miracle of Jonah opens a different vista. Jonah, after his miraculous deliverance, preached to the men of Nineveh and they repented. Jesus adds the coming of the Queen of Sheba to hear the wisdom of Solomon. In the antitype Jesus this effect is paralleled. His death and resurrection open the gates to a preaching greater than that of Jonah, to a wisdom exceeding that of Solomon. So *the Passion is the culmination of the signs of Jesus*, but here the culmination of the signs of grace. It is the supreme sign on which our faith must rest and will rest. There is no higher grace, no grace beyond this all-sufficient gift unto men. In a way judgment too is here involved, namely as a result of rejecting this highest and holiest sign of grace. They who reject the sign of Jonah shall not be able to face the men of Nineveh, nor the queen of the south, when they meet these people before the Son of man on the last day. The angle of approach is new on this point. The enmity which brought Jesus to the cross is left out in the sign of Jonah; it is the rejection of the Gospel as such, with its saving message concerning Christ crucified and risen

again, which entails judgment. So we may consider this text and the preceding one a pair, each acting as a complement to the other — that, warning against the opposition of unbelief — this, calling us mightily to faith.

Jesus is working in Galilee, where the Pharisees are dogging his steps and seeking in every way to turn people against him. How far they were ready to go we see from their blasphemous charge that Jesus was working with the help of the chief of the devils. How Jesus answered and silenced them the verses preceding our text indicate. Our pericope carries the story a step farther.

12, 38. Then certain of the scribes and Pharisees answered him, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.

We must understand **then** to mean: "about this time." There is an interval between v. 37 and v. 38, and as v. 46 shows also a change of scene. Jesus is in a house, crowded with people, Luke 11, 29, busy with his work. The Pharisees with whom he had clashed so sharply are bent on further efforts to turn the people from him, if not against him. They have taken counsel with each other as to what was best to do. They plan to select a few of their ablest men, in order once more to ask Jesus for a sign. He had called on men to come out openly either for him or against him; they return that call — let him come out openly himself, let him show a sign that will be beyond question. By this, of course, they mean to say that the signs done thus far, in particular the one done upon the blind and dumb man, recorded by Matthew in our chapter, and the one just previous to that, upon the man with a withered hand, also recorded, to say nothing of the many others done likewise at this time (v. 15-16), were insufficient in their estimation. So they pick their men, **certain of the scribes and Pharisees.** In the previous parts of the chapter we have heard only of the Phari-

sees, the separatists, who adhered most strictly to the Law and the traditions of the elders, affecting a high degree of holiness, and esteemed accordingly by the people, but formalists to the core and full of hypocrisy. Their enmity against Jesus is well illustrated in nearly the entire chapter. The "scribes" are most likely also Pharisees, those adept in the Law and its interpretation. To be accounted a member of the *sopheerim* or lawyers one had to pass due examination and show the necessary learning. "At 30 the presiding rabbi admitted the probationer to the chair of the scribe by laying on of hands, giving him tablets whereon to write sayings of the wise and the 'key of knowledge' wherewith to open or shut the treasures of wisdom. He was then a *chaber*, or of the fraternity, no longer of 'the ignorant and unlearned,' Acts 4, 13, but separated from the common herd, 'people of the earth,' 'cursed as not knowing the Law,' Jno. 7, 15 and 49." — Fausset. The opportunity seems favorable; one of their spokesmen, backed up by the others, asks Jesus what had been resolved on. Matthew writes: they **answered him**, which here evidently means more than that they merely spoke up. Though the verb is thus used, it nearly always connects with something preceding, and in this case with the statements Jesus had recently made to them. — Their speaker uses an apparently respectful form of address: **Master**, or "teacher," as if Jesus were one of their superior class, learned in the Law and authorized to teach it. There was no sincerity in the title. — The request thus introduced is put forward as one these men think they have a right to make. Our versions soften it by translating: **we would**. They really say: "Our will is to see," etc. The verb used expresses will combined with choice and purpose. We may circumscribe and translate: "It is our will and purpose to see a sign of thee." They mean to imply that, considering everything, they surely can demand and ought to de-

mand this much, and Jesus ought to comply with their evidently legitimate and fair demand. The verb is put forward as having the emphasis. — The English again loses a little by being compelled to translate: **see a sign from thee**; the Greek has this reversed: "from thee a sign to see." They want to get it "from him" in some way or other, and it is to be a sign "to see," emphatically *to see*. One might wonder why they stress the seeing, and ask whether the signs Jesus had done, like the two in this chapter, were not patent enough to the eyes. They certainly had "seen" these. That is the very point — they are thinking of something more stupendous, more astonishing to the eyes. They cared nothing for deeds shining with grace, mercy, help to poor sinners and sufferers; they wanted the heavens moved, the clouds made to gyrate, sun, moon, and stars forced to perform antics, visions painted in unearthly colors in the sky, angel hosts to parade the milky way — something overwhelming to see. Such are the notions of human reason when it tries to dictate to God. Suppose for a moment this wish had been gratified, even to the extent that these men would have asked no more. What would have been the result? In prodigies and portents like these there is no power to draw the heart to faith. They answer no spiritual need, and thus are not fitted for faith, have no affinity with it. Moreover, wonders of this sort respond to the morbid side of our nature, stimulating an unhealthy craving, which when started wants more and more of this stimulation. If given only one such demonstration a very likely result would be that later reflection would begin to doubt the evidence of the senses so strongly appealed to at first, and would thus end in a conclusion the very opposite of the one promised when the sign was asked. It was morally — not, of course, physically — impossible for Jesus to give the kind of sign the Pharisees demanded. The faith they promised him in answer to such a sign

was not the faith he had come to work. Their demand for such a sign and Christ's steady refusal show how far apart the two were.

39. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: 40. 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.

"Answering he said," the aorist participle here identical in time with the main verb. It is simply a statement which Jesus makes, a public declaration addressed to no person in particular, not even in a special manner to the men who had voiced the demand for a sign; it is a statement for all to hear and take warning from. It simply records a fact: this generation seeks a sign; but in a simple and effective way it adds a judgment on this fact by calling this an evil and adulterous generation. In the same objective, impersonal way, dealing again only with the fact, Jesus states that no sign shall be given, save the sign of the Prophet Jonah. The entire form of statement is lofty, masterful, and authoritative to a degree. Men are trying to prescribe to the Messiah what he should do; not his friends and followers who may with good enough intentions expect and ask for wrong things, but men of hostile mind and with hostile intent, set on a course contrary to the Messiah. They can be answered only in this authoritative way. — The term **generation** cannot be restricted to the scribes and Pharisees present at this moment, nor to their entire class; it includes the Jews of Christ's day in general. Jesus foresaw how they were bent on getting the wrong kind of sign. He states the reason for this perverse attitude of theirs: they are an **evil and adulterous** generation. The second adjective helps to specify the first. The word "evil" has an active sense in the Greek: doing evil. They show the evidence of

a wrong and wicked will. Their evil is unfaithfulness to God, their rightful Lord. The term "adulterous" refers to their covenant relation to God, which is often compared to that of marriage, Hos. 1, 2-2, 15; Jer. 3, 6-13; Ez. 16, but is made to include more than the running after other gods in plain idolatry, taking in such derelictions as hypocrisy, Jer. 3, 10, inward hostility, Hos. 7, 13-16, friendship of the world, Jam. 4, 4, etc. This wider sense applies here. The Jews were making a demand of Jesus which betrayed the ungodliness of their hearts, their defection from the covenant, their disharmony with the gracious, saving ways of God, their inner divorce from the holy purposes of God. Their desires were illegitimate, by no means the outcome of faith, love, submission, obedience to God. "Evil and adulterous" fits their case exactly. In making an application to our own generation we ought to distinguish between those who have entered into covenant relation to God, and those who have never been in this relation. Strictly speaking the latter class cannot be called adulterous in the old biblical sense, just as the term was not applied to the Gentiles of old. But it certainly does apply to the unbelieving and unholy spirit of those who claim connection with God through Christ, or who have torn themselves away from that connection. The adulterous act which Jesus here chides is the seeking of a wrong sign; it is, however, only one evidence of this inner defection, which does not exhaust the evil growing out of this inward break with God. By following one sinful act to its inner root the source of many sinful acts of a similar nature is exposed. The verb **seek after** is the Latin *desiderare*, a desire expressed in question and demand; the noun from the verb often = question. This generation, Jesus means to say, constantly wants the wrong thing, and when the right thing is put before it, it has no desire for that, and spurns it. The kind of Messianic kingdom Jesus was bringing to them, so beautifully described in 11, 4, etc., did not ap-

peal to these Jews; they wanted something totally different. — Zahn remarks that the term **sign** is not used by the Synoptists as their own word for the miracles of Jesus, they use "works," or *δυνάμεις*, "mighty works," and employ "sign" only when quoting the statements of others. Yet the Jews had the word *σημεῖον* transliterated into their own Hebrew *seeman*, Aramaic *seemana*, and both the questioners of Jesus on this occasion and Jesus himself used it. "Sign" always has an ethical meaning, although this meaning naturally corresponds to the ethical character of the person employing the term; "sign" points to what is signified. When St. John uses the word, we know he has the divinity and glory of Jesus in mind. When the Pharisees use the word they have in mind the idea of astonishing physical power, but apart from true spiritual ends, wherefore also they think they will believe if this power is made to display itself before them. Jesus takes the word "sign" as these Pharisees use it, and in that sense flatly declares: **and there shall no sign be given it**, i. e., this generation. The passive verb which leaves the giver veiled in this case, makes the statement one of cold fact. Emanating from an utterly false motive, betraying an attitude fundamentally wrong, the kind of sign these men ask for shall not be given them — neither Jesus nor the Father has such a sign for them. — Yet they shall not be left without a "sign" — and here we note how the word in the mouth of Jesus automatically takes on its higher ethical meaning as the expression of the higher ethical thought of Jesus. The sign these sign-seekers "shall be given" — note that it is a gift from the great Giver — is one with the significance his love and grace attach to it, a sign such as these men really need: **the sign of Jonah the prophet**. The Greek article intimates that this sign is both definite and well known to these men who were thoroughly acquainted with the book of Jonah. In Matthew 16, 4 it is mentioned without any further elucidation whatever, probably because 16, 4 takes for granted

the elucidation which is added in our present text. Luke 11, 30 adds a brief general explanation: as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so the Son of man shall be to this generation.

V. 40. With the connective **for** the elucidation now follows. Jonah was a type of Jesus; what happened with Jonah pictured and imaged in a realism wrought by God what would take place with Jesus under the same divine power. **Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale.** Let us give due weight to the fact that Jesus himself makes this statement. No shadow of myth, parable, vision, or dream here. This thing happened exactly as the book of Jonah records. Jesus puts his seal upon it. Whoever rejects the miracle of Jonah must settle with Jesus, who used the literal fact of this miracle at least twice, and in both cases that very part of the account of Jonah which is so objectionable to modern skeptics, and both times, not as a side-issue, but as a divinely wrought sign setting forth the very climax of his own work, his death and resurrection and the following effect. — The “three days and three nights” here are taken from Jonah 1, 17. Delitzsch writes: “We are not to take the three days and three nights as equal to three times twenty-four hours, but are to understand according to Hebrew usage that Jonah was vomited out on the third day after being swallowed by the fish, cf. Esth. 4, 16 with 5, 1; Tob. 3, 12 and 14 (according to the Luthèr text).” One might take it that Jonah was in the belly of the fish three full days and nights, and that this typified the stay of Jesus in the grave irrespective of its exact length; but this will not do, since Jesus repeats concerning his own stay the identical words from the book of Jonah, “three days and three nights.” Zahn remarks that for Matthew the significant thing is the equal number of days. This is true, yet we are dealing here not with a statement of Matthew who may have considered the number of days as such sufficient in stating the parallel, but with Jesus

who uses the identical words for his own stay as for that of Jonah. The duration of both was the same, and the Jewish idiom explains this as the references to Esther by Delitzsch show. — The Hebrew has “bowels” for **belly**, the latter word in Greek signifying the abdominal cavity with its contents. The R. V. retains the term **whale**, although this is the very word which has caused so much trouble in giving skeptics a shadow of excuse for their objections. The Hebrew simply has *dag*, “a great fish,” so translated also in the A. V., and not “whale.” For this the LXX used *κῆτος* = sea-monster, which is the word used in our text and translated “whale.” There have been next to no whales reported in the Mediterranean, and the throat of the whale is too small to admit the body of a man. It is idle to assume nevertheless that God wrought a miracle upon a whale to swallow and spew out Jonah. Since he had plenty of fish with throats and bellies big enough for his purpose, he used one of these, “a great fish,” a “sea-monster,” as his own Word states. Delitzsch thinks it was a great shark, either *canis carcharias* or *squalus carcharias* L., reporting on the size of these fish, and adding some accredited accounts of what they are able to swallow; see his commentary on Jonah, p. 282, note. Just what species of fish this was we do not know, for revelation does not say. Suffice it then that no natural impossibility is in the way of the miracle. The real point of the miracle, as far as Jonah’s body is concerned, is his being preserved alive after being swallowed, and being ejected alive on the third day, and this so that he escaped to land. This was the special providence of God, and the Scriptures so present it. It is exactly like other miracles of this class, both in the Old and in the New Test. Even in ordinary life the most astounding cases of preservation occur, due beyond question to special divine interposition. These considerations are offered here simply to show how unfounded the objections of unbelief really are. — With Jonah’s stay in

the sea-monster's belly the stay of Jesus for the same length of time **in the heart of the earth** is paralleled: **as** the one, **so** the other. As in every comparison so here, and here in particular, since this is merely a type, we dare not extend the likeness beyond the point or points intended, remembering too that in every case the type is only a miniature, an image greatly reduced, of the antitype. Only it must be held fast that the type is of divine design and not accidental. When the type occurred its Designer had the antitype before him. Here the point is the time duration and the place. For the former the words are identical in the type and in the antitype; in the latter the bowels of the fish image the grave of Jesus. Meyer, Koenig (*Höllenfahrt*), etc., dispute the interpretation concerning the grave; they think "the heart of the earth" must signify hades. They insist that the expression is peculiar and striking, that grave would be a significance too ordinary; but most of all they feel that here is another opportunity to bolster up the idea of an intermediate place between heaven and hell, namely *scheol* or hades with an upper and a lower compartment. In reply we must hold fast that the length of stay in the heart of the earth shuts out completely Christ's descent into hell (not into an intermediate place), which took place after his vivification, and for which no time duration is ever given. This against even a man like Besser, who here finds the descent into hell proper, but omits the necessary proof for his assertion, and overlooks altogether the significant three days. While the expression "the heart (Hebr. *lecb*) of the earth" is out of the ordinary, nothing but the minds of commentators seeking for an interpretation less ordinary than the grave supports the interpretation hades. The Jonah miracle deals with Jonah *alive*, body and soul not separated; this is used not as a type of what the soul of Jesus underwent, but of what took place with his body. We know of no place for that body during those three days except the grave in Joseph's

garden. The body was buried, and burial takes place in the earth. The point of extreme depth cannot be urged for "heart," least of all do we know that hell, either hell proper, or the imaginary intermediate hades, has its location in the center of the earth. The typical feature is simply this: when Jonah disappeared in the maw of the monster his career seemed to be ended—it was not; he returned alive and preached with wonderful success in Nineveh according to God's will. So when the Jews saw Christ laid in the grave they thought his career was ended—it too was not; he returned alive and his glorious work according to the divine will went on. The type is fully satisfied with this parallel of the antitype; it needs nothing further to make the correspondence exact and close. Sound interpretation rests at this point. As Nebe says in another connection: fanciful and critical minds may seek farther if they are bound to, as for us the simple facts stated are amply sufficient.—The sign of Jonah cannot signify the preaching of Jonah. Zahn urges three reasons against this notion of the old rationalist Paulus who simply *had* to get rid of the Jonah miracle in some way, and who has been followed by other rationalists of the same type: There is no "sign" apparent in Jonah's preaching; there is no sign-significance to which Jonah's preaching can be applied; Jesus compares only his person to Jonah's person.—All this settles another controverted point, namely the historical reliability of the Jonah miracle. To call it a myth, a parable, a poetical or symbolical invention, something which transpired only in the mind of Jonah, is to kill it as a sign. Only an objective reality can serve as a sign. The matter narrows down to a dilemma: either the myth idea must go—or the sign use must go; you cannot have both. Compare the elaborations of Delitzsch on this decisive point.

41. The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for

they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here.

The central idea in the sign of Jonah is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This divine sign stands out against the peculiar sign desired by the Pharisees. It will do what their sign could not and would not do — corroborate every word Christ had uttered, every work he had done as truly the word and work of the Messiah, full of divine grace and truth. It is the crowning of all signs, the final proof of the Messianic mission of Jesus and of his divine Sonship. It would not be wrought till all was ready; then, however, it would come without fail. Jesus says: it "shall be given" to this generation. The guilt of this generation in bringing him to his death is thus not brought out, only the power and grace of God in bestowing this final sign. It would still require faith, for the resurrection of Jesus would be proclaimed by the chosen witnesses of that final miracle; unbelief could then go on as it had done before and reject the testimony of these witnesses. These are the considerations which connect the word on the final fate of this generation with the word on the final sign given to it. Will these people accept the sign of Jonah, or will they reject that too? They will not believe even that. Jesus takes all their unbelief together and brings out its terrible guilt by means of two comparisons: he sets them over against **the men of Nineveh** and over against the queen of the south. The scene which Jesus has in mind is the final judgment. To **stand up in the judgment with** another is not to judge him, but to appear with him before the judge in order to receive judgment together. It is the eternal Judge himself who here states what will then occur: the men of Nineveh **shall** then **condemn** this generation. How? Their case when presented to the Judge will act like a sentence of condemnation on the case of the Jews. **For they repented at the preaching of Jonah**, when this prophet finally came to their city and announced the

wrath of God against their sins. The character of this repentance we have mentioned in discussing Matth. 11, 20, etc., for Sexagesima. The men of Nineveh "believed God," fasted in sackcloth and ashes, and God "saw their works, that they turned from their evil way," and so he spared them, i. e., did not overthrow their city. This was not the contrition and faith which admits into the kingdom of God, as also the prophet brought to Nineveh only the Law and not also the Gospel. The door to the kingdom was not thrown open as yet to the Gentile world. In sending Jonah to Nineveh God wanted to warn his own people, and teach them a lesson by showing how even the Gentiles respected his prophets and their message when sent to them. Delitzsch writes: "The mission of Jonah is a fact of symbolic and typical significance, which was not only to inform Israel on the position of the Gentile world toward the kingdom of God," i. e., that the Gentiles were not simply to be destroyed, as the Jews were prone to believe, "but at the same time to prefigure the future reception of the Gentiles heeding God's Word into the fellowship of the salvation prepared in Israel for all nations." The points to note are these: wicked Gentiles — to whom a strange prophet from a foreign nation is sent — with nothing but the threatenings of God's Law — believe that Law — desist from sin, show deep sorrow and fear, and amend. This, of course, did not save Nineveh in the Gospel sense of the word. On the day of judgment these men of Nineveh are not for the measure of repentance they have shown admitted to heaven. What their ultimate fate will be Jesus leaves veiled, and it is idle to speculate. On that great day we will witness the mercy as well as the justice of God in dealing also with the Gentiles who did not have his Word. Till then we must content ourselves. We ought to note, however, that Jesus speaks only of "the men of Nineveh," i. e., those who heeded Jonah's warning, not of the city as such and the course it ran. The amendment attained by Jonah

was of short duration; Nineveh rose up in haughtiness to make herself mistress of the nations, a world-power hostile to God. When the measure of her guilt was full the destruction which the prophet Nahum had announced arrived under the Median king Kyaxares in alliance with Nabopolassar of Babylon. — Jesus takes this case of the Ninevites of Jonah's time and sets beside it the case of the Jews of his time, doing this with the brief exclamation: **and behold, a greater than Jonah is here.** The one a recreant prophet brought to time by God's discipline, the other the Messiah-Prophet, God's Son himself; the one with a brief word of the Law, the other with all the glories of the Gospel, these even embodied in himself; the one with no miracles, though perhaps the Ninevites heard of his deliverance, the other with the most abundant and blessed miracles. Yet Nineveh heeded Jonah, and the Jews did not heed Christ. Thus the case of Nineveh will of itself condemn the case of the Jews. In the final judgment these will stand far beneath those. — We must add something. Jesus had spoken of the sign of Jonah, of his own resurrection. That sign demonstrated that indeed here was "a greater than Jonah." This sign, however, was "given" to the Jews in the preaching of the apostles and the extension of God's grace through this preaching during another generation. The sign of Jonah was thus for them a sign of added grace, yea the very highest grace. Only with all this rejected and scorned the judgment of their own temporal destruction came. And only with all this first counted in does Jesus intimate what the eternal judgment of their unbelief will be.

42. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

A second comparison brings the same result. Jesus has scribes before him, men whose business it was to

seek the divine wisdom in order both to possess it themselves and to dispense it to others. How did they act? Jesus utilizes 1 Kgs. 10, 1-13. **The queen of the south** is the queen of Sheba, of the extreme southern portion of Arabia. **She came from the ends of the earth**, a distance of about 1,000 miles, from what were then literally the ends of the known world. What this journey meant in those ancient days is hard to realize. Danger, hardship, time, expense were nothing as compared with her object: **to hear the wisdom of Solomon**, the fame of which had reached her in that far distant home of hers. The verb "to hear" is the aorist, summing up into one all that she hoped to hear during her visit in Jerusalem. Nothing is said about the character of Solomon's wisdom, i. e., of its religious side. True wisdom must include that. The queen found more than had been reported unto her. Here again are these points: a benighted Gentile, and a woman at that — in a far distant land — with only a more or less uncertain report to inform her — undertakes a journey of such proportions — to hear the wisdom of one who again could be counted only as a type of Christ. — Once more the telling contrast in the brief exclamation: **and behold, a greater than Solomon is here** — he, infinitely greater, yet receiving far less than his type. People of the covenant — here in their own land — with Wisdom itself come to them to dwell with them — and yet they will not hear. We may parallel this comparison with the previous one by including here also the work of Jesus through his apostles after the resurrection; for here too Jesus speaks summarily of the entire unbelief of this generation. The conclusion is just, the voice of Wisdom declares: this queen, when her name is called at that day, **shall rise up in the judgment** (the future passive in the middle sense) **with this generation**, when it too will be called to stand before the Judge, **and shall condemn it**. With far less than this generation she did far more than it did. Really, the comparison is worse than that, not one

of more or less, but one of accepting the humble measure vouchsafed against one of rejecting the most abundant measure bestowed in astounding grace. She might have had excuse for not getting the wisdom of Solomon, but the Jews had none for scorning the heavenly wisdom of salvation in Christ. The application of these comparisons to our church people of to-day and to those who ought to be our church people is too plain to be overlooked. The great sign is ours with all its overflowing grace. Let us heed it with the faith it so richly deserves.

SERMON.

Of all the miracles in the Bible that of Jonah has received the most abuse from skeptics and unbelievers. First of all they fell upon the word "whale," and mocked at that, because the whale, with all its great size, has a throat so small as to prevent it from ever swallowing a man. But the word "whale" disappears the moment the Bible is properly examined. Jonah himself wrote simply "a great fish," never naming it. When Jesus repeats the story in the New Testament he uses the Greek word "sea-monster," also adding no name. Only our English translator used the word "whale" in the latter case, and it takes little learning to know that in any argument we are bound to go back to the original word. Science knows more than one great fish or sea-monster able to swallow a man alive.

But the claim is made that it would have been impossible for Jonah to live in the belly of the fish. Impossible? Who is able to state in every case just what is possible and what not? Aside from the wonderful deliverances the Scriptures record, we hear down to this very day of the most astounding cases of preservation in cyclones, explosions, earthquakes, accidents, and other dangerous situations. Men return alive of whom none of us would have thought it possible. Those who know God know too that his power and providence is behind these marvelous preservatons. It is folly to deny it in the case of one of God's great prophets, and that when God himself declares it, when God's own Son twice corroborates it. It actually seems as if Jesus did this purposely in regard to the miracle of Jonah to settle in advance the scoffings of modern skeptics. He puts his word squarely against that of foolish men. And we have no trouble to decide which to believe.

But there is far more in this miracle of Jonah than the question of whether it really occurred or not. The Savior speaks of it to point out its mighty significance regarding himself and regarding all men down to the end of time. He connects this miracle with his own saving work and with our own eternal salvation. It makes a tremendous difference on this account whether we believe his word or accept the contradiction of skeptics, a difference involving the salvation of our own souls. Give heed then to what Jesus says about

The Significant Deliverance of Jonah from the Belly of the Great Fish.

That deliverance prefigured *the passion and resurrection of Christ*; foretold the coming of *the Gospel*; and calls on us to prepare for *the judgment to come*.

I.

The deliverance of Jonah is one of the great miracles of the Bible, not because Jonah returned alive from the depths of the sea, but because his miraculous return was a picture of what God would do when his own Son came to work out our salvation. Jonah's deliverance **prefigured the passion and resurrection of Christ**. It stands forth as a shadow and image of the most blessed of all God's deeds, when Jesus was swallowed by death and the grave, when Jesus returned on the third day with eternal salvation for us all. "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three night in the heart of the earth."

The miracle of Jonah was *designed* by God. He could have delivered Jonah in a thousand different ways, without the great fish, without letting the fish swallow the prophet, without the stay of just three days in the belly of the fish, without having the fish cast him ashore again. Who can count the possible means of deliverance in the hands of God? But God chose this specific way of dealing with Jonah: he carried him down into the jaws of death; he kept him there three days; and then he sent him to fulfill his great mission. Why? Because, together with many another deed of God, this miracle wrought upon Jonah was to picture in advance the far greater deed God intended to do for the salvation of the world.

Thus the miracle of Jonah stands out as *one of the great signs* of God. Its very strangeness marks it as a sign, for even stranger, more wonderful and astounding was that other deed God purposed to do in our behalf. But the chief thing in this sign of

God, as in all the others that point to our salvation, is the grace and mercy that God displays, to make us look to that greatest of all the gifts of his mercy which he prepared for us in his Son. So he kept the prophet alive when all men would have thought him dead and gone forever, yea, he brought him back alive to carry out the work assigned to him in the mighty city of Nineveh. This is what Jesus urged upon the Jews when they kept asking him to "see" a sign. They thought only of some astonishing sight. Yet what would it have profited them if Jesus had moved the sun to and fro in the heavens, blotted out the clouds with a word, set a thousand comets in the sky, or filled it with millions of falling meteors like sky-rockets bursting from the heavens? It would have been a display of fanciful power, and nothing more. What these men needed was a power to save, heal, help, and deliver. Such were the blessed miracles of Jesus—full of wonderful grace; and such was this miracle of Jonah, full of power indeed, but power directed toward a glorious goal, deliverance, salvation, mercy for us who need mercy first of all. The miracle of Jonah was a sign of the greatest of all God's deeds of mercy. This was what Jesus wanted men's hearts, and not merely their eyes, to see, and seeing thus to believe.

And so Jesus pointed to *the great significance of this sign* wrought in Jonah. Was it wonderful that Jonah should have been swallowed by the great fish and carried down into the dark caverns of the sea? 'God would do a greater thing, yet imaged by this smaller one to prove his purpose and design in advance—he would give his own Son into death itself to lie in its black caverns even as Jonah lay. Did it seem as if Jonah was lost forever, without hope or possibility of return? So God intended to place his Son, but in actual death, with all men certain that he was lost, and with all hopes placed on him seemingly swept away forever. And then those three days that Jonah lay in his living tomb—God counted them exactly, as the precise time set for his own Son to lie locked in the darkness of the grave—not an hour longer, not an hour less, for the one was to be the true shadow of the other. Then came what no man would have dreamed—out of the deep Jonah returned through the power of God—alive. The monster of the sea gave up his prey at God's command. Once more Jonah walked upon the earth. Surely, here the image is plain, and the hand of God visible to our eyes. For even so the monster, death, would open wide his jaws and at the mighty command of God yield up his infinitely more precious prey, him who was dead indeed, but could never be held by the bonds of death, God's own Son, rising from the tomb to live in majesty and glory for evermore. Slain for our offences, he was raised on the third day for our justification. One more line completes the wonder

sign. Jonah returned from the deep, went to Nineveh, and preached repentance to the multitudes of her citizens, and his work succeeded. It is a miniature of the great work of salvation which began with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead—out into all the world he carried the Gospel by his heralds of peace, and his glorious work has succeeded, like Jonah's, but infinitely beyond his. That is the significance of the sign of Jonah, made such by God and sealed as such by the death and resurrection of his Son. Faith reads the sign and thanks God for the saving work of his Son.

II.

The significant deliverance of Jonah from the belly of the great fish in prefiguring the passion and resurrection of Christ at the same time **foretold the coming of the Gospel.**

The miracle of Jonah, as repeated and augmented in Jesus is itself *the substance of the Gospel*. The ordeal through which Jonah passed was by no means for his sake alone, it was wholly on account of Christ and the wonder of grace wrought in the fulness of time in and through him. So also the dying and rising again of Christ. Why should the Son of God go through the terrors of death at all, and why should he ever have required a resurrection? Both his death and resurrection were accomplished solely for our sakes. They are the sign of Jonah written in large and golden letters for our salvation. They are the supreme sign of God's grace toward us poor sinners. Without that sign as the death and resurrection of Jesus completed it we to-day and all men would be helpless, hopeless, lost forever. A greater monster than the one that swallowed Jonah would stand ready to swallow us, with no shadow of hope for our deliverance. That monster which Jesus slew for us by his death would be opening wide his jaws to devour us, and from its terrors there would be no escape. For whether men realize it or not their sins make them all victims of death—not merely of what we call temporal death, the separation of the soul from the body, but of eternal death, the curse that separates forever from God, life, heaven, blessedness. When life here on earth is done whither shall our souls laden with sin and guilt go? Let men imagine what they will, the curse of sin is eternal death, and no man can escape from it by power of his own, as little as Jonah could have freed himself from the monster fish. God brought him forth, to show how he would bring Christ forth from death itself, and through Christ free us from death. For when Christ, the Son of God died he gave himself into death, that by dying he might pay the penalty of our sins, and thus shatter the hold which death had on all sinners. To show that death was conquered for us indeed, Christ who died rose triumphant from

death to bring that triumph to us all that we may share in it now and forever. This is the inner meaning of the miracle of Jonah as revealed in Christ's saving death and resurrection, it is the heart and substance of the Gospel.

In the preparation of this wonderful Gospel with its power of Christ's death and resurrection there was necessarily included its *proclamation for men to hear and to believe it*, and thus to be saved. That too is why Jonah is a picture of Jesus. He was a prophet of God, and Jesus is the greatest of all prophets. Jonah's message was only the stern Law of God to the men of Nineveh, that of Jesus is the full Gospel of salvation. But more than this: Jonah was sent after his deliverance to a great heathen city with his message from God. It was an image of the far greater work of Jesus, when after his resurrection from the dead he would send the Gospel far beyond the borders of the Jewish land to all the heathen nations of the world. Those men of Nineveh, heathen though they were, believed the word of Jonah. So shall the precious Gospel of Jesus find believers and followers in the world on through all the ages. The sign of Jonah shall not fail—thousands shall be rescued from their doom of sin by its power and grace. To-day when the sign is brought to us may we not fail to heed it and to make its deliverance our own.

III.

But in spite of all that God has done and still does some will not believe. Therefore the significant deliverance of Jonah from the belly of the great fish, prefiguring the passion and resurrection of our Savior, foretelling the coming of his saving Gospel, carries with it a mighty warning, for it **bids us prepare for the judgment to come**. Let men, if they will, refuse to believe; he who prepared and sent them all his grace in his own Son will call them to a mighty reckoning at last.

Think what the miracle of Jonah means, namely, the wonderful grace it portrays, Christ's atonement and victory for us, and this brought to us to be made our own by the Gospel. Let no man fail to *estimate that grace aright*. Jesus helped the Jews, and helps us likewise, on this vital point by showing us what followed the miracle of Jonah in the heathen city of Nineveh, and by giving us a glimpse of what shall follow on the great day of judgment to come. Jonah carried his message to Nineveh and the men of Nineveh heeded it; they repented in sackcloth and ashes. On that great day they shall be called to stand up before the great Judge, to receive their sentence as he will render it in justice and in mercy. On that great day the Jews, to whom Christ himself preached, for whom all that the miracle of Jonah portrayed was

wrought, shall likewise be called. And, we must add, we too shall be called, who have to-day all that the Jews had, and the warning of their unbelief besides. What will the great Judge say when he notes what the men of Nineveh did with the little they had, and what the Jews did with the abundance they had, and what we are doing even now with the still greater grace vouchsafed to us? Dare he in justice disregard the comparison? Impossible. The repentance of the men of Nineveh will condemn the unbelief of the Jews, and that condemnation will be just. Will it be compelled to condemn still more our unbelief, if we to-day neglect our wonderful measure of grace? Weigh these things now, and do not wait until that day overtakes you. Let no foolish ideas about the miracle of Jonah itself, no false conclusions about the work of Christ, no indifference to our sin and need and the help sent us by the Gospel cloud our vision and mislead our hearts. "Behold, a greater than Jonah is here!" Weigh well the greatness of our grace. It is bound to count in the judgment. If the men of Nineveh repented at the message of Jonah, shall not we repent, believe, and rejoice having Christ and his Gospel, and thus obtain in the judgment a verdict of grace, and not of wrath and condemnation?

Jesus adds another comparison in bidding us to prepare for the judgment to come. Jonah was sent to Nineveh; Jesus came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; the Gospel with all its treasures of grace and heavenly wisdom is brought to us. Let us *use the day of grace* and embrace our golden opportunity. For in the day of judgment not only will the men of Nineveh be called to whom the prophet was sent, but also the queen of Sheba to whom no prophet was sent, who lived a thousand miles from the people of God, and only heard rumors of the wisdom of their great King Solomon. That was enough, however, to draw her; an opportunity so slight she grasped and used to the full. She spared neither time nor expense, let neither distance nor danger deter her, but came to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of Solomon. When in the day of judgment this woman is called, and beside her the Jews who did not need to go a thousand miles to hear Christ, since they had him all his life long in their own midst, and we too are called who also need not go to distant lands to hear the saving wisdom of the Gospel, who have had it in our midst from our infancy on—will not the great Judge judge fairly and justly between us all? He surely will. The queen of the south with her faithful use of her slight opportunity will condemn the men of Christ's time who would not use their wonderfully great opportunity. What will our sentence be? "Unto whom much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Luke 12, 48. That woman went a thousand miles,

many to-day cannot go one mile. With the Gospel and church at their very doors they pass by both and seek something else. That woman sought the wisdom of Solomon. "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here!" and he seeks us. Let her shame us now, that we may escape shame and receive the gracious commendation of our Savior and our Judge on the last great day.

Significant indeed is the deliverance of Jonah. May it show us the great miracle of salvation in Christ, the blessedness of the Gospel, and the preparation of faith which we need now and on the great day to come.

OUTLINES.

How this text is preached on may be gathered from some of the outlines offered by Langsdorff: The Lord's grave complaints and charges—The Christian and miracles—Why do we not believe?—We need no new miracles—Terrible is the judgment of God on unbelief. As the themes, so the division—all on the secondary figures of the text, not on the primary one, Christ, and this during Lent! An unjustifiable mistake, yet made on many a text. Let us avoid it. The burden of the text is Christ and his death and resurrection. This Jesus himself calls a sign, and as such lifts up above all other signs: The greatest sign of God's grace in Christ Jesus—pictured in the sign of Jonah—realized in Christ's death and resurrection—made ours by the Gospel. Or: The greatest sign of grace in the Gospel—pictured by the miracle of Jonah in the Old Testament—wrought by the power of Christ in the New Testament—made decisive by Christ on the day of judgment. If we make the secondary personages prominent in the sermon these must all be used only as looking to Christ. Why Christ called the Jews an evil and adulterous generation: they recognized neither the greatness of God's grace—nor their blessed day of grace.

Do You Know the Sign of Jonah?

1. *What this sign really is?*
2. *What this sign really offers?*
3. *What this sign really forebodes?*

The Sign for the Men of this Generation.

1. *It signals grace.*
2. *It signals judgment.*

Who is Going to Stand up with us in the Judgment?

1. *Jonah.*—2. *The men of Nineveh.*—3. *The queen of the south.*
-

"Behold, a Greater than Jonah is Here!"

1. *Of whom Jonah was only an image.*
 2. *To whom Jonah still points us.*
 3. *Before whom Jonah will at last face us.*
-

Luke 19, 1-10.

This old text for the anniversary of the church dedication deserves to be used as a regular Sunday text, since many congregations do not observe the anniversary for which it was appointed, and those who do hardly ever get more than the reading of this text at the altar. It is a text for Lent because Jesus is presented as approaching his passion, stopping for the night at Jericho on his way to Jerusalem and the sacrifice there to be made. There is no mention in the text itself of the Savior's Passion, but there is one word of Jesus here which always has and always will be read in the light of his Passion. It is the final sentence in the text which reveals *the great Purpose of the Passion*, namely "to seek and to save that which was lost." One thus sought and saved stands before us in the text, an acknowledged, open sinner, the publican Zacchæus.

19, 1. And he entered and was passing through Jericho.

Farrar has the following descriptive notes: Jesus had left his seclusion and was proceeding on his last significant journey with his disciples. "As they advanced toward Jericho, through the scorched and treeless Ghôr, the crowd of attendant pilgrims grew more and more dense about him. It was either the evening of Thursday, Nisan 7, or the morning of Friday, Nisan 8, when they reached the environs of that famous city — the city of fragrance, the city of roses, the city of palm trees, the 'paradise of God.' It is now a miserable and degraded Arab village, but was then a prosperous and populous town, standing on a green and flowery oasis, rich in honey and leaf-honey, and myrobalanum, and

well-watered by the Fountain of Elisha and by other abundant springs." — "It was necessary to rest at Jericho before entering on the dangerous, rocky, robber-haunted gorge which led from it to Jerusalem, and formed a rough, almost continuous ascent of six hours, from 600 feet below to nearly 3,000 feet above the level of the Mediterranean. The two most distinctive classes of Jericho were priests and publicans; and, as it was a priestly city, it might naturally have been expected that the king, the son of David, the successor of Moses, would be received in the house of some descendant of Aaron. But the place where Jesus chose to rest was determined by other circumstances." — Luke writes literally: "Having entered he was in the act of passing through Jericho." Jesus, then, did not stop when, accompanied by his disciples and a great crowd of pilgrims likewise on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover, he came into the town. The reason is very plain — the man he intended to stop with was not at home, he had gone out to get a glimpse of Jesus. Jesus knew where to find him. So he simply walked on through the town to its farther edge. When he had found Zacchæus he returned to the publican's home.

2. And behold, a man called by name Zacchæus; and he was a chief publican, and he was rich. 3. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the crowd, because he was little of stature. 4. And he ran on before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way.

The manner in which Luke introduces Zacchæus is quite exceptional. He does not say simply: There was a certain publican by name Zacchæus, etc. He begins with an exclamation: **behold**. This can hardly refer to the man as he was when this history begins. There was nothing so wonderful either about his name or his other characteristics. Jesus had met and dealt with other wealthy and prominent publicans. Zahn thinks it probable that Zacchæus later became prominent

in the Christian church and names authorities for his having become a bishop of Cæsarea. This, however, cannot be the reason for Luke's way of introducing the man here. This must be due to the remarkable thing which Luke himself is here about to narrate concerning this publican—the way Jesus invites himself to his house and the effect which the contact with Jesus had on Zacchæus. The weight of this will be felt the more when we recall the preceding incident with the rich young ruler (18, 18), ending with the word on the difficulty of a rich man entering the kingdom (18, 25-27). Here now came a striking exception—a man who voluntarily gave up a great part of his wealth because he had found the true riches.—**A man called by name**, uses the dative where the classics would have the accusative. **Zacchæus** marks its owner as undoubtedly Jewish, the name being derived from *sak*, pure, *sakah*, to be pure.—He was **a chief publican**, that is he held a commission from a Roman principal contractor to the state to collect the dues imposed by Rome on the Jews, and had subordinate publicans under him. Jericho's trade in balsam, which was taxed at a high rate, seems to be the reason why the publican's office here was higher than the one in Capernaum. The palm groves of Jericho and its balsam gardens (now all gone) were so valuable that Antony gave them as a source of revenue to Cleopatra, and Herod the Great redeemed them for his benefit.—When thus Luke adds that Zacchæus was **rich**, this signifies some considerable wealth and a social station corresponding to his money. Whatever odium was attached to this business of tax collecting in the eyes of Jews generally, this was not great enough to prevent men like Zacchæus from taking up the business. No doubt, it hurt their standing among the more patriotic and zealous Jews, yet their wealth and prominence otherwise was bound to tell. So we must imagine Zacchæus as a man not in the best sort of a business, a little like some prominent brewer or

distiller in our times, but living handsomely, with many friends, with commercial and social connections, and in his community by no means to be despised. — This was the man **who sought to see Jesus** when the Savior was reported as approaching and then entering the city. Luke uses the imperfect tense, which conveys the thought that Zacchæus was making an attempt in the direction indicated, but leaves it open as to whether that attempt succeeded. That part of the story is held in abeyance by the tense, to be added later when the narrative has progressed that far. Between the beginning of this seeking and Luke's statement that he "could not for the crowd" we are free to imagine various efforts on his part. He evidently left his office and went in the direction of the moving throngs trying to get near enough to Jesus to satisfy his desire. He probably made repeated attempts at various places along the streets Jesus passed. — Luke writes he sought to see Jesus **who he was**; the Greek keeps the tense of the direct question when this is made indirect after a past tense, while the English idiom changes the quoted tense as here given. Zacchæus wanted to get sight of the person of Jesus. *Fama notum vultu noscere cupiebat*, Grotius. How did this wonderful man look, of whom he had heard so much? That was what he wished to see. A desire like that could, of course, be simply curiosity on his part; people always run after famous men merely to gaze upon them, and having done that are satisfied. In the case of Zacchæus this explanation is insufficient, as the entire narrative shows, especially the treatment Zacchæus received from Jesus, and his own action as a result. There was a deeper longing in the heart of this head-publican, one strong enough to impel him to actions beyond those which curiosity alone might produce. — All efforts proved in vain, as the aorist: **could not**, states. **The crowd** was too dense and great, and Zacchæus **was little of stature**. A taller man might have looked over the heads of people after getting reasonably

close, but even if Zacchæus had been able to get quite near the people in front of him would have blocked the vision of so small a man. He was disappointed but by no means discouraged. His ingenuity hit upon another way to get him his desire. — **He ran on before;** literally: "having run forward to the place in front," a kind of pleonasm, which Robertson calls natural in all vernacular speech. He got ahead of the crowd **and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him.** Only this was no sycamore as we plant it now merely for shade or ornament, but the sycamore fig, which grows to the size of a walnut tree, with heart-shaped leaves, downy underneath and fragrant, growing fruit in clusters on little sprigs from the trunk. Here Zacchæus was sure to see Jesus, **for he was to pass that way,** literally: was on the point of coming through there. The imperfect tense pictures Jesus' progress, moving along the road, Zacchæus having gauged his route. The Greek genitive for "that way" is very interesting grammatically, Blass even calling it "incorrect," but see Robertson 494 for a good discussion. Zacchæus merely avoided the congested crowds; along the road where this sycamore fig stood there were people enough on this exciting day, and they must have seen and remarked the curious actions of this little man climbing up into the tree. He overcame his pride and dignity in adopting the tactics of a boy. One wonders whether perhaps others did not do the same thing. On occasions like this the natural excitement of all concerned allows more freedom than usual. Still, Zacchæus seated on his exalted perch cut an unusual figure, take it as we will.

5. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house. 6. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. 7. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner.

Few commentators do justice to the language which

Luke here uses and hardly any of them bring out fully what this language implies. Of course, **Jesus came to the place**, since that was the direction of his course. But we must not forget the significant imperfect *διήρχετο* in the first verse. It was the intention of Jesus to stop with Zacchæus in the first place; yet he went on through Jericho, passed the heart of the city, and was in its environs now, as if he intended to leave the city behind him and stop somewhere beyond along the road. Yet he merely came to this "place," because he knew that this was where his host was waiting for him. Therefore, when he came to the tree **he looked up**. That was never accidental. A thousand things, with the crowds about him, would have held his eyes elsewhere. It is foolish to think he looked up every tree he came to. As stated before, other men may also have climbed trees to secure a better view. Jesus never stopped or looked except when he came under the branches of this tree. It takes a dose of rationalism like Myer's to suppose that in some way not stated in the narrative Jesus already knew Zacchæus personally. That is flatly contradicted by Myer's own admission that Zacchæus wanted to see how Jesus looked. Plainly neither had ever seen the other before. It takes a thorough, vulgar rationalist—one really, vulgar like Paulus—to supply the information that somebody told Jesus who this little man in the tree was, supplying Jesus with the name. Before Jesus ever reached the tree he knew who was awaiting him there, the man's name, and what is more the man's heart and soul. Zahn rightly refers to John 1, 42-50; 2, 24-25. Whatever Jesus needed to know in his work and office, also in his contact and intercourse with men, that he knew; it was the use he made, for his saving purposes, of the divine attribute of omniscience. There is no inquiring under the tree, no colloquy of any kind, not even a pause or hesitation. Jesus looks up, sees the person for whom he looks, and at once addresses him by name. The thing must have

astonished everybody. The whole moving crowd stopped, drew still closer together, and all eyes were turned upon the little man in the tree. Who could this be? — Equally wonderful are the words of Jesus: **Zacchæus, make haste, and come down: for to-day I must abide at thy house** — you are my host, hurry up and receive me! Jesus invites himself to the home of Zacchæus! His program was made all along, and it was made right — he is merely carrying it out. Jesus must stay the night somewhere before he can proceed with the next part of the journey, the stretch from Jericho to Jerusalem, and his lodging place shall be this rich publican's house. There would be abundant accommodation also for his immediate disciples. It was all made out — let Zacchæus hasten with his part. To say that Zacchæus was surprised is evidently putting it mildly. Luke, of course, merely says that **he made haste, and came down**. That is the way with these evangelists, just a touch or two, when often we hunger for more. Yet note that Luke uses the same words which Jesus used in calling to Zacchæus, not substituting others as he might easily have done. The heart of Zacchæus was responding to the heart of Jesus, as when one strikes a key on the organ and the pipe for that key sounds and vibrates with its tone. A tumult of thoughts and feelings must have surged through the little man's heart. He whom he was going to be glad merely to get a good look at, to impress his image on his mind; he with whom he had not dreamed to exchange as much as a word, from whom he had not thought to receive as much as a glance in passing: this great and wonderful person was coming to be his guest! Zacchæus knew that Jesus had read his whole heart, even as Nathanael knew it and confessed it when Jesus uttered that one word to him about being under the fig tree. Cf. *Eis. G. Schl.*, 2nd ed., I, 258, etc. Only in the case of Zacchæus it all had a special meaning, for he was not merely a publican, one of a class generally looked down upon, but a publican

who had many a sin standing against his conscience and aware of these sins. Yet Jesus was coming to abide at his house! These are the considerations that are focussed in the statement: **and received him joyfully**, or "rejoicing." It was not the question of being thus honored by Jesus above other people. Any consideration of this kind was thrust back by far more vital thoughts. The coming of Jesus to Zacchæus' house was a heaven-sent gift to him whose heart and conscience were not at ease. All that Zacchæus had heard of Jesus, his condescension to publicans and sinners, his willingness to help those whom others despised, perhaps also what he had said to others about the forgiveness of sins, contributed to the joy with which Zacchæus received Jesus into his house.—We cannot conceive the scene as some do—skip all the evident implications, and imagine the house of Zacchæus out on the road from Jericho towards Jerusalem in the direction Jesus was going when he came to the sycamore fig, then transferring Zacchæus without further ceremony to the entrance portal inviting Jesus in, and then the murmuring of the people at what they saw. It is a hundred chances to one that Zacchæus with his wealth and his work as head of a tax department had his residence in the city itself in one of its finer quarters, and commentators must not clash with the simple probabilities in a case. But aside from this, the people were not left in ignorance of the intention of Jesus until they saw Zacchæus opening his house in friendly welcome to Jesus. Jesus declared his intention publicly under the sycamore fig—all near to the tree heard it, and they were many. The whole procession halted till Zacchæus climbed down. The receiving with joy began right there. Jesus and his disciples, now in company with this publican, started back into the city to go to the house of this man. Those who had not heard the word of Jesus under the tree quickly learned what was going on. Many, we may say, went along till the house was reached and Jesus

and his disciples went in. This is the connection into which Luke's statement belongs: **And when they saw it, they all murmured.** What they saw began at the tree. The aorist participle states only this that the seeing preceded and caused the murmuring. There is no necessity to make the seeing refer only to the entry of Jesus into the publican's house. For the main verb too is an imperfect tense—they began and continued to murmur; they began when they realized what Jesus said to Zacchæus under the tree, and when then he suited his action to his word. They **all** murmured, there was a general dissatisfaction expressed in words of disapproval.—Luke gives us the gist of these words: **He is gone in to lodge with a man that is a sinner.** The emphasis is on the phrase "with a man," etc., and the modifier "that is a sinner" is simply an adjective attached as a predicate to the word "man." The second emphasis is on the verb "lodge," which is last in the sentence. To think that with *such* a man Jesus should *lodge*! This statement reflects very clearly the general opinion about publicans. They were classed as "sinners," and that not merely as aiding the government which oppressed the Jewish nation, but also as practicing oppression in collecting undue amounts and thus enriching themselves unlawfully. Whatever estimate Jesus may have placed on the first point—he never told the publicans to drop their business, and did tell the people to pay their Roman taxes,—we know that he certainly objected to any form of overcharging. Zacchæus was a real sinner in the eyes of Jesus. In going to his house he did not mean for one moment to countenance this man's sin or to let him remain in it undisturbed. That the populace overlooked, and thus blamed Jesus here, as he had often been blamed before, for having something to do with publicans, when proper opportunities offered. The people were right in one respect: it would not have been proper for Jesus to lodge with Zacchæus, he being what he was and left

to remain what he was. Jesus never for a moment countenanced sinners who intended to remain the sinners they had been. Yet in our following Jesus here we must remember that he had an advantage entirely beyond us to-day: he knew what could and would be done in any given case, knew it unerringly, and could act accordingly, while we are in the dark and can reckon only with what in any given case may appear probable. So we are bound fast to ordinary prudence and caution, lest men grossly deceive us, and our very goodness of heart and generosity injure the cause we seek to aid. Besser pictures the murmuring: Perhaps now and then a Pharisee walked past the lodging place of Jesus and said: I had it in mind to honor him, to invite him to my house; but now I do not care to see him! But if Mary heard this story, methinks she sang anew: "He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he hath sent empty away." 1, 53.

8. And Zacchæus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold.

The sequel as Luke narrates it leaves much untold, much that simply must be supplied in order to understand properly what is told. We cannot agree with those who imagine that the promise or vow of Zacchæus was the result of nothing but the immediate personal impression produced by Jesus upon Zacchæus. We do not wish to minimize this impression in any way, but it never acted like a kind of magic in converting the hearts of sinners. Jesus wrought upon these hearts by means of his Word, and there is every reason to think that he did the same thing here. Besser overdraws the picture when he thinks that Jesus brought Zacchæus to this confession and vow by private conversation with him, which "only the angels heard who rejoice over the sinner that repents." The angels hear also the words spoken to sinners in public. As when Jesus entered the

home in Bethany, so, we may well suppose, he himself first acted as host before accepting the hospitality of others. Beyond a question there were *cohortationes et monitiones* from Jesus, though Meyer is sure there were none. These were given in the presence of the disciples; as we gather from v. 9, where Jesus speaks to Zacchæus indeed, but evidently so that others also are enabled to hear. The mention of "this house," which means household, implies that some, if not all, of the members of the family of Zacchæus heard the words of Jesus. And so in a manner the question is answered for which Zahn finds no answer, namely *when* Zacchæus made his confession and vow. That was in all probability when Jesus had finished speaking, and in direct answer to the words of salvation the publican had heard from the Savior's lips. Not till this was done was the table set and the evening meal served. And we may be sure that now all concerned saw fully why Jesus had invited himself to this man's place, and agreed that the invitation was justified, no matter what the people otherwise might say or think. One more thing must be added. Since Zacchæus was a Jew and knew the Law and the Old Test. generally with its Gospel promises added to the Law, this knowledge must have had some measure of effect upon his soul in advance of the words Jesus addressed to him. In this respect we may again assume what is quite plain in other cases that came under Jesus' hands — hearts and consciences were touched, but the doctrine of the Pharisees held out no hope or help for these poor sinners — Jesus alone could give them what they needed. — There is a kind of formality about the action of Zacchæus — he **stood**. The time had come for him to speak, and so he rose up from the mat or rug on which he had been sitting in oriental fashion listening to Jesus, "stood" before Jesus and all who sat about when Jesus had made this publican's house a church of God, and now in solemn fashion made his response to the Lord. — It is a weighty

thing Zacchæus is now ready to say, hence the very proper exclamation **behold**, and he addresses his words to Jesus as his soul's master and **Lord**. — His first statement is a vow or promise of thanksgiving: **the half of my goods I give to the poor**. It is this man's thank-offering for the pardon, comfort of conscience, and peace of soul he had just received from Jesus. A priceless gift had been given him, and he thus acknowledges the gift. Thanks like this presuppose faith, and so we may say Zacchæus is confessing his faith. The act is voluntary on his part. Jesus made no demand upon him to give his wealth away. There was no special call to Zacchæus to forsake his home and family and preach the Gospel. He was not told even to drop his business as a publican, although after his conversion he may have dropped it voluntarily, since it was mixed up with much unrighteousness and offered too many temptations; still, if he continued in it, he conducted his work in a clean way. Why he gave "the half" and not a different fraction is impossible to explain. Love has its own generous measure and always will have, as those know best who have been prompted by love. — Beside the confession of faith with thanksgiving there is a confession of sin: **and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold**. The "if" must not mislead us; it is the condition of reality. "This class of condition *assumes* the condition to be a reality and the conclusion follows logically and naturally from that assumption," — Robertson. There were things on the conscience of Zacchæus. The verb really signifies: to be a common informer; here: by false assertions to press money out of someone. It plainly refers to the business of collecting taxes and the sin of undue exactions therewith connected in those days. To what extent Zacchæus meant to confess himself guilty is impossible to say; his offer to make fourfold restoration seems to indicate that the cases were not numerous, for if he had oppressed^d right and left he never could have made such ample restitu-

tion after giving half of his wealth away. The thank-offering must be conceived as wholly apart, given from untainted money entirely. "Aught of any man" also seems to imply that only to a limited extent had there been fraud. The compound ἀποδίδωμι = to give what is due anyone, hence here "to restore." The Law required that only a fifth more than the sum be restored in cases such as are here involved, Lev. 6, 5; Num. 5, 6, etc. But Zacchæus voluntarily offers to treat any peculations he may have been guilty of in his business as plain and simple theft, for which the Law stipulated fourfold or fivefold restitution, Ex. 22, 1; 1 Sam. 12, 3; Ez. 33, 15. In the fullest possible measure Zacchæus wished to make amends for his wrongs. Not that amends wipe out guilt. Proper amends are an evidence of a changed heart, and the amends of Zacchæus must be treated as such evidence. "When the Lord Jesus enters a house unrighteousness moves out," — Besser.

9. And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. 10. For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.

This is how Jesus pronounced absolution. Jesus spoke "unto him" by making a statement concerning him in the hearing of all present. We cannot entertain the supposition that this was done in the presence of the multitude, however much the words of Jesus in themselves constitute a refutation of the previous murmuring. When Jesus says that **salvation** came to the house of Zacchæus he means that this salvation came to stay in that house by the faith of its dwellers. This salvation, rescue, deliverance, and the state of safety thus produced, is freedom from sin and guilt through the pardon of Christ, and the restoration of the soul to the favor of God as his child and heir. The moment the sinful soul of Zacchæus turned to Jesus in faith, this precious salvation was his, and Jesus gave him the divine assurance of it in this word of absolution. — The

mention of **this house** cannot be understood merely of the building, as if under its roof now there dwelt a man that was saved. While nothing is said of the family of Zacchæus thus far, "this house" evidently refers to the members of the household. It is entirely fair to think that the family of Zacchæus believed as he did and shared in his salvation. On his way to the cross this was one of the sweet comforts of Jesus that, in spite of the enmity which would accomplish his murder, his love was rewarded by signal examples of faith and love in return. The aorist "came" states an accomplished fact. — The addition: **forasmuch as he also is a Son of Abraham**, substantiates the preceding statement by showing the manner in which it is true. Jew though Zacchæus was, a true son of Abraham he did not become till now; for Abraham is the father of believers, and faith alone makes us sons of his, Gal. 3, 7; Rom. 4, 11 and 12 and 16. As in other cases so here Jesus emphasizes faith as the subjective means of salvation, here in his own appropriate and beautiful way, yet here as elsewhere without a trace of synergism, since faith is kindled by him and his Word alone. — Now follows what must be called the real climax of the text, the rock on which the whole structure of it is founded: the saving purpose of Christ's entire mission. **For** introduces the proof and substantiation of the verdict on this publican; his faith and salvation would be utterly impossible except for what the **Son of man** has come to do and actually does do. Behind the salvation of Zacchæus is all the saving work of Jesus. The emphasis is on **came**, a verb which tells of Christ's coming in its entirety, a Messianic term, for he is the Coming One and as such was present when he spoke. — The favorite Messianic title is used, on which compare John 1, 51 in the *Eis. G. Selections*, 2nd ed., I, 36, and Matth. 11, 19 for Sexagesima in this volume. He who is more than man came as man, as the great Savior of men. — And the purpose of his coming is **to seek and to save that which was lost**.

The aorists are important—to accomplish and really effect this seeking and saving, not merely to attempt it, or to keep working at it with ultimate success in doubt. Zacchæus was evidence already, as others besides, that the great purpose was more than a mere intention. Salvation was his that day and hour. In Matth. 18, 11 we have only the one verb “save,” here **to seek** is added. Jesus goes after the lost, he brings his saving help to them where they lie in their desperate condition. While we are free to think of the individual souls and the work done to rescue each by means of the Gospel, in this connection and coupled with the coming of Christ it includes all his mediatorial and redemptive work, on which the appropriative work of the Gospel rests. He successfully sought the lost when he gave his life on the cross; by his death and sacrifice he went to us in our distress and found us. “To seek and to save” go together, for it is one great act: his saving heart and hands seek us, and the seeking finds by saving. Yet the term **to save** is the more vital one; it means to render and keep one safe. It connotes danger, death, destruction, namely that of soul and body spiritually as the result of sin and its curse. To save is to lift us out of all that and place us where we are secure, sound, unharmed and kept so. What this cost Jesus the journey to Jerusalem shows.—**That which was lost** is the neuter participle made a noun by the article, and the neuter form states the object in the most general way, compare John 3, 6 and similar expressions. We must take the idea in the English word “lost” in an intensive sense: that which has perished and is now in this condition—a true description of the wreck sin has made of us. Far from God, in night and darkness, with all strength gone, shattered, and broken, yea, actually dead and without a spark of spiritual vitality left—this is what “lost” means. It helps us to understand what the seeking and saving involved actually to reach and restore the lost. At the same time it helps to reveal the glory

of the work when we look at the task — the depth from which we were raised, and the height to which we are brought.

SERMON.

It was a great day for the city of Jericho when Jesus, on his way to Jerusalem to lay down his life for us all, entered the beautiful city and passed through it. The whole town turned out to see the wonderful man of whom they had all heard, who had done so many miracles, who had even now, just outside the city, healed two poor blind beggars by a mere word. There were the beggars now, following in the procession behind Jesus' disciples, as he walked ahead of them along the street. Everybody was excited to see, to take it all in, the crowd was packed close along the whole way, nobody wanted to miss anything if perhaps another miracle would be wrought.

But if we look a little closer we will find that what I have just pictured about the people, is really all there is to say. The text states that Jesus "entered and passed through Jericho." Do you note the implication? The people of Jericho did not surround Jesus and cry: Lord, stay and teach us thy Word! Lord, help our souls to find salvation! The real purpose of Jesus in all his work, in his presence now in their city, in the journey he was now taking to Jerusalem to give his life for them all, they did not and would not understand. So they just let him pass on through. And he might have gone on without stopping in Jericho at all, if it had not been for one man. Thank God, there was one at least, not indeed better than the rest, in fact worse than many when we look at his sinful life, yet one whom God had led to worry about his sins. For that one man Jesus stopped. He found him perched high in a sycamore fig tree, because he was such a little man, and could not get to see at all in the crowd below. In that man's heart Jesus saw that his purpose could be realized. And so he stopped under the tree along the road, called the man down, invited himself to his house, and did on this man's soul what he had come for, come into the world, come to Jericho that day, come to us to-day for in his Word. Do you want to know about that purpose? Blessed are they who do. Only too many still let Jesus go by, as did the people of Jericho that blessed day when he came to their city. May God touch our hearts to understand aright

Christ's Gracious Purpose to Seek and to Save.

I.

If we think for a moment who Jesus was, and then consider to whom he came and what he did, we will find there is only one explanation that we can give for it all: this purpose of his to seek and to save — **it flows from infinite love.**

Look at these people in Jericho — miserable sinners every one of them, nearly all of them self-righteous and blind, refusing even to see their sins. Why, you and I, if we followed our own inclination, would turn in disgust from them and leave them to their sins and pride, and the deadly result that surely must follow. And this man who had some conception of his sin, whose heart the holy Law of God had begun to reach, he was the chief among the publicans, supervisor of the tax collection business in Jericho. Even the people called him a sinner, and he confessed it himself that he had taken money from people by false accusation, that is false tax charges. He was only another of all this mass of people, absolutely unattractive, stained and filthy with all sorts of sin.

And now think of Jesus, sinless, pure, holy — Jesus, the eternal Son of God himself, come down among these people, walking there in the streets of Jericho to draw nigh to these people to seek and save them from their sins. They fail to appreciate it all. They crowd around him with no sense of their sin or of his gracious purpose. They merely gaze and marvel at his miracles, and let that excite and draw them. And even the heart of Zacchaeus, the publican, how blind it was, how little he too knew of the true purpose of Jesus. Why, again, if you or I had been in Jesus' place and had followed our natural bent, we would never have bothered about people like this. "Let them go," we would have said, "no use to try to do anything for them, to say nothing of saving them!"

Yet there is Jesus, and in this city of Jericho, in the very house of that publican and sinner he declares: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Explain it. You cannot if you look only at motives such as you see among men. You have to go to heaven to explain it. And even in heaven you have to go to the heart of God to get the real explanation. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." That, and that alone, is the explanation of this purpose of Jesus as you see him among men, in Jericho, in Jerusalem, on the cross, and here now in his Word preached to us.

"His love what mortal thought can reach!
 What mortal tongue display!
 Imagination's utmost stretch
 In wonder dies away."

When you let this love stand out before your heart, then this whole text about Jesus and Zacchæus, in fact the whole Gospel, will begin to look different; it will glow and shine and take on a heavenly radiance. It will warm and win your heart, and draw you to the feet of Jesus. The world has never seen and never will see such another miracle as when the Son of God came down to a world of sinners to seek and to save that which was lost.

II.

Yes, the great purpose of Jesus to seek and to save flows from infinite love. And now add — **that love goes out to meet a desperate need.**

Take Zacchæus, the publican, the confessed sinner, as we see him here in the text when Jesus came to Jericho. Take his family, who certainly were like him, with the same or similar sins in their souls and lives. And the whole population of the town — the proud priests, many of whom lived in Jericho, all of whom thought, just because they were priests, they were better than other people; and the Pharisees, who were still worse, arrogant in their holy claims, sure they were the chosen of God because they fasted and prayed and paid special tithes to the Temple of God. All this mass of people down in the mire of sin and getting in deeper and deeper the longer they lived. Just like any city to-day with its different classes of people, some criminal even, thousands arrogant, self-satisfied, setting up all kinds of claims of their own over against God, all of them guilty over and over again of thousands of conscious and unconscious transgressions of God's holy Law, their very souls corrupt and diseased with sin. And all these people going on thus from day to day, till the cruel hand of death sweeps them away from sight to go to their doom forever.

If you uncover it all, let the light of God shine into it, put away the lies with which men try to hide it at least in part, then look at the holiness of God, at the purity of his Law, at the severity of his righteous judgments, fear like an avalanche must fall over us. Where is there any help, deliverance, shadow of hope? Yes, some cry: Here! some cry: There! But when you look it is nothing but the old deceit, like that of the priests, Pharisees, Jews in Jericho, who dreamed they had a way out, yet never even knew how badly they were in, and had nothing but a dream, a deadly lie, locking them only the more firmly in their prison house of sin

and unforgiven guilt. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. There is none that doeth good, no, says the Lord, not one. And "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven," writes the holy apostle, "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Rom. 1, 18. And the Psalmist adds: "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee." Ps. 5, 4. "The way of the ungodly shall perish." Ps. 1, 6. This reveals the desperate need which so many refuse to see, which stands out in all its terribleness the moment you drop the delusions and see things as they really are.

Is there no hope then? no real help? nothing but final judgment and despair? Look at Jesus in Jericho and hear *his* word: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." Mark the purpose of which he speaks, and see the love which conceived that purpose and went forth itself to carry it out. That is the true answer to all this desperate need of sin and guilt. It is the one bright star of hope in all this world of night, the one way of escape from this vast charnel house of death. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." Acts 4, 12. Jesus declares: "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Jno. 14, 6. With these blessed assurances ringing in our ears, looking up out of the depths of all this need, its terrors and impending judgment, to Jesus, to his purpose and love, and what it does to seek and to save the lost, once more we sink in adoration at those holy feet and open wide our hearts to all this love which goes out from his heavenly heart to meet our desperate need. Let the men of Jericho pass that wondrous love by; realizing in any right manner the reality of our need we can only fly to it for refuge.

III.

If thus the thought of God's love and of the desperate need it goes out to meet with the purpose to seek and to save must impress our hearts. this impression will be deeper still when we see how **that need requires a mighty sacrifice.**

Do not forget that Jesus is in Jericho, six hours walk from Jerusalem, on his way to Jerusalem, for the last time on his way there. What does that mean? Gather it from his own word that the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Not by teaching alone, not by loving and working miracles alone, not by a holy life and example alone could he ever hope to lift one sinner out of the chains of his sins, to cleanse one heart from its deadly guilt, to carry one soul out of this wilderness of woe

back into the fold of heaven. The whole Old Testament revelation of God taught this one central truth—there is no way to remove guilt except by blood. That is why those ceaseless sacrifices were offered of old. They kept before the hearts of the Jews the image of one mighty sacrifice to come, which would really do what all these other sacrifices constantly promised on God's assurance, and what nothing else possibly could do, take away, cancel, expiate, cover, remove, annul the sin and guilt of the whole world, of every sinner in it. And, the New Testament seconds the Old, for here at last this all-sufficient sacrifice is revealed—God's own Son gives his life for the world on the cross on Calvary. Every page of the New Testament is part of the revelation which sets this sacrifice before the eyes of the world. Jesus came indeed to seek and to save the lost, not merely to try it or do something toward it, but to carry it out to the fullest success. He did it by his death on the cross. So precious was the life he offered, the blood he shed, that its expiation was enough for all the world.

The whole story of Jesus going through Jericho and stopping at the house of Zacchæus appears in a new light when we see the sacrifice included in the purpose of love to seek and to save the lost. Zacchæus was brought to repentance and faith. He confessed his sins when he promised to restore fourfold what he had wrongfully acquired. He confessed his faith and gratitude when he voluntarily vowed to give the half of all his goods to the poor, as a thank-offering for the grace he had received. Then do you hear Jesus say: "To-day is salvation come to this house"? And the significant addition: "forasmuch as he also is a Son of Abraham"? God himself taught Abraham about the sacrifice of Christ to come when he bade Abraham sacrifice his own son Isaac. Of Abraham Jesus says: "He rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it and was glad." Sons of Abraham are all those who have the faith of Abraham, and that faith centers in the sacrifice of Christ and in the pardon through his blood. He who comes alone with his sins to God will indeed be lost; but he who comes with Christ, letting him bear them, shall be saved. What a price for Christ to pay! Thank God, that in our need there came to us love so great as to bring the sacrifice that would really avail. Let us worship this glorious Savior, cleanse our souls with his sacrifice, and live ever in the soul-renewing power of it.

"Lord Jesus Christ! Thy precious blood
Is to my soul the highest good:
Of all my sins a perfect cure,
It quickens me and makes me pure." .

IV.

And now look upon the man in our text, and see how that sacrifice brings forth a glorious salvation.

"This day is salvation come to this house," says Jesus, "for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." What had happened with Zacchæus. See it yourself—he was a changed man. Jesus had brought him what the priests and Pharisees had failed to bring. They insisted on doing all kinds of works in order to get the favor of God and a place in heaven. But what if a man had lived like Zacchæus in works of sin? What if a man had no good works at all to bring? nothing but a stained, sinful life? They had no answer. They did not understand the meaning of their own Jewish sacrifices which pointed to the sacrifice of God's Son, and thus in advance offered pardon through him. They simply shut men like Zacchæus out. But when Jesus came to Zacchæus the first thing he undoubtedly did was to tell Zacchæus and his whole house the glad news of God's mercy toward sinners, even also to such as they were—not the false notion of mercy as if God merely sets aside sin, but the true mercy which blots out sin with atoning blood. That Gospel shone bright in every word of the Old Testament which pointed to Christ. That was the Gospel Zacchæus heard from Jesus' lips. His heart was opened for it by faith. He arose as one from the dead. A glorious faith and hope filled his soul. See how he lays his sins at the feet of Jesus in an open confession; see how he utters his faith and gratitude in making a vow and voluntary promise. Yes, the man that was lost, completely lost in sin, like all those poor sinners in Jericho, was saved. Salvation had come to his house, even as Jesus said, glorious, blessed, divine salvation through Jesus Christ sent to take away our sin. Jesus himself pronounced his absolution, and opened the door of heaven for him by saying: "He also is a son of Abraham."

Need I say what all this means to you and me? Here is the Savior now in his holy Word, with the same purpose to seek and to save, the same love behind that purpose, reaching out to us in the same deep need, only now with his mighty sacrifice, made once for all, long completed, extending the same pardon and salvation to us. Surely, it is not in vain. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Come as Zacchæus came and say with him:

"I lay my sins on Jesus,
The spotless Lamb of God;
He bears them all, and frees us
From the accursed load.

I bring my guilt to Jesus,
 To wash my crimson stains
 White, in his blood so precious,
 Till not a spot remains."

Then add the note of joy:

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

Thus in you too the great purpose to seek and to save shall reach its goal. And the heart of Jesus shall rejoice once more to see his purpose crowned with your salvation.

- OUTLINES.

Whatever is made of the publican in this narrative one thing ought to be clear, we ought not to let him overshadow Jesus, for this is a text on Jesus first, and on Zacchæus only second. Then also, let us beware of the synergism likely to creep in from some of the treatments accorded this text by commentators or expositors. Monergism alone solves the problem of the change wrought in this publican. We unhesitatingly reject a theme which asks for "the conditions under which salvation may be secured" (Sommer), and then enumerates: longing, overcoming obstacles; obeying Jesus' orders, confessing sins. Our theme should at least be something like this: How Jesus changed Zacchæus; and we may enumerate: 1) What Zacchæus had heard of Jesus in advance of his coming; 2) The action of Jesus in inviting himself to the house of Zacchæus; 3) The word of Jesus spoken in Zacchæus' house. But that word ought to attract us most of all: "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"—the love that lies in this purpose—the work involved in this purpose—the end achieved by this purpose. Or the other word: "This day is salvation come to this house"—in the Savior—by his message and gift—through the faith and joy wrought in our hearts. This method may also be made to serve: view first Christ's great purpose to save as he was carrying it out and proceeding to Jerusalem—then secondly, view this purpose as he carried it out upon the individual Zacchæus and his household.

When Jesus Invited Himself to Zacchæus' House.

1. *The self-righteous were offended.*
 2. *Zacchæus received him gladly.*
 3. *Jesus brought Zacchæus salvation.*
 4. *Zacchæus entered a new life.*
 5. *The great purpose of Jesus was carried out.*
-

"To-day I Must Abide at thy House!"

1. *The need that called Jesus to the house of Zacchæus.*
 2. *The help that Jesus brought when he went to the house of Zacchæus.*
 3. *The divine purpose which lay behind both the need and the help when Jesus entered the house of Zacchæus.*
-

The Blessed Story of Jesus and Zacchæus.

We may read it in three chapters, marked by three words in our text:

1. *"He sought to see Jesus, who he was" — need.*
 2. *"To-day I must abide at thy house" — salvation.*
 3. *"The-Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost" — redemption (love and purpose).*
-

Zacchæus:

God's Hour of Grace.

1. *It may come unexpected — yet God prepares it.*
 2. *It always brings salvation — Christ's help and pardon.*
 3. *It invariably leaves a great change — repentance and thanksgiving.*
-

The Savior's Blessed Purpose to Seek and to Save that which was Lost.

1. *What this purpose cost him.*
 2. *What this purpose brings us.*
-

LAETARE.

John 12; 27-33.

This text strikes the note of glory in the midst of Lent when Jesus is near his Passion, both thinking and speaking of it. It is surely an excellent text for the latter part of the Lenten season, and we have chosen it for Laetare; others have it for Reminiscere, Judica, Palm Sunday even, or assign it for other seasons combining with it vs. 20-26. These verses are used as a text in the Eisenach selections, and all preachers will find that verses 27-33 are a rich unit in themselves. Christ asks the Father to glorify his name, and the answer comes audibly from the skies: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." That glorification of the Father's name centers in Jesus and takes place through Jesus. Nor must we at once jump to the exaltation of Jesus when we hear the words glory and glorify; in speaking of what the voice from heaven meant Jesus includes first of all his Passion, of which John feels constrained to remind us: "This he said, signifying what death he should die." So our general subject here will be *the glory of Christ's Passion*. "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. . . . 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." These words from the *Eis. G. Selections* on

John 13, 31-35 for Judica may find a fitting place on this second Lenten glory text.

Jesus has made his royal entry into Jerusalem. That was on the last Sunday before his death. Without telling us anything about the time connection John adds after his record of the entry the account of what Jesus said when certain Greeks asked to get word with him. This request, coming just at this time, moves Jesus deeply. The Gentiles are pressing as it were to enter the kingdom, and he knows the door will be thrown open to them only by his death. So this is the burden of his words, which end, however, with a glorious promise concerning the future for the faithful disciples of Jesus, v. 26. In what now follows the thought of death returns, and we see that it moved Jesus far more deeply than appears in v. 24 with its beautiful parable of the corn and wheat.

12, 27. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour. 28. Father, glorify thy name. There came a voice out of heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.

Jesus speaks audibly, but only for the disciples and others present to hear, not for them to answer or to think the words addressed to them. Jesus is in a higher presence, and in a moment his monolog turns to a dialog—he speaks to the Father in prayer. **Now** must be understood of the present moment when Jesus was speaking; it is clearly defined in v. 23, “the hour is come,” it is the hour of passion and death. Jesus feels himself in the midst of the strong stream of events making for his death; he realizes that in fact the death hour has begun. This is the deep solemnity that sounds in the little word “now.”—**My soul is troubled** is a revelation of what Jesus at this moment felt in his human soul as the death shadow was closing over him. We must hold fast that this was the death for the world’s sin and guilt, death with all the curse and damnation

in it. This helps us to grasp the word "troubled," in Greek the perfect tense, with "now," of an effect that began earlier, but is still present; we are constrained to translate "is troubled." It is necessary to note here that the death of Jesus was to be a far different thing from the Christian's death. Our death is robbed of its terrors by the death of Christ; his death was an entering in into those terrors. Nor did he enter like the wicked do now, blindly-or only realizing those terrors in part. They were fully revealed in all their horror before his eyes. Moreover, he was sinless and holy, God's only begotten Son. His death would be wholly voluntary on his part. He was not dragged and driven to it by any compulsion but that of his own will, one with the Father's, and moved by love. But now, with the hour come, the act of sacrifice to be consummated, the frightfulness, the utter horror, the inconceivable dreadfulness of it all comes over the soul of Jesus. All that was human in him recoiled from the rending ordeal, just as our body, to use a weak comparison, shrinks from some painful contact and quivers when it begins, yet submits and endures, no matter what the pain, held to the task by the power of the will. Thus the soul of Jesus was shaken in this great and trying hour.—We must read the following as belonging together: **and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour?** It is really all *one* question. The first words are not to be taken as if Jesus does not know what to say; least of all as if he is addressing a question to the disciples—Jesus is speaking to the Father. And the thought is: shall he ask the Father to save him from this hour? shall that be what he shall say to the Father? "Shall say" is the deliberative aorist subjunctive, the proper form for a question of doubt. "Save" is the aorist imperative, punctiliar = save by one complete and mighty act of deliverance. Unfortunately both of our versions read the second clause as a declarative sentence; they take it that Jesus here actually asks the Father to save

him from this hour. The context forbids the declarative sense; in fact, if it is tried, the context at once annuls this sense — Jesus himself declaring that for this very cause he came into this hour, i. e., to suffer its pangs, not to be saved from them. This is entirely evident from the Greek, which goes on with ἀλλά, here as in many a case = but no — thus giving Jesus' own negative answer to what precedes, which then must be a question. Jesus was considering the possibilities of his case, somewhat like in Gethsemane. He might indeed ask the Father even yet, though the hour had begun, to deliver him completely from it. In plain human fashion, true man that he was, he looked at that possibility, and allowed us to hear his thoughts; but at once he dismissed it from his mind — he had come to suffer, and he would suffer. — So he adds: **But** (= but no!) **for this cause came I unto this hour.** Commentators seek for the antecedent of διὰ τοῦτο; there is none grammatically, the phrase is construed best *ad sensum*. For the great purpose of enduring what this hour will bring, Jesus has come. It is to crown all his life and previous work. So he does not pray to be saved from it.

28. Instead, this is what he prays: **Father, glorify thy name.** The one, and in the highest sense only, purpose of Jesus, his supreme motive, is the Father's glory and will. Any thought apart from that, contradictory to that, Jesus puts away; it never enters his heart to find an instant's lodgment. The **name** of the Father is the revelation of God, his will and purpose made known, unveiled. To **glorify** that "name" is to make it stand out before men in all its truth, grace, power, and other attributes; for the sum of the divine attributes, or any portion of them, is the δόξα, or glory, of God. Here the unveiling is meant which results from the passion and exaltation of Jesus as our Redeemer. The sense of the prayer, then, is for the Father to help Jesus carry his redemptive work to completion, thereby displaying his truth, love, righteousness, power,

etc., to all the universe. So few the words — so immense the sense! — Instantaneously a miraculous answer to this prayer comes from the Father: **There came therefore a voice out of heaven**, as at the Baptism of Jesus, and as at his Transfiguration. Let no man ask how. It came to support and strengthen Jesus in this hour, as he was passing into it. It confirmed his prayer directly and even audibly: **I have both glorified (it), and will glorify (it) again**. The Greek mind does not need the repetition of the object of the verb as we need it in English. John uses no connective participle "saying," making the narrative more dramatic. The Father did glorify his name in and through Jesus in all his past life and work, for it all shone with the grace, power, and wondrous purposes of God. And he will do this also in the hour now begun, in the passion and resurrection of Jesus. It shall all be gloriously accomplished to the praise of his holy name.

29. The multitude therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it had thundered: others said, An angel hath spoken to him. 30. Jesus answered and said, This voice hath not come for my sake, but for your sakes.

The multitude here is the crowd of pilgrims come to attend the Passover. Jesus evidently was in one of the courts of the Temple. He was not teaching; his disciples stood about him; he was speaking chiefly in their hearing, though others stood by and listened as they pleased, or moved on again among the people that were scattered about all through the court at this time. The voice from heaven, most probably out of the clear sky, was loud and easily heard as coming from above. Yet as in Acts 9, 7, when Jesus from his throne of glory spoke to Saul on the road to Damascus, the voice was understood only by those for whom it was intended, all the rest heard only the sound, but did not get the words. In both cases this is part of the miracle. Faith or the lack of it ought not to be brought in — Saul had

no faith. The divine purpose and intent covers the case, and that is enough. That voice might have sounded for Jesus and the disciples in all that crowd so that no one else would have heard a thing. God wanted the crowd to hear too, but only the sound, not the words themselves, as a manifestation from heaven sufficient for them; the effect on the disciples was thereby also increased. — Naturally, different interpretations of the phenomenon resulted, according to the temper and character of the auditors. Some thought of thunder, others of the voice of an angel. In the clear skies of Palestine thunder did not seem a good hypothesis in this case, though sometimes without an apparent cloud there may be a discharge of lightning and the resultant sound. Those who thought an angel had spoken were, no doubt, more impressed by Jesus — they were certainly nearer the truth. We may add the reflection that all our modern scientists would have sworn to thunder in this case, and would have called anything else superstition. There are just a few things on which science had best learn from a higher teacher. We note the two perfect tenses, the one in the indirect discourse: "there has been thunder," used simply for the same tense of the direct; and the other in the direct discourse: "An angel has spoken to him." Both perfects are intensive (Robertson), the sound though already gone still as in the ears of the speakers. — **Jesus answered and said** might be understood as referring to the multitude, but there is no addition: "said *to them*." What Jesus says is addressed to his disciples, who together with Jesus heard and understood the Father's reply. Jesus explains why this was given audibly: **This voice hath not come for my sake, but for your sakes.** Jesus himself was always sure of the Father's answer to any of his prayers; he needed no audible reply. This miraculous reply was for the disciples, on their account, that they might hear directly and with their own ears that the Father had indeed answered Jesus, and what that answer was. It

was another attestation of the Father, of the clearest and strongest kind, that Jesus was his well beloved Son. This explanation Jesus made so that others too who stood by might hear it, even as they had heard the astounding sound from heaven. They too might thus learn what had really taken place.

31. Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. 32. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself. 33. But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die.

The fuller and deeper significance of it all, especially of what Jesus had meant with his prayer, and of what the Father had meant with his answer, is now clearly stated to the disciples. **Now**, as in v. 27, signifies the hour into which Jesus had entered, the hour of his passion and glorification. There is no article with **judgment** in the Greek. Judgment can be predicated of the world in various connections; this event, now impending, is one of those connections, and we may add, the work of the Spirit is another, 16, 11, and the final day and Christ's return is another. **This world** is the world as an ordered complex; in it men stand at the head, and all else focusses upon them. The present hour pronounces a verdict upon the world, since it contains a rejection of Jesus on the part of the world. It may look as if this world by rejecting Jesus had pronounced a verdict on him, had judged him. In reality, by doing this very thing, a judgment descended upon the world itself, a terrible condemnation — it lost its right to exist. "By killing Jesus, the world pronounced its own death sentence, lost its right to exist." — Zahn. Not that the world will end at once, but its enduring character is gone — it is vain, empty, transient, passeth away (1 Jno. 2, 17), it is doomed. — Hence the parallel statement: **now shall the prince of this world be cast out** — he will be thrown out of his dominion and realm, its right of existence being gone, he having destroyed it

himself by driving it to kill Christ its Life. He rules only a crumbling, fading kingdom. The future tense points to the end, which shall fully reveal to men what a decisive thing is "now" taking place. **Out** = out of this world, i. e., as his realm or kingdom. — But what about this hour for Jesus? He has already made this clear in vs. 23-24, to which we must add the voice from heaven with its promise of glorification. He adds a fuller explanation here, and as in v. 25-26 shows what all this coming work will mean for us. The reference to himself is emphatic, in mighty contrast to Satan and the condemned world — **and I** = as for me. We must not read the least doubt into the futuristic **if I be lifted up from the earth**. The condition is one of certain expectancy, and should read in English: "if I shall be lifted up," as indeed I shall. Jesus vividly imagines the lifting up as accomplished. **From the earth** = out of it, separated from it; he does not say: from the world, which would alter the sense entirely. He is speaking of the transfer of his body from its previous form of existence here on earth, to its new form of existence enthroned in the glory of heaven at God's right hand. The days of his humiliation will cease, the eternity of his glorification will begin. This, of course, refers to his human nature. Not that he will no longer be present with his disciples according to his human nature — he will be with them to the end of the world; where two or three are gathered in his name he will be in their midst, and this according to both natures — the entire Christ. Yet not as before, when he walked visibly on earth; it will all be with the glory of transcendent power and in the manner of his eternal exaltation. Just as what is now to happen on Calvary and in Joseph's tomb constitutes the doom of the world and the dethronement of its ruler, so it will constitute for Jesus his enthronement in heaven forever. — This condition now most surely to be fulfilled ushers in a glorious conclusion for us; Jesus says: **I will draw all men unto**

myself. Our translation leaves a wrong impression; it reads as if all men in the world would be drawn unto Jesus. The Greek simply has the masculine plural "all," which here signifies all the children of God, all who believe and shall yet believe, these together as one great body. We must not overlook the force of: shall draw **unto myself.** In 6, 44 this drawing is predicated of the Father. The *opera ad extra* are *indivisa*, and are thus predicated of all the persons, now of one, now of another. We must connect the drawing of Jesus with what he says in 5, 20-21. In this ἐλκύειν is embraced all the work of the means of grace as this culminates in our eternal glorification. "Unto myself" is explained by 14, 3 and 20, and similar statements. Thus the kingdom of Jesus shall reach its consummation, while that of Satan disappears. The hour now begun will usher in the great drawing of grace through Word and Sacrament, which Jesus views here, however, not merely as to its world-wide reach unto all nations, but as to its final outcome and success, when all the work shall be done. Then "all" shall be with him and share his glory. In the word "all" there lies the idea of universality in so far as the persons meant are not one nation only — remember the Greeks who had just asked for Jesus; or one arbitrarily or mysteriously chosen class or number. These "all" are drawn from all the world, from the house of Israel, and from the Gentile world besides — the "sheep" and the "other sheep" — "one fold" under "one Shepherd," 10, 15-16. — John adds the explanation which helps us to see exactly what Jesus meant. The participle **signifying** refers to Jesus himself; it is he who signifies, indicates, points out, what John here states, namely **by what manner of death he should die**, i. e., crucifixion. This is true also of 3, 14 and 8, 28, where the Jews are the ones who lift Jesus up, i. e., on the cross. In our passage the lifting up is said to be "from the earth." The verb has a double meaning, or let us say one which may be used in a pregnant way.

It is the way of Jesus when speaking of his death always to view that in its inner meaning of a transfer to his heavenly throne. He makes the supreme sacrifice, but this is always considered as accepted of God and sealed as accepted through the resurrection. This view is transferred to the word "lifted up." And thus there is added to it here the effect for us: by his being lifted up he draws us after him to glory. It is false to accuse John of putting his own meaning into Jesus' words. He is helping us that we may not read those words superficially, but see in them all that Jesus really meant.

SERMON.

① The old church name for this Sunday is *Laetare*, which means: Rejoice! You may ask whether this is proper considering that we are in the season of Lent. It will help you to know that Lent includes only forty days, from Ash Wednesday up to Good Friday, and has just forty days by counting out all the Sundays. ¹ Sunday commemorates, not the death of Christ, but his resurrection on Easter morning, and that makes every Sunday, also those during the season of Lent, days of gladness and rejoicing. Not that the death of Christ is not mentioned during these Sundays, quite the contrary; we do mention it, we even dwell on it. ² Our text says in so many words that in what is here told us Jesus signified "what death he should die." But note in this very text how he spoke of his death. ³ He knew all its terrors for his soul and body, for here he himself tells us how at the near prospect of it his soul was troubled and shaken. Yet he saw more, immensely more, than this dark side of his death. ⁴ As he looked into the supreme hour opening before him with the cross rising just ahead on Calvary's height, a heavenly light of glory was poured out over it from on high. There was the black, forbidding, terrifying shadow indeed, but behind it, and breaking forth out of the night above it, a radiance exceeding all that earth ever saw. ⁵ This is what our text reveals for us likewise to see, that we may understand the death of Christ as he himself beheld it when with unfaltering steadfastness he went into it. Look, then, with the eyes of faith on

Christ's Vision of the Cross,

a transcendent vision of glory, of triumph, of salvation.

1.

① Never for one moment was the death of Christ anything for him but what the Scriptures report when they tell us the story of it—the supreme ordeal of torture, suffering, agony. The physical side of it is ^{utterly} awful enough—the bonds, blows, mockery, thorns, nails, hours on the cross, till finally the soul left its body. But this is the least of it. Who can tell what his soul endured when God laid our guilt and the curse of that guilt upon Jesus. and at sight of that guilt himself turned from Jesus, and let him (drink out the gall and) fiery bitterness of it in actual death! Jesus never died as we die—he could not. The sinless, holy Son of God was in no way subject to death. He could die only by willingly putting himself under our sin, by thus willing to die for us. That is why he held still and uttered never a complaint when in his passion men piled upon him all the sins, cruelties, and tortures they possibly could. He took the whole load because he had come to bear it. And what we see thus laid upon him is only the outward side of what God himself did in that hour of passion and death, when, as the prophet Isaiah says, “God laid on him the iniquity of us all.” That is how Christ died. For any man to die with a single sin upon him is to be swept instantaneously into the black abyss of hell. God’s Son, dying with all our sins upon him, died indeed, tasted and felt the awfulness of all this curse, but by that very act of his conquered, destroyed, removed the curse completely.

All these terrors Jesus saw when he looked toward Calvary and beheld there the vision of the cross. Not one particle of these woes was hidden from his eyes. So real were they to him, even before he touched them, that his soul shook and quivered, and the words were pressed from his lips: “Now is my soul troubled,” and he asked whether he should pray his Father to deliver him from this hour. (Never for a moment estimate the cross of Christ less than Christ himself did. Cover it with all that you have ever heard of the reality of sin, its curse, and penalty.)

Then, however, look again. As the fearful hour looms before the Savior, shaking his very soul, he sees there on the cross another sight—the vision of all the plan, purpose, and promise which God in heaven had centered in the cross. Since Adam’s fatal sin every revelation of God to man had pointed to this cross. “For this cause,” Jesus declares, came I unto this hour.” The agony is there, the curse and doom with not the least subtraction. But infinitely more is there—God’s name, God’s revelation, God’s mercy to man, God’s promise of deliverance for man—all that is there—the Cross, and Christ upon the cross, is the heart of it. Take the cross away, or Christ from the cross, and

the sin, curse, penalty will remain, but then upon us, upon all men, and for evermore. That is what Jesus sees, and as he sees it there comes from his soul the mighty prayer that takes all this in: "Father, glorify thy name!" What does it mean? From the vast space of the sky above there sounds forth a mighty voice in answer. Men stood amazed. Some cried that it was thunder; some: "An angel spake to him!" It was the Father in heaven answering that prayer of his Son: My name—"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Once more we ask: What does it mean? It means the cross—Christ sees it; the Father sees it; we are to see it: **the cross—a vision of glory!**

The glory of the cross is that I thereby find God's mercy to man realized; the glory of God's sacrifice for man's sins actually made; the glory of the redemption of the world by his own Son's death accomplished. In the cross all this is revealed as a reality—as if the curtain of heaven is withdrawn, and God's heart of love for us, with all its blessed thoughts toward us, is laid open to our gaze; and even beyond that—God's plan of deliverance for us is set before us there in the cross all carried out to the full, to stand henceforth forever unchanged. Oh, it is a *vision of glory* indeed. It goes infinitely beyond anything man's heart could possibly conceive. Heaven opens for sinners in the cross of Christ.

With that vision of his cross Christ went forward to place himself upon it. The glory of it made him steady and strong. Let it fill our hearts with faith and joy.

II.

Our sin brought Christ to the cross; his voluntary sacrifice for our sin is the glory of the cross. But sin does not stand alone. It is never a thing by itself. We must get the right view of sin, especially when we look at the cross of Christ. Sin is part of a vast power that goes way beyond us. It extends through the whole world and binds fast all men. And then it extends into the unseen world beyond, into hell itself; and there, as the great prince and ruler of all this terrible realm, is Satan with the wicked angels that have fallen from God. That is how we must look at sin. It is never a thing just by itself, or one in you alone, or that concerns you alone. Every sin we commit and every corrupt condition in us is the dark power of hell and Satan reaching up out of the abyss and locking itself fast in us to make us victims of its power.

Now the moment Christ came to deliver us from our sins he came into mortal conflict with this vast and hellish power and the prince of hell and of the world of sin who exercises and controls this power. No sooner did Christ assume his office as our

Savior than he was tempted of the devil for forty days—Satan tried to get him too under his power. That was the opening battle, and Satan did not succeed. All through the ministry of Christ this battle continued in one way or another, because Christ had come to destroy the works of the devil, as the Scriptures say. But the final conflict took place on Calvary, on the cross. There the last decision was made. It was between Christ and Satan, but it concerned us. Would the strangle hold of the devil on men through the deadly power of sin and guilt be broken, or would it go on in spite of Christ and his efforts, and would we, lost as we were under that power, remain lost forever?

This was what Christ saw when he entered the mighty hour and went forward to the cross. This was what he meant with his prayer: "Father, glorify thy name!" and what God meant with his answer: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." Jesus declares: "This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes." The Father was with the Son in this coming battle on the cross. The outcome was never in doubt for a single moment. Jesus proclaims the outcome here in advance: "Now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Now—in this hour of passion and death. The victory of Christ over all this power of sin that holds us with a thousand bonds is absolutely assured. This is Christ's vision of the cross—it is a **vision of triumph**, of conquest and glory beyond anything that we can imagine or think, for it extends not only through all the world and all its ages, but likewise through the vast abyss of darkness and hell itself. Jesus Christ on the cross destroyed the works of the devil forever, and broke to pieces his mighty realm of sin and death on earth. The whole structure of it received there the one terrific blow that caused it to sink and bend to its fall. This sinful world is doomed now and will sink in ruins with the prince that built up its sin and rules it, into the yawning gulf of eternal darkness. The bonds of sin are all broken by the triumph of Christ's cross—we all can escape and reach safety through Christ, but all the rest will go down to destruction forever.

What a mighty vision of the cross! How we ought to see it aright and mark its significance for us all. The world still stands, men still sin, Satan still tries to rule. Be not deceived. The judgment of death and defeat is upon all this realm. It is bending now like a great tower to its fall. In a little while the mighty crash will come when it will disappear forever. Christ gave it the death-stroke when he atoned for sin on the cross, and by his atonement broke the curse of sin and tore its bonds in two. As a mighty victor Christ went into that battle. Fierce, awful

beyond comprehension though it was, the outcome was *triumph*. Christ saw it and rejoiced; we are to see it now and to rejoice with him.

III.

But all this includes another part, the one that now deals with us, as the great outcome of what took place on the cross. Here we are in this sinful world, and all of us sinners still. But again let us see it aright. There is not only sin and men living in sin. There is now through the cross of Christ an open door of escape for all sinners, a door that shall never be shut. Christ points it out to us all when he says: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." And John who recorded these words for us adds, in order that we may understand them correctly: "This he said, signifying what death he should die." Christ was lifted up upon the cross, but that was the lifting up of the victor on his throne. The cross conquered sin, death, and hell. Through the cross Jesus was lifted to his heavenly throne of glory on high. There he sits now and rules with majesty and power forever. And right in the midst of this world of sin he has established his kingdom of grace and salvation for sinners. Through all this world of sin his saving Gospel is preached, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. This is the drawing he speaks of: "I shall draw all men unto me." His church, his Gospel, his salvation, the forgiveness offered in his name, the power for us to become his disciples, children of God by faith and trust in his name—these are the evidences of his triumph. By all these he draws us to escape the impending doom of the world. In all these is the open door by which we can escape. Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life: yea, he that believeth is already passed from death unto life. He is out of the kingdom of this world, he is in the kingdom of Christ. He has thrown off the bondage of the devil, he is under the rule, protection, and blessing of Christ. When the great world with its sin and judgment falls into eternal destruction, he shall not fall with it, but rise to safety, carried aloft by Jesus' hands. For the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but they that do the will of the Father, believe and hold to Christ, shall abide forever.

This is the vision which Christ had of the cross, of what it would bring when the hour of his passion would end. It was a **vision of salvation** extending through all the ages, even unto eternity itself. It lifted up his soul, it gave him steadfastness and joy. And as this vision is unveiled to our eye now it is to show us aright all the inner things of the death of Christ, that the glory, the triumph, the salvation of it, achieved by Christ

for our sakes, may be made our own by trusting in him and in his cross.

Blessed are they who see the vision of the cross as Christ unveils it for them, and by its power are drawn unto him.

OUTLINES.

The central thought of the text deals with the glory of Christ's death, i. e., with the revelation of the glorious things involved in that death. John's last remark is highly significant here, as also the opening statement, that the soul of Jesus was troubled. So we may preach on: The Glory of Christ's Passion—the glory of his sacrifice (as this glorifies the "name," i. e., all the saving revelation of God's mercy and plans)—the glory of his victory (v. 31)—and the glory of our own deliverance (drawn unto him).—How God glorified his name in the cross of Christ. He made his plans of mercy—and his judgment on all opposition—shine forth to produce our salvation.—A few contrasts lie embedded in the text. We may utilize them in several ways, for instance: How Christ faced the hour of his Passion: he realized the suffering awaiting him, but knew too its purpose to glorify the Father's name—he anticipated the fierceness of the coming battle, but was absolutely certain of the glory and the triumphant victory—he measured the greatness of the sacrifice to be made, but he beheld also the wonderful salvation this was to bring.—From another angle of the text we add: How the cross of Christ draws our hearts: there we see all God's grace and mercy—all man's bondage and danger—all our hope and salvation.

When the Son of God Went to his Death.

1. *The Father's name was glorified.*
2. *The world and its prince were judged.*
3. *The success of the Gospel was sealed.*

The Most Glorious Thing that Jesus Did.

1. *Die to conquer hell.*
2. *Die to glorify his Father's name.*
3. *Die to draw us to himself.*

The Supreme Hour in the Whole Course of Time.

1. *Supreme for God and his Son.*
2. *Supreme for the world and its prince.*
3. *Supreme for you and me.*

What Happened when Christ Died?

1. *God glorified his name.*
 2. *The world's judgment was sealed.*
 3. *The great drawing of hearts to heaven began.*
-

JUDICA.

John 11, 47-53.

God and Christ rule in the midst of their enemies. This comes out very strikingly in the Passion Story, for instance in our present text and in Matth. 26, 2 and 5. *God's counsel in Christ's Passion* is one of the great features in it and deserves our special attention. Our text is used by some eleven pericope selections for some Sunday in Lent, though Judica seems the best place for it.

Lazarus has been raised from the dead. Certain of the Jews who witnessed the astounding miracle, but without faith, reported this to the Pharisees in Jerusalem. While not a denunciation, no law having been broken, it was still a hostile act, and it helped to stir up further the hatred of the rulers. The greatest work of power and mercy thus served to drive some men farther into sin and destruction.

11, 47. The chief priests therefore and the Pharisees gathered a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many signs. 48. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.

The connective **therefore** shows that what is now narrated is the outcome of the raising of Lazarus and the report of this miracle in Jerusalem. While **the chief priests**, Caiaphas, Annas, and others, are mentioned first, **the Pharisees**, though here placed second, were the instigators of the meeting now held, for they had received the report, v. 46, which called forth this counter move. The designation of chief priests and Pharisees is one regularly used for the Jewish Sanhedrim as such; and that is the idea here — the High Council itself met. —

When John writes: they **gathered a council**, we must note the absence of the article; the word "council" here is only a session, but, of course, this was not a session of a few private individual priests and Pharisees, but a session of the great body to which they all belonged, the Sanhedrim. — We are taken by the evangelist into that session and hear the gist of the deliberations held by these men. **What do we?** they say, or rather, we may suppose, one of the speakers says, yet voicing the thought and sentiment of many present. We must observe that the present indicative mode is used, not the deliberative subjunctive as in a question of doubt, nor the future as in a question of simple inquiry. The question is rhetorical, and in meaning strongly negative: What are we doing anyway? — nothing! The fact of the case is that up to this time the Sanhedrim had really *done* nothing in regard to Jesus; they had talked and resolved, but had stopped short of any real action to check Jesus. — It is truly remarkable to hear the flat admission following that question: **for** (or: because, giving a reason for the question, and its suggestion that something be *done*) **this man doeth many signs**. The speaker avoids the name of Jesus, something to be noted through all the story of Jewish hostility, even in Luke's account in the Acts when the apostles are persecuted. To this very day the names "Jesus" and "Christ" are distasteful to men of unbelief. When they make use of sections of Scripture for their purposes, they have at times deliberately cut out the precious name, omitting it. The parable of the Good Samaritan is used in a certain ritual, but all that we hear is that this is "a famous drama, which has received the plaudits of the world for many generations," thus literally

". . . stealing the livery of the Court of Heaven
To serve the devil in."

The designation **this man** is slighting and derogatory = this fellow. He **doeth** many signs means that he is

still engaged in multiplying them. And they are even called **signs**, and acknowledged to be **many**. What they signified to these men we are not told; what is added in the next statement, however, shows that these "signs" are considered as having the effect to make men believe or trust in Jesus. In this sense then the miracles are here called signs — they reveal something about Jesus which the Sanhedrim does not accept, but which many people are accepting. There is no effort in any manner to deny the reality of the miracles of Jesus; this piece of modern rationalistic and skeptic wisdom was not invented at that day. Perhaps the Sanhedrists were at a disadvantage compared with the moderns — it was a little awkward to deny the resurrection of a Lazarus for instance when the man was right there to testify of his own death and return to life, to say nothing of the cloud of witnesses besides. Here is a thing to note: faith is not a matter of so much proof or evidence for the intellect. In religious matters we must aim ultimately at the will and not stay on the surface of the intellect. With the fullest knowledge, and even while openly admitting the fact of Christ's most glorious Messianic deeds the Jewish leaders do not dream of believing in him.

V. 48. The following conditional sentence is in the regular form for the condition of expectancy. We cannot assume, however, that the argument here put forward is a mere pretext and not really sincere. The speaker expressed the real thoughts of the assembly. **If we let him alone**, do no more than we have done hitherto, permit him to go on working these signs, **all men will believe on him**, i. e., everybody, in popular phrase, the Sanhedrists, of course, omitted. — There is a gap in the thought here, which must be filled in before the further conclusion can be understood. With the populace generally believing in Jesus, i. e., adhering to him as the Jewish Messiah, the result, to the unbelieving Jewish mind, could be only this — some fine day

Jesus would set himself up as a worldly king and fulfill the popular expectation in this regard. Of course, Jesus had hitherto constantly refused to do this thing. But these Sanhedrists, themselves altogether insincere and false at heart, adjudged Jesus to be no better; in fact, they could not imagine a real Messiah in any other form — he simply had to come in royal guise. The result of such an action on the part of Jesus, they think, will be that, without fail **the Romans will come** to crush this revolt against their authority, and in doing so deprive the Jews of the last trace of autonomy by abolishing Jerusalem as the capital and dispersing the entire Sanhedrim and forever annulling its power: **and take away both our place and our nation.** "Our place" is best taken to mean Jerusalem as the capital and seat of power for the Sanhedrim. This includes the Temple as the central sanctuary of Judaism, but chiefly as connected with the authority of the Sanhedrim. The addition "our nation" uses the common word which parallels the Jews with other nations, ~~not~~ the sacred word which means "covenant people." The idea is that by losing their Sanhedrim the Jews would be robbed of their last bit of national standing, and would be left a disorganized and scattered mass. At all hazard, they imply, this calamity must be prevented. The Sanhedrim must keep its power and position; saving thus the nation as a nation. Right here already we may note that the Sanhedrim was adopting a plan which without fail would bring on the very calamity they were trying to ward off. By the action they were now taking they themselves eventually brought the Romans down upon them, and for upwards of eighteen centuries the Jews have ceased to be a nation like others. We must not overlook the selfishness which here hid behind the cloak of patriotism. The Sanhedrists were concerned about their nation because this gave them their power and standing. But the gravest implication is the virtual abandonment here of their own idea of a king-Messiah, as far as

their accepting any such a king is concerned and yielding their worldly power to his hands. This may sound incredible, and that is the reason why some prefer to take the word about the Romans as really an insincere utterance. But in the trial before Pilate this complete turning traitor to the old Jewish ideal of the Messiah as a grand earthly king comes out in boldest form: "We have no king but Cæsar." The Jewish leaders, who had cast truth, right, even the commonest morality to the winds, had advanced beyond even the perverted idealism of their nation. They were coldly self-seeking; power and place was their all, and here they show plainly the real thoughts and desires of their hearts.

49. But a certain one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, 50. nor do ye take account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

The assembly is a unit as to the danger threatening them, but up to this point no solution has been offered to show the way out. Now **a certain one of them** — *one* man, John means to say, has found the key. The word "one of them" is thus not meant to place Caiaphas on a level with the rest, as also only a mere member of the assembly; this word "one" places him over against all the rest who knew only how to lament and question, not how to take decisive action. His real name was Joseph, Caiaphas being an additional name for him, according to Josephus. He was the **high priest** from the year 18 to 36, maintaining his position far longer than his predecessors. The addition **that year** should read: high priest "of that year," and is not to be understood as if he were in office only for that one year, or as if he changed off annually with another. "Of that year" draws attention to the fact that Caiaphas was the high priest during the notable year in which Jesus was crucified; cf. also v. 49; 51; and 18, 13. — He was by far the boldest in the hostile band, and shows it at this de-

cisive moment. It must have been with an air of impatience and irritation that he finally broke out in the words: **Ye know nothing at all**, or: "You do not know a thing!" These words are discourteous, even rough in such a dignified assembly. Josephus casts some light on them when he reports of the Pharisees that they were "friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord, and regard for the public; but the behavior of the Sadducees one towards another is in some degree wild, and their conversation with those that are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them." *Wars* 2, 8, 14. The unscrupulousness of Caiaphas may also be taken into account.—In what respect the men of the Sanhedrim show this denseness is specified: **nor do ye take account, that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.** The simple solution of the whole difficulty is that Jesus must die. This the rest did not put into their reckoning, Caiaphas did. They reasoned, but did not draw the conclusion, Caiaphas helps them. "It is expedient for you" = it is conducive, useful, advantageous to you. The clause with *ἵνα* is subfinal (not a purpose clause), in the regular fashion of the Greek of this time, crowding out the classic infinitive in a multitude of cases. "For the people" = in behalf of the people, for their benefit. How this is meant Robertson (631) brings out: "There are a few passages where *ὑπέρ* has the resultant notion of 'instead' and only violence to the context can get rid of it." He mentions our passage as one where the preposition undoubtedly means substitution, and quotes Abbott (*Joh. Greek*): "in almost all the Johannine instances it refers to the death of one for the many." Note the change from *λαός*, covenant people, to *ἔθνος*, nation in the ordinary sense. In using the former the contrast is between the one man (Jesus) and the covenant people to whom he belongs; in the second case the contrast is between the Jews as a nationality over against the

Romans. Caiaphas then proposes for Jesus to die. What is one man when his station and that of his fellows is at stake? While this is the thought of Caiaphas he hides the enormity of it in his form of statement. He invokes the principle that as between two evils we ought to choose the lesser; and so he opposes the death of one man to the destruction of the whole nation. If the choice has to be made — and this is the presupposition on the part of the Sanhedrim — the former alternative is the one to take. The crime of it is hidden still more by putting this alternative in the form of the one man dying *instead* of the nation — his death would save the nation, it would be a vicarious sacrifice. That would, in fact, be noble if the man concerned made it himself, but it becomes quite another thing when others make this decision as these men were making it. Moreover, one significant thing is left out — how this one man Jesus is to be made to die as Caiaphas here proposes. A single moment's thought on this point would have revealed at once that the high priest's proposition was nothing but deliberate, cold-blooded murder. This point was not ventilated now, it came later, and the decision then was not assassination, but judicial murder. Possibly Caiaphas felt, unscrupulous though he was, that it was not wise to raise this final point now. So he stops short with his significant alternative, certain that all will be with him there. And he was right — not one voice was raised in dissent. So blinded to every moral consideration had these men become. Luke tells us about Joseph of Arimathea (23, 51) that he had not consented to their counsel and deed. How he dissented we are not able to say. None of the evangelists give a hint as regards Nicodemus on this point, but it seems beyond question that he too did not consent to this death (cf. 7, 51 and 19, 39).

51. Now this he said not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; and not for the nation only, 52. but that he

might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad.

The words of Caiaphas are remarkable in another respect. He voiced his own wicked ideas, but in doing so God governed his words so that what he said was in reality, without his realizing it, a prophecy of what God intended to do, and of what Jesus was about to do—to die for, and instead of, the nation, etc. Caiaphas utters his prophecy unconsciously. The words: **he prophesied** mean that he spoke by inspiration. He might have used other words for his base thought, but God led him to choose words such as expressed far more than he himself thought or meant. Inspiration must be clearly distinguished from revelation. Inspiration governs what is said or written, so that it shall be just what God wants, no more, no less, and in the form in which he wants it. The speaker or writer may, or may not, himself grasp all that he says, 1 Pet. 1, 10-11, where the prophets are described as studying their own words. In the case of wicked Caiaphas the higher sense of his own words was completely hidden from him. It ought to be plain that the inspiration involved in his prophecy is nothing less than verbal inspiration. It is that he put his statement into this form, into these words, which really carried a double sense—unutterably base as he meant them (the Sanhedrim to kill Jesus), yet unspeakably noble as God meant them (Jesus to die a voluntary and vicarious death).—This prophesying John connects with the office of Caiaphas: **this he said not of himself, but being high priest that year.** Again the significant reference to “that year,” in the same sense as before. We must not conclude hastily that every high priest as such was also a prophet, for this was not the case. No; here God singled out the man who was high priest of this great year, who held the notable office which of old, in the theocratic order of the first covenant, was used for decisions vital to the people, to serve again in this manner, now not through the Urim and Thummim

lost long ago, but through divine control of his words on a vital occasion. As the high priest Caiaphas was the chief leader of the Sanhedrim, and indeed ruled. Him God overruled in this case. In doing so we see nothing mechanical, no forcing of the will, or any unnatural coercion. The man's wickedness is left wholly intact, his murderous intent, and his cunning and unscrupulous way of expressing it on this occasion, when he wishes to bring the Sanhedrim to action. All this God uses to place right into the midst of these chief representatives of the Jews, as coming out of the mouth of their own official leader and spokesman, the prophecy of Christ's vicarious sacrifice. *They* may want to slay Jesus for their purpose, *God* lets Jesus die for his purpose. Both purposes meet in the death, but both are diametrically opposed, only one is blind to the other, while this other includes in its plans and thus rules over the former. — In restating what Caiaphas said John interprets his unconscious prophecy to us. **That Jesus should die for the nation** is literally: that he is about to die for it, is on the point of doing so. The words state an impending fact. In the direct form the main verb would be in the present tense, which here, and sometimes in regular classic usage, is changed to a past tense in the indirect discourse, Robertson, 1029. The present infinitive "to die" is descriptive. Where Caiaphas used: "for the (covenant) people," John interprets: "for the nation." Jesus will die for the Jews, not as members of the covenant, but as men in general, apart from any covenant — though his death was foretold and promised in the covenant. And John at once adds: **and not for the nation only**, but as for this nation so equally for all other nations — that death will be vicarious and substitutional for all men. This goes beyond the prophecy of Caiaphas, who thought and spoke only of the covenant people. But the prophetic sense of his words, when rightly understood as God meant it, that Jesus would sacrifice himself for the Jews, necessarily

requires the addition, that by thus dying for the Jews he would die for all men. He could die for the Jews only by dying for all. But John did not stop to say this in so many words, namely: "not for the nation only, but for all the nations." He at once, presuming this in thought, states the ultimate purpose of God resting on this presumption and fact of the universality of Christ's atonement. In this John copies the manner of many of his Master's deep and surprising sayings. That ultimate divine purpose is: **but** (for all others likewise) **that he might also gather together into one the children of God that are scattered abroad.** Here John brings in what lies in the word Caiaphas used, i. e., "covenant people," *λαός*, but this word now as it will stand in the new covenant for all God's chosen people from among all nations. These people are here called "the children of God" in advance of their becoming such children, a thing done repeatedly in Scripture; cf. 10, 16; Acts 18, 10; Jno. 17, 9 and 20: "for them also which shall believe on me through their word." The designation is proleptic, but it rests neither on an absolute, mysterious decree of predestination (Calvinism in some form), nor on a natural disposition, inclination, anticipatory preparation, peculiar affinity on the part of the people concerned (Pelagianism, synergism in some form); but on the divine foreknowledge, which knows from the beginning all in whom the grace and call will succeed. It is contrary to the entire doctrine of grace to define these "children of God" as heathen people who have a longing for God (Luthardt), a receptivity for God (Tholuck, Weiss, Godet), to call them "men receptive for salvation" (Zahn), "souls in heathendom longing for redemption" (Keil). They are not "God-seekers" among the heathen, who are only waiting for the Gospel to come to them. The Scriptures know of no such distinction among men. The people concerned may never have been God-seekers in any sense, they may have lived even more wickedly than many others. But God knew how his

Gospel and grace would utterly change these people from all that they were before to something entirely new, and on the basis of this infallible foreknowledge he can speak of them in advance as his sheep, his children, those who shall believe. — They are now scattered abroad, each one going his own way, Is. 53, 6, alienated, far from the life in God, etc. The divine purpose which Jesus shall carry into effect through his death is that he might also **gather together into one** all these (foreseen) children of God. By faith they are to become one body, or one people of God, the true *λαός* of the New Test. In the whole redemptive work of Christ God always looks to what we may call the net results — the souls that will actually be brought to eternal salvation.

53, So from that day forth they took counsel that they might put him to death.

The decision voiced by Caiaphas was accepted by the Sanhedrim. The plain, matter-of-fact aorist "took counsel" carries with it the idea that their counsel proved successful. The sub-final clause: "that they might put him to death" states the subject on which they counselled, i. e., to kill him, which means, of course, to find a proper way to do this. The killing as such was decided on in the meeting just described, the following deliberations on the killing concerned the method. But though they deliberated long and earnestly, and put into their deliberations all the zeal and cunning of their hatred, they never found a way themselves. Judas had to come and show them the way. Only so did their counselling succeed.

SERMON.

A meeting of the very greatest importance took place in the city of Jerusalem shortly after the Lord Jesus had wrought one of his greatest miracles. Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary in Bethany, had died, and four days after his burial Jesus had raised him from the dead. Immediately after the news reached the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem they called a meeting of the High

Court or Senate of their nation to determine what to do against Jesus. They came to the conclusion that there was only one thing to do, namely to kill Jesus or to have him killed.

One is almost dumbfounded to hear what our text reports concerning that meeting and the decision it reached. The Son of God had appeared among these men, for the third time he had raised a poor mortal from the dead, this time by one omnipotent word bringing back to life one from the dark prison house of the grave. Instead of acclaiming the deed, acknowledging Jesus for what he evidently was, believing and worshipping him, the entire High Council of the Jews resolved to do the very opposite, to kill this Prince of Life himself, in fact, they added to this the determination to kill in addition the man whom this Prince had raised from the dead. The facts in the case are unquestioned. The Jewish High Council not only resolved on this murder of Jesus, they actually carried their resolution out a few days later.

But a remarkable thing is told us about this meeting. The president of the Council, the high priest himself who directed it, proposed that Jesus should be put to death. In making that proposal, which the whole assembly forthwith accepted, he used the statement "that one man should die for the people." He appealed to the doctrine of substitution, that wonderful doctrine which forms the very heart of the Gospel. This is what rivets our attention to that meeting in Jerusalem. We must hear what our text says on

Caiaphas, and the Doctrine of Substitution.

How Caiaphas perverted and abused this doctrine, and how God corrected and used it.

I.

What is the doctrine of substitution?

It is this: one person pays, suffers, or, if the case be such, lays down his life instead of another. Jesus states the doctrine in its most exalted form: "I lay down my life for the sheep." St. John states it doubly: "Herein perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John 3, 16. St. Paul writes of two noble Christians, the tent-maker Aquila and his wife Priscilla, who rose to this height: they "have for my life laid down their own necks, unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles." Rom. 16, 4.

Not only the Scriptures know this doctrine, we meet it frequently in life. A mother in her great love will give up her own life if need be to save her own child. Many a true friend has paid the debt which would have meant ruin for his friend. In

battle hundreds of lives are lost and wounds incurred to shield the loved ones at home. All that is high, noble, grand, praiseworthy in the human heart comes out in the sacrifice which the doctrine of substitution includes. We often call this sacrifice a vicarious offering—one by which one man voluntarily takes the loss of another or dies in his place.

This precious doctrine Caiaphas perverted and abused by his hate of Jesus.

The Savior's heavenly love, his deeds of help and healing, his purity and holiness in turning men from sin, his majesty as the Son of God made man for our sakes, his kingdom in which we are to be the children of God—all this, instead of drawing the heart of Caiaphas, repelled it, because he was filled with the lust of power and refused to yield to the mercy of God. The more Jesus impressed the people, the more they asked whether Jesus perhaps was not the Messiah sent of God, the more Caiaphas was filled with jealousy and envy, till he reached the point where he determined to have Jesus killed. But that would be a cowardly, dastardly crime! To secure his wicked object, and yet to mask its wickedness to a certain extent, Caiaphas invoked this doctrine of substitution. He tried to make it appear as if the whole Jewish nation were in danger, and as if the death of Jesus alone could save it. This was the means his hate employed—a perversion and abuse of the noble thought of substitution, which shocks every honest and upright mind.

The hate of Caiaphas left out the chief essential in the noble idea of substitution.

Why do we count it a magnificent deed when one dies for another? when one suffers or pays in the place of another? Because he does this of his own free will, from love or a similar lofty motive. This was the very thing Caiaphas left out. No wonder, for hate is always blind; and how could the wicked hate of this unscrupulous high priest reckon properly with the idea of a willing, loving sacrifice? He said indeed: Let one man die for the people—let Jesus die to save the Jews; but he did not mean: Let Jesus give himself for the Jews; he meant: Let us kill him for the benefit of the Jews. This left the form of substitution, but turned it from a deed of noble self-sacrifice into a deed of rank injustice and bloody crime. Glory to the man who gives himself to save another, but woe to the man who for his own ends sacrifices another. The one is a deed all right-thinking men must acclaim, the other a deed all right-thinking men must utterly condemn.

This grows clearer still when we see how Caiaphas made his own interest and gain the purpose of the false substitution he proposed.

Why did he want Jesus to die? He tried to make it appear as if the existence of his own nation was at stake. He claimed that Jesus might make himself a king and thus bring the whole military power of the great Roman empire down upon the already oppressed Jewish nation to take its last bit of liberty away. But what he was really after was to keep his own place of high priest, his own power as the chief ruler of his people. He feared this might be taken away from him if Jesus continued to live. And so he proposed that it was best for Jesus to die. He was going to pay the blood of Jesus to buy position and power for himself and the men associated with him, to kill another in order to get something valuable for himself. Can you think of a more terrible perversion of the great doctrine of substitution?

When thus we set before our eyes the perversion and abuse to which Caiaphas put the doctrine of substitution, the black hand of hell busy to bring about the death of Jesus is revealed.

When that High Council met in Jerusalem to consider Jesus and his work they had to acknowledge: "This man doth many miracles." That last miracle, when Lazarus was brought to life from the grave, they acknowledged with all the rest. What was their answer? The answer of hell itself—Jesus must die for doing these glorious deeds of divine power and help. When they seek for a reason why he should die, what are they able to find? A false pretense of danger to their nation, and the basest promptings of self-interest and wicked ambition. Satan was leading them on. When with all this wickedness they try to put a fair color upon their decision that Jesus must die, what is the outcome of their effort? A shocking perversion and abuse of a great and precious doctrine, that of substitution, of vicarious suffering and death—to gain their ends they determine to spill Jesus' blood. A devilish power was blinding their eyes and driving them on to crime. Thus alone could Jesus be killed. The chief advisor, the real president in that meeting, was not Caiaphas, but the master whom Caiaphas served, the prince of hell, who was bent on Jesus' death—and he more than all these men.

To see all this aright is to realize that the hand of hell is busy in the same direction still.

All to whom Jesus, the Gospel, and his salvation come to-day, who reject him and prefer the things of this world and their own selfish, worldly, sinful desire and interests, in their way second the action of Caiaphas who substituted himself and his desires for Jesus and his kingdom of grace. It is the same old doctrine of substitution, with the same old perversion and abuse, instigated by the evil one—away with Jesus, that we may get what we want, and do what we please! That vote in the council hall at Jeru-

saalem has been repeated over and over again in countless variations, with the devil behind the ballot. What if Jesus is great and glorious, what if his mercy and grace are wonderful, what if his purpose is heavenly and blessed—he stands in the way of men's gain, ambition, pleasure, pride, perverted desires, lying beliefs—he must be put out of the way. So they trade him again for what they want; they sacrifice him and all he stands for, that they may stay as they are. They make a substitution, and persuade themselves that it is right, good, profitable to themselves. But look at Caiaphas, and you will see fully and clearly what that substitution really is. Hell helped to make it. Caiaphas damned himself in what he did; and so will every man who thinks it is best to give up the Savior that his earthly desires, gains, and pleasures may stay as they are. God preserve us from a substitution like that!

II.

But look at the text again and see how this doctrine of substitution, so shamefully perverted and abused by Caiaphas and all who choose as he did, is most gloriously corrected and used for our salvation by God.

God himself holds to the doctrine of substitution.

Twice St. John reminds us in our text that Caiaphas was the high priest in that year—that notable year when the Lord Jesus was brought to his death. In the old days of Israel the high priest was the one who inquired of God for the people to secure his direction and will in vital matters. Now the hand of God once more showed itself in this most vital matter of all; the greatest and gravest which ever had come to Israel. Jesus was rejected by the Jews, but when Caiaphas proposed that rejection God overruled the words in which he made it. In those words he indeed uttered his own devilish wickedness, but he had to do it so as to appeal to the doctrine of substitution: Let Jesus die for the people. Caiaphas never knew it when he said it, but his words were a prophecy, an utterance of God's own holy and gracious intention regarding his Son. There was to be a substitution indeed, far different than the one Caiaphas meant, one that God meant—the divine substitution planned by mercy and grace not for one nation only, but for all, for the whole world.

See the great substitution God had in mind.

For centuries he had been teaching Israel that salvation from sin would be by substitution alone. No man can bear his own sins except to be damned forever by their guilt. If he is to be saved another must be brought to bear the sins for him. God taught this doctrine to his people by means of all their bloody sacrifices. An animal was made the substitute. On it the sins

were laid and then it was killed in sacrifice to take the sins away. The animal died at the altar that the man might live and be free. But no animal could possibly take away the sins of a human being. The blood of no beast could ever be a substitute for the blood and death of a guilty man. All these animals, slain in substitution, were only preliminary to the real substitute, the Lamb which in due time God himself would provide. Their blood pointed forward to the blood that would be mighty and valuable enough really to take away human sin and guilt. That Substitute to come was God's own Son made man for this very purpose. His blood would be a propitiation indeed, making good all that the blood of those animals had indicated, and not for one nation alone, but for all men everywhere. Every true Israelite who brought an animal in sacrifice according to God's direction by that act declared his faith in the great sacrifice and substitute which God himself would offer in his Son. Thus and thus alone were those animal sacrifices effective. They were the temporal substitutes to join the hearts of sinners to the permanent, divine Substitute. And now at last the time was at hand for that divine substitution to be made. Wicked Caiaphas, because he happened to be the high priest, had to declare that the death of Jesus would be a vicarious death, a death of substitution.

And God's substitution was the highest and holiest ever made.

The vital thing in any true substitution is that it must be both voluntary and adequate. The substitution of God's Son for us was indeed voluntary. The very purpose of his coming into our flesh was to take our place under the curse and penalty of our sin, to be made a curse for us, in order to free us. Caiaphas thought he could take the life of Jesus, but Jesus said: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." John 10, 18. The glory of Christ's sacrifice is that he made it voluntarily in love for us miserable sinners to rescue us from hell.—And his sacrifice was sufficient. This man, the Scriptures declare, "now once in the end of the world hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself": and again: "So Christ was offered to bear the sins of many." Heb. 9, 26-28. His sacrifice obtained eternal redemption for us, "who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." 1 Pet. 2, 24. He, the just, died for the unjust. And because he was the Son of God himself his blood, shed in willing substitution for us, did indeed prove a sufficient price and ransom for us all. And this is what God meant when he made the wicked mouth of Caiaphas once more, now that Jesus was to die, declare in involuntary prophecy that Jesus would die for the people.

Thus too this holy and blessed doctrine of substitution, as used by God in the sacrifice of his Son for our sins, is to be our one hope in life and in death.

Luther in one place writes that our sins must lie either upon our own necks or upon Christ. If they remain upon us we are lost forever, but if they lie on Christ we are saved. Take whichever you will, he says. Can there be any question which we will take? Let men pervert the doctrine of Christ's substitution as much as they will, let them misunderstand the whole Word of God and the greatest deed which it records for our good, we will cling to our great Substitute and pray in humble faith:

"All sin hast thou borne for us,
Else would despair reign o'er us:
Have mercy on us, O Jesus!"

In the face of our end, when we shall be called to meet the great Judge on that day, let us add this other prayer:

"Lord Jesus Christ! Thy precious blood
Is to my soul the highest good:
Of all my sins a perfect cure,
It quickens me and makes me pure.
Thy blood, my spotless glorious dress,
Thy innocence, my righteousness:
Before my God I pardoned stand,
And enter, crowned, the heavenly land."

OUTLINES.

A strong dramatic element pervades this text, which may be utilized effectively in descriptive sections: When the Sanhedrim met to vote that Jesus must die: 1) the prince of hell stood behind its president, Caiaphas—2) God stood behind their victim, his Son Jesus Christ.—The heart of the text lies in the explanatory word of John: God's counsel that Jesus should die for all men: he had it proclaimed—he carried it out—on it our salvation rests.—Koegel's theme: The children of God gathered in one, may be elaborated in a way different from his: they are joined together by one sacrifice—in one faith—to be one body—for one eternal home.—Langsdorff follows the order of the text, using the theme: The counsel of Caiaphas to kill Jesus. His parts are: the lack of counsel on the part of Jesus' foes—the false counsel of the high priest Caiaphas—the true counsel of God which prevailed.—This text too shows striking contrasts; we state the following: they who were called to be the servants

of God appear in the service of the devil—He who was the victor of death was himself to be robbed of life—The nation Caiaphas tried to save he by that action helped to destroy—He who was to die for the benefit of Caiaphas did die, but for the benefit of all—He who will judge all men with righteousness is here judged by unrighteousness—They who scheme wickedly for themselves are made to aid him who lovingly planned for us all.

Christ's Foes must Serve him.

1. *As witnesses of his glory.*
2. *As prophets of his redemptive death.*
3. *As instruments of God's counsel of grace.*

— Lessmueller.

Christ Rules in the Midst of his Foes.

1. *They condemn him, but in doing so must testify to his power.*
2. *They take counsel against him, but must prophesy his redemption.*
3. *They seek for means to destroy him, but must wait for God.*

"That One Man should Die for the People."

1. *The council of deadly hate.*
2. *The plan of divine love.*
3. *The message of blessed salvation.*

— Ziethe.

"The Children of God shall be Gathered Together in One."

Thus was it

1. *Prophesied by one of God's prophets.*
2. *Confirmed by divine interpretation.*
3. *Made possible by a sacred sacrifice.*
4. *Brought to a glorious consummation.*

— Koegel.

The Wonderful Mystery of the Death of Jesus Christ.

Jesus died :

1. *A victim of human hate.*
2. *A sacrifice of divine love.*

— Lindemann.

One instead of All.

1. *It does seem wrong.*
2. *It surely is right.*
3. *In fact, it is noble.*
4. *And in Christ it was made divine.*

(*Wrong*, when injustice kills the innocent and lets the guilty escape. — *Right*, when justice accepts the offer of one for another. — *Noble*, when one offers himself in the place of another. — *Divine*, when the Godman chose this way for our redemption.)

PALM SUNDAY.

John 12, 12-19.

John's account of the royal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem has seldom received the attention in preaching which it deserves. Some of the pericope systems use the entire section verses 1-19, with the result that even Sommer confines the sermon to verses 1-8, and others make only casual mention of verses 9-19, or 12-19. The more do we feel like following the lead which takes the entry itself as the Palm Sunday text, verses 12-19, giving this precious portion of Scripture its full due.

John's account is by no means a mere repetition of that of the Synoptists. As in so many instances John's Gospel supplements the record of the other evangelists, adding most important and essential features. So in this case. We see the entry here in the light of Christ's miracle upon Lazarus as this affected the pilgrim crowds at Jerusalem; and John adds the deeper touch concerning the understanding of the disciples when Christ's glorification shed its light on what thus had transpired in Jerusalem. All this aids our use of the text for this Sunday to help us see *the honor due to the Christ of the Passion*. Palm Sunday is by far the best Sunday for the annual confirmation of our catechumens. Here is a text with the old festive character, one which presents the King to whom our catechumens are to pledge fealty, and his greatness as the Savior-King shines forth more even than in the old pericope text. This ought to satisfy us all.

After spending the night at Jericho in the house of Zacchæus Christ made the journey from there to Bethany, arriving some time in the afternoon of Friday. At sundown the Sabbath began. The supper at Bethany

was after sundown on Saturday, when the Sabbath was ended. Sunday morning Jesus left Bethany and made his royal entry into Jerusalem. V. 9 reports how the pilgrims in Jerusalem got word of the presence of Jesus in Bethany and went out to see him there and also the man he had raised from the dead. This fanned the murderous hatred of the Jewish leaders more than ever who in their impotent rage to control the situation planned to kill even innocent Lazarus. This is the dramatic situation on Sunday morning, the point at which our text begins.

12, 12. On the morrow a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13. took the branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried out, Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel. 14. And Jesus, having found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, 15. Fear not, daughter of Zion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.

The account of John is purposely brief, presupposing that of the other evangelists, yet it has some distinct features of its own. "On the morrow" refers not to the anointing at Bethany, for this took place after sundown Saturday, and thus, as the Jews counted their days, at the beginning of the Jewish Sunday. "On the morrow" refers to Christ's coming to Bethany, v. 1. There is unanimity among commentators that this "morrow" was Sunday. Some, however, conclude from Mark that Jesus made his entry Sunday afternoon. The reason assigned is insufficient for thus fixing the time. The distance from Bethany was about two miles. The morning of the day seems the most probable time, which is all that can be said. — **A great multitude that had come to the feast** states exactly who is meant — not the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but the pilgrims who had come for the Passover festival from all over the land and from distant parts in other lands. Many of

these had come to the city days before to attend to the purifications necessary in their case that they might be permitted to join in the festive rites. Some had very recently come, some were coming in still. The R. V. has "the common people" in v. 9, and also in v. 12 in the margin. This translation is not exact; the *ὄχλος* which plays such a prominent part in John's Gospel consists of outside pilgrims, and this in distinction from both the Jewish leaders and the people of Jerusalem; moreover, in both verses John states this multitude was "great." — On Sunday morning the news spread among these pilgrims in the city **that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem**, or, to give the Greek more exactly: "Jesus is in the act of coming," is on his way already from Bethany. How the news could and did come John helps us to see by the imperfect tenses he employs in v. 11. After Jesus got to Bethany on Friday those of the pilgrims who had come with him from Jericho went on into the capital, made the presence of Jesus in Bethany known, and thus induced many to go out to Bethany to see both Jesus and Lazarus. V. 11 states, they "kept going away and believing" on Jesus. There was a constant coming and going while Jesus was in Bethany. No wonder the news spread quickly on Sunday, the moment Jesus got started: He is coming! he is coming! This clears up also what the Synoptists state about two multitudes. The pilgrimages to Bethany between Friday and Sunday morning made quite a crowd in that village and neighborhood, who all joined the procession when Jesus made his start. So one multitude followed in with Jesus starting from Bethany, and another, and no doubt far greater multitude, **went forth** from Jerusalem **to meet him**.

V. 13. On their way out **they took the branches of the palm trees**, John tells us, and stops with that. He mentions only palm trees, the other evangelists speak simply of trees, which may include more than the one kind, and say nothing about palms. For John

the palm branches are most significant, and we must thank him for specifying thus. Zahn thinks the palms were kept in the hands of the men, but there seems no reason to make this restriction as to palms when the other evangelists say that branches were strewn in the path of the Savior. Both things were done, branches were strewn and branches were waved. John's word for "branches" itself means palm branches, so that we have a kind of pleonasm when he adds to that word the genitive "of the palm trees." The article too has something to say: the branches of *the* palm trees, i. e., of the well known trees which at this time lined the road leading into the city. There are no such trees now along this thoroughfare, but they were once one of the beauties of the approach. To get the right impression from John's brief words we ought to know what the orientals thought of palm trees—majestic in their height, the queens of all lowland trees, with their proud diadem of great fronds, spreading with their face to the sun, in immortal green, unceasingly replenished with new life from the deep set roots—in those desert lands, and in many an oasis the picture of life in a world of death (Delitzsch on Ps. 92, 7). For the oriental the palm tree was the perfect tree, embodying everything a tree should really be; even its life extending to 200 years made it seem a symbol of immortality. Just what the palm branches with which Jesus was greeted signified is debated by commentators. Some argue from their use at the Feast of Tabernacles that the main idea was joy. Zahn contents himself with the modern significance of victory and triumph. Taking it altogether, and keeping the sacred Jewish ideals in mind, Keil seems to get nearest the truth when he makes the palm branches symbols of life and salvation.—Thus the multitude **went forth**, the plural verb construed with a singular subject *ad sensum*.—Luke tells us where the Hosanna shout was first raised, "at the descent of the mount of Olives," and also states that "the whole

multitude of the disciples began to rejoice" thus. John more briefly tells us that the great multitude kept on shouting thus, using the durative imperfect tense: **and cried out**. The shouting thus begun must have continued all the way into the city and through its streets to the Temple. Tissot has a beautiful picture of the scene in the Temple courts after Jesus' arrival there — the Jewish boys of the age of twelve and over who had come to the festival, in their festive white parade in front of Jesus in regular lines, keeping step to their clapping of hands and shouting, mimicking their elders. — The words used in the shout are from Ps. 118, 25-26, to which interpretative additions were made, cf. Luke. Ps. 113-118 are termed the *hallel*, with which the festal procession at the Passover was received by the priests; this *hallel* was sung also, part before and part after the Passover meal. The most distinctive part of the shout was **Hosanna**, three of the evangelists retaining the Hebrew in transliteration: *Hoschîa-na* = *schaffe Heil*; grant salvation; "save now" (A. V.). The word seems to have been used on this occasion less as a prayer and more like a joyful acclamation, a little like our: All hail! — The rest of the Psalm words: **Blessed he that cometh in the name of the Lord** (Jehovah), constitute a welcome. The Greek has the perfect participle: "having been blessed" in the sense of being in this condition now. While the verb signifies a benediction pronounced in words, it includes, especially when the words are thought to come from God, the full reality of gifts and treasures implied in the benedictory words. Here this implication is beyond question, for this enthusiasm of the multitude, which the other evangelists do not explain, is shown by John to be the direct outcome of the great miracles of Jesus, the crowning one of which, the raising of Lazarus, had stirred the hearts of all these pilgrims to their very depths. — Luke adds more of the shouting; John, with all his brevity, gives us the significant cry: **even the King of Israel**. This, beyond

question, acclaimed Jesus as the promised Messiah. It is useless to speculate on the significance attached to these words by the multitude. Whatever of wrong earthly expectation still clouded the vision of these "disciples" (Luke) and of the multitude generally, a holy enthusiasm had caught their hearts on this Sunday morning, a wave of real spiritual feeling and joy, the direct product of "all the mighty works they had seen" (Luke), and in thus acclaiming Jesus as the true Messiah meant to "praise God" (Luke). This may help to explain to us why Jesus accepted this honor and lent himself by his every act to this enthusiasm, riding into the city as the King that he was.

V. 14. Now John shows us the King: **And Jesus, having found a young ass, sat thereon.** How Jesus obtained the ass is not described; that the aid of others is included we see from v. 17: "they had done these things unto him." John's aim is to show the fulfillment of the prophecy Zech. 9, 9, which he quotes freely with abbreviation. Only the essentials are given, first, of the fulfillment; secondly, of the prophecy. "As it is written" has the usual extensive perfect: the act of writing lies in the past, but its result is here now, i. e., the written record. — The sense of the original which has: "Rejoice greatly" is here given by the call: **Fear not.** When fear goes out, joy comes in, i. e., as over against God. One may quote the *ipsissima verba*, but an entirely legitimate form of quotation, one constantly employed in all preaching, is to quote the sense, and in doing so use equivalent terms instead of the exact original words. This is not taking liberties with the original. All depends on the writer's purpose. Sometimes he must have the exact original, at other times the sense as such, or only part of it, is ample. So here. — From the Psalm passage John lifts out the chief and most remarkable statement — Zion's king coming to her, riding on the colt of an ass. This is the point of the prophecy stressed by both Matthew and John. **Daughter of Zion =**

Israel. Zion is the Temple hill, from which the city itself may be called "Zion." Thus the "daughter of Zion" is the people whose capital and sanctuary was on this hill. The name is at once significant and beautifully poetic, one of the great names for Israel of old, and now, by a legitimate transfer, applied at times to the New Test. Israel. The Greek imperative **behold**, by losing its verb accent, the circumflex, and taking the acute instead, becomes an interjection, equivalent to our "lo!" Here the exclamation points dramatically to the figure of the peace-king, marked as such by not coming to his capital with the panoply of war, but sitting upon the colt of an ass. There is symbolism in the animal Jesus rode, a symbolism to which Zechariah had pointed. Fausset: "the ass is lowly as compared with the horse; it symbolizes *peace*, as the horse does *war*, and as such bare the meek and lowly yet divinely royal Savior, the Prince of peace, in his triumphal entrance into his own capital; the young untamed colt bearing him quietly marks his universal dominion over nature as well as spirit." There was reason to come to Jerusalem with power, to punish her wickedness and unbelief, but this was still the day of grace, and the crowning deeds of grace were yet to be done. So Jesus came as the King of grace and salvation, not to be feared and dreaded but to be loved, trusted, joyfully followed. The *literal* fulfillment of the prophecy is here emphasized. This would not be so striking if Jesus had usually ridden about the country, but he always walked until now, and it was by his own orders and direction that he "found" the colt.

16. These things understood not the disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.

"These things" = the entire occurrence as the fulfillment of a specific prophecy. Note the repetition which keeps the attention on "these things." **The dis-**

ciples are the Twelve. They knew the Scriptures, but took their part in this significant procession without understanding that the whole of it, down to the plainest outward features, was all arranged of God's long in advance. The elements which produced this burst of enthusiasm were entirely natural and unforced; God utilized them for his purpose. But his hand is marked in what Jesus did, in his arranging to ride in this manner instead of walking as always heretofore, and in his ordering them to get the young colt for him thus to ride. Neither the foreknowledge of God can fail, nor his directing hand in securing the details down to the last point. The disciples were just like the multitude in unconsciously helping to fulfill the divine prophecy.

At the first means at the time when the great act took place and thereafter, till the eyes of the disciples were opened. — **When Jesus was glorified**, then many things, by virtue of his glorification, appeared to them in a new light; the glorification itself helped to enlighten them. We may add that then also the Holy Spirit brought these things to their remembrance, as Jesus had promised them, 14, 26. The point which John stresses is the realization of the disciples **that these things were written of him**. It all served mightily to confirm their faith. The veil was taken away so that they saw the life of Jesus and all his signal acts, in connection with his glorification, as they really were, planned and directed of God to be in every part the revelation of the Messiah, of the Savior of Israel and the whole world. Perhaps Luke 24, 27 and 45 apply here, though John does not hint at this final teaching of Jesus. — **That they had done these things unto him** refers to the disciples who had brought the colt at his direction, laid one of their long robes across its back, and then helped Jesus to mount, walking by his side. — John has several of these striking references to prophecy, beginning with the prophecy of Jesus himself concerning the destruction and raising up of the temple, 2, 19-22; including the un-

conscious prophecy of Caiaphas, 11, 50-52, and the further acts, 18, 31-32; 19, 24 and 34-37.

17. The multitude therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, bare witness. 18. For this cause also the multitude went and met him, for that they heard that he had done this sign.

In these verses John gives us, what in so many cases is withheld, an explanation of how the multitudes came to act as they did. Only a textual question causes trouble as regards the interpretation. If we read with our versions $\delta\tau\epsilon$, then v. 17 tells us what the multitude did which witnessed the raising of Lazarus. There were many witnesses, as John reports, and they are even termed $\delta\ \delta\chi\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ by Jesus in 11, 42. The present participle in the Greek for "was with him" would be read as a sort of imperfect participle (Robertson, 892), a little unusual at the least. We then get this sense: the Jews who witnessed the miracle wrought in Bethany spread the report broadcast. V. 18 adds that this caused the multitude of pilgrims in the city to go forth and meet Jesus. In a way this reading of the story is acceptable. But a fair number of texts read $\delta\tau\iota$ instead of $\delta\tau\epsilon$, so also the oldest translations, cf. Godet and Meyer on the authorities, strangely omitted in the critical text of Souter. V. 17 then reads: "There was bearing witness therefore also the multitude that was with him, *that* he called Lazarus," etc. This gives us two multitudes — the one consisting of the crowds who went out to Bethany, as v. 9 reports, to verify the miracle and see Lazarus for themselves, many of whom were in Bethany when Jesus started for Jerusalem on Sunday morning. These all accompanied him and as they went along kept telling of the miracle and what they had seen. V. 18 now adds, in explanation of v. 12, that the pilgrims in Jerusalem had also heard of the miracle and were stirred up to go to meet Jesus when, as v. 12 states, the news arrived that he was on his way to the city. The question is a

fine point in exegesis and text study — which shall we choose? There is more textual authority for “when,” but “that” gives the richer and finer sense. Difficulties like this occur whenever the textual evidence and the internal or sense evidence seem to balance each other, the one standing against the other. Men like Meyer, Keil, and Zahn reject *ὅτε* without question, and they seem to be right. V. 17, as John wrote it in Greek, is decidedly better with “that” than with “when.” — **Bare witness**, really: “were bearing witness,” is forward for emphasis; on this action compare Luke 19, 37. The connective **therefore** fits far better when **the multitude** is conceived as being with Jesus on Sunday morning, and we need no unusual explanation for the Greek participle in the clause: **that was with him**. — They all testified to the fact of the great miracle, having seen the tomb and Lazarus alive. John gives us the testimony as they made it: **that he called Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead**, which is a full description of the great deed. — From this multitude the other is clearly distinguished, for it **went and met him**, which is only one word in Greek: “met him.” These people had likewise heard the report, and it is **for this cause**, “on this account,” that they went forth. John reports **that they heard that he had done this sign**, significantly calling the miracle a sign, and using the perfect tense: he *has done* this sign, and it stands there now before their eyes. The springs of action are thus laid bare; we now understand the reports of the other evangelists far better than if John had not written.

19. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Behold how ye prevail nothing: lo, the world is gone after him.

Palm Sunday must have been very disquieting for these men. Chagrin and helpless wrath are in their words. All the measures they had taken against Jesus so far had proved abortive and useless. This royal entry seemed like a public challenge of the authority which

had issued orders for Jesus' detention and arrest. Among the Pharisees there seem to have been two parties, and the more unscrupulous set rebukes the other set which had hitherto advocated only arrest. They speak **among themselves**, that is "to themselves," one group to another of the same sect. We may read **behold** as an imperative or as an indicative, though the former is best in a passionate utterance like this. They want their companions to view with their own eyes how they are helping and aiding matters in no way by their past course. **Ye prevail nothing** = you are doing no good, securing no success. In passionate exaggeration they explain their meaning by exclaiming: **Lo, the world is gone after him**. It must have looked as if they alone had not been carried away by the flood of enthusiasm for Jesus. The verb is: "go away after," and carries the idea that the people were forsaking the Pharisees and thus going after Jesus. Here is something like the prophecy of Caiaphas; unconsciously they utter words which fit what afterwards did take place, when thousands turned to faith in Jesus and his church extended to the ends of the earth. *Inscii prophetant*, writes Bengel. The Pharisees who utter these bitter words must have been men who agreed with Caiaphas that the only thing to do was to kill Jesus in short order. *Approbant Caiaphæ consilium*, Bengel. They may have been members of the Sanhedrim who wanted the Pharisees in general to dally no longer, but consent to the proposed extreme measure without further compunction. This dark background of hate in the hearts of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem makes the whole spectacle on Palm Sunday highly dramatic; the more when we realize that all this bloody hate was perfectly known to Jesus and that he followed his sure course in the face of it.

SERMON.

"Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord!" An enthusiastic multitude with waving palm branches in their hands raised this cry when our Lord Jesus Christ made his entry as the King of grace and salvation into the ancient city of Jerusalem. They went to honor the Savior that day, to acknowledge the wondrous miracles he had done, to greet him as indeed the long expected Messiah, the hope and crown of their nation.

What the multitudes of festive pilgrims did that day on the road into Jerusalem has left an indelible impression. Those shouts of Hosanna have found a mighty echo, those waving palm branches still stir enthusiastic honor in men's hearts. We too know this great King Jesus, know him better and more fully I hope than all that multitude of old. You, my dear catechumens, have sat at his feet these many days to learn all that he did for you, all that he does for you, all that he will yet do. And this day, called Palm Sunday in memory of that great past day, is to be your day for publicly pledging your hearts to your King and Savior Jesus Christ in humble faith and loyal obedience. By your confession and vows you lay the palms of honor and devotion at his feet to-day, and raise once more the blessed prayer of Hosanna, which means: "Save now, I beseech thee. O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity!" Ps. 118, 25. And we, my friends, who have made this vow and pledge in years that are past, as we hear it repeated again by these young Christians are to feel anew and in fuller measure if possible what then filled our hearts. These years should have taught us by many a blessed experience what the grace of our Savior King really is, how rich his gifts, how strong his help, how blessed his fellowship in every hour of life. The vow once made is thus to be renewed in us to-day with greater vigor and more depth of meaning. As this text shows us once more the multitudes at Jerusalem honoring and praising Jesus as the Savior King, we in spirit and by every act of our worship to-day join them, and in this way, which we know is acceptable to him, we offer Hosannas and palms for the King.

Hosannas and Palms for the Savior King!

Surely, with word and deed we must say it **for the King's own sake.**

They called him the King of Israel as they brought him on his way to the Holy City. He was that indeed, in a higher and more blessed sense even than those people thought. Prophets had

spoken of his coming and described it in advance. Zechariah had told how he would do the very thing he did there in Jerusalem, enter as the King of grace, not on a proud chariot or charger surrounded by an army and military power, but riding without a sign of earthly pomp, on a humble beast, the foal of an ass. Psalmists had sung his praise and described the salvation he would bring and the gifts he would bestow. Israel's kings, David and Solomon, the greatest of them all, had looked forward to this still greater King to come, to the spiritual, heavenly, and thus eternal kingdom he would establish. And now he was there, doing all that God had foretold, a King indeed, a King of salvation, bringing eternal blessings to the souls of men.

He came as the King of divine grace. "Fear not," but "rejoice greatly," the old prophet had written hundreds of years before: "Daughter of Sion, behold thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt." Why did Jesus ride thus as a King into Jerusalem? He came with power indeed, for a few days before at his royal word death itself had obeyed and given up its prey at his command, when Lazarus, four days in the grave, came forth alive again. It was the power of God come to deliver us from sin and death. It was the power of heavenly grace to free us from sin and its terrible results. It was the power of redemption which would break the power of sin by this blessed King's own blood and death. Even now he was come to offer up that sacrifice that we might be free, made the children of God through the forgiveness of his blood by faith in his sacrifice for us. So he came in lowliness, not in pride: in humility, not in pomp and show. He was on his way to Calvary, to the cross, to the sacrifice for our redemption. That was the kind of a King he was.

And that is why the cry of Hosanna fits him so well, and the waving of palm branches at his coming. The people caught up that word from the 118th Psalm which they recited and sang at the Jewish Passover, the old festival God had given them when years before they were rescued from the bondage of Egypt. There, when they were slaves, the night that God delivered them, the first-born in every Egyptian house, from the king's palace down to the lowest hut, was slain by the angel of death who passed through the land, because the Egyptians would not let the people of God go free. That angel spared the houses of the Israelites because God had told them to mark every door with the blood of a lamb slain in sacrifice. Year by year, in memory of God's deliverance, at his own bidding they slew the Passover lamb and sang the Psalm with its prayer Hosanna—"Save now, O Lord, I beseech thee!" Yes, the Hosanna fit this King of salvation, for he was himself the Lamb, who would save the people from a far more terrible

bondage, that of Satan through sin and guilt and the punishment of God. His blood would bring them eternal release and lift them from all this world of sin to the true Canaan of peace and joy in heaven. And the palms fit this King, for they symbolized the life and salvation he brought in his deliverance.

Therefore I say: . Hosannas and palms for the Savior King, first of all *for his own sake*, for his power and mercy and the gift of his salvation. Shall our hearts remain unmoved when we see what the Jews of old did to welcome and honor this King? If they in some degree recognized his greatness and blessedness, do we not recognize it still more? He is our King, our Savior, and for all that he is we honor and magnify his name to-day.

And we do it also **for our own sakes**. Our faith, our love, our joy in him demand that there be Hosannas and palms for the King. It will ever be thus—a fire must burn, a light must shine, and so faith must confess, love must honor, joy must sing out its delight.

He is the King! shouted the multitude on the way to Jerusalem. They meant: He is *our* King! It was a joyful and happy confession that came from their lips. By all their actions they wanted to tell what was in their hearts and thoughts. They were trying to show the loyalty, gratitude, expectation, and joy they felt. With their hearts surcharged like that they could not keep still. They would have been false to themselves if they had. What if the adherence of many to Jesus that day was superficial, their joy and enthusiasm one that did not go deep enough? That does not change in the least that these people were right in showing what moved them, and that a truer faith, a more genuine love and gratitude, and a deeper joy must not do what they did, come out and display itself for its own sake in honoring our King.

In a little while we will hear these catechumens make their public confession of Christ before this assembled congregation. We have come here for the very purpose of hearing it. In fact, our hearts want to join that confession and do join it in every part of this service which is all for the honor of Christ our King. Not that he needs this honor from us. He would be what he is if none of us now or ever believed in him or confessed his name: but we would not be what we are if we to-day withheld that faith and honor from him. He is not made richer by our faith, but if we are without it and have no faith to voice to-day, we are infinitely poorer, for the treasures that might be ours are then not ours. we are empty and destitute. O think for a moment what our faith means to ourselves, how it makes this King our King, takes all his gifts, places us in his Kingdom here and assures us of a place in his kingdom there, and you will see that for our own

sakes we must bring Hosannas and palms for the Savior King. Only see that your faith and trust in him be true indeed, that he may acknowledge it and bestow upon it his grace. Let it be strong and enduring that you may keep that grace forever. For our own sakes let us honor Christ our King by trusting him with all our hearts and thus this day and always honoring his name.

The same is true of love. It is vital to ourselves that we have and show such love. For remember the love of all true believers for Christ is only the answer of their hearts to his love. Always and always Christ first loves us and by his love awakens our love in return. Ever it is his love that kindles ours. That means, if our hearts remain cold and loveless it is because we have spurned his love and loving gifts. If we can see a response of Hosannas and palms like this in our text, without a stir in our own hearts, then not Christ but we are to be pitied. Have we actually taken nothing from him? Has all his love been in vain for us? Are we going through life and into eternity alone? Think what this means, and then take anew the measure of this great King's love for you, as you see it in his death for you, in all his spiritual blessings, in all his golden promises. Let all that love of his come into your hearts, let it come in ever anew by means of his Word and sacrament, and see what it means for you now and to all eternity. Then will your heart be warmed with an answering love and a gratitude that grows steadily greater the more you realize what this Savior King is for you. For our own sakes we must love him thus and ask him to increase our love and to help us show it. Yes, Hosannas and palms for the King, for his sake since he deserves them, and for ours since we are blessed in bestowing them.

Then, too, for the sake of his foes.

Alas, there were such, and are such still! When Jesus made his entry into Jerusalem as the Savior King there were some who did not join in the Hosannas nor offer him palms. The Pharisees never stirred to greet him. They were the ruling class of the Jews and turned in wicked opposition against him. They had given orders to arrest Jesus in order to stop his teaching and work, but had failed utterly so far in interfering with him. And now when the people acclaimed Jesus they stood by with hostile eyes and envious hearts. St. John tells us how they spoke to each other: "All the world is gone after him!" and in their hearts they resolved more than ever that this King of Israel must die. We know how they did bring him to his death, not by power of theirs but by love of his, since his death was to free us from our sins and bring us back to God.

But why do we say that for the sake of such enemies of Jesus there should be Hosannas and palms for him from us? In order to separate ourselves more completely from them. Shall we who know this blessed King, who realize what our own faith and love to him mean for us, ever leave it in doubt on which side we belong? Shall we by our coldness and indifference ever help to strengthen the opposition of those who reject his love in order to go on in their blindness and sin? Surely, we will want to do the very opposite, in fact, must do it if we really mean to honor him. Just as we want Jesus to acknowledge us to-day, to receive us when we die, and to accept us at the last day in his eternal kingdom, so we must want to separate ourselves as widely as possible from all his foes now. Our honor of Jesus is a mighty protest against all the opposition of men to him. It may bring us their ill-will—it is sure to do so. But let it. He bore the cross for us, we will bear for him whatever is laid on us for his sake. "Blessed are ye," says Jesus, "when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matth. 5, 11-12. And again he says: "Who-soever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God." Luke 12, 8-9. He that is not with the King is against him. Therefore, also because of those who are against him our Hosannas and palms, our honor and praise shall proclaim that with all our hearts we are with him.

There is another reason. You see it when Jesus made his entry into Jerusalem. To the last he sought to win those who needed him so much, yet would not receive him hitherto. That is the wonder of his love—it is so strong, so patient, so enduring, so single in its great aim of saving us. And that is why our praises of that love must continue to go forth even also for those who stand aloof from Christ and have not yielded to his love. Who knows how many were saved by the love of our great King, when this love held on so long? Who knows how many will yet be moved to yield their hearts to our King when they see and continue to see our faith and love of him in the Hosannas and palms we offer him? He bids us to let our light shine before men that they may be brought to glorify God. His holy apostle admonishes us that we, the Savior's chosen generation, show forth the praises of him who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. 1 Pet. 2, 9. So our mission among men is to point them all to the great King of Salvation, and that we do by our Hosannas and palms, by every honor we show him, every confession we make

of him, every bit of true gratitude we show toward him. God make us faithful and zealous in thus holding up the name of Jesus even before the eyes of his misguided foes.

Down through the ages the echoes of that first wonderful Palm Sunday have come, reaching even to us this day. Those Hosannas and palms of that far off day stir our hearts now to offer like praise and adoration to our Savior King for his sake, for our own sakes, and even for the sake of his foes. As we joyfully answer this call, let us remember how the great procession of Hosannas and palms, of loyal hearts honoring Christ and proclaiming his praises among men, will move on down the coming years, until at last the great King of salvation steps forth from his throne to receive into eternal honor those who have thus honored him. God grant that none of us may ever leave that procession, and that our Hosannas and palms may greet the King with all the rest on that great coming day.

OUTLINES.

Palm Sunday has its own effective appeal, and our text fully answers it. The central figure is Christ the Savior King; upon him we must focus the entire sermon. We may sound as the festive note: Our welcome to Christ our Passion King!—as he comes to us with all his saving grace—as that grace draws our hearts in faith and adoration. Or we may take up directly the ancient refrain: Blessed the King that comes to us in the name of the Lord!—we bless him for all that he did when he came to Jerusalem that first Palm Sunday—we bless him for all that he does in us now, on this Palm Sunday.—We may also dwell on: The heavenly attractiveness of our Passion King: its power (meeting all our deepest needs, our highest aspirations)—its success (resisted only by those who will not be saved; praised and glorified by all who yield in faith).—Confirmation may lead us to sound the note of loyalty: Be true to Zion's King!—true in faith and devotion to him—true in the fellowship of his true followers—true in our resistance to every foe of his.—The King who deserves our Hosannas and palms: he has earned them—our joy should be to offer them—let no man induce us to withhold them.

Come, Let us Honor Christ our King!

1. *Why?* Because of the excellence of his person; because of the greatness of his grace and sacrifice; because of the infinite value of his gifts to us.

2. *How?* Let us learn from his friends — their palms, their praise of his works, their hosanna of prayer and expectation. — Let us learn from his enemies — for their hatred put love; for their hostility put obedience.
-

Palms for the King!

1. *There never was one more worthy of them.*
 2. *There is no greater blessing than to bestow them.*
-

Zion's Palms.

1. *Her prayers.*
 2. *Her praises.*
 3. *Her vows.*
-

Hosanna to the King!

1. *Save, Lord, from our sin!*
 2. *Save, Lord, by thy grace!*
 3. *Save, Lord, for thy glory!*
-

GOOD FRIDAY.

John 19, 28-37.

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Ex. 3, 5. There are no holier places in Scripture than those that are wet with Christ's redemptive blood. Here is Calvary and *the climax of the Passion*. The supreme moment has come—Jesus dies. Even on the cross all is finished down to the last. And that last is vital; the price was not suffering alone, however great, but the suffering that included actual death.

19, 28. After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst. 29. There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: so they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to his mouth.

With the simple transitional phrase "after this" John proceeds to describe the death of Jesus. How long or brief the interval was between the Savior's word to his mother and to his favorite disciple is not indicated. The best harmonistic efforts place the three hours of darkness into this interval and at its close the great cry of agony: "My God, my God!" etc. That shadow is now gone, the sunlight again lights up the sacred hill and its precious burden. The end is now at hand.—John tells us that Jesus knew this. He passed through every stage of his suffering fully comprehending its significance and place in his Passion. The way his soul trod lay clear and open before him down to the last bitter step. He knew now that he was at the very end.—We construe together: **Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished.** Some commentators construe the pur-

pose clause with what follows: "that the scripture might be fulfilled (Jesus) saith, I thirst." There are weighty reasons against this. We cannot read John's statement, that Jesus knew "that all things are now finished," so that this means: all things *except one*, namely the prophecy about his thirsting; and that thereupon, in order to add also this fulfillment, Jesus said: "I thirst." The natural order of the sentence, especially when we read it aloud, will connect the final clause with what precedes, not with what follows. No commentator has shown any reason why John should place this clause forward, ahead of the verb it modifies, thus giving it special emphasis, when none is required. Especial weight must be assigned to the fact that there is no prophecy which states that Jesus would cry: "I thirst." Ps. 22, 15, even if referred to Christ, necessitates no word from his lips. Still less applicable is Ps. 69, 21, where gall and vinegar are mentioned, whereas this last drink of Jesus was simply vinegar or sour wine, without gall. Ps. 69, 21 can be referred only to the stupefying drink offered to Christ when he was to be nailed fast to the cross, which drink he refused. Men to be crucified were usually doped in this way in order to subdue their struggles during the nailing fast of their limbs. Every prophecy which can be referred to Christ's thirst would be fulfilled completely simply by the fact of his thirsting; yet if the sentence is construed as these commentators desire the point of fulfillment would lie in Christ's utterance of the word: "I thirst." Zahn has felt this, and so makes the one thing yet to be added to complete the fulfillment the death of Christ. But this is plainly read into the verse before us. If the purpose clause is not connected with what precedes, then it must refer to some prophecy which foretells this cry or complaint of Christ; and there is none such. It cannot refer to the act of dying. So we take the sentence in its natural order. — Jesus knows **that all things are now finished, that the scripture might**

be accomplished. Note the word "now" = already. They were finished earlier than one would have supposed. Men nailed to crosses often suffered for three or four days. Pilate could hardly believe that Jesus was already dead when Joseph asked him for the body, and verified the report for himself. Six hours upon the cross ended the supreme part of the Passion. John has the perfect tense: "has been finished," using here the identical word which presently Jesus himself utters in dying: *τετέλεισται*. In some strange manner Robertson. (898) tells us that this perfect tense is here used with a future perfect meaning. Quite the contrary; it is exactly our English: is finished; the action of the past is brought to the point of the present moment. We must note the difference between the two verbs which appear here in close proximity: *τελέω* and *τελειόω*. The former = to bring to a close, and refers to time; the latter = to bring to the goal, and refers to the quality of the action. Our translators (R. V.) have marked this distinction, translating the former: "are *finished*," the latter: "might be *accomplished*." The sense is this: Jesus knew that the last thing for him to do was now done in order that the goal set by the Scriptures might be reached — that goal was now reached, death was here. There was no more suffering to undergo, there were no more duties for Jesus to attend to before his death. The end had been reached. The A. V. is quite inexact in translating: "that the scripture might be *fulfilled*." This formula, with the Greek word for fulfill, is usual when one prophecy is meant. The word which John here uses is entirely different, and while one might suppose that for some reason John here had varied his usual mode of expression, if it could be shown that here too one specific prophecy is meant — as stated above, this is the very thing that cannot be shown, and it is for this very reason that John uses the significant word "to accomplish," i. e., bring to a goal. The word here refers to the whole course of Christ's life and passion

as outlined in prophecy; of all this the final goal was now reached, Jesus had performed it all. Nor can we say that one thing was yet lacking, namely the actual death, for this is the very goal itself at which Jesus has now arrived, and Jesus knows, as John here says, that he is there. — So, with this knowledge Jesus **saith, I thirst.** There is no question that burning thirst had parched the lips of Jesus long before this and had grown more terrible as time went on. Nothing had crossed his lips since the night before at the Passover meal. Beside all his other suffering he had hung for hours upon the cross, and it is well known that all who were crucified suffered the excruciating pangs of thirst. These pangs Jesus had endured till now. Why had he not asked for drink ere this? And why does he ask now? Here we meet a wonderful variety of interpretations. Without hesitation we decline to say that the word “I thirst” was meant by Jesus in an allegorical sense, not of physical thirst, but of the thirst of his soul for the souls of men. Allegorical fancies are altogether out of place in this sacred moment. We do the same with the symbolical sense. This presumes that the vinegar given to Jesus is symbolic of the world’s treatment of Jesus — thus ungratefully, with nothing but miserable vinegar, were his burning lips moistened when in dying he asked for drink. No such symbolic meaning lies in Jesus’ word, “I thirst.” If he had desired to show the ungratefulness of the world to him at this moment, why should he have left out the gratitude of all his true followers and given us no final symbol of that? All allegory and symbolism is out of place. Nor did Jesus wish to shorten his end by drinking the vinegar. On the other hand, there is no reason to assume that the vinegar was to lengthen his life, or could in any way lengthen it. A few drops of this liquid upon scalded lips and a burning throat have no such wonderful effect. Both the shortening and the lengthening must be set aside. Some are greatly surprised that at

this supreme moment Jesus should have indicated a physical desire — he who had set all such desires aside this long while! It is this surprise which leads to the so-called deeper interpretations of which we ought to beware. Nebe is right when he agrees to the pure physical need expressed in "I thirst." Remember what precedes: all is finished now, the work is done, the battle over, the victory here. Like some great general who never thought of hunger or thirst during the long battle hours, when at last the victory is won, he feels again the natural cravings. So Jesus now. This interpretation of Nebe is correct as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. In his effort to reject the idea that Jesus felt himself sinking into unconsciousness and therefore wished to have his lips wetted, he overlooks what follows. Jesus was dying, it is a question of minutes now, and Jesus knows it. But he desires to die not merely with full consciousness up to the last moment, but with a victorious cry from those parched lips, that burning throat. For that he wanted the vinegar. He did not *cry* aloud: "I thirst"; he *said* that as he could. But after this drink, as the Synoptists report, he uttered his victorious shout, and so he died. Even the centurion at the cross was astonished at this mode of death. John has helped us to understand it somewhat.

V. 29. The presence of the **vessel full of vinegar**, likewise of the **sponge** and the **hyssop** causes commentators to think strange thoughts. It ought to be evident that all these were intended for just what was done with them here. Men crucified cried for drink in their raging thirst, and the executioners used vinegar in a sponge on a short rod to give them so much to moisten their throats. The idea of this prolonging their lives need not trouble us, for crucifixion was intended to be a long drawn out torture. The *ὄξος* or vinegar is sour wine. It was used for the soldiers; and for the purpose here indicated it was entirely serviceable, for

it does allay thirst. There seems no doubt but that Jesus knew the vinegar was there, and there for this purpose, and so made his want known. There is thus no reason whatever for any special reflections in regard to the vinegar. — John uses the plural: **they** put a sponge, etc., and **brought** it to his mouth. Whether this means that several went about it, or that the sponge was filled more than once, now by one person, now by another, is difficult to determine. The repetition is quite possible, because the sponge would not be dripping full when raised. From John's plural we take it that now one, and now another hand raised the sponge. — The **hyssop** was a short reed, only about 18 inches long, since this plant makes stems of no greater height. This means that the crosses on Golgotha were not tall, as painters sometimes picture them. The head of each man could be reached by extending the arm at full length and taking a rod or reed of the indicated length.

30. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit.

The fact that Jesus received or took with his mouth the proffered vinegar shows plainly that his word "I thirst" was a request. Mouth and throat are moistened again for a brief moment, so that the last words Jesus intended to speak could be spoken in the manner he desired. There is no pause or time interval — at once on receiving the vinegar **he said, It is finished.** Matthew, Mark and Luke all state that Jesus cried with a loud voice. The former two mention no words, but Luke records that Jesus cried: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" We are left to decide which of the two words in these two records, that of John and of Luke, was the final word. There is little question that the last word is the one recorded by Luke. John connects the word "It is finished" directly with the reception of the vinegar — there was nothing between the act and the following word. The word recorded by

Luke is in a way included in John's statement that Jesus "gave up the spirit," i. e., into his Father's hands. The natural thing too is that one should commend his spirit to the hands of God only after he could truly say that his task was all finished. Jesus dies with a loud shout—it is the voice of a victor after the battle. The Son is going home to the Father after doing all that Father's will. No wonder his voice rose to its loudest tone.—**It is finished**, τετέλεσται, the perfect passive, literally: "It has been brought to an end or close." The force of this tense as here used may be illustrated by a line ending in a point, thus ———. There is an extended action, which has come, just now, to its termination. To whom is the word spoken? We answer: to God. It is like a report which Jesus makes to the Father who sent him. Nebe does not want us to think that the loud voice which Jesus used in uttering his last word was in any manner intended for the bystanders; in fact he is very emphatic about it. We cannot agree with him. While both of the last words are addressed to God, and the loud voice for each is due to the mighty fervor of the soul of Jesus that all was finished at last, those words were evidently meant also for men to hear. If the whole Passion and death were for us, why should we be shut out from this conclusion when now Jesus goes to the Father?—There is no subject. What is finished and brought to a close? Obviously the suffering of Jesus. But the word cannot convey the idea as if Jesus thought only of himself and was glad that now his pains would cease. Some say: the fulfillment of the prophecies was concluded. That is partly true; the prophecies concerning the resurrection, etc., were *not* yet fulfilled. A good many are satisfied to say: the work or task of Jesus is finished. But that is not definite enough. His work went on after his death and resurrection, goes on now. Zahn has only this pale thought: "There is no more duty to hold him here in life." A word so important cannot be put off with such

a general interpretation. The death of Jesus finished his redemptive work, the work of reconciliation, the work of atonement. This is the specific thing which is now brought to a close. The Lamb of God has made his great sacrifice — it is all done. Our great Substitute has paid the price — paid it to the uttermost farthing. "It is finished" indeed! Others will yet preach and teach, and Jesus will work through them; as the King on David's throne the regal work of Jesus will continue forever; but this redemptive shedding of his blood, done once for all, is finished forever. Hebr. 7, 27; 9, 12 and 26; Rom. 6, 10. — We are grateful that John has recorded this glorious word of the dying Savior for us, which the other evangelists omitted. John is satisfied **with Luke's record of the final word**, and so adds nothing here except the death itself. The last two words must have been spoken with only a brief pause between. Then came the end: **and he bowed his head**. Up to this moment his head had been held erect, now the muscles all relax, the head drops forward upon the chest. It is mere fancy to think that it inclined to the side on which the penitent malefactor hung. The dropping forward of the head goes together with the death. — There is no interval, no prolonged struggle, no gradual cessation of breathing, but at once the Savior **gave up his spirit**. Luke has the one word which means "to breathe out the spirit," John has the full counterpart to our English translation, thus evidently covering also the final word by which Jesus in dying commended his spirit into his Father's hands. All of the evangelists use choice expressions for stating the actual death of Jesus: none of them is content to say only that "he died." So they all too refer to the spirit or *πνεῦμα*, not to the *ψυχή* or soul, though dying can be expressed also by using the latter. Jesus was true man, and thus had what in man is called soul and spirit. These two are one, namely the immaterial part of our being. This may be called soul or spirit with no special difference

intended. When a difference is to be made the soul signifies our immaterial part as it animates the body and receives impressions from the body, while the spirit is the same immaterial part as it looks to a higher world. Compare Luke 1, 46-47, Fourth S. in Advent. Man's personality resides in his soul or spirit; in Jesus this personality was that of the Logos. The death of Jesus then dare not be looked at as a separation of the Logos from the human nature of Jesus or from any part of it. The union with our nature, once entered into, remained absolutely intact and undisturbed ever after. Nor was that union only with part of our nature, with the spirit or the soul; it was a most wonderful and complete union with our entire nature and all that belongs to it. In the death of Jesus his human soul or spirit was separated from his body, just as this separation takes place in our death. In the sinless person of Jesus the spirit ruled absolutely, and so it is eminently fitting that John and the others follow Jesus' own last word when they say that he yielded up his "spirit" in dying. 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 feelings in saying that Jesus really died of a broken heart. A few interpreters have followed in that line. The author himself left the matter undecided in the *Eis. Gospel Selections*, 2nd ed. I, 556. The latest and best medical authorities tell us that this is an impossible theory. A lesion like that could result only from a degeneration of the heart, and this occurs only in older persons where disease has left its effects. This statement covers also the tentative suggestions that some artery burst and thus 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. It requires but little reflection to see how untenable this conclusion is. The passage referred to deals with the entire action of

Christ in giving himself into death for us. His volition is apparent all along when he announces his passion and finally when he enters that passion and endures all its agonies. The death of Jesus is due to the physical effects of suffering and crucifixion. This alone is the cause assigned by the Scriptures. When the spirit left the body Jesus was dead. Only we must always conceive that death as one full of peace and joy. With the hard and bitter work all done Jesus goes to his Father. Like a tired child he lays his head to rest in his Father's arms. — Born of a perverted learning and a false imagination are all those ideas which try to make us think the spirit of Jesus entered *scheol* or hades, an intermediate place between heaven and hell, and remained there till the resurrection. Compare Matth. 11, 23 for Sexagesima on this subject. This hades notion is almost as bad as the older idea of some Reformed theologians that the soul of Jesus entered hell and suffered the tortures of the damned. Jesus himself tells us that his spirit went into his Father's hands, and this is heaven. John 17, 5 calls it the glory which the Son had from all eternity. The paradise into which the penitent malefactor's soul passed to be with Jesus that day was heaven, the eternal abode of God and all his blessed angels and saints. — Thus the Son of God was slain for our sins, giving his life to deliver us from death and to lead us unto life.

31. The Jews therefore, because it was the Preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the sabbath (for the day of that sabbath was a high day), asked of Pilate, that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

The Jews here mentioned are, of course, the Sanhedrists, most probably their leaders who had acted in the trial. Not that they had waited till Jesus was dead; they had left the hill of crucifixion some time before. The prospect always was that men who were crucified would linger on for a long time. This the Sanhedrists

wish to prevent in the present case, **because it was the Preparation**, i. e., for the special Sabbath which would begin with the setting of the sun. The designation "preparation" refers to all the preparation necessitated by the approaching Sabbath; all meals had to be prepared in advance and all other necessary work had to be finished before sunset. But the preparation is not the reason for the request; this is given in a following clause. — The Romans left the bodies of criminals on the cross till they rotted. The old Jewish law; Deut. 21, 22, etc., required that such bodies should be taken down and buried on the day of execution, because they were accursed and were not to defile the land. This referred to men who were hung, and thus to criminals already dead. Whether the Jews had this old regulation of theirs in mind here is not certain. They, of course, could not urge such a Jewish regulation upon the Roman governor. Their purpose here is of a different kind: **that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the sabbath**, whether still alive or dead. In the present case they had a special reason: **for the day of that sabbath was a high one**. It was the Sabbath of the Passover week, doubly sacred on this account. So near the city they did not like to see the bodies still on the crosses during this approaching holy day. — So they **asked Pilate** to have them removed. The clause which embodies their request is sub-final, *ἵνα* with the subjunctive, instead of an infinitive: **that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away**. This presupposes that all three crucified men were yet alive; the Jews then did not know that Jesus was already dead. The breaking of the legs is the so-called *crurifragium*, a cruel hastening of death, by its cruelty lessening the original punishment in no way. The form *καταγῶσιν* has an irregular augment, probably to distinguish the aorist from other forms. There are three such forms in the New Test., and Plato also has this augment in the infinitive.

32. The soldiers therefore came, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him: 33. but when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: 34. howbeit one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and straightway there came out blood and water.

In a remarkable manner the body of Jesus is preserved. John alone reports these facts. With heavy clubs several of the soldiers, those to whom the work of execution had fallen, crushed and shattered the legs of the two malefactors, going from one to the other. Something influenced even their callous hearts to leave Jesus to the last. They were not eager to carry out these orders upon this strange man. But when they approached his cross with their clubs **they saw that he was dead already**, his hanging head, his cessation of breathing making it plain to them that life had already fled. Yet in any ordinary case subalterns like these, especially common soldiers under military orders, use no discretion of their own; and so, if this had been an ordinary case, whether dead or not the blows would have been struck without hesitation. Nebe thinks this breaking of the limbs was hard work, and that the soldiers desisted from it in the case of Jesus in order to spare themselves the effort. We prefer to think that the same feeling which made them come last to the cross of Jesus stayed their hands when they saw he was dead. There was something about this man even when dead which affected the soldiers in a manner different from any other person dead or alive. — Instead of breaking the legs of Jesus, though already dead at least apparently, **one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side**, most probably the left side, plunging the blade of the spear through the heart. The verb is the one used regularly by Homer for stabbing to death. The intention evidently was, not to see whether Jesus was really dead, but to put his death beyond doubt by piercing the heart. Nebe is quite sure that this thrust of the spear

was applied also to the malefactors, since the clubbing would not bring on death immediately. To say the least this is doubtful. The text mentions the clubbing and even specifies first one, then the other, but it speaks of the spear only in the case of Jesus, and John's narrative makes the impression that this use of the spear was something altogether unusual and unlooked for. He himself stood by and witnessed all that occurred. — The result of the thrust was that **straightway there came out blood and water**. The history of the exegesis of this brief word would fill pages. Blood and water afford a fine opportunity for symbolism of one kind or another. Medical authority has influenced some to declare that blood and water could not flow forth from a wound like this after death had set in, and so they take it that John here intends to report a sign or miracle. A study of the text shows that John merely mentions the fact of the issue of blood and water, and that he treats as significant the fulfillment of two prophecies, the one that no bone of the body of Jesus should be broken, and the other that he should be pierced — and that is all. We may say what we will regarding the blood and water, John gives us no hint as to what he thought regarding this phenomenon. The sober conclusion of Zahn seems best: nothing in the text indicates a symbolical or a miraculous significance; the issue of blood and water is only an accompanying result of the spear thrust, and for John this seems to have been a visible evidence of the Savior's death. "Came out" does not mean gushed out in a stream. As regards the body of the Godman we may say that corruption did not touch it, Acts 2, 27. The ordinary processes of decay never appeared in that holy body. What physiological phenomena the slashing of *his* body with a spear blade should produce no man is really able to say. John merely states what he saw as the effect of this last hostile act. We are content to stop where he stopped.

35. And he that hath seen hath borne witness, and his witness is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye also may believe. 36. For these things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. 37. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.

V. 36-37 elucidate v. 35—note the explanatory particle γάρ. Not the water and the blood then, as a symbol, sign, or miracle, constitute the burden of John's witness or testimony which is to confirm our faith, but the bones left unbroken and the side so ruthlessly pierced. Note the perfect tenses: **he that hath seen hath borne witness**. John loves these perfects. When he recorded his testimony, long years after, the vision was still vividly before him. It ought to go without saying that he means himself as the man who saw and bore witness—he never mentions his own name or that of any member of his family. The main verb *μεμαρτύρηκεν* is especially significant. It speaks of a testimony made once for all, to stand thus now and always. Plainly John means the written record he has just made. This is fully corroborated by the final clause at the end of our sentence, for here for the first time in his Gospel he addresses his readers. His testimony, then, is this written record.—Before he mentions the purpose he inserts two strong supporting clauses: **and his witness is true**, ἀληθινή = genuine; and this adjective has the emphasis. What John has written is based on no hearsay, but on direct vision of his own—he has recorded what he saw with his own eyes. He is a competent witness. The second clause: **and he knoweth that he saith true**, ἀληθῆ = true things, without falsification. Whom does John mean with this pointed ἐκεῖνος? Zahn is right, the frequent use of this word has in mind a contrast with some other person, and hence does more than merely emphasize the subject already known, it sets that subject over against another. But more de-

cisive still, John cannot rest the truthfulness of his testimony, when he wants others to accept it, on his own subjective conviction, on his own personal assertion. He does not do this in the case of Jesus himself, 5, 31, etc.; 8, 13-18, but makes Jesus appeal to his works, the Scriptures, or the Baptist, 5, 32-47; 14, 10, etc., in corroboration. Can John exempt himself from this essential qualification of a witness, that whatever he says must be corroborated and supported by another in order to be able to demand credence? We do not think so. This *ἐκείνος* is not John himself, but another, who knows indeed that what John has here recorded in testimony is really true and a statement of the actual facts. It might be taken that this other is God himself, an appeal that would be proper. But God has not been referred to in any manner in the narrative, while this narrative has dealt all through with Jesus as the supreme person. Therefore *ἐκείνος* is Jesus, the glorified Savior himself. When John wrote his Gospel toward the end of the century he placed himself before the church for which he wrote, assuring his readers personally that his words were those of a competent and a true witness and appealed to Jesus himself as his support. This interpretation goes back to Gerhard, and Zahn who follows it mentions a number of others, Erasmus, Dechent, Haussleiter, K. Meyer, E. Abbot, and with reticence Sanday. The others all claim that John appeals only to himself.—The purpose clause: **that ye also may believe**, belongs to the previous verb "saith"—the verb "hath borne witness" is too far away. Notice the present subjunctive = be believing, continue to believe. John is thinking of men who already believe; if he had meant the beginning of faith he would have used the aorist. By this continued believing, then, is not meant merely credence in the facts **which John has just reported**, but faith in the full sense of the word—faith in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior. John's genuine and truthful testimony on the

death of Jesus has for its purpose to support and strengthen the faith of all the church, all believers who read and hear his testimony. The second person used here puts John face to face with us all.

36. In a strange way commentators hinge the solemn assurance of v. 35 altogether on the blood and water, as though this was the thing that we must believe above all else. Yet John himself beyond the mere mention of blood and water has nothing further to say on this matter. In his explanatory clause he brings in **these things**, namely the unbroken bones and the gashed side as literal fulfillments of prophecy, **that the scripture might be fulfilled**. In the latter statement he uses the regular formula, and then quotes the "scripture" to which he refers. — The first is: **A bone of him shall not be broken**, Ex. 12, 46; cf. Num. 9, 12. In the typical paschal lamb no bone was to be broken. It was not to be treated as an ordinary lamb slaughtered for food, which would be cut up and portioned out. No part of it was to be carried from one house to another, nor any portion that might be left over eaten later like other meat, but was to be burnt before morning. All these directions, in particular the order to leave the lamb entire and thus roast it on a spit, not cut, boil, or prepare it in ways that required sundering, disjuncting or breaking the bones, lifted the paschal lamb above all other sacrifices even, and this in order that it might be in a special manner a type of Jesus. How strikingly the antitype matched the type appears at the critical moment when all ordinary expectation would lead us to expect the legs of Jesus to be broken—but they were left unbroken. John puts the type and the antitype side by side, in order that, seeing what he saw, we too may believe.

V. 37. **And again another scripture saith: They shall look on him whom they pierced**, Zech. 12, 10, translated from the Hebrew by John, because the LXX was too inexact, making "pierced" signify only mis-

treat, insult. In the words of the prophet it is Jehovah himself who is pierced, and the piercing is connected with death, for they who pierced Jehovah thus shall mourn as one mourns for an only son or for his first-born. We must not shift the point as so many do from what was done in the piercing to what followed after that, looking upon the pierced form and mourning. In Jesus Jehovah, the Son of God, was literally pierced. While this gashing with a spear did not itself cause the death, it was the final act in the death tragedy. Again, holding prophëcy and fulfillment together, faith will be greatly strengthened. Every ordinary expectation would have thought that Jesus must hang for at least a couple of days on the cross, if he should indeed be crucified; or that he would have been killed like the malefactors by shattering the legs and thighs. Instead of that he dies after six hours, no bone is broken, and a spear pierces his side! The entire manner in which John reports the latter fulfillment shows that Jesus alone was thus pierced, not the malefactors, and that this piercing was exceptional. — Chiliasts at once jump to the conclusion that this looking upon the pierced one with mourning = the conversion of the whole Jewish nation. The real fulfillment on this point, which however John does not dwell upon, begins with what Luke 23, 48 reports: "And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things that were done, smote their breasts and returned." Keil adds: The real, full beginning of the fulfillment began when the 3,000 in Jerusalem were pierced with contrition and came to faith; this was followed by many other conversions in Jerusalem, and on down through the ages in every Jewish conversion. Those, however, who remain in unbelief shall also look upon him whom they pierced. "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so. Amen." Rev. 1, 7; Matth. 24, 30. The prophecy of

Zechariah refers to the Jews, not to the Gentiles, to the Maleach Yaveh, the Angel of Jehovah (Jehovah himself, the Logos), to his death, and that death including a piercing. In it all grace and judgment, as so often in other prophecies, are combined, the latter indicated by the comfortless mourning to which John refers so plainly in Rev. 1, 7.

SERMON.

Only one thing will satisfy **the Christian's heart to-day**—to go up in spirit with the holy evangelists to Calvary, to let their sacred words unfold once more to his soul that momentous scene when the Lord Jesus Christ, God's own Son, our blessed Savior, gave up his life that we might be saved. The one of all the evangelists who himself stood on Calvary during all those six hours when Jesus passed through his last great agony, who saw him yield up his spirit unto his Father, who watched all that was done to the last, who himself then with a few faithful helpers carried the sacred body of our Lord to its resting place in the tomb—he is to be our guide in this solemn hour. His holy words shall show us

How the Savior died upon the Cross.

I.

The end had come. The three fearful hours of darkness from noon till three o'clock were ended. The agonizing cry: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" had been wrung from the Savior's lips. Once more the sun broke through and flooded all the scene. The final moment was at hand—Jesus, our Savior, was dying. But mark well how he died. There is something stupendous in these last moments when life leaves the Savior's body on the cross. He dies as our Savior indeed—as the victor crying in triumph: "**It is finished!**"

Our Savior dies with the great work for which he had come into the world triumphantly brought to an end. He had come to redeem us from our sins, to remove our guilt by the shedding of his blood, to open heaven and blessedness for us by his death that we might enter in. That glorious work was now finally done. Not one stroke more needed to be added, not a single further effort, was required. The glorious goal set by God and clearly imaged

in the prophecies of his Word was now attained. Jesus had redeemed the world—salvation was won for man. What a moment of triumph for the Savior's soul. The stains of his battle are still upon his body, but the victory, the eternal victory over our sin, guilt, and death are in his hands. It is this that fills his soul now and makes him cry with all his might: "It is finished!" Thus he died.

Think what that work cost and you will understand the better how Jesus died thus. "It is finished!"—oh what all lies behind that word! The Savior's whole life in lowliness as man in this sordid, wretched world of sin and sinners. His battles with Satan from the first temptation on to the last conflict on the cross. The hard pilgrimages from one end of the land to the other with often scarcely a place to lay his weary head. The constant contact with men who loved sin better than salvation, Satan more than a Savior. The base ingratitude which saw all his love and loving gifts of healing and help, and yet would not understand their true purpose. The final Great Passion itself, the unjust condemnation, the bonds, the blows, the crown and mockery, and then this terrible cross, and in those last three hours the greatest bitterness of it all, when even in his Father's sight he was made a curse for us and in our stead, and for our sakes hung forsaken of God on the cross. And now it was all done. This tremendous price for our sins was all paid—all paid down to the uttermost farthing. O the triumph and blessedness of it! It is thus that the Savior died crying with a mighty voice just before his spirit took its flight: "It is finished!"

But the future is also locked up in that word and the victorious work of which it speaks. He uttered it, therefore, in the fervor of his soul not only for God to hear, but also for men: and St. John to-day helps us to hear it. Those parched and burning lips which had tasted no drop of drink since the early hours of the night before, after all that Jesus had endured, could not have cried aloud. So Jesus, knowing that the great work was all done, and that he might die with a shout of triumph on his lips, said: "I thirst." The soldiers brought the rod of hyssop, the sponge, and vinegar they had ready for the crucified when they would moan from thirst. They wet the Savior's lips and mouth, and then there rang out for them all to hear this mighty word, which still sounds forth to all the world in the holy Gospel of St. John—"It is finished!" They stopped, listened, wondered—finished, yes, a greater thing than they all knew, one which most intimately concerned them all, and will to all eternity, was finished. For all men and for all time, for you and for me and all the millions then unborn, for all the generations yet to be born, down to the end of time, and even for all eternity, the great

work of redemption was finished on Calvary. There now it will stand unchanged forever. By one all-sufficient sacrifice all is paid. The great fountain of pardon in Jesus' blood flows on and on in an undiminished stream for all who will to drink and be blessed. And ever as men's hearts yield to the love which won that salvation for them, their hearts will respond to the Savior's cry of victory "It is finished" in songs of praise and gratitude.

"Be praised, O Jesus, without end,
That thou from heaven didst descend,
And hast for me a ransom paid —
For all a full atonement made."

II.

When the word of victory had been uttered St. John tells us that Jesus bowed his head and gave up the spirit. But now a strange thing happened, not only the signs which the other evangelists record, which John therefore omits, the earthquake, the rocks rending, the veil in the Temple torn in twain, but something pertaining to the holy body of Jesus itself, something which shows us again how our Savior died upon the cross, namely **as the Passover Lamb giving his life for us.**

St. John tells us that the Jews who had brought Jesus to his death; while they triumphed in their monstrous deed, did not like to see the bodies of the men crucified on Calvary remain there in full view on the Sabbath, especially since the Jews all considered this Sabbath in their holy Passover week especially great and high. Men nailed to crosses often lingered on for three or four days before they finally died. So the Jews asked the Roman governor Pilate to have the execution hastened in the terrible manner then customary, namely by ordering the executioners to take heavy clubs, and reaching up from the ground crush and shatter the legs of the victims, thus killing them. The Roman governor consented. St. John stood by and saw how the first malefactor thus had his legs broken, ending his miserable life. Then the second was dealt with in the same way. Would the soldiers carry out their orders as men like this almost always do, without further question, and crash their heavy clubs down upon the body of Jesus also? They came to his cross — and paused. Jesus was already dead. What of it — crush his legs anyway! they might have thought. But no, they did not. An invisible power held them. It was the hand of God. St. John beheld and marvelled: for he saw then how Jesus had really died, as God's own precious Passover Lamb prepared for our deliverance.

Hundreds of years before, when God delivered his people Israel from the bondage of the Egyptians he had ordered them to kill and prepare for each family or group of ten or more a lamb: they were to treat it as sacred and holy, and in the killing and preparation not a single bone of it dared to be broken. All these hundreds of years, at every coming Passover, down to the one which had been celebrated the very night before, the Jews had followed these instructions. Never a bone of any Passover lamb had been broken. Why this ancient, strange command of God? Because all those lambs were types and images of Jesus; because they all pictured his sacrificial death for us. And that there might never be a doubt about it this mark was affixed of God to all those Jewish lambs and to this great heavenly Lamb of his own: "A bone of him shall not be broken." When every one might have expected those soldiers never to stop for an instant, but at once to swing their clubs against that holy body—they did *not* do it. God protected his holy sacrifice, as he said he would by the prophecy concerning the paschal lambs.

But see what all this signifies for us. If Jesus is the great Paschal Lamb of God, then all those other paschal lambs slain at God's command picture to us what our Savior's death really means. That night in Egypt the angel of death went through the land and killed the first-born in every Egyptian house, but the blood of those paschal lambs protected every Israelite's house. More than this—that night when they ate of those lambs as God bade them the order would come from the Egyptian king ending their terrible slavery and bondage forever, they would go free under Moses, their leader, to serve God in a new land. It was all a show and image of the salvation which God would prepare not only for the Jews but for all men in his own chosen Passover Lamb Jesus Christ. They who trust in the blood of this Lamb of God slain on Calvary, they who by faith receive unto themselves his holy sacrifice are thereby delivered from a worse death than that which swept through Egypt that night, and are set free from a worse bondage than that from which the Israelites were delivered that night. God's Passover Lamb by his death frees us from the eternal death which comes as the penalty of sin and from the eternal curse and bondage which unforgiven sin brings upon men. All who believe in the Savior slain on Calvary are by that faith made God's own children to serve him here in his holy church on earth, and then at last taken to the blessed church above to serve him there in joy and holiness forever. This is how Jesus died—not a bone of his was broken; he died as our Passover Lamb—death and damnation shall pass over us and spare us for the sake of Jesus' blood. St. John saw it and re-

corded it for our faith and consolation. We see it with him and sing:

"Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,
 All our sins on thee were laid;
 By almighty love annointed,
 Thou hast full atonement made.
 All thy people are forgiven
 Through the virtue of thy blood:
 Opened is the gate of heaven,
 Peace is made 'tween man and God."

III.

Not a bone of our Passover Lamb did the soldiers on Calvary break, but they did something else, again altogether unexpected, but foreseen of God, and again an act so significant that when St. John points it out to us we must see with him that this too shows us how Jesus died. The Savior died on the cross **as the mighty Messenger of Jehovah bringing grace and judgment to us all.**

Those cruel clubs were not raised to shatter the bones that dared not be broken. But as St. John stood by he saw one of the soldiers raise a spear and plunge the sharp blade of it into the side and thus into the heart of Jesus' dead body. And when he withdrew the spear blood and water came from the great, deep gash. In a strange way the holy body of Jesus was thus marked once more, not by sparing it this time, but by wounding it. And St. John tells us that this was done likewise under the directing hand of God, for centuries before he had pointed all his people to this coming sacrifice which he would make of his own Son, and had his prophet Zechariah declare: "They shall look on him whom they pierced." Behold here, what St. John shows us the body of God's own Son pierced indeed, not merely by the cruel nails in his hands and feet, but also and most significantly by this mortal wound which pierced through his very heart.

But again note well what this great sign and mark upon the holy body of Jesus means. When the prophet foretold it he coupled it with the gift of God's spirit of grace and supplication, but at the same time he foretold how Israel would mourn at the sight of him whom they pierced, mourn as one does for an only son or for the death of his first-born. St. John himself tells us what this mourning will be, when in the book of Revelation he speaks of the final judgment, of Jesus coming in the clouds: "Every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." Who is this of

whom the prophet foretold that he would thus be pierced, and that both grace and judgment, supplication and mourning would be connected with him? Zechariah called him the Angel of Jehovah, and the word "angel" means messenger. Who this Angel or Messenger is we see when he speaks as the Lord God himself and when he is himself called Jehovah. It is God's own Son. Him the wicked nation of the Jews would pierce to death—did pierce thus with a wound deep and wide through his very heart when he died as the Godman on the cross of Calvary. And now you see why hundreds of years before already God had his prophet speak of grace and judgment in conjunction with this Messenger, his own beloved Son whom he would send to Israel and whom they would pierce and mark with the great death wound.

Jesus died as God's great Messenger—the cleft in his side marks him. And all they who pierced and marked him thus shall look upon him, either now in grace, or on that last great day when he returns in glory, in judgment. They who look as did the 3,000 in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when St. Peter preached unto them Christ crucified, who see the atoning blood that flowed from his heart, who accept the grace of pardon in that blood, who believe with repentant hearts—they shall be blessed by this great Messenger of salvation. He will pardon their guilt and save them. But all who refuse to look thus upon his grace shall look at last in another manner. Marked by his holy wounds as the Messenger of Jehovah's grace whom they slew, they shall see him in his eternal majesty on the last day. Then terror will take hold on them: they will mourn, even as the prophet said; they will wail, as St. John wrote in Revelation. For all who reject the grace sent them by God through his Son slain for them shall be cast into outer darkness to wail there forever.

This great mark in the holy body of Jesus is a sign first of all for the Jews, for they are the people who inflicted that mark upon him. But who will say that it does not refer also to us? But for our sins neither the Jews could have wounded the holy Son of God, nor could that soldier have plunged his spear through our Savior's side. Rightly, therefore, do we sing:

"Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
 Let me hide myself in thee;
 Let the water and the blood,
 From thy wounded side that flowed,
 Be of sin the perfect cure;
 Save me, Lord, and make me pure."

Yea, let us this day bow our heads and mourn in the sorrow of godly repentance and then look with faith upon the Savior's open side where the blood of our atonement flowed. And may God preserve us from the unbelief which by its rejection of Jesus pierces his side again; for all they who pierce him thus, Jew and non-Jew alike, shall howl in terror at last when they see, then too late, him whom they pierced. When the final shadow sinks down over us may we pray as our last prayer:

"Secure I hide in his cleft side
My failures ev'ry one."

These great and holy visions of the death of our Savior let the apostle St. John help you to-day to carry away in your hearts from the sacred hill of Calvary—the vision of the victor crying: "It is finished!" that of the Passover Lamb buying us free from bondage and death, and that of the Messenger of Jehovah bringing us grace and judgment. With these visions drawing your hearts ever back to the cross you will this day have not been in vain in spirit with St. John on Calvary.

OUTLINES.

The central thing in the text is the death of Jesus—all else focusses its light upon that. We may take the simple theme: How St. John describes the death of Christ to us—so that we see God's hand in that death—the work of redemption complete—and may thus believe even as St. John did.—In treating the word "It is finished!" the preacher is tempted, in order to get divisions under this theme to make the catalog: the life of Jesus—the predictions—the suffering—his life's work—our redemption. A little reflection should show us that this is really improper. We must take that sacred word only in the sense in which he meant it: the work of redemption is finished. But we may divide on this work: this work assigned to Jesus by the Father—which required such a sacrifice—which was done with such obedience and love—which is so blessed for us all. Homiletical desires, or shall we call them needs? dare never lead us to violate true exegesis. We may also put it thus: "It is finished!" Behold the Savior's great victory! Behold the Lamb's great sacrifice! Behold God's great fountain of grace!

"It is Finished!"

1. *The passion.*—2. *The sacrifice.*—3. *The redemption.*

The Word of our Dying Savior: "It is Finished."

1. *The battle is fought.*
 2. *The sacrifice is made.*
 3. *The sanctuary is opened.*
 4. *Satan is conquered.*
 5. *Death is swallowed by life and immortality.*
- Thomasius.
-

The Supreme Moment on the Cross.

1. *Supreme for the Savior.*
 2. *Supreme for the work of redemption.*
 3. *Supreme for us all.*
-

Let St. John Take us beneath the Cross.

1. *Let him show us the price of our redemption.*
 2. *Let him move our hearts to accept this redemption by faith.*
-

THE EASTER CYCLE

(483)

EASTER.

Luke 24, 1-12.

There is little opportunity for choice as regards the Easter text. The old pericope line has Mark's account, the Eisenach series has Matthew's. There are left the narratives of Luke and John. The latter is intended by the apostle as a supplement to the narratives of the Synoptists and therefore lacks some of the features which we value so highly for Easter morning, although we might select John 20, 1-10. We prefer the story as Luke gives it. He places before his readers *the great historical fact of Christ's resurrection* and how it was revealed to the first witnesses. In doing this the importance of this fact in its connection with Christ's atoning death and in its bearing upon the disciples is also touched. It is thus one of *the* three Easter gospel texts, and a finer we could not wish.

Like the other Synoptists Luke takes up the narrative after the passing of the Sabbath during which the tomb was guarded by Pilate's soldiers with a government seal affixed to the stone which closed the opening.

24, 1. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared.

The Jews had no names for the week days; therefore they designated them with reference to the Sabbath. *Mía τῶν σαββάτων* is the Greek for the Hebrew expression: the first (day) with reference to the Sabbath, i. e., the first following the Sabbath. It must be noted too that one may use either the Greek singular or plural for Sabbath. So our text begins with Sunday morning. — And that **at early dawn**, which uses the genitive of time for "dawn" and adds to that the adverb "deep" — thus: "at deep dawn," i. e., early dawn: There is no

discrepancy with Mark: "they come to the tomb when the sun was risen." Mark's present tense covers the entire time from the start till the arrival. The start was before the sun was up, while compared with daylight it was yet dark (John 20, 1). — Luke writes: **unto the tomb**, for the arrival at *this place* is the important thing. A word on the tomb may not be out of place. It was hewn into the rock, i. e., a small chamber was hewn out, into which a door about two feet wide led. There were two kinds of these rock tombs, such as had deep coffin-like compartments for the bodies hewn into the walls of the tomb, like the cells in the honey comb. Into these the bodies were pushed feet first, and then the opening was closed with a small slab. The other rock tombs had couch-like places cut into the wall, so that the body lay lengthwise of the wall, in larger tombs one body above the other. These so-called *loculus* tombs often had decorated facades on the walls inside. Our Savior's tomb was of the latter kind; for only in a tomb of this kind could an angel sit both at the head and at the feet of the place intended for the body. The usual method of closing the door which led into the tomb was by means of a large circular stone which was set in a groove running across the face of the tomb. This groove sloped toward the door, to hold the stone there and prevent it from rolling to one side. Naturally, this made it difficult in opening the tomb to roll it up the incline — the very thing that troubled the women. — Who were the persons that **came** thus early to the tomb? Luke answers us in v. 10. We may say at once that he does not name them all, for he means to tell us only how the disciples certainly should have believed when they received the testimony of more than two or three witnesses. So he names three and points to the rest. Who the latter were we can only guess. Only Salome, the mother of John was one of the company, but the mother of Jesus was not among them — if she had been the evangelists would most certainly have

named her. There were no men in the company, partly it seems because the work the women intended to do was woman's work, but surely also because in this case the strong love of these blessed women moved them to action till the last, while the broken and shattered faith of the men left them helpless, unable to rally even to this service. We must take into account also that the men did not remain together when Jesus was torn from them. When Mary Magdalene carries back the startling news that the grave has been rifled she finds only two men to come to the rescue, Peter and John — the rest were elsewhere. Only the news of the resurrection brought them together again, and it took Thomas a whole week to come. — The women came, **bringing**, or carrying, the **spices which they had prepared**, i. e., made ready as soon as the ending of the Sabbath, Saturday at sundown, permitted the necessary labor for law abiding Jews. Nicodemus had brought "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight" when Jesus was buried. The myrrh is a preparation of the bark or gum resin secured from the myrrh balsam tree; the aloes are not the common aloes with their unpleasant odor, but imported from the East, either the perfume made from the resin which thickens in the wood, or the fragrant wood itself, which gives off its aromatic odor when it begins to decay. The aloes are the *ahalim* for making fragrant the garments of kings, and were always costly. Some think that this aromatic mixture brought by Nicodemus was fluid, but it was intended for the linen bands which enwrapped the body of Jesus, being sprinkled in liberally as the strips of linen were wrapped round and round. The *aromata* which the women brought were either altogether or in great part unguents intended for the anointing of the body. Comp. John 12, 1, etc., in the *Eis. Gospel Selections* for the evidence that after the tragedy on Calvary the body of Jesus could not be anointed in the manner usual among the Jews. In fact if Joseph of

Arimathea had not provided the linen in such an unexpected way, and Nicodemus the myrrh and aloes, there would have been nothing at all on hand for the body of the Savior, even his clothes having been divided among the soldiers. The time too was so short that the best of effort would not have availed under those trying circumstances. So what could be done was hastily done Friday before sundown. With many a sad regret the women especially must have come away from the tomb—how they longed to do far more and all in fitting order for that loved body. Now they are ready for this work, though the body had already lain so long—it should not lie another unnecessary hour. The women, no doubt, feared that even now the first signs of decomposition might be manifest.

2. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. 3. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

Luke here lifts out two immense facts and sets them before us as such, namely two things which the women **found**, using the same historical aorist in both statements. When they did this finding, and how the action progressed step by step Luke does not say, and we have no right to read into his brief report what he has not put into it. Note that he says the stone was **rolled away**, not from the door, but **from the tomb**. How this was Matthew tells us—an angel had done it. At the touch of his finger the heavy, sealed stone was hurled from its place over the door, out of the groove made for it to roll in, rolled instead away from the tomb and fell flat, and the angel sat upon it. There was the tomb of Jesus wide open when the women came near enough to see it. That essential fact Luke puts forward for us to mark.—Beside it the other, to which the former is the introduction, using the simple *ἐν*, here “and.” **And they entered in** is only the aorist participle, which in this case intends to say only that on entering, or on having entered **they found not the body**. Both

times the verb is forward, we are to know what they *found*. They were not merely told in either case, they saw with their own eyes and so "found," and in the latter case by going into the tomb itself. This absence of the sacred body is a vital thing. What had become of it? Matthew has the angel draw attention to this significant absence; he points to the place where the body had lain—the place was empty. All deniers of the resurrection get into difficulty here. Some helplessly surrender and say they do not know what became of the body. Others try their imagination to explain in some incredulous fashion—anything to locate that body in some way. For as long as they fail in locating it, they feel that the sacred record has the advantage. Russell of "hell" fame frantically claims it was dissolved in gas! Alas, for all the follies of unbelief—that empty place proclaims aloud with its silence: "He is risen, risen indeed!"

4. And it came to pass, while they were perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel: 5. and as they were affrighted, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them . . .

Here again Luke merely states the fact, and does not describe the movements and actions in detail. He uses the simple form found so often in the sacred record: **And it came to pass**; it marks an occurrence merely as such. The women **were perplexed thereabout**, they were at a loss concerning this thing, i. e., the absence of the body. All that Luke aims to tell is what concerns this phenomenon. What else all the women saw in their approach and entrance, and in what order, is not stated. Any details which we imagine must square with the vital facts as the holy writers state them. Nor dare one record be played against another, as those are ever inclined to do who make their own thought and imagination decisive even over against inspired authors.—So the women at first glance, it seems, noted the absence of the enswathed body. That is the point

Luke is concerned about, and in connection with that alone he makes the explanation: **behold**—for it was marvelous indeed!—**two men stood by them in dazzling apparel**. In regard to these angels it will be well to remember that they were entirely free to move about, to sit, and to stand as seemed most appropriate for their mission. It is wrong to think they must be fixed in one position, or to hamper them in other ways. We know that one angel rolled the stone away and sat on it. He seems to have waited for the women to come near enough. Then he passed into the tomb. Matthew and Mark mention only one angel, the former does not say that he was in the tomb, the latter does. Luke states that there were two, John corroborates Luke on this. We may assume that when the women looked into the tomb they at once saw in the dazzling light that filled the narrow chamber both the vacant place and the two angels. They were terribly startled—what did it mean? Mark speaks of the angel sitting—perhaps both of them sat, or one stood as they entered. Presently the angels speak, i. e., most likely one speaks for both. Thus, we may say, two evangelists come to speak of “*an* angel,” for we must note that neither Matthew nor Mark say there was only “one.” Luke says the two men “stood by them.” When they entered, the sitting angel, or if both at first sat, then both of them, arose to receive the women and speak to them. John adds that the two angels afterwards remained in the tomb waiting for Mary Magdalene, having a special message for her. For she, when first noting the open tomb, supposing the grave had been robbed, had at once wheeled about and run back to the city to get help.—The angels are described as **men** when they appear on their mission here, or as young men, never as women or maidens. Female angels in feature and form are unbiblical; let us get rid of them in church decoration. Power is their mark; masculine virility and strength should be in every line,—Mark notes the whiteness,

Matthew and Luke the **dazzling**, lightning like radiance of the angels' **apparel**. They come in human form, though wondrously exalted, and thus have garments upon them, but white to show their purity, blazing bright to show their glory and holiness. We cannot but think that the rock hewn chamber glowed with a heavenly light from these two angels of God. — We must thank Luke for this touch in the picture, that when the women **were affrighted**, they still realized that the persons they saw were angels of God, **and bowed down their faces to the earth**. That, we may well suppose, was the effect of the dazzling appearance of the angels coupled with the fright that came over the women at this moment. It was not an act of worship, simply the natural effect of what they beheld. Nebe, in dealing with this section of the resurrection story in his monumental work, is surely disappointing. He is content to let the different records stand as if they disagreed — and yet there is no disagreement except such as men may themselves introduce. He dodges his task by hinting at different "sources," some women may have seen only one, others two angels, and even adds this bit of helplessness — the angels themselves are seen only by those of whom they wish to be seen. We need no such evasions to leave the least shadow on the Synoptists and John. All we need is to take their words just as they stand; they are pieces of the one divine pattern, and put together give us the great lines of the wondrous resurrection scene in the empty tomb of Jesus. Where death had hitherto always ruled, life and light from heaven itself now shone.

5. . . . **they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen:**
 6. **remember how he spake unto you while he was yet in Galilee,** 7. **saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.**

Thus the resurrection of Jesus is announced to the

women, their faces, we may well think, still bowed down to the ground. As with the angels, so with the words to the women all is harmony. Each evangelist gives us his portion of them, and the whole statement is the great Easter message. Luke omits the call not to fear, which undoubtedly was the preamble to the whole message. He also omits the command to tell the apostles and Peter what had occurred, but reports that this command was carried out, v. 10. First we hear the preparatory question: **Why seek ye the living among the dead?** We cannot think that this was merely rhetorical, i. e., that by the participle "the living one" is meant the risen one, thus preempting the announcement of the resurrection. "The living" one is the one in whom they believed as the source and fountain of true life. They had seen him commanding death and securing obedience, and they had felt the power of the spiritual life he had wrought in their own hearts. Could they for one moment suppose that this Living One had himself fallen helpless and broken under the power of death? lying thus as one of the countless dead **among the dead?**

- his body to molder in the grave? This question was to stir to life again their stricken faith, to prepare them for the great Easter announcement of the resurrection. — This at once follows: **He is not here, but is risen.** The aorist states the past fact as such. The form is passive, "was raised," but as in many of these passives the sense is middle: "he raised himself" = is risen, as the R. V. properly states. The Scriptures say both, that the Father raised Jesus, Rom. 6, 4; 8, 11; Matth. 16, 21; 17, 23; 26, 32, and that Jesus rose, Mk. 9, 31; Luke 18, 33. Dogmatically stated all the *opera ad extra sunt indivisa*. John 10, 18 leaves no doubt as to Christ's power to take his life again after laying it down. When the angels call him the Living One this must say that as such he would rise by his own power. Here we must state how and when the rising took place. No man witnessed the act—no man could. The great moment

came that morning, before the angels descended and opened the empty tomb. We must never think that Jesus pushed away the stone, or that he needed the opened door to leave the tomb. His holy body lay in rest, dead indeed and separated from its spirit, but even so wholly untouched by decay with which death marks every other body it lays hand on. All in an instant the *vivificatio* occurred, body and spirit were reunited, and in that same instant the body had passed through the living rock and left the tomb empty. In that wonderful instant the body of Jesus entered the state of exaltation, its new, eternal mode of existence—"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." F. C. VII, J. 619, 190. The vivification and the glorification may be taken to constitute the resurrection of Jesus, yet all through the Scriptures there is added what we may call the manifestation. Instead of at once transferring his glorified body to heaven Jesus uses it to show himself visibly and tangibly to his disciples until his visible ascension to heaven. This manifestation is part of his resurrection.—The preparatory question and the great announcement are followed by an effective reminder: **remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee.** The women had followed Jesus on his last journey to Jerusalem and had heard the Lord's announcement of his passion during these latter days in Judea. The angels' word reaches back farther than that, back through the Galilean ministry and its significant utterances which these women

too had heard or had communicated to them at the time, Matth. 12, 40; 16, 21; 17, 22, etc. The implication in the mention of Galilee is that this death of Jesus was the goal to which he himself had intended to go from the very beginning — it was the very object of his Messianic mission, not a dire tragedy which had befallen him and ruined his life's purpose. — The words of Jesus are summarized by the angels: **that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.** These are the chief points, and they must always be kept together. On the Son of man see the text for Sexagesima. As the Messiah and Godman he had to be betrayed. This is the necessity not of fate or determinism, but of divine love and purpose for our salvation. The sinful men are Jews and Gentiles taken together, and the word "sinful" points to what their wickedness would do and actually did with Jesus. This culminated in the crucifixion. The trouble with the women, as with all the disciples, was that their thoughts stopped short at this point, cf. v. 21, but the crowning point of the announcements of Jesus had been his resurrection on the third day. And here we have the active verb *ἀναστῆναι*, rise again, get up again after lying down in death. That wonderful third day was now here — and they had forgotten all about it, had not even looked for anything to happen, had come only to find a dead body and leave a dead body in the tomb. But Jesus had not forgotten — he had done just what he had said. As the crucifixion came according to his word, so now the resurrection had come likewise. The visible proofs were before them — the empty grave, opened by angel hands for them to see empty, and these heavenly heralds to bring the promise of Jesus once more to their minds. Luke stops at this point and does not add the angels' command to tell the disciples the news.

8. And they remembered his words, 9. and re-

turned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest.

Again we must deal justly with Luke—he is simply stating the facts, and is not giving a close description of the entire action. Unless this is observed wrong conclusion will follow. Meyer rationalizes—this remembering is psychologically impossible if Jesus had really foretold his resurrection so clearly. No doubt if Meyer had heard those predictions *he* would have remembered them in time! The superiority of some of these modern exegetes is astounding to say the least. Well, not till now did these women recall in their true meaning the clear and plain predictions of Jesus regarding his resurrection. To help the psychologists we need only to remember ourselves that the disciples all along did not think it possible for Jesus to come to such a death, tried to take his words in a figurative sense, and when the passion came in actual reality were so upset thereby that they were unable to reason it out in cold logic that if Jesus died thus as he said, he would also rise again as he said. Many and many a time things become clear to us *after* the event which before, though they are plainly told us, and the first steps are clearly before us, we do not recognize in their real bearing. The psychology of what happened to these women is quite clear if we will do a little remembering ourselves. — **And returned from the tomb** is only a participle: having returned; or: after having returned. It is summary, says nothing of how they returned, with fear and joy battling in their hearts, and does not report how they saw the Lord himself on the way. The return is mentioned by Luke only as introductory to the report they made: **and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest.** This too is only a brief summary. Judas had gone to his place. The eleven are first sought out, then the rest of the believers, as the women found them, or as they came attracted by the

report to question them, were told. It would be a mistake to think that the eleven were together in one place when the women got back. They had scattered in Jerusalem after the death of Jesus, perhaps already before. Mary Magdalene was able to find only Peter and John at first, and she may have hunted for these. The telling was stretched out till it included the Eleven and the rest. Peter and John were not there when the women got back to the city; they heard the report after they returned from their run to the tomb.

10. Now they were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of Jesus: and the other women with them told these things to the apostles. 11. And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk; and they disbelieved them.

The testimony is so important that Luke names the main witnesses. **Mary Magdalene** is included, which shows plainly the summary character of Luke's statement, for Mary Magdalene had not kept with the other women. Just what she did John's Gospel reports. Her individual testimony is here combined with that of the other women. She is named first, and is treated regularly as the leader of the women, just as Peter is treated as the leader of the men. How Jesus himself distinguished her John's Gospel states. Jesus had freed her from demoniacal possession, but there is no evidence for the tradition that she had led a vicious life. She was a woman of high character and rare qualifications, apparently possessed of wealth, and as far as we know unmarried. — **Joanna**, Luke 8, 3, was the wife of Herod's steward, thus a woman of position and means, which is all that we know of her. — **Mary the mother of James** is the wife of Cleopas, and mother also of Jesus' own mother. — Who the other women were is not known, except that Salome, the wife of Zebedee now dead and the mother of John, was one of them. — These are notable witnesses indeed whose combined testimony

should not have been treated lightly. They reported to **the apostles** first. They are named again as the men who above all others should at once have believed, but they did the opposite. As to Peter Luke gives a hint in v. 12, and John's Gospel tells us concerning the details and John's own part in going to the tomb. Luke intends to give only the fact of the incredulity which the women had to contend with at first. In the sight of these men their remarkable story appeared as **idle talk**, *dummes Zeug*, a wild, extravagant, ridiculous story. Luke doubles his words to make them the stronger, and adds the negative verb: **they disbelieved them**, i. e., the women. Thus was the first Easter message received by the apostles.

12. But Peter arose, and ran unto the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths by themselves; and he departed to his home, wondering at that which was come to pass.

The textual authority for this verse is far too strong to call it an interpolation. Zahn's contention that the agreement with John is too close for this not to be an importation from the fourth Gospel ought to be reversed — John purposely gave us in full what Luke stated only in fragmentary form. So the best commentary on our verse is John 20, 1-10. — **Peter** and John ran to the tomb when Mary Magdalene came flying with her fearful news that the grave had been disturbed. Peter stooped because of the low doorway, in fact he went in as John states, and he too saw the grave empty — only **the linen cloths by themselves**, mute witnesses that he whom once they had enfolded now needed them no more. John does not say that Peter at once in any manner believed; he testifies only concerning himself (20, 8), and as regards both that as yet they did not realize what the Scriptures said of the resurrection. So Peter, and John too, left the empty tomb; and Luke says of the former that he wondered at what had **come to pass** — wondered at this astounding disappearance of

the sacred body, and at the significant manner in which he had seen those cloths lying—not as if a desecrating hand had torn them from the body, but as if heavenly ministering hands had laid them there in order to tell their tale to the beholders. In what follows, v. 24, Luke by using the plural indicates that Peter did not go out to the tomb alone.—Let us not blame the apostles and others too much for being so slow to believe. Their reluctance God has made to serve a mighty purpose, namely to impress upon us that these men were not credulous, uncritical, easy to impose upon. They were as hardheaded as men can well be to-day. Not until the fullest, strongest visual and tangible evidence came, and that not once but again and again in the actual appearance of the risen Savior, did they believe. If we had been in their places we could not have demanded more. But they did believe—all of them, with a mighty faith born of these heavenly realities and of the divine grace that wrought them for our salvation.

SERMON.

"Hallelujah! Lo, he wakes!

Lives! o'er death and hell victorious;
Earth in awe and trembling quakes,

As the hero rises glorious:
He who died on Golgotha,
Jesus lives, Hallelujah!"

This is the echo of the great Easter Gospel as it rings through the ages since that wondrous morning in Joseph's garden near Calvary's hill—the mighty response this Gospel meets in every Christian heart on this new Easter morn. "He is risen: he is risen indeed!" And there is but one care for our joyous hearts as we hear the Easter Gospel once more—that we may grasp and make our own all that its blessed message brings. To aid us most effectively, here in our precious Easter text is one of God's holy evangelists who under God's own direction states the great facts for us in due order, that step by step we may follow him and thus penetrate indeed with all its heavenly meaning.

The Great Easter Gospel of our Lord's Resurrection from the Dead.

St. Luke bids us contemplate: the useless spices—the empty tomb—the shining angels—the startled women—the doubting disciples—and by the aid of them all he bids us fill our hearts with Easter faith and joy.

I.

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing *the spices* which they had prepared, and certain others with them."

Can you think of anything sadder than these women, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, Salome, and others, going out in the gray light of that Sunday dawn to finish the task they had been compelled to do so hurriedly that Friday afternoon when at sundown the Sabbath began and the sepulchre had to be all closed—for as Jews they dared to do no work on the sacred day? Think of the love of their hearts which made them hasten thus, now that they dared to turn to the tomb again. But what a broken love! They hasten so because they fear decay was already beginning to work its ravages upon that precious body. All they had been able to do was to wrap it in long strips of linen sprinkling an ample amount of powdered spices between. They want to anoint the body itself, as the Jews loved to bury, rewrap it more carefully and completely, and so leave it forever with all that love could do in this tenderest, saddest service of all.

"Bringing the spices," writes St. Luke, the costly aromatic ointments they had prepared. What a world of meaning lies in the words!

Think of those spices, and then think of him for whom they were intended!

Beneath all the cruelty, pain, and tragedy of our Savior's death there throbbed a mighty victory. When he bowed his head on the cross he had died indeed, but he had also laid his life down himself by a voluntary act of sacrifice. When his limp body was lifted down from the cruel cross, it was still the body of God's own Son who had commanded storm and waves, sickness, demons, and death, and in every case had been instantly obeyed. When they wrapped it in linen like other dead, that body was utterly unlike those dead, for by it sin and death themselves were broken and could never harm this holy body by their touch of corruption and decay. David already had prophesied of the body of Jesus that it would not see corruption. They laid it down on the rock-hewn couch in the fine new vault which Joseph of Arimathea

offered for its rest, thinking that here the body would stay till it crumbled to dust and ashes, when in reality he to whom that body belonged meant for it to rest in this quiet place only till the third day when he himself would bring it forth in all the glory that really belonged to it. And now that mighty moment had come. Even as the women went on with hurried steps, as the shadows grew lighter and the first streaks of the dawn lit the east, the great Easter miracle was wrought—Jesus Christ, slain for our sins, having cancelled our sins, arose in triumph from the grave. Behold the **useless spices**—a few moments more and they will drop to the ground and be forgotten by their bearers, for they themselves will see and hear the great Easter Gospel of our Lord's Resurrection. And they, and we all, whenever we hear those spices named again, will feel the power of that Gospel strong and mighty with joy in our hearts.

That is what the useless spices proclaim on Easter morning—useless indeed—for the body of God's Son was incorruptible—it rested for our sakes in death—it slumbered thus only for a little while—then all its life returned and its glory shines forth forever. And we who see it all, like the women in our text, are filled with a joy that shall never end.

II.

"And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre," writes St. Luke. "And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus."

If ever sad hearts went out to a grave those hearts were sad that Easter morning. Here was one more than merely loved by those near and dear to him, and now torn from them by the ruthless hand of death. They had believed in Jesus as the Christ, as the Savior of Israel and of the world. Mary Magdalene had experienced his power when he freed her by one mighty word from the possession of evil spirits; there were others of the women who had received his miraculous help. A new life, a new joy, one which really came from heaven had entered their souls. Then this fearful death of Jesus at the hands of his enemies had crashed down upon all their hopes like an avalanche, and with their own trembling hands they had laid him in the grave and rolled the stone before its opening. More than their love lay buried there—all their faith and trust in God's promises, all their hopes for time and for eternity. That was the grave that loomed before their thoughts when they went out that Easter morning from Jerusalem.

Keep that picture in mind, and then see what St. Luke writes—the grave is wide open—the grave is empty, the body of Jesus gone!

Here is the Easter Gospel in its fulness. A grave was needed indeed, when our Savior laid down his body in death for our redemption. And God saw to it that one proper in every way was at hand when the great hour came, not a pit to be covered with heavy clods of earth, but a roomy rock-hewn vault with niches cut in the walls for the bodies; not an old tomb with the molder of death in it, but one wholly new and just finished, fit for the rest of the incorruptible body of our Lord. (No prison-house was this tomb to be for our Savior, like ordinary tombs for men's bodies. Where was there a tomb which could lock in the body of him who had shattered the gates of hell itself? This was to be a place of sweet, untroubled rest after hard labor and pain. When the work was done for our redemption on the cross the weary body of Jesus rested—in the highest and holiest sense it rested, even as his spirit was refreshed by holy angel ministrations in heaven.—And when those sorrowing women drew nigh, when the hour set by God himself came, the great Easter deed was wrought. The soul of Jesus returns to the body in the tomb, and in the next instant alive, glorified, using now all the heavenly powers that had belonged to it from the very beginning, the body of Jesus passes out through the living rock walls of the tomb to enter upon its new existence in the fulness of divine majesty and glory. Thus was the tomb empty—an emptiness absolutely different from every other tomb on earth from which ever a body on earth has been taken. For this body, when its death had destroyed death itself, arose itself in a divine life never to end. St. Paul writes: "Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." Rom. 6, 9.—And now to reveal that wondrous emptiness to men an angel came, like a flash of lightning from the morning sky; he touched the stone that locked the empty tomb, hurled it from its place, and laid bare the change that had been wrought within. Then the women reached the tomb—all was ready for them to come and see: the empty tomb proclaiming the Easter Gospel of our Lord's Resurrection from the dead. When their hearts grasped it, a joy unspeakably great (and as deathless as he whose resurrection they now saw) overcame them.

O let the message of that empty tomb bring the same Easter joy in all its fulness to you to-day. Christ's empty tomb means that death could not hold his body, the grave could not bar him in. It means that the body slain for our sins is transformed, glorified, using all the power and majesty belonging to it. Time and space and all earthly limitation cannot hinder it or set limits for it. And all the life and glory of that exalted body is intended for us, that by the power of Christ's salvation even our bodies shall at last be made like unto his. Take in the joy, and with the prophet Hosea and the apostle St. Paul sing the Easter song of triumph: "O death, where

is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

III.

"And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold two men stood by them in shining garments."

What had those women expected to see in the tomb of Jesus? You know—the sad image of death and its terrible ravages. For this they had come prepared. They dreaded to think of it, and yet they could not stay away. They knew that tears would suffice their eyes, that the wounds still fresh in their hearts would open anew, that their hands would shake from nerves overwrought when they would touch *his* holy wounds and cover them with precious unguents. And then, when all would be done, they knew how they would leave, with sad and painful reluctance, with heads bowed down and faces covered, wearily going back to dreary, empty lives. Ah, the pity of it when we picture it to our minds. All the sorrows we have ever had are as nothing to this sorrow—for the highest hopes of heaven lay buried for these women in that tomb.

To realize in your own hearts the full meaning of the Easter Gospel never forget what those women felt when they thought of their work in Jesus' tomb. Against that black background of nameless grief hold the Easter vision that met their eyes.

Always in the great story of our salvation when the cardinal points are reached heaven itself gets into commotion—the angels of God appear. It was so when our Lord Jesus rose from the dead. Into the very citadel of death the eternal spirits of life and light were sent. When the bulwarks of the grave were thrown down the shining dwellers of heaven marched in. Where the stench of corruption had ever ruled before now at last the sweetness of angelic presence spread heavenly delight. It is all symbolic of what the resurrection of Jesus has brought—life in place of death; immortality in place of decay; light instead of the night of death; joy eternal in place of gloom.—And remember the angels of God are his messengers. Whatever their shining presence symbolizes, all that they came to make our own through him who won it for us by his death and resurrection. That is why **the shining angels** at the tomb of Jesus waited for the women till they came. The women were to see them, to see reflected in them what the Easter Gospel of our Lord's Resurrection really is, and then to receive from them what this Easter Gospel really contains. And not only they, but we all who have eyes to see this blessed Easter vision of the angels of life and light in Jesus' tomb.

Let your hearts rejoice in what is here proclaimed. As dark as was the grave of Jesus when he was laid there, so dark are our graves still. But he is the first fruits of them that slept. The power

of Christ's resurrection is over all those who sleep in Jesus now. The life and light that entered Jesus' grave is now invisibly over every grave in which one of his saints slumbers. Only a little while, like the three days of darkness in Jesus' tomb, and the shining angels of God will open every one of our graves and we shall share the life and light which is theirs and which the glorious Easter Gospel of Christ now makes our own.

IV.

St. Luke writes again that the women "were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth." Then, however, the Easter message rang out: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." And they remembered his words.

There was something wrong with those women when they made ready those spices and went out to anoint the body of Jesus. Much as their sorrow affects us when we try to imagine it, we dare not forget what really caused that sorrow and made it so comfortless and deep. They had forgotten!—forgotten the most precious of all the words and promises of Jesus. They said they believed, and yet—they had forgotten. When the very things came which Jesus had told them, not only at the last, but already in his earliest teaching in Galilee and all through his ministry, the crowning things to which all the others were only a prelude, behold, these women forgot—they passed through them all as in a maze, a cloud over their hearts and eyes. It was all so simple—if Jesus died as he said he would, died exactly as he said, on the cross, why then this death itself was proof and guarantee that after that death would come exactly what he said would come—his rising from the dead. But they had not believed as they should, and so they even went out to anoint the body of Jesus, when with eager expectation they should have awaited that decisive third day. Even the enemies of Jesus, the men who had killed him, had not forgotten—they placed a guard of soldiers around the tomb, so that nobody could come, steal away the dead body, and then spread the report that Jesus was risen. Those soldiers should have reminded the women and all the rest, if nothing else would: but sad to say, they all forgot.

Here is the part of the Easter message that *we* dare not forget—the part that points to faith. When the women saw the angels and with faces bowed down to the ground heard those words of loving rebuke: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? . . . remember, remember how he spake unto you!" then they were startled indeed. How it all must have come back

to them—all in a flash then at last. Their own dulness of mind and heart must have startled them; the clearness of all those words of Jesus, now finally clear also to them; and the tremendous significance of those words, when now the full reality of what they contained burst upon their consciousness. Shame at their forgetting and failing to believe, at their foolish bringing of spices when they should have brought remembrance and faith, at their waiting so long and requiring so much to get what Jesus had offered them and tried to give them so long.—**The startled women** in the tomb of Jesus recall to us how thousands of hearts to this day lie in the maze of forgetfulness and unbelief. Not so had those women forgotten that their memory had become a blank. They knew that Jesus had said those things, but they did not treat them as realities. Just so, who will count them all, and some of them are in our churches this very Easter morning, people hear not only the promises of Jesus' resurrection but the glorious fulfillment of those promises from angel lips, from the pens of God's evangelists, from the mouth of Jesus himself, and yet they do not deal with them as golden realities for life, for death, and for eternity—they pass over them in a kind of dismal forgetfulness. Do we want to wait to be startled too by something more than we already have? The hour is coming when the angels who were in Christ's tomb will appear again; all the angels of God will be with them, and the risen Savior himself in his heavenly glory. Not you and I alone, but all men alike will see them. But on that day it will be too late for faith. O let this precious Gospel of the Savior's resurrection with the angels' call to the women to remember be enough for us. God give us the true Easter remembrance of faith.

V.

And now St. Luke tells us what the women did: they "returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. . . . And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

Does it jar us to hear that this was the reception accorded the first promulgation of the great Easter Gospel from the lips of the first witnesses? Alas, for the similar unbelief that has followed down to this very day. But these words of St. Luke and the other evangelists were written for the very purpose of preventing such unbelief and of strengthening our faith against it when it meets us among men. Yes, it is true, the eleven apostles themselves did not believe when the women returned and told the things they had seen and heard, and none of the rest believed. They even called the whole report ridiculous, the foolish chatter of women. But in a very little while every one of these disciples,

even Thomas who held out longest, did believe. That is the thing to impress upon our minds—not one continued in doubt or unbelief. Why not? Because the proof of the Lord's resurrection was overwhelming. And so forever the Scriptures record this unbelief at the start to show us how all these disciples were anything but easily convinced, the very opposite of credulous dupes. They were men of sound, solid, practical sense—no half dozen women, even such noble characters as these named by St. Luke, could make them believe what seemed so utterly improbable, yea simply impossible. But when the Lord himself appeared to them, when Thomas himself was ordered by that Lord to put his fingers in the prints made by the nails in Jesus' hands, and to thrust his hand into the open gash made by the spear in Jesus' breast—then no unbelievers were left. Thus **the doubting disciples** are made to help proclaim the undoubted fact of the great Easter Gospel for us all.

Let no man say, then, that he cannot believe. Where God has given us so much, where our eternal salvation depends on what he gives us, where heaven and earth combine to draw us to faith and all its blessed fruits, only one thing can keep us in unbelief—a heart that simply will not yield to God's grace and Christ's love. Woe to those who spurn the Gospel of the Lord's resurrection—their present state, empty of faith, hope, true joy and peace, is only the foreshadowing of what their state will be at last, equally empty of God, Christ, salvation, heaven, and eternal blessedness.

VI.

We have followed St. Luke's holy record of our Lord's resurrection from the dead. But dwell as we may on any of its individual parts, only by combining all those parts into one tremendous whole will their full effect be realized in our hearts.

There is one center to which every part points, and that is Jesus Christ who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification. He who went into the grave laden with our sin and guilt, himself paying the penalty of death for that guilt, arose on the third day glorified and exalted. Were the sin and guilt truly atoned for? one might ask when he died thus—

"He whom blood-stained they buried
In the still twilight hour."

Here is the answer: "He is not here, but is risen!"—

"He whom God waked from slumber,
He who arose in power."

That word on the cross is true: "It is finished!" God himself accepted the blood and death of his Son; the resurrection proclaims it to all the world, and that proclamation stands to all eternity. Through the grave of Christ the way was opened for us into heaven. The barrier of sin, guilt, and death is broken forever. Heaven's holy light shines in those angel messengers in Jesus' tomb. Into that light the women entered and it never left their hearts. Into that light a little later the Eleven and all the other disciples likewise entered, when their unbelief gave way to joyous faith. Christ's death and resurrection are the portal which shall never be closed. That is the heart of St. Luke's precious record of what took place on Easter morning, the heart of the great Easter Gospel for us all. Take them all together, the different precious parts, and let them rivet your souls to this golden center where our salvation shines.

And so indeed the result will be reached—**hearts filled with Easter faith and joy**. Not merely that 'Jesus escaped from death is our joy, but that his resurrection is now for us the way of escape from death. Not this or that wonderful part of the Easter miracle is our delight, but the miracle itself as it takes in us poor sinners, breaks our bonds, and sets us on the way that will lead through our own resurrection to him who now triumphs in glory. In a little while all these shadows of earth shall be blown away, all false hope and expectations of men shall pass like the unsubstantial vapors they are. Then shall be left this glorious Easter Gospel alone—the *Prince of Life*, the *Lord of glory*, the *King of salvation*. And all they whose hearts have embraced that Gospel by faith, bound thus to him who is the substance of that Gospel, shall live with him in his heavenly kingdom forever.

"Hallelujah! then I cry;

Christ too will from death restore me,

Take me to his throne on high,

Whither he has gone before me.

Faith exults: *Victoria!*

Jesus lives! Hallelujah!"

OUTLINES.

There are many ways of approaching this great festival text. We note the three general methods—take the parts of the text *seriatim*, with a theme to cover the whole and match the formulation of the parts—take out the part chosen to govern the whole sermon, and group all that the text offers in accord with this central feature—take the great fact of the resurrection itself and

so formulate the statement of it that the main parts or elements contained in it are brought to view and offer opportunity to weave in the text. The sermon given above follows the first method. The second may be illustrated by the theme: The angel's word: "He is not here, but is risen!" 1) He needs no spices. 2) You need to remember. 3) All men need to be told.—Or, simply stating one central fact in a formulation of our own: The empty tomb on Easter morning: 1) "Why seek ye the living among the dead?"—2) "Remember how he spake unto you."—3) They "told all these things."—We add a sample of the third method of using the text: The blessedness of the Easter miracle: see how this blessedness shines in the risen Savior—in his resurrection gifts—in the hearts of all believers.

The Lord's Resurrection the Greatest Victory in the World.

1. *Behold it in the open tomb!*
2. *Hear it proclaimed by the shining angels!*
3. *Realize it in your own hearts with all believers!*

The Solid Foundation of our Easter Faith.

1. *The Lord's resurrection is a fact which was divinely prophesied.*
2. *The Lord's resurrection is a fact which actually occurred.*
3. *The Lord's resurrection is a fact which was really seen.*
4. *The Lord's resurrection is a fact which is most blessedly experienced this very day.*

— Seehawer.

The Open Sepulchre.

1. *Death is gone.*—2. *Life is come.*—3. *Faith rejoices.*

What Means this Empty Tomb?

1. *For him who lay there.*
2. *For those who went there.*
3. *For us who would like to have been there.*

QUASIMODOGENITI.

Luke 24, 36-47.

The Easter cycle extends from Easter Sunday to Cantate. There was no need to discuss the cycle in connection with the Easter text, for that text dare have only one topic, namely the resurrection of Christ. Now as we take up the first of the following texts, all of which are dominated by the Easter miracle, we must review them in order. Quasimodogeniti is the octave of Easter, called "little Easter," and is reckoned as constituting part of the Easter festival, naturally the minor part. The great Easter fact is so immense that it must have more than one Sunday for its celebration. Our text is chosen accordingly. It shows us *the risen Savior among his disciples*. The text, however, includes the final teaching of Jesus, and that on the basis of the Old Test. Scriptures. This is a valuable addition; working it into the general subject of the sermon we may say that we have here *the risen Savior substantiating the Holy Scriptures*. — We have Matth. 16, 15-19 for Misericordias Domini, Peter's great confession followed by Christ's still great assurance concerning the church. This Sunday is distinctly marked as the Sunday of the Good Shepherd. Our new text retains the basic thought, only it speaks of the church without any imagery. The text has the ring of Easter in it: "the Son of the *living* God" and his voice of infinite power and blessed authority. We take its subject to be: *the risen Savior and the permanence and power of his church*. The text contains Rome's proof passage for the authority of the papacy and invites an explanation which explodes these spurious claims. — Jubilate in the old line of texts is also marked, Jesus placing his followers over against the world and its hatred. In Mark 34-38 the same general line of thought is retained: *Let not the world make us ashamed*

of the risen Savior. Note that the glory of this Savior appears clearly in the final sentence of the text.—The final text for the brief Easter cycle is especially fine, John 17, 18-24. Like the old text it also speaks of the church and its condition here in time, only it adds the promise of final glory. We take its subject to be: *the oneness of the church as it awaits the glory of the risen Savior.* It thus appears that the entire cycle which is governed by the resurrection and exaltation of Christ brings his glory, power, and promises to bear on his church. This is the basic thought in the old gospel texts; it is presented with modifications in the Eisenach selections; and we have it here again, strong and virile, the four after-Easter texts distributed among the four evangelists.

Turning now to our text for Quasimodogeniti we see that St. Luke takes us into the midst of the disciples on Easter night. The Eleven are together again, and other disciples are with them. The word Eleven, however, is used like the designation of a society, which may be employed even when one or the other member is absent. Thomas was absent on this occasion. The disbelief (v. 11) in Christ's resurrection is gone. When the two Emmaus disciples arrive with their jubilant report, they meet the same kind of a report from the lips of the Eleven: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon." The hearts of all are filled with new-born happiness and they are in the midst of lively conversation about all that has transpired on that wonderful day.

24, 36. And as they spake these things, he himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

To reconstruct the scene as completely as possible we must add from John that the doors were locked, so that no one could have entered the room without first knocking and then being let in. Mark adds the explanation that the disciples were lying on their couches at supper, the meal apparently being about ended. All in

the room are engaged in animated conversation discussing what had happened that day. This is what the genitive absolute with its present tense conveys: they were all engaged in talking of these things.—Then, all in an instant, Jesus **himself stood in the midst of them**. Note the aorist verb, and this verb itself—not: “he came,” or anything denoting motion—simple: he “stood.” And not to one side, as if in some manner unobserved he had managed to get in—but with the couches and tables ranged around the room to accommodate all those present, ten apostles, two from Emmaus, and probably that many again, if not more, of other believers (two prominent men are mentioned, Acts 1, 23; and there must have been a number of others). Right **in the midst of them** Jesus suddenly stood. There is no question that this is a miraculous appearance, the reverse of the disappearance in v. 31. Only bold rationalists attempt an evasion. How did Jesus enter? Of course, miraculously; but can we say any more? Nebe betrays his Reformed bent when he demands that we stop short and say only that it is all a mystery. This is true enough, but ought not to be made a screen for any false notions on the person of Christ or on the presence of Christ’s body and blood in the sacrament “in, with, and under” the bread and wine. This standing in the midst of the disciples must be taken together with the passing of the living body of Jesus from the tomb, with all the other appearances and disappearances of Jesus during the forty days, and with his final ascension and transfer into the glory of heaven. Always the body composed of real flesh and bone is concerned. It is not like a phantasm dissolving into nothing, or into a gas-like vapor, an immaterial spirit substance, which is able to pass through anything, reversing this process when an appearance is to be made. The body of Jesus has its substance as before, but now uses in fullest measure the infinite powers belonging to it. It has not one mode of presence merely, such as

we are ordinarily accustomed to, but other, higher, more wonderful modes as well, as our Formula of Concord says. All of them are real in the highest sense, nor can we tell how many such modes he may have and use at present. Luther is undoubtedly right over against the Zwinglians: "By this coming through locked doors is shown that since his resurrection in his kingdom on earth he is no longer bound to bodily, visible, tangible mundane substance, time, place, space, and the like, but wants to be known and believed as ruling by his power everywhere present, having the will to be with us and help us in all places and at all times, when and where we need it, unfettered and unhindered by the world and all its might." Cf. v. 5 and its explanation in the previous text. — One may imagine the effect of this sudden appearance of the living Savior in the very midst of the room where the disciples were reclining. The most conflicting feelings and thoughts instantly surged through their hearts. They must have jumped up and stood with wide-eyed astonishment in startled attitudes around the Savior. We must remember that all of them learned only by degrees just what the resurrection and glorification of Jesus meant. Probably they thought of the Lazarus miracle at first, but Lazarus came back into his old everyday life. The resurrection of Jesus was something far higher. This will help to explain to us the references to unbelief which go through the story of the forty days. Those men were people of cold common sense who thought of things in a matter-of-fact manner, and it took them some time to grasp what all was contained in this stupendous reality. It is for this reason too that Jesus proceeds step by step with them, gives them no less than forty days, and employs various means, coupled with instruction, to reveal to their hearts and minds what his resurrection really was. — Not long did Jesus let his disciples — the Eleven as a body — wait, but on Sunday evening — it may have been nine or ten o'clock — he comes to greet them.

With all eyes upon him he speaks, as they had often heard him before, in the same old familiar voice: **Peace unto you.** This common oriental greeting means more from the lips of Jesus than it ever did from the lips of ordinary men. As the speaker here, so the word he speaks. We have its echoes in the apostolic greetings which so often include "peace." In the Hebrew peace embodies all good, a good fortune, all prosperity; peace is the word where everything goes well, and the heart is content and full of happiness—Luther. He also contrasts worldly peace with Christ's peace: the former removes only the outward disturbances, the latter leaves all these outward conflicts, but removes the inner and hidden cause of our own conflict with God. So we battle against sin, death, world, devil, but God's peace is in our hearts, and we are happy. This is the peace that passeth all understanding; it is something completely beyond the comprehension of the world. In preaching we ought to differentiate between objective and subjective peace. Jesus brings both, but the first is fundamental. It is thus that Jesus has abolished the enmity (Eph. 2, 15), God's righteous indignation and wrath against us. By faith we enter into this peace and make it ours. Then, however, we ought also to feel and enjoy this peace. But whether we always do or not, this is less vital, as long as the objective peace remains. Our feelings are unstable; when they sink to a low ebb, they shall be made to rise again to the fullest enjoyment of what Christ's peace is for us.—No evangelist records that any of the disciples, not even Peter, made any response to the Savior's greeting.

37. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit.

The first two verbs are aorist participles, the latter with an adjective. This doubling is to intensify the statement. The effect upon the disciples is tremendous. They had just spoken joyfully of his having arisen; now that they have him in their midst why do they not cry

with joy and come and fall at his feet and greet him thus? One answer, no doubt, is that the appearance of Jesus was not identical with his former appearance. "The Lord indeed brought forth from the grave and afterwards set at God's right hand the same body that hung on the cross; but one appearance is that of the Lamb which bears the sins of the world and is brought to the slaughter, and another is that of the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne." — Besser. A majesty and exaltation must have been poured out over the familiar form and face. He was the same, and yet he was changed. Another thing to notice is that only a few of those present had as yet seen the risen Lord. In addition, as stated above, the full glory of his resurrection all of them had to learn slowly. — The imperfect tense pictures the scene, so also the present infinitive: they were supposing that they were beholding a spirit. These were their thoughts, arising involuntarily in their hearts. **Spirit** here is about the same as our word ghost, when we speak of "seeing a ghost" — only none of us has ever seen one, nor had they. It was only what they thought a spirit might be, i. e., an unsubstantial appearance, without a solid material body of actual flesh. The secret superstition that slumbers in all of us, and is quite strong in some, came to the surface when Jesus thus appeared; cf. Christ's walking on the sea.

38. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and wherefore do reasonings arise in your heart? 39. See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having. 40. And when he had said this, he shewed them his hands and his feet.

Two things are established here, the identity of Jesus and the substantiality of his body as it stood before the disciples. **Troubled**, shaken to and fro with fearsome thoughts, goes together with the **reasonings** that are rising in their hearts, the former the effect,

the latter the cause, with justification for neither. While the disciples plainly displayed their thoughts, Jesus knew them fully. Luke does not say that they supposed they saw Jesus' spirit, but "a spirit," an evil spirit who had assumed the form of Jesus and was trying to terrify them. And yet they may have been shaken between the two—an evil spirit impersonating Jesus, and the spirit of Jesus appearing in the form of a phantasm. Luther takes occasion here to explode the spiritistic notion, as though the spirits of the dead are able to return from the other world and in any way communicate with us—this the Bible throughout denies. God refuses to send one from the dead to warn us or to preach to us, Luke 16, 31, and has forbidden us to try to talk with the dead, Deut. 18, 11; Is. 8, 19. There is rebuke in the questions of Jesus. They invite to calm consideration, discarding superstitious fancies and going back to sound sense. This is no spirit of any kind—it is Jesus himself, the same Jesus they have known so long.—This is what the command means: **See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself;** John adds that he also showed them his side, he alone having mentioned the spear thrust. The body of Jesus thus retained the open wounds which had been inflicted on it. The exalted existence on which the body had entered did not remove these significant wounds. Here they serve to identify Jesus. He held out his hands, one foot after the other, displaying his side, and made them see it all. It was the plainest ocular evidence **that it is I myself**, not some mocking spirit.—And yet not either only the spirit of Jesus. To settle this Jesus bids them: **handle me**, pass your hands over my limbs and body, **and see**, so that they may be convinced by their own senses.—There is no reason to read *ὅτι* as "that" in this case; it is "because" or "for." They needed no instruction on spiritology. They all held to the idea that a spirit has no solid flesh and bones. They are right in this, and Jesus uses it for his proof to them: **for a spirit**

hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having. The question is not whether awe held the disciples back from actually feeling his body—the Lord himself insisted that they do this. It was all in the act of holding out his hands and feet and side to them. They felt the flesh substantial like their own, the bones beneath the muscles—real bones indeed. They were learning what a resurrection unto glory means—it is the same person, the same body, and yet both in a new and wonderful state.—The closing remark leaves no doubt: **he shewed them his hands and his feet**, both to see and to feel.

41. And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat? 42. And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish. 43. And he took it, and did eat before them.

It is one thing to disbelieve, and another to disbelieve for joy. Nebe is right, the human heart is too small to take in a great and unexpected joy all at once—it seems too good to be true. There is a flutter of the heart, as if the reality might after all not be real. Luther: "This is a strange text and curious statement; at first faith is held up by fear and frightened thoughts; now joy holds it up, which now is much greater than the fear was before, and the disciples are so full of joy at the scolding of the Lord and the showing of his hands and feet, that they cannot as yet believe. This is one of the Christian's afflictions that grace is altogether too great and glorious when we look at our lowliness and unworthiness as against Christ, and consolation is too abounding, so that our hearts are much too narrow to take it in; for who should presume to take into his heart that Christ shows himself as such a kind Savior towards me, a poor sinful man, giving to me all in one act to have as my own all that he has done."—The present participles in the double genitive absolute picture the agitation and wonder that had come over the disciples. In the midst of it Jesus asks for something that he may

eat, *βρώσιμον*, the neuter adjective = something eatable. The tables very likely had been cleared, or if the meal had about come to an end little was left, so that Jesus asked. — They gave him **a piece of broiled fish**, and though the best texts omit it, there is every reason otherwise to add: "and a honeycomb." This, having taken, he **did eat before them**, for them to see. Not for himself did he eat, but to add this new proof for them to see and be convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that it was the risen Lord and no other who stood before them. This eating is cumulative proof, at once strong in itself, but stronger with what precedes, and also making that stronger.

44. And he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me.

Beginning with v. 44 Luke narrates what occurred most likely at the close of the forty day period shortly before the ascension. There is no connective word, merely the statement that Jesus at some time spoke to his disciples as follows. The R. V. translates well: the **words** which Jesus means, the ones he had spoken to his disciples while he was yet with them in the former mode of daily human intercourse, are these: **how that all things must needs be fulfilled**, etc. By *δεῖ* any kind of necessity may be expressed. Here the necessity is one of divine grace and planning for our salvation. This could not fail. Jesus himself had pointed to that **which was written**, the expressive Greek perfect participle = the things written and now standing before us as such. Every one of these must come to fulfillment — not one can be altered or fall to the ground. **In the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms** does not mean to single out certain Old Test. books, nor divide the Scriptures into three separate sections, but constitutes the full, grand title of the entire Old

Test., the whole of which in the most manifold variety testifies of Christ, John 5, 39. There is only one preposition. — **Concerning me**, as we see from what follows, includes more than the passion and resurrection, namely also the world-wide promulgation of the Gospel. This too was written "concerning me."

45. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; 46. and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; 47. and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

The sense is that he brought the disciples to understand the Scriptures. There is no difficulty here about the **mind** and the activity to **understand**. The mind or intellect must grasp the proffered truth as this actually is, unpervverted and unclouded. Thus the heart will be reached. He **opened** does not mean by miraculous influence, but by giving them now the explanation and exposition which made many a shining Scripture passage clear to them. They were at a point now when they could understand many things hitherto dark for them. The Lord used the advantage of their present situation. Luke does not record what all Jesus taught the disciples. Nor are we sure that what is here stated was all done at one session; there may have been several instructive discourses. — Verse 46 sounds like the conclusion of this precious instruction of Jesus. The best texts omit: "and thus it behooved," which, if it is retained on its inferior textual authority, would also spoil the connection of v. 47, for the preaching is still in the future, and "behooved" would make it read of the past. Again we have the perfect tense: **it is written** — the emphasis is on this infallible divine record. God is behind his Word — men may see it and realize it or not — the event will always prove it. — Now Jesus names three grand acts that were thus written. The

first is: **that the Christ should suffer**, i. e., the Messiah, the word here used as an appellative. The aorist infinitive here and in the two other clauses is complexive — the whole suffering embraced in one view. Of course, the rising again is one act. But also the preaching, although it would go over centuries, is compressed in this aorist as one great act all complete. — The summary statement on the passion is followed by a similar one on the resurrection: **rise again from the dead the third day**. The verb is active. What it meant the disciples saw before them now in the risen One. What a wondrous commentary on "thus it is written"! The phrase ἐκ νεκρῶν denotes separation, and nothing more. Cf. Robertson 598. Note the absence of the article, pointing to the *quality* of being dead, not to so many individuals left behind. Chiliasts at times stress the phrase to secure two resurrections. It must then be said ἐκ νεκρῶν in sense = from death, since the quality is stressed. This preposition does not mean "from among," or "out from among." The phrase is used 35 times of Jesus, a few times of other individuals and in a figurative way. Only *two* passages refer to the resurrection of many, Mk. 12, 25; Luke 20, 35, and in these the phrase cannot have a meaning different from all the other passages. As applied to the unique resurrection of Christ this is apparent at once — there is no parallel for it. The idea is not that when he arose he left all the other dead behind — nobody thinks of the other dead men. The contrast marked by the phrase is that Jesus came out of death and reentered life. It is no wonder that ἐκ νεκρῶν is not used of the ungodly, when we find only two places where it is used of the godly. The strange thing with Chiliasts is that they read every Bible word with a view to chiliasm, and thus pile up a mass of perversions which entangle and mislead the unwary. — In the final clause the infinitive is again forward to parallel the other two: and that there **be preached**, etc., i. e., heralded abroad. This on the basis

of **his name**, with the revelation of who he is and what he has done as the foundation. The name is not the word "Jesus" or any other appellation, but all that makes him really known to us. It is his person revealed, and that person in all his work. He is the corner stone of the Gospel, or, to extend the figure in the preposition ἐπὶ, the foundation. — It makes no material difference whether we read "repentance *unto* (or: *and*) remission of sins," always the inward change called **repentance** will precede the divine act of **remission** in personal justification, not indeed in time (there is no time interval), but in the order of thought; and in the same way repentance is always *unto* remission. There is no more beautiful word in Scripture than ἀφεσις — sin sent away as far as the east is from the west, sent to the bottom of the deep whence it shall never come forth. All remission which does not rest on Christ's death and resurrection, on his all-sufficient expiation, and this applied to us by repentance (contrition and faith), is a delusion of hell — a truth that cannot be made too emphatic for our work-righteous, self-righteous, self-absolving, self-complacent generation. — This too the Scriptures foretold, that the Gospel of Christ would be preached: **unto all the nations**, not a single Gentile nation excepted, but in this order: **beginning from Jerusalem** — salvation is of the Jews; unto the Jew first, then unto the rest. Here Luke virtually records the Great Commission. The reading varies, and in any case contains what is termed a grammatical irregularity. The nominative plural participle has no noun or pronoun to depend on — an anacoluthon; if we read the singular accusative, this may be the impersonal neuter, "it beginning," which would be best, or the masculine: "he beginning," i. e., the herald implied in the verb. The aorist makes the participle a time designation: "having begun." — Of these three things, the passion, resurrection, preaching in all the world, the disciples are witnesses, i. e., that these three are the

revelation of prophecy and attested as such by Jesus himself. Let the Jews object—the disciples are the witnesses and must testify accordingly. Here we see how the Son of God himself honors the Word and upholds it. Though written by weak men it is for him the final and absolute authority. How much more ought we to bow to that Word in the obedience of faith and dismiss all self-chosen thoughts, all science that follows a contrary course, all reason and reasonings that affect a superior wisdom, all so-called Christian consciousness and Christian experience which set themselves up in any manner independently of the Word, all feeling and inner light trying to go back to the Spirit without the control of the Word. The risen Savior leaves us wholly under the written and inspired Word. “Thus it is written!”

SERMON. *used 1927.*

We often say that the Christian church is built on Jesus Christ. We call him the corner stone, the foundation of the church. Whenever we do this we have in mind his passion and his resurrection. Without these there could be no Christian church. The resurrection, however, always presupposes his passion and death, and so we are justified in saying that the resurrection of Christ is the eternal rock on which the Christian church is built.

What a tremendous error, then, to deny the resurrection of Christ! (We are little concerned about the world, which, because of its blindness and love of ungodliness is ready to deny anything. But there are people who claim to be Christians, even preachers who assert that they are preaching the Gospel and building the church of Christ, who set up this denial of our Savior's resurrection and mislead the poor souls of men. Once for all we must understand what such denial means. It destroys the very foundation of the Christian church. There is no church of God if Christ did not arise from the dead. St. Paul has well written: “If Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.” St. Paul merely restates what Jesus himself showed his disciples the very evening of the day when he arose from the dead and all through the forty days between his resurrection and as-

cension—the entire church of Christ rests forever on his glorious resurrection from the dead.

Let us impress upon our hearts this vital connection between

The Christian Church and Christ's Resurrection.

With the resurrection of Christ the Christian church stands or falls, for we must realize that in this resurrection literally everything is involved—Christ himself as our *Savior*, the *peace* he has brought, the *Gospel* he has sent out, the *revelation* of which he and his resurrection are the center—and thus beyond question all that is rightly named the *church*.

I.

For the Christian church the Savior is absolutely essential. Take away the Savior, and there can be no Christian church in the true sense of the word. But on the other hand the resurrection is essential for the Savior. We must solemnly affirm: **no resurrection—no Savior.**

There is an absolutely vital reason for all these efforts which Jesus made to convince his disciples beyond the least shadow of doubt that he was indeed risen from the dead. This vital reason is behind the opening of the tomb, the laying in significant order of the linen cloths, the presence and message of the angels, and then of all these wonderful appearances of the risen Savior. Here in our text, the very evening of the day he arose, when the wonderful news had brought the disciples all together again in one place, when they had finished their evening meal, all at once Jesus stood in their midst. They were startled and frightened at first. But he showed them his hands and his feet bearing those significant wounds of the nails; he bared his side showing where the spear had entered his heart. They had to see with their own eyes that it was he himself. More than that—he made them feel of his flesh and bones that they were real indeed, and no phantom appearance or shadowy vision. He made them bring out food, fish and honeycomb, and ate those before them. Not that now in his glorified state his body needed (anything like) earthly food, but to demonstrate in the completest possible way that he was truly risen from the dead.

+ What is the (vital) reason for this strong demonstration (and the absolute conviction it produced)? It is, this that he was the Savior indeed. The load of sin had been heavy—it had crushed him down into the grave. Had it crushed him for good, swept him, like it does the sinner, into eternal night and destruction? It had not; for here he was—not merely alive, but glorified and

returned from the grave. The sin was gone—Jesus had borne it away—a Savior indeed! He had died on the cross; they themselves had buried him and closed the tomb over his dead body. Had death swallowed him up for good? Had he merely tried to break the bonds of death and failed, going down like others who die to stay in death? No. Here he was, alive, glorified, death and the grave shattered behind him. He had triumphed—the glorious victory was won. Jesus is the Savior indeed, and it is his resurrection from the dead which ^{proves} attests it. *—*

(He whom we call Savior must be able to deliver us from sin and death. If he himself sinks down beneath them he cannot be a Savior, such a Savior ~~as poor~~ dying sinners must have to be saved.) No resurrection—no Savior, is the conclusion we cannot escape if Jesus did not arise. And then all would be lost. But see what a glorious conclusion follows when with all the disciples and with St. Paul we are able to sing: "But now is Christ risen from the dead!" Then he is a Savior, the very Savior we need; then we all who are joined to him in living faith are saved indeed, and may gather around him as the company of those who are thus saved, that means as his church.

II.

In a different way the same mighty conclusion is reached when we look at the salvation which makes us a church. Take it away, and there is no church left in the real meaning of the word. But ^{entirely} (the all-important thing to note is) that salvation depends absolutely on the fact that ^{may see in the 2 place} Jesus arose from the dead. So (again) we (affirm as ^{beyond} question): **no resurrection—no salvation.**

When Jesus arose from the dead he appeared alive and triumphant in the midst of his disciples. But perhaps this was only a personal escape of his—a victory and triumph for him alone, leaving all the rest of us just where we were before. Why then this display of his victory, the ^{empty} tomb, the linen, the angels, the risen Savior himself? No, his victory is for us; his triumph is ours. To settle that once for all the Savior returns in his resurrection with the mighty word: "Peace be unto you!" upon his glorified lips. He comes to bring us this peace which he has gained, which is only another and most expressive name for what we usually call salvation.* Nor does he stop with the word peace. He shows the disciples the holy five wounds with which he has bought this peace for us. Those wounds, bleeding so terribly once, now glorified forever, are the eternal guarantees that there is peace for us indeed. (On his throne of glory now those holy wounds)
By these holy wounds, which

still mark the body of Jesus. (By them in heaven itself) our peace is forever established. *in heaven itself*

Stop and think what this peace really means, and how this *peace* (and this alone,) makes us the church of Christ through him who brought that peace to us by his resurrection from the dead.

The Scriptures declare that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all sin and all who lie in sin. If one thing is sure, it is this that God is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him. Ps. 5, 4. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Drop the delusion of those who cry: Peace, peace! when there is no peace. Unless the wrath of God is stilled, all dreaming of peace on our part is vain. It is just as if a criminal who has offended against the law of the land and struck at its majesty should imagine that by his wanting peace now he could escape the just penalties of that law. He might dodge the law for a while, but the moment its hand reached him he would be doomed. But with God no man can dodge—we are all in his hands, every hour of our lives. Even when sinners go together, form societies and call them churches, and employ men to tell them that their sins will not harm them, that God is so kind he will not hold them accountable—*that God is so kind he will not hold them accountable—nothing, whatever is changed.* Not *in any* (so, or in any other way of human invention) is there peace and salvation for us. To put God at peace with us requires infinitely more. What is required the risen Savior himself shows us when here he proclaims peace indeed and exhibits to us the proofs of that peace as proofs that count indeed with God.

Look at the glorified wounds of Jesus and see there the peace that is peace indeed, release from sin, deliverance from death, acceptance at the throne of God. When Jesus died he placed his soul in his Father's hands. Did God then accept the sacrifice of Jesus' blood for our sins? Was God satisfied with the atonement Jesus had made? Can we now come with Jesus' blood and sacrifice covering our sins and find acceptance with God? Here is the answer. From (God himself in) heaven above the soul of Jesus returns, reenters his body, and now declares that God has accepted his sacrifice and that the holy wounds in our Savior's body are God's *articles of peace* with us all. Thus, and thus alone, is there peace for the sinner. Take away the resurrection, take away or count for naught those glorified wounds, and you take our peace, our salvation, away. No resurrection—no salvation! But now is Christ risen; God has accepted the price of Christ's death for our peace; Christ himself brings us that peace by his resurrection. And with this blessed peace of Christ's wounds (made ours by faith,) we may indeed gather about him as his church; that peace makes us Christ's own, God's own, his pardoned children, his holy church.

III. *But*

(There is another step in speaking of the Christian church and Christ's resurrection from the dead. *step* Not visibly does Jesus come *present* to us now to show us his wounds and speak the word peace. That he did for those precious forty days only. How does he come to us now? By means of the holy Gospel. The Gospel brings us the risen Saviour, and all that his resurrection carries with it. (This is so vital for us as the church of Christ that we must ever) declare: **no resurrection — no Gospel.** If Christ did not rise, then, not only is the Gospel not true, it would not be Gospel any more, whatever else it might be. And without the Gospel as Gospel indeed, no church, no real church of God is possible.

What was it that Jesus impressed so deeply upon the hearts of his disciples during those forty days when Jesus appeared to them and gave them his last instructions and commands? This is the precious sum of it, as St. Luke records: "Thus it is written," said Jesus, "and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Soon the forty days would end and Jesus ascend to heaven. Those disciples indeed would have it all treasured in their hearts, how he suffered and died for our sins, how he rose from death on the third day, and how this resurrection proved that Christ's sacrifice had been accepted of God, how peace everlasting was theirs through Christ crucified and risen from the dead. But how about us, and how about all the nations of the world? Here is Christ's own answer—the Gospel! By the Gospel all that those first disciples saw with their eyes is brought now to our hearts that by faith we may see it, and by faith have it forever. This is why Jesus commanded before his ascension to heaven that the Gospel should be preached to all the world, and why he sealed this precious command with the promise, that whosoever believeth the Gospel shall be saved.

By the Gospel then Jesus appears to us now. He is here this very moment as the Gospel rings in our ears. His Gospel reveals him to us better even than our bodily eyes could see him or our bodily hands could assure us of his presence and his gifts. Even when Jesus appeared to those first disciples he himself had to teach and tell them what he had done and what his work had won for them—he himself had to preach to them what is now preached to us, the Gospel. (For ever the vital thing is to see not Jesus alone, but how he suffered, died, and rose again for our salvation. Unless this gets into our hearts all is in vain.) Preach

the Gospel is therefore his last command, and for almost 1900 years it has been done.

But what is done when men tamper with that Gospel? when they take the resurrection of Jesus out of it, the very thing he impressed so deeply upon those who were to be the first bearers of his Gospel? No matter how the thing is done, whether by the claims of (false) science, that man cannot rise from the dead, or by (the false theological wisdom) which asserts that all these inspired records of the resurrection are only myths and fables, or by the assertions of fanatics who think they have something better to offer than the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, the moment the resurrection is taken out of the Gospel it ceases to be the Gospel, the glad news that sin and death are conquered for us by Christ. Whatever is left is like a nut with the kernel eaten out by noxious worms. Yea, worse; for when men take the resurrection of Jesus out of the Gospel they substitute something else—and any substitute here is like poison for bread. It is all summed up in the one statement: no resurrection—no Gospel with real salvation through Christ for sinners. *But* Glory be to God, the whole Bible contradicts this delusion! It rings with the resurrection of Christ. Every evangelist records it; every apostle made it the corner stone of his preaching; Moses and every prophet proclaimed it in advance. The Gospel brings us a Savior risen from death and the grave with eternal salvation now for us all.

“ And therefore we gather together now: all whose hearts rejoice in the precious news of this Gospel by faith, not as an earthly society merely, like thousands of others religious, or of other kinds, but as the company of those who have been saved by Jesus' death and resurrection—as his holy, blessed, eternal church.

IV.

The Gospel which brings us the risen Savior is the only hope of men and the only real foundation of the church. But we must take in the full view of it. Christ's deliverance from death for our redemption is such a stupendous thing that it forms the crown of all God's revelation to man. All that God has ever said to man since that sad day when Adam fell into sin, centers in Christ and his resurrection. It is literally true, if the resurrection of Christ is set aside as unreal, the whole vast structure of God's revelation to man is overthrown. **No resurrection—no revelation** is then the only conclusion left. And that again means no church of God as a real church of his.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples he did more than send them forth to all the world as the heralds of his salvation through his death and resurrection. St. Luke records that Jesus said to

them: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Then Jesus took up the revelation of God, opened the understanding of his disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures, namely how all God's revelation to man leads up to Jesus' death and resurrection. This is the vital thing in all of it. And this vital thing was now finally accomplished—the risen Savior stood before them, and salvation was theirs through his resurrection. No wonder that now they were to carry the glad news of it all for all the world to share.

The resurrection of Jesus is a deeper, mightier thing than many suppose, many even of those who believe in it. To achieve the resurrection for us Jesus was born man. To conquer sin and death for us by his resurrection God's Son left the throne of heaven and came to earth. Heaven itself, and God in heaven is behind Christ's glorious resurrection, even as now heaven rejoices around our Savior risen from the dead and ascended on high. And thus it was that all through the ages before Christ came, by God's own words and the messages of his holy prophets, the resurrection of his Son from the dead was set before men's eyes as their only hope of salvation. Isaiah proclaimed it when he told of the Lamb led to the slaughter, which would be taken from death, would prolong his days, and live forever. The prophets called the coming Savior the corner stone on whom the building of God's church would rest forever—that meant his resurrection. He would be an eternal king, producing an eternal redemption—and that included the resurrection. He would be a High Priest forever, because he would rise from the dead. In him all the nations of the earth would be blessed—this the promise to Abraham already,—a promise based on the resurrection. What a wonderful story the whole Bible becomes when you read it in the light of Jesus' resurrection, when you see it as Jesus made those first disciples of his see it during those forty days! Blessed indeed is what God was preparing for men, and what he finally wrought as he had said he would, when he raised Jesus from the dead.

Take that resurrection out, and what have you done? You have destroyed the one thing which makes God's revelation through all the past and all the coming ages what it really is—the glorious, golden hope of man. If the resurrection is gone, then the sun in God's heaven of revelation is gone, and we are all in eternal night. If the resurrection is a fable then the whole Bible is nothing but a fairy-tale, like other remarkable stories of ancient folklore. If there never was a resurrection and God never promised us a Savior returned from the grave, then what has he given

us that is worth while for our souls, what revelation has he made beyond what man himself could know and find out? Yea, if the resurrection of Christ is not real, then, as St. Paul says, all God's messengers are found false witnesses—not one of them can be trusted, they are all liars, for they all said that God would raise Christ, whom now he did not raise up, if the denial of his resurrection is justified. And if Christ is not risen from the dead and this revelation of God must be cast aside, then there is no hope or help for us, and the night of death which swallowed up Jesus is only waiting now to swallow up us all likewise. Oh, I know that men set up in the place of Christ's resurrection and the divine hope and life this offers us, hopes, promises, claims, assurances of their own. This is their ungodly, blasphemous presumption. God's revelation they cast down, to put up in its stead for our souls the abortions of their own lying fancies. Christ's mighty deed of death and resurrection they annul, that they may be a Christ for us by their own revelations. Away with them all. God's revelation shall stand undarkened forever. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not the Word of God, not the truth of his revelation, not the Christ he has given us, not his atoning death, nor his saving resurrection. We are not left drifting in eternal night, God's risen Savior gathers us around him; we are his disciples, his believers, filled with the power of his resurrection—his beloved church.

V.

And now we may close the grand circle which our after Easter text has helped us to draw. These two clasp into each other—the Christian church, and Christ's resurrection. The mighty conclusion stands: **no resurrection—no church.**

With no resurrection of Christ we would have no real Savior. His work would end at the grave. That far we can certainly go ourselves. We must have one to lead us far beyond that line. With no resurrection we would have no salvation. All that we could have would stop short at death. Again that far we can go ourselves. We must have the peace and pardon which admits to God in heaven. With no resurrection we would be left without the Gospel, in fact the whole world of men would be left without a revelation of God really able to fill their souls with light, hope, and help. We must have God's Gospel, God's revelation; this alone can bring us what we need. Thank God we have them all: his revelation, his Gospel, his Savior and salvation. Christ's resurrection from the dead is God's own heavenly assurance for our souls.

Thus from the resurrection of Christ has sprung the Christian church. It is the company of all those who by faith have Christ and his salvation in their hearts, who by faith have received God's Gospel and revelation. The power of Christ's resurrection shines in them all. Their faith has sprung from it; their lives have been uplifted by it. The risen Savior rules their hearts. They gather about his invisible presence to glorify his holy name. Ever and ever more souls shall be added unto them as they too feel the blessedness of this resurrection. And all these through all the ages of Christendom are only the successors of those who in the long ages before believed in the Christ of God and in the glorious work he would crown with his blessed resurrection. False churches there have been many, and ever will be. But the true church stands—Christ is her mark, he who was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. God grant that this heavenly mark may be upon our souls now and evermore.

OUTLINES.

The previous sermon has endeavored to indicate the immense sweep of the text which every preacher will feel who works himself thoroughly into it. In this respect it will make little difference from what angle the sermon approaches the text, as long as it tries to cover what all the text contains. A very desirable point is the Savior's greeting: The risen Savior's greeting of peace: that peace shines forth from his wounds—is assured by his resurrection—is sent out to all the world.—This text deals in a special way with: The certainty of Christ's resurrection. This certainty is established by Christ himself—and by the entire revelation of God—and as such forms the basis of our faith to-day.—We may also set forth from this text: The supreme importance of Christ's resurrection: 1) It is vital in the work of Christ—without this it would have been failure; 2) It is vital in the whole revelation of God—without this it would have been empty and false; 3) It is vital for our salvation—without this it would be nothing but a sham.

The Heavenly Peace which the Risen Savior Brings.

1. *Written in God's Holy Word.*
2. *Sealed by Christ's holy wounds.*
3. *Made ours by faith through his Holy Spirit.*

How God Sends us the Great Easter Gift of Christ's Resurrection.

1. *As a fact divinely assured.*
 2. *As the center of all revelation.*
 3. *As the heart of his Gospel.*
 4. *As the rock of our salvation.*
 5. *As the fountain of eternal peace.*
-

The Gospel of Christ's Resurrection.

1. *Its truth.*—2. *Its place in God's plan.*—3. *Its importance for us all.*
-

God's Revelation and Christ's Resurrection.

1. *God's revelation foretold the resurrection.*
 2. *God's revelation culminates in the resurrection.*
 3. *God's revelation proclaims the resurrection to all the world.*
 4. *God's revelation makes the blessings of the resurrection our own.*
-

MISERICORDIAS DOMINI.

Matth. 16, 15-20.

Many of our people will like to hear a sermon on this text because it contains Rome's proof passage for the papacy. This perfectly legitimate element of interest ought to be used. The text is meant to deal with the church, not so much with Peter's confession as with Christ's reply to that confession. For this reason we begin with v. 15, using Peter's confession merely as an introduction to Christ's words on the church. We may note the Easter flavor in the text: "Christ, the Son of the *living* God," the reference to "the gates of hell," and the entire vision of the future of the Christian church which involves Christ's resurrection. We take the general import of the text to be: *the permanence and power of the church.*

The critical point in the Galilean ministry of Christ has been reached. After the feeding of the five thousand and the decisive discourse on the Bread of Life many turned away from him. The Pharisaic opposition grew. Jesus purposely withdrew from the more populous centers and worked on the borders of Galilee. He is now in the most northern part. This is the general situation into which our text places us. Jesus is alone with his disciples and places before them the decisive questions which he intends as a means to place them in the strongest opposition not only to his enemies open and secret, but also to all who have wrong and inadequate opinions concerning him. His disciples know what the people think. Several must have given ready answer when Jesus put the first question. Then followed the second, with which our text begins.

16, 15. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? 16. And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The first question had only been preliminary. It mattered little what the people thought and said. None of their ideas did Jesus intend to discuss. Their opinions were merely a background against which to place in greater relief the truth of what Jesus really was. The question which calls for this truth is addressed to all the disciples. We must note the strong emphasis on *ipseis* at the head of the question. Jesus is not thinking of any one disciple or confessor on this occasion; he views the Twelve as one body who have one conviction and faith, and whose confession is a unit accordingly. This is important in itself, but grows to still greater importance when we read what follows. Jesus inquires about what the disciples **say** concerning him. We need hardly remark that thus he calls for their confession, but, of course, counts on that confession being a true expression of their inner conviction and faith. Any other confession is really false. When the lips contradict the heart, the man stands self-condemned. There is too much of this kind of confession to-day. All its falsity is open in the sight of the Lord. He has the advantage here over us. We are compelled to take the confessions of men as they make them, irrespective of what may be in their hearts. The only aid we have is the conduct. When that contradicts the lips the confession of the latter must be set aside. Conduct speaks louder than words. Many a man's conduct shouts so loudly that we cannot hear his words or give them any weight at all. In matters of the ministry and work of the church — since Jesus here means to speak of the church — conduct means the practice of the minister or church. — Jesus does not need to wait for a reply. Peter ever ready and eager makes answer at once. While, of course, he speaks the conviction of his own heart, we are bound to say that his confession

is made in the name of all, and John 6, 70-71 does not as yet shut out Judas Iscariot. It is entirely proper to suppose that all the Twelve either by word or act seconded what Peter spoke in their name. Matthew gives their spokesman his full name **Simon Peter**, indicating by this little touch also that he felt the solemnity and importance of the occasion. — Peter solemnly declares: **Thou art the Christ**. The name here is appellative = the Messiah promised of God. The acknowledgment is without qualification, pointed, weighty, and strong. Even so it would have been a fine confession. We dare not assume that only the Twelve were ready to make it. When Jesus asked about "men," he had not received the answer that some did indeed admit him to be "the Christ." These were a class apart and belonged together with the Twelve. Peter's confession would be theirs too. But here no note is taken of any of this kind — Jesus is dealing for a purpose of his own with the Twelve alone. — But Peter makes a significant addition which lifts his acknowledgment that Jesus is "the Christ" to the high plane upon which this confession belongs. He adds: **the Son of the living God**. This is far more than a mere synonym of the Christ. The Jews did not expect the Messiah to be God himself. Many of the wider circle of Jesus' disciples may still have thought him to be only a man, though they would be ready to acknowledge him as the Messiah. But here Peter unhesitatingly acknowledges the divinity of Christ. Not *a* Son, but *the* Son of God does he call him, namely in the sense of St. John "the only begotten" Son. He utters the word as the expression of his own inner conviction. It states in words the impression which the entire person of Jesus with its personal presence, words, and works had made upon Peter and all his fellow disciples. This is worth more than mere intellectual reflections and conclusions, although the mind of the disciples also grasped the reality of what this confession stated. Only no mind will ever

fathom fully what the simple words of Peter mean, and the minds and hearts of all of the Twelve had much yet to learn of what here they so nobly confessed. Peter uses the participle: the **living** God, placing God in contrast with all false gods who are dead idols. But the word "living" here implies more, namely that in Jesus, in sending Jesus, and in all that they saw of Jesus, God had attested himself to the disciples as the living God. For God shows that he is the living God by what he does among men. There is no reason in any way to discount Peter's confession. We have no intimation that he spoke by a sudden inspiration, saying what was really beyond himself. We know that he did not live up to his own confession, but this inconsistency and inadequacy of conduct on his part does not change the genuineness and truth of what he here confessed. This confession of his has come to be the heart of the confession of the whole church, and stands as such to-day.

17. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

The confession of Peter receives the immediate acknowledgment of Jesus. Thus Jesus accepts his confession as true. In other words he puts his stamp of approval upon the statement that he is the Son of the living God. It is beyond us how unitarian and rationalistic writers can claim that Jesus never called himself the Son of God. He did it in any number of ways; he did it most emphatically here. But here he speaks not of himself and what this confession means to him, but of what it means for Peter: **Blessed art thou.** This is meant of spiritual blessedness, a condition of happiness resulting from the possession of the essential soul-treasures. To know and have the true Savior makes a man blessed indeed. Jesus speaks to Peter, but in what he said to this one confessor all the other dis-

ciples heard what applied equally to them. Zahn and others are mistaken when they put Peter forward unduly, saying that Jesus called him alone blessed for making this confession. All the disciples made that confession through Peter; and not for the confession was Peter praised, but for the revelation from which that confession sprang. — The name **Simon Bar-Jonah** (Son of Jonah) is significant in pointing to what Peter was by nature. Over against this Jesus intends to place his new name. Meyer finds no significance in this juxtaposition, but the two names are too marked here to have been used unconsciously and without purpose. But we do not think that there is any play on the etymology of either Simon or Bar-Jonah. In his natural state Peter, like the other disciples, would be inclined to follow only natural reason, "flesh and blood." This, by the grace of God, he was led to avoid — hence his blessedness. — Jesus himself justifies his judgment (cf. Matth. 5, 1, Septuagesima): **for, etc.** Peter's confession is in no way the product of his own reason, superior intellect, or other meritorious quality or effort on his part; all that was shut out already by his old name Simon, etc. The faith and knowledge which uttered Peter's confession was not in any way the product of **flesh and blood**, i. e., of man. The Hebrew *basar wadam*, frequent in Jewish literature = mortal man; man in his weakness and fallibility. Here Peter himself is meant, but what was true of him was equally true of the other disciples. — In the verb **hath revealed** Jesus declares the contents of Peter's confession to be an impenetrable mystery, one which "flesh and blood," man by his own power, is unable to uncover and know. Only **my Father which is in heaven**, whose greatness and glory are thus made prominent, can reveal to any man that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. It lies on the surface that the revelation here meant is not one of intellectual knowledge, but of spiritual apprehension. The Father has filled Peter's heart with

the light of faith, and thus he knew Jesus. But we must not suppose that the Father exercised either an arbitrary or an irresistible will in this matter. Nor was this revelation to Peter without means. The Father revealed Jesus to Peter through Jesus himself, and he endeavored to do this with all men with whom he brought Jesus into contact. Verses 13-14 shew how men would not receive the Father's revelation, but preferred their own foolish thoughts instead. Our passage is a mighty proof for the confession: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him." Only they know Jesus whose souls have come into living touch with him through faith; others, even though they call him God's Son, do not know what they are saying.

18. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

We must mark the emphatic *καγώ*. Here speaks the Son of the living God whom Peter had confessed; and he speaks as the great Lord of the church and King of the kingdom of heaven. Next we must note the pronouns **thee** and **thou**, likewise emphatic: **And I also say unto thee**, as if the Lord were here making a confession on his part regarding his disciple; and really that is what he is doing: **thou art Peter**. It is exactly what he has promised: if we confess him, he will confess us—this he begins now already, as we see in Peter. Cephass or Peter = the rock-man, cf. Jno. 1, 42. This name, given to Simon on first coming to Jesus, indicates what Jesus would make of this man, here what to a significant degree he had already made of him. His confession was a mark of the true rock nature.—The name which Jesus uses is *Πέτρος*, the masculine form, which signifies a large, detached rock or boulder. He then continues: **and upon this rock will I build my church**, but now he uses *πέτρα*, the feminine noun, which signifies a rock-cliff. Liddell & Scott give for *πέτρα*:

a ledge, or shelf of rock, a rocky peak or ridge, and add the significant statement: "There is no example in good authors of *πέτρα* in the sense of *πέτρος* a stone, for even in Homer *πέτραι* are not loose stones, but masses of living rock torn up and hurled by giants. The distinction is marked. It is marked still more by the pointed addition **this rock**, ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πέτρᾳ. Two things ought to be frankly acknowledged — the plain distinction, and the evident correlation. *Πέτρος*, the person of Peter, and *αὕτη ἡ πέτρα*, "this rock," are not identical — the latter does not signify the apostle Peter. This significance of the terms before us is supported by other considerations. If Jesus meant Peter himself, in his person, by "this rock," he could easily have said: ἐπὶ σοῦ, "on thee" will I build my church; or: "on thee, Peter," repeating the name. But Jesus has already referred to Peter's person, both in his old name Simon Bar-Jonah, and in the significant designation "flesh and blood." Peter's person does not receive a bit of credit there, all the credit belongs to God. This appears again in the name "Peter," which states what Jesus intended to make out of Peter, i. e., points to something from above, greater than Simon, and put into him to make that out of him which Jesus desired. If we look beyond our passage in the Scriptures, all this is amply corroborated. Eph. 2, 20 makes all the apostles the "foundation," and knows of no prerogative of Peter. Matth. 18, 1 and 4; Luke 22, 24 the Twelve debate who is to be the greatest among them. They evidently did not think that Peter had been assigned this position. Matth. 18, 18; John 20, 23 contain no intimation whatever of any supremacy of Peter. He is only one among the rest — sometimes, not always however, *primus inter pares*. The highest authority bestowed by Jesus upon his followers is given to all alike, and not to Peter either as the human head of the church or as the *princeps apostolorum*. Yet *Πέτρος* and *αὕτη ἡ πέτρα* are far more than a play of words. The feminine term

stands for the thing that made Peter a rock. That was, of course, not his confession, but the revelation from which that confession sprang and to which Jesus refers so significantly in v. 17. But this revelation was not Peter's alone; all the disciples shared it, for all of them confessed in the confession of Peter. To bar the rest out, to speak only of Peter here because Peter voiced the confession, to emphasize Peter's confession unduly as *his* confession, is wrong, even if Peter's confession, not his person, is made the rock on which Jesus erects the church. Luther is right: "All Christians are Peters on account of the confession which Peter here makes, which is the rock on which Peter and all Peters are built" — taking Luther to mean the truth held and confessed by Peter and these Peters. *In omnibus illis dictis Petrus sustinet personam totius coetus Apostolorum, sicut ex ipso textu apparet.* Smalc. Art., *De Potestate et Primatu Papae*, where from XI on an exegesis of our passage is found. As far as v. 18 is concerned, which is the unfolding of what lies in v. 17, just as Luther indicates, we have here Peter as a believer and confessor of the Son of God, and thus as the spokesman not of the Twelve, but of all true Christians. We have here not the office of the apostolate, but the divine truth and reality on which all believers, apostles and all others, stand as the great "rock." The office of the apostolate is called the "foundation" in Eph. 2, 20, because this gave us the written New Test. Word, for which reason also the prophets and apostles are grouped together. — Modern exegetes sometimes deviate from these findings. Meyer says that "this rock" = the rock nature of Peter, concretely present in his person; on this the church is to be built. The text goes beyond this rock nature, to the Father's revelation which made Peter blessed. Meyer is judged by this plain statement of the text. Zahn points to the faith of Peter, i. e., his subjective faith, and thinks that Peter is the first man to declare his faith, and that therefore he has the dis-

inction of being the first stone laid down to form the foundation of the church. But the entire notion of the *first* stone is imported. And it is a question indeed whether Peter is the first one who believed, or even the first one who confessed faith in Jesus. The fine way he did it here does not say at all that no previous confessions had been made, and no previous faith had entered hearts by God's revelation; as early as Jno. 1, 49-51; 2, 11 we have faith and confession, and even the confession: "Thou art the Son of God!" Zahn overlooks a few things. So also we much challenge his argument in going back from the Greek to the Aramaic to prove that really there was no distinction between the name "Peter," and the ordinary noun "rock." Zahn does not happen to have the Aramaic Gospel of Matthew, if there ever was such a document, nor any inspired Aramaic record of Jesus' statement. He may set aside the inspired Greek record we have, we are unable to do this. It is very risky business to try to translate anything back into its original language, especially into a language like the Aramaic of Christ's day, of which we all would like to know far more. Whenever this appeal to the Aramaic is made to alter the plain meaning of the inspired New Test. Greek, the appeal ought to be set aside at once as out of order. — On "this rock" Jesus says: **I will build my church.** We may take it that he refers to the day of Pentecost, or, if we wish to speak more exactly, that this building process had already begun when he was speaking, and would extend on through the future. Since Jesus speaks of himself as the builder, he cannot speak of himself as also the foundation, hence he makes that to be "this rock." As the Lord of the church he calls it **my church**, and he uses ἐκκλησία, **church**, the assembly of those called together. This points to the calling of the Gospel and Gospel messengers. The church, then, are all believers who have been called out of the world by means of the Word, and are one "building" or body

here on earth. In conjunction with the figure of the "rock" we have that of a building — stone laid against stone, fitly framed together, a living temple of souls joined together, by faith, the great *Una Sancta*, which we confess in the Apostolic Creed. No Peter, no subjective faith of Peter, could bear this structure. This delusion of Rome finds no hold whatever in Scripture. It takes God's revelation of the Christ, the Son of God, to constitute that eternal foundation. — For so enduring shall this building be that **the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it**. Hell is here viewed as the opposite of the church on earth, each like a great *oikos*, house, palace, perhaps we might say castle or fort. "The gates" or portals are mentioned to make us think of the mighty warring host of devils issuing forth from them to assail the church of Christ, i. e., to hurl themselves against her portals and bulwarks. The intimation is that this assault shall take place. But these terrible devil powers **shall not prevail against it** (the church), i. e., be strong and mighty against her. Zahn is right, this implies an attack upon her, but Jesus assures us in advance of her power to withstand. Some believers may be dragged down, but the church will not fall in defeat. As a matter of curiosity only, in no way a piece of exegesis, we mention Meyer's fancy, that at the end of time the church will batter down the gates of the lower world and release the dead held there. This would top Christ's descent into hell by a descent of all his believers down at least to the gates of the same place. When it comes to hades more than one exegete loses his balance!

19. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

A good deal of fog, raised by prominent commentators, disappears when we hold fast that the keys here spoken of belong to **the kingdom of heaven**, and

that this designation is not identical with "my church" in verse 18. Philippi (*Glaubensl.* 5, 3, 201) draws attention to the distinction when he says that the term *Ecclesia* embraces only the earthly side of the kingdom of heaven, while "kingdom of heaven" takes in both the earthly and the heavenly sides. It thus includes the great King himself, his subjects, the citizens of his kingdom. And we must add, the idea in "kingdom," as used thus in the Scriptures, involves the exercise of certain divine power, authority, dispensing blessings and the like. We must not stress the idea of organization by thinking too much of the way earthly kingdoms are arranged; for the kingdom of heaven is not patterned after any earthly kingdom, but is superior to them all. It is in reality the entire domain in which Christ our King exercises his saving grace. He does it by the Gospel here on earth, so that wherever that is preached his Kingdom is present and operative; and he exercises his grace in the bestowal of heavenly glories above, so that there too his kingdom is and all its power. — Now **the keys** of this kingdom Jesus says he **will give** to Peter. The future tense is significant, though commentators read over it and never ask when this gift was executed. V. 20 sheds some light on this point — Jesus restrains his apostles from telling men that he is the Christ. Not yet were the keys to be used by them — they were not ready as yet, nor was Jesus ready, our redemption was not yet accomplished. There is a figure in the word "keys," and we must combine it with the verbs **bind** and **loose**. While the number of keys is not specified, these two verbs rightly make us think of only two keys. It ought not to be difficult for us, as it certainly was not to Peter and the Twelve, to understand that a key which binds is simply the power to shut out from the entire kingdom of heaven, and a key which looses is the authority to admit to this divine kingdom. Instead of chasing fancies of our own we prefer to follow the old hermeneutical rule: *Scriptura ex Scriptura*

explicanda est. In Matth. 18, 18 we have these two verbs again, and in the same order: "What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." This is Christ's own commentary on the keys. It is the stepping stone to another: "Whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained," John 20, 23. Because the order is reversed in this passage is certainly no reason to say that here the keys are not meant. The Scriptures themselves thus explain the neuter **whatsoever** = "what things" in Matth. 18, 18, and "sins" in John 20, 23. This neuter, then, does not itself signify *persons*, but the *acts* of persons. But through these acts of theirs, which are made subject to the power of the keys, the persons also are affected. It is the old principle carried consistently through the Scriptures that all public judgment of men, even Christ's final public judgment, has to do not with the heart directly, with its faith or lack of faith, but with men's works. Faith is always a hidden thing, which God's omniscience alone is able to pass upon. Wherever God's judgment or that of his agents is to be justified in public before other men and before the angels, the works of men are brought forward. So we especially are bound always to deal only with the works of men, with what they confess by word and deed, and dare never arrogate to ourselves the function of deciding directly, and apart from works, concerning faith. We may or may not have the moral conviction that a man has faith, or that he lacks faith — this is none of our business, we are to pass only on his works. — The key that binds is the power and authority to retain sins; the key that looses is the power and authority to forgive sins. We need not say what this means for the persons involved — it either shuts them out of the entire kingdom of heaven, or it admits them into this kingdom. And now we can answer the question raised by the future tense.

This power was given to Peter when Jesus finally sent him to preach the Gospel in the world. The power of the keys, this binding and loosing, is the power of the Gospel — it alone removes sins, so that what is loosed **on earth** is thereby automatically loosed also **in heaven**, and what is bound **on earth** is likewise by that very act bound **in heaven**. How this key-power is to be exercised Matth. 18, 18 shows with the greatest clearness. It is the power to grant or to withhold absolution or forgiveness. Always this power is Christ's own, and only given to us in his name and according to his will. All of the cardinal passages involved emphasize this. Only repentant sinners can be forgiven, only impenitent sinners can be sent away unforgiven. The keys are stronger than we — they never work according to any man's perverted will. They fit only certain locks, nor can you work the loosing key where the binding one alone fits, and vice versa. All true and proper administration of the Gospel is an exercise of the keys. Who will count the souls admitted to the kingdom by the preaching of the Gospel alone? This administration is applied to individuals in church discipline, in the divine service of confession, and in other instances when single souls seek the comfort of the Gospel. — It is plain, then, that Jesus' word to Peter here is not meant as applying to Peter alone as against the Eleven. This perversion has produced the papacy with all its tyranny of souls. Matth. 18, 18: "tell it unto *the church*" (which uses the very word our text contains), as also the commands to preach the Gospel, are sufficient proof that the keys were entrusted to the entire church, and not to any order of men, not even to the Twelve alone, to say nothing concerning Peter alone. But the church operates the power of the Gospel entrusted to it through its called ministers. We might call them the hands of the church. This, however, is true only of the public work of the Gospel. The Twelve had Christ's own call, bestowed upon them in an immediate manner; Paul too

was called thus. As apostles they were to do a special work in the early days of the church, Jesus making their office to correspond to their task.

It would lead us too far to list all the false views which have been connected with our passage. Meyer and Zahn are set on making "bind" and "loose" = forbid and allow. Very authoritatively the former declares: "Any other explanation as compared with this dignified usage is arbitrary and linguistically wrong." But this interprets the words from the Talmud, which uses *asar* and *hittir* (Aram. *asar* and *sherah*) in this peculiar manner. Even Hofmann follows this explanation first given by Lightfoot. According to this interpretation Peter is to determine what in a moral way shall be allowed or disallowed in the church — much as the pope hands down decisions for the whole Catholic church now. When did Peter ever do anything of this sort? Zahn feels the pinch in Christ's statement that what is thus forbidden and allowed shall be considered forbidden and allowed also *in heaven*! He attempts to evade this difficulty; but it only shows that he is wrong. We do see the keys used in the Acts and in the Epistles. A notable instance is Acts 15, only Peter here is not the chairman of the meeting, this is James. And in no way does Peter even formulate the decision, James does that, and the decision is adopted by "the apostles and elders *with the whole church*"! This action applied the Gospel to the situation of the church as it then existed; it specified how the principle of brotherly love and forbearance ought to be applied. The case of incest and similar sins, 1 Cor. 5, 11 and 13; 2 Cor. 2, 6-8, is another commentary; cf. also 2 Cor. 2, 10. So all through the Acts and Epistles: *the church* uses the keys by exercising the power of the Gospel, now upon many, now upon one; and in this exercise the apostles and elders (pastors) lead as the proper ministrants of the church. Fausset thinks Peter had the keys only in those instances when he was infallible. Perhaps he laid them

down in between! The man mixes up the divine inspiration vouchsafed to Peter and others, with the administration of the Gospel. And so the errors go on. But the great work of Luther and the Reformation has most thoroughly gone into this portion of holy Scripture, establishing once for all what the power of the keys is, how Peter had it, and how the church has it. And this result is so fortified by Scripture itself that no Talmud reference will be able even to budge it. The only pity is that there are Protestants and children of the Reformation who have not yet discovered this blessed inheritance of theirs.

SERMON.

An echo of the Easter triumph we were privileged to celebrate two weeks ago sounds through the great text which you have just heard. St. Peter in the name of all the apostles confesses Jesus Christ as the Son of the living God, and that Son declares that he will found his church so that the gates of hell shall not be able to overthrow it. St. Peter's confession was true, Christ's promise was true—nineteen centuries of the history of the Christian church attest it. Just how true both are the power of Christ's resurrection from the dead reveals to us.

This is what makes all that Christ said to St. Peter in regard to the church he had come to found for the salvation of men so important for us all. Not only has the church existed for all these centuries, every hostile attack against her has failed and her work has gone on triumphantly and will go on till the end of time. Why? Because Christ, the Son of the living God is behind the church.

Let us carefully weigh, then,

The Savior's Word to St. Peter on the Christian Church,

on its foundation, its function, and its foes.

I.

Christ, the Son of God, had come to found the church on earth and to make it the portal of heaven. For this he made his great sacrifice on the cross, and then arose on the third day, throwing wide the portals that men might enter there and find salvation. Here in our text he is busy with

the preparatory work, training his apostles who were to be his special servants in the first age of the church. How much he had already accomplished we see in the noble confession of St. Peter. When he asked the Twelve on this notable occasion: "Whom say ye that I am?" this ever ready disciple voiced the faith of them all: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God!" At once Christ opened up to them what all was involved in this confession. To know Christ as he really is must lead us to know likewise the divine purpose of his coming among men, of his work here on earth, and of its consummation hereafter. This purpose stands before us embodied in his church. Put together then these two—Christ, the Son of the living God, and his church; and begin as Christ here did with **the founding of the church.**

What had St. Peter done when he declared that the twelve apostles were convinced in their inmost souls that Jesus was indeed the divine Savior sent of God? He had placed himself and them all into living relation with Christ. He had confessed that the souls of them were joined to Christ by the inward tie of faith and trust. They had escaped from the bogs and sands of human delusions, and had grounded themselves on the everlasting Rock of Ages, on the Son of the living God, their Savior, where they would stand secure to all eternity. It was a mighty confession indeed: it said even more than Peter thought when he uttered it. No wonder Jesus called him blessed, and told him that this confession was the fruit of God's work in his soul, for by the work of God's grace alone can any man ground himself thus upon Jesus Christ.

But see, the Savior now answers the confession of the apostles by drawing the curtain aside to show them what lay in the future. "On this rock," said Jesus, "will I build my church." On what rock? On the very one St. Peter and his fellow apostles had confessed they were already built by faith—on Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. The Christian church is founded on this mighty Rock of Ages which cannot be moved. The glory of the apostles is that they were the first to be thus founded and grounded on Christ, even before all his redemptive work was done. What if they did pass through days of trial and weakness. They were often enough weak and wavering, but the Rock on which they stood held. See how they gathered at last around their risen Savior, and then realized far more fully than when Peter here first said it, that this Christ, dying for our sins and rising again, is indeed the Son of the living God, an eternal Savior, the everlasting foundation of the church. And then Christ carried out his word that on this Rock he would found his church. Beginning at Jerusalem and going on through the world Christ was revealed to men, and thousands and thousands down to this

very day have been drawn to Christ as Peter and the Twelve were long ago. Their souls rest on this divine Savior; he supports and holds them now and ever more. Thus is the church founded as Jesus says "upon this Rock."

But are we not misreading the Savior's words? Did he not say to St. Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock," namely upon Peter, "will I build my church"? Is not the apostle Peter the foundation of the church? Does not the very name "Peter" signify rock? This is the terrible delusion of Rome. To bolster it up, since Peter, of course, would die in a few years, they have invented the idea of successors of Peter; not that Christ ever appointed a successor of this or any other apostle as an apostle, but the church of Rome chooses such successors herself and calls them popes. Thus the Catholic church claims to be • founded on Peter. The Greek word "Peter" means stone. That was the name Jesus gave to this apostle to indicate what his grace would finally make of him, a solid living stone in the structure of his church. As such he was to be an example unto others that like him they too might grow firm in the faith and be living stones in the temple of God. But when Jesus said: "upon this Rock I will build my church," he used a different Greek word, not "stone," but rock indeed, like a mass of rock in the earth upon which one can build stone upon stone in a mighty structure to stand unshaken for ages. Peter himself had just confessed that his faith rested on Christ, the Son of the living God—that was the Rock Christ said he would build his church on. Peter was one stone already in that building, so were the other apostles and believers stones resting on Christ. Christ's words are plain enough, if only men will take those words as they stand.

If the church had been built upon a mere man, no matter how great and strong, it would not stand to eternity. Though Peter was a strong apostle of Christ, he himself needed a Savior as much as any man. Remember how he denied Christ the night Judas betrayed him. Almost did Peter then fall from the great foundation Rock of the church—Jesus' mercy saved him. If Peter is the foundation of the church, and not Christ, then does Peter stand alone? No greater dishonor could be done Peter, for his whole soul rested on Christ. But if Peter is the foundation of the church because he rests on Christ, then he would be a foundation upon a foundation, he would not differ from the other apostles and early believers. The real foundation would then after all be Christ. Look on through the Scriptures, and see whether Peter is made the foundation. Paul preached only one grand theme, not Peter, but Christ and him crucified. John preached not Peter, but the blood of Christ which cleanseth us from all sin. The Apostolic Creed confesses not: "I believe in

St. Peter," but: "I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord"—the same confession with which Peter rested his soul upon Christ.

Thank God that Christ is our foundation. He needs no other upon whom to rest, for he is God's eternal Son. His power, grace, majesty, his atoning work, his promise will stand forever. He that believeth in him shall be saved indeed. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3, 11.

II.

When Peter and the apostles confessed Christ as the Son of the living God the Savior beheld in them the beginning of his holy church. He then revealed to them that he himself was the foundation upon which this church would rest to all eternity. But this very image of it, a mighty building, a strong fortress on solid rock, a glorious temple on a sure foundation, the Savior used to reveal to the apostles what **the function of the church** would be.

This church which Christ said he would build, and did indeed build by his sacrifice and resurrection, he pictures as having a grand entrance that men may be received into it. And this entrance is nothing less than the door into God's own blessed heavenly kingdom. Christ's great object in building the Christian church was to bring the kingdom of heaven down here among sinners that thus through the Christian church the doors might be thrown open and men received, into his kingdom. With this in mind we will understand what Jesus said to Peter and thus to all the apostles: "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." The great work of keeping the doors of the kingdom of heaven in the Christian church Jesus thus placed in the hands of Peter and his fellow believers. We who believe in Christ and confess his name, we who are in the church and thus in the kingdom of heaven, we are to have this grand and blessed duty—to keep the door, to have charge of the keys, to open and to shut the door, to admit those who may enter, and to bar out those who may not. This is the great function of the church. Mark it, of the church, not of one or more in the church, but of all those who constitute the church, namely of all true believers in Jesus Christ. The first of these Jesus saw before him when Peter made his confession, and to them he made this blessed revelation which is now in full operation—the keys of the kingdom open and shut that kingdom here on earth for men.

What are those keys? The answer is plain when Jesus says: "And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." A little later Jesus himself states this very thing of

all the apostles: "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." After his resurrection Jesus said still more explicitly: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose soever sins retain, they are retained." There are two keys, then; that means two great powers committed to the church, to bind and to loose, to retain and to forgive sins, to bar men out of the kingdom of heaven and to let them in. Once Christ himself exercised this power. Hear him say to the paralytic man, to the sinful woman in Simon's house: Thy sins are forgiven—go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee. And again, turning to the wicked Jews, he said: Ye shall die in your sins—he who blasphemeth the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven either in this world or the next. Thus did Christ in person handle the keys while among men; this we now are to do at his command.

He has told us how, when he gave us the Gospel to preach to all the world. What is the sum of that Gospel? You know it well: he that repents and believes shall be forgiven and saved: he that refuses to repent and believe shall not be forgiven and shall be damned. Preach it, said Christ, just as I have given it unto you. And just as we preach it to all to hear, so we are to apply it to each and every individual, forgiving his sins in Christ's name and by his command if the man repents: retaining his sins and refusing him membership in the church if he will not repent. And this Gospel thus preached and applied as Jesus has ordered will be effective every time; no matter what scoffers may think or say, these two great Gospel powers or keys will work unfailingly, shutting out every impenitent sinner, freely letting in every penitent one.

But again, are we not mistaken here? Did not Christ say: "I will give unto *thee*," namely Peter, "the keys of the kingdom of heaven"? Was not Peter thus made the head or pope of the church to bind and to loose, to let in and bar out of the kingdom of heaven? This is the great error of Rome. Peter is dead and gone, but since about two hundred years after Peter they began to make successors of his, and then gradually built up the papal hierarchy, the pope of Rome at the top, and all his bishops and priests binding and loosing at his command, while all the members of the Catholic Church must humbly submit. But the whole system is false. Christ established no vicegerent of the church, he made no pope out of Peter. The keys and their power he laid not in the hands of Peter alone, or even of all the apostles alone, but into the hands of the whole church on earth, of all his believers. "Tell it unto the *church*," Jesus said, when a man has sinned, and will not repent: and he adds: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth," ye as the *church*, "shall be bound in heaven:

and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth," ye as the church, "shall be loosed in heaven." Not to Peter, not to the Twelve, but to the whole church he gave the Gospel, and this key power of the Gospel to admit men to Christ's kingdom, or to shut them out. And so the first church used this Gospel and its powers, and the true church has continued to do so down to this day. This is what Christ has done, and we will not submit to any man who stands up to usurp this power to himself.

The church is the great keeper of the keys. The Gospel and its wonderful power belong to us all who are built by faith on Christ. Yet it is Christ's will and command that the church call and appoint men to preach this Gospel and to administer its power. In this the church is like our great nation which elects its president and congress to administer the constitution and laws of the land. There would be a tremendous rebellion if any man would attempt to usurp these powers and claim that they belonged to him alone. They belong to the whole nation, and the nation as such administers them through its chosen representatives. So the church with the powers of the Gospel. Christ selected the first twelve representatives, for he had special tasks for them to do as apostles, but he gave the Gospel and its keys to all the church, for the church as such to handle these keys by calling pastors to preach the Gospel and to apply this Gospel, in the name of Christ and his church, to the souls of men, to admit the penitent to heaven, to bar the impenitent out. And behind his Gospel and these its keys there stands the Christ that Peter confessed with his fellow disciples, the Son of the living God, making that Gospel good in every case, letting into his great heavenly kingdom every penitent sinner, barring out every impenitent one.

The pope would snatch those keys and hold them himself. But equally arrogant is his claim that he can change these keys or powers to suit his own ideas of who shall enter and who shall not enter the kingdom. And in this second piece of arrogance he has had many followers outside of the Catholic Church. Many are not satisfied to bind what Christ binds, they want it loosed. They want to broaden the entrance to the kingdom to let in all kinds of people as they may decide. And others want to narrow the entrance by setting up new requirements, such as Christ did not set up. They all act as if they were the kings of this great kingdom of heaven, at least they do not bow to the Son of the living God to follow his will and Word alone. But all such arrogation is in vain. No man can alter the keys or change their working. You can crowd an earthly church with all kinds of people—that does not admit them to the kingdom unless they truly repent and believe. You can set up rules to bar out of the earthly church many a truly penitent believer. Christ himself whose

the keys are still admits him into the kingdom. But woe to the men who sin thus against the keys and the kingdom! They must give an account to the Son of the living God. In the state many an elected officer may get around the laws, but the Gospel and its powers no man can evade, not even the pope, not even a church body composed of millions. The keys placed into Peter's hands and the hands of the Twelve will judge even them, and so they will judge us all; for these mighty Gospel keys are nothing but the will and Word of the living Son of God.

Humbly let us bow then to Christ our King. What an honor to enter his kingdom of grace! And the still greater honor to be made the keepers of the door of his kingdom! Let us take this holy Gospel he has put into our hands, preach and administer it in every point exactly as he has said, heeding him only and no thoughts of our own or of other men. So will our earthly churches be indeed the gateway to the kingdom of heaven, and we will enter that gateway and through our ministrations others will enter, all to the glory of our Lord.

III.

In his word to Peter on the Christian church concerning its foundation on the Rock, and its function in regard to the keys, the Savior inserts a glorious promise and assurance. He declares of the church: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This is Christ's word concerning **the foes of the church.**

Yes, there are, and there always will be, foes both of Christ and of his church. Nor are these merely human foes. Against them human power might prevail. Here and in many another place in Scripture the curtain is drawn aside and we are shown who stands back of all the human foes of the Christian church—the gates of hell, Satan and the powers of darkness. Whoever sets himself against Christ is a tool and ally of Satan. Whoever opposes the Gospel and its blessed truths of salvation is aiding the gates of hell. Whoever hinders and hurts the true church of Christ which administers his blessed Gospel is doing the work of the kingdom of darkness. There are only two great spiritual kingdoms among men, that of which Christ is King, and that over which Satan holds sway. And these two are bound to clash. The gates of hell swing open wide. Satan and his hosts go forth to war against Christ, his Gospel, and his church.

"Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight.
On earth is not his equal."

Into the open jaws of those gates he would drag all the souls of men to eternal destruction. The church will ever be assailed. In the world we will never have peace, for always new oppositions will be stirred up. Sometimes these oppositions have risen to bloody persecutions. Read the history of the church and see the fires through which she has passed. Always here on earth she will be a church militant, her members "soldiers of the cross." The truer we are to Christ the more will we have to fight the battle of Christ.

But at the very start Christ, the Son of the Living God, has declared that the gates of hell shall not prevail. It is the great victor of sin, death, and hell who gives us this assurance of the victory and triumph of the church. What a handful of men heard that first promise—what a mighty host of believers glories in it to-day! Why will the church triumph, why will her foes go down in defeat? ~~With our unaided strength we would soon lie low in~~ final defeat. But the Son of the living God is our King; he is with us always even unto the end of the world; even where only two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst of them. The church founded on this Rock cannot fall or fail: never shall the mighty keys of the Gospel be snatched from her hands and the doors of the kingdom of heaven be blocked by the enemy. We may suffer, but we shall prevail, or rather Christ shall prevail in and through us. And this blessed promise to the church includes every member of hers. Christ knows his sheep, and not one of them shall be snatched out of his hand. Only we ourselves, by wilfully, wickedly turning from him and loving the world again, can separate ourselves from his promise. If we grasp the hand of Christ in his Gospel and resist the devil he shall flee from us. Forever and ever Christ, his Gospel, his church, and every true member of that church are stronger than the arch-foe of the church. See the hosts that have triumphed already. In the Book of Revelation they are described as they that have overcome and sing now the song of heavenly victory. Ever new hosts are joining them above—and you shall join them and I, if only we remain true to Christ.

Glory be to Christ who gives us this blessed assurance! Let it fill your hearts with gratitude and joy. Let it make you loyal to Christ and his church and fill you with courage to fight the good fight of faith. "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed with white raiment; and 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. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." Rev. 21, 7. The great advance hosts of the church militant have already received these promises and are become the church

triumphant in the kingdom above. We too are hastening toward that triumph.

- Let the words which Christ spoke to Peter concerning the Christian church sink deeply into your hearts. Her foundation is everlasting, her function is divine, her foes are helpless. All this because with all her members she is the church of Christ, the Son of the living God.

OUTLINES.

Harless in Langsdorff's work on the newer gospel pericopes shows what a wealth of thought lies embedded in our text. We may lift out that central word: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church." Here is the foundation of the church—here is her work (called together by the Gospel, every member like Peter built by faith on this rock)—here is her assurance of success and triumph.—We may put forward: The marks of the true church—built on Christ, and on no human authority—built in true faith, and trusting in no works and ceremonies—built by the Gospel, and following no other doctrine.—Combining Peter's confession and the mighty answer of Jesus we could make our theme: The answer of the Son of the living God to Peter's great confession: that answer shows the rock on which Peter stood, and the church with Peter—that answer shows the fight which Peter must fight, and the church with him—that answer shows the work which Peter was to do, and the church with him.—If a more controversial sermon is desired, take a theme like this: Is the pope at Rome the successor of Peter? We answer by pointing to the falseness of the papal claims—and by pointing to the truth which Christ himself declared to Peter.

The Glory of the Christian Church.

1. *Her glorious Founder.*
2. *Her glorious power.*
3. *Her glorious permanence.*

The Son of the Living God and his Church.

1. *He laid the rock on which she stands.*
2. *From his hands are the keys which she holds.*

Was St. Peter the First Pope?

There is an answer to this question in

1. *The rock*, on which the church is founded, which is not Peter, but the truth which Peter confessed, and we confess with him.
 2. *The gates of hell*, which shall not prevail against the church, not because Peter is so strong, but because the foundation of the church is divine.
 3. *The keys*, which the church holds, which are the power and authority of the Gospel given, not to Peter, but to the entire church and her ministry.
-

The Church the Keeper of the Keys.

1. *The keys* which have been committed to the church.
 - a) The gates of heaven are on earth; no one enters except through them.
 - b) These gates are in the Word, by which the door of heaven is opened and closed.
 - c) The Word is committed to the church, whose duty it is to open and to close.
 - d) The church exercises this power of the Word ordinarily through the ministry.
 2. *The keeping of the keys* on the part of the church.
 - a) Having preached repentance the church is bound to forgive the sins of all who do repent.
 - b) Having warned against impenitence the church is bound to retain the sins of all who do not repent.
 - c) Christ's authority behind both acts makes them valid on earth and in heaven, and thus fills the church with divine assurance.
-

The Glories of the Christian Church.

1. *Her foundation*—the Son of the living God.
 2. *Her authority*—the keys of the kingdom of heaven.
 3. *Her promises*—the gates of hell shall not prevail against her.
-

JUBILATE.

Mark 8, 34-38.

Our text is closely connected with the preceding one on Peter's great confession, as a glance at Mark 8, 27, etc., shows, and the parallels Matth. 16, 24, etc., Luke 9, 23, etc. Between Peter's confession and the exhortation in our text there lies the announcement of Christ's passion and resurrection. Mark even says that Jesus began to *teach* the disciples in regard to these matters and that he spake *openly* regarding them. Peter tried to interfere by taking Jesus aside and urging him against any such course. He thoroughly misunderstood the entire situation, both as to Christ's work and as to his own discipleship. This is the connection in which our text occurs. The church of Christ and every true follower of his must remain in lowliness *nor ever let the world make us ashamed of Christ*. How this text fits the Sunday for which it is set the remarks in the introduction to Quasimodogeniti have shown.

34. And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Mark has the fuller and more graphic account. We may assume that when Peter took Jesus aside and rebuked him regarding his entering any course like suffering and death, the other disciples were not far away. V. 33 says that in replying to Peter Jesus turning about saw his disciples. The counter rebuke administered to Peter may well be conceived as having been spoken so that all the disciples, standing in a group apart, heard the sharp words. The interval between this rebuke and what now follows does not seem to have been great, perhaps it was quite slight. Wohlenberg assumes that

at some time between Jesus was completely alone, perhaps engaged in prayer, and that then he did what Mark here states, called the multitude and the disciples unto him. The text with its graphic touches does not hint at such retirement or prayer. After the rebuke to Peter Jesus calls the disciples all to his side, and in addition the multitude that was following him and at the moment like the disciples standing some little ways apart, Jesus having been engaged with Peter. What Jesus has to say is for them all to know and impress deeply upon their hearts. The longer and the better they know Jesus the more will they find that accepting Jesus means denying self. — **If any man would come after me, let him deny himself.** Jesus uses the condition of reality, which the English "would come after" renders imperfectly. Jesus has in mind one actually following him. He uses *θέλει* which refers to the will, and the present tense is durative: If a man has the will and continues to have it, let him, etc. There is no compulsion of the will, all discipleship is voluntary. But there is no such thing as man of his own will deciding to follow Christ. Every man's will is bound by nature, and the drawing of the Father and of Christ (means of grace) can alone set it free. Now where this liberation has occurred, where a man drawn to Christ wills to **come after him** — here an aorist infinitive evidently complexive = to make his life a coming after Jesus — such a man must know what his willing involves. "Come after," as here used includes all that goes with discipleship, both faith and conduct. It means to make him the teacher, guide, master, lord in the highest sense of the word. — What this involves is now brought to view by means of three energetic imperatives. **Let him deny himself**, and the aorist imperative means: once for all. The verb means: to turn some one off, to refuse to acknowledge him or continue association with him. There is a sort of paradox in denying oneself. But this self that is meant is self as our former master and leader. Man by nature

always directs himself, and being blinded and perverted by sin he directs himself contrary to God. The paths and acts that seem good and desirable to him end in the precipice of eternal destruction. It seems glorious to be one's own master, but it is fatal; it seems free, the very acme of liberty, but it is a false freedom which overlooks the real bondage in which the soul lies. It is fundamental then to disown this master SELF, if Jesus is to be our Master. The two follow opposite paths, lead to opposite goals. We must say no to self and all its promptings, turn our backs upon them, as Peter wrongfully did when he denied Jesus the night of the betrayal, as the prodigal rightfully did when he turned from his evil course and determined to go back to his Father's house. We may apply Frommel's word: "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 give thee up, for his love and favor is worth more to me than thine." Arndt has well said: "Jesus has many servants, few followers," for so many only apparently bid farewell to self. Note then in the very nature of the case coming after Jesus = denying self, not following self. — The second imperative is also an aorist: **and take up his cross** once for all; or as Luke has it: take it up "daily." There is a kind of a paradox here also — in all ordinary cases the cross is forced upon a man against his will, but the follower of Jesus of his own volition lifts it upon his shoulders. What Jesus means with this striking figure is evident. Not only are we to say no to self and follow another, namely Christ, but in following him are to become like him — as he bore the cross, so we are to bear the cross. Paul calls this "the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death," Phil. 3, 10. Peter writes: "Ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings," and he bids us rejoice at that. 1 Pet. 4, 13. "Always bearing about

in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." 2 Cor. 4, 10. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." Col. 1, 24. A deep thought underlies this entire conception, namely the oneness of Christ and the church. While there is no thought of atonement in any manner in connection with the sufferings of Christ's followers, these sufferings are viewed as one with his, an extension of them still in progress, and thus coming on all who are vitally one with him. The "cross" thus becomes a true mark of every follower of Jesus; none is without it. The sufferings thus meant are those resulting from our faithfulness to Christ. They may be due to the hostility of the world, or they may be such afflictions as Jesus otherwise lays upon us because we are his followers and need the discipline of the cross. Many who are not followers of Jesus, or only sham followers, like to call everything that comes upon them in penalty for their sins a "cross," but, as an old Bible with comments has it, these are nothing but switches for the hide of the ass. Four good old rules are offered by Besser: Expect the cross daily — never decline its load — take hold of it courageously without the stupefying wine with myrrh of worldly diversion — do not try to run away from God's school before he is done with you. Each follower has **his** cross — Jesus knows what each needs. The whole imagery here employed has become dulled to us like a coin in constant use; it is the preacher's business to bring out all the impressions clear and true again. Sad to say, many a Christian cannot see the difference between the chastisement his own follies still bring upon him and the genuine cross he is to bear. So also many are ready to endure much in a cause of their own, but flee when it comes to the cause of the Lord. — The third imperative is durative: **and follow me** constantly. "To come after" Jesus

and "to follow" him is, of course, the same. It embraces all that a life of faith and faithfulness includes — every thought, word, and deed governed by our new Master. Especially by the first two imperatives Jesus means to show how difficult it is to follow him. Some men think it perfectly easy and lovely. But genuine following means genuine abolition of self and genuine stooping beneath the cross Jesus has for us. Let us say it at once — no man can achieve this of himself, no man ever has, in fact no man of himself would ever even try. This following is wholly and down to the last point the work of God's grace. And this very grace reaches out in these imperatives to all who hear them to draw them unto Jesus and make them his followers indeed.

35. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's sake shall save it.

This **for** shows why Jesus used those three imperatives — he does not want us to lose our life. Note the verb *θέλειν* again in the first sentence; it is of a man who wills to save his life by seeking the earthly things which he thinks will secure that result. In the second sentence there is no need for such willing, i. e., to lose the life, for it is a foregone conclusion that he will thus lose it. There is no difference between the two relative clauses, the one with the subjunctive, the other with the future indicative, the New Test. Greek allowing both with or without *εάν* or *άν*; they state a future act vividly. Both statements are in the form of a paradox, such as Jesus loved. They always challenge the mind, make one look for the key, and thus stick in the memory. — Whoever resolves to **save his life**, namely by trying to secure as fully as possible the things our earthly life requires in the way of sustenance, may succeed indeed, but by that very act he **shall lose it**; for he will have saved only his temporal life as long as that may last. Not even trying for anything higher,

how shall he obtain anything higher? His little earthly life will have run its course, and then the terrible loss will appear even to him, but then too late. So the sense of the first paradox is: he that determines to save his life in the lower sense of life, shall as a result lose his life in the higher sense of life. — On the other hand, whosoever **shall lose his life** in the lower sense of the word, by giving up any of the temporalities, even if necessary dying as a martyr, **for my sake and the gospel's sake**, devoting his efforts with singleness of heart to these, he shall indeed lose his life, in the lower sense of life, but in so doing he **shall save it**, namely his life in the higher sense of the word. "If you withdraw from the cross, because you wish to preserve your life uncrucified, you will lose it, for everything is lost which tries to maintain itself separate from Christ; but if you lose your life, if you freely offer it and expose it for Christ's sake, in following and serving him, you will save it, find it well preserved and eternally sheltered in him, for nothing is lost that is entrusted to him. Look! All men must die, but to whom will you die? If you die to self, you are indeed one robbed of life; but if you die to the Lord, you are an heir of life." Besser. Does this word of Jesus sound hard? Look into his face, he is showing us the one way to true life and joy. — Mark alone has the addition: for my sake and **for the gospel's sake**, which Wohlenberg calls a practical application. We lose our lives for Christ's sake in losing them for the Gospel's sake. This does not necessarily mean to sacrifice life or anything that belongs to our earthly life in *working* for the Gospel, although, of course, this is included. But for Christ's sake = in faithfully following him; and for the Gospel's sake = in faithfully holding to the Gospel, knowing its preciousness to our souls. — The whole paradox turns on the double sense in which the word *ψυχή* is used in Greek. It may mean "life," for the *ψυχή* animates the body rendering it alive; and it may mean "soul," the

immaterial part of man. So one may indeed save the former and at the same time lose the latter, and vice versa.

36. For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? 37. For what should a man give in exchange for his life?

Here is the proof for Christ's previous statement, hence the **for**. It is put in the form of a question the answer to which is so self-evident that every man using his proper natural faculties will give it himself. And the question reduces the elements involved to a simple problem in profit and loss. This must appeal to men like the Jews keen in trade; and it ought to appeal to our commercial age, which thinks that "money talks." Well, here is what it says. Moreover, the problem is stated so as to make the worldling's side as favorable as it can possibly be made, more favorable than any man ever has made it or can make it. Figure the profit yourself—put on the credit side of the ledger: **that a man** (here insert your own name!) **gain the whole world.** Now that means literally the whole world with all the money there is in it, all its beauty, art, delectable pleasures, all its knowledge, science, invention, all its government, power, empires, emperors, and everything else—not one item omitted. Then put on the debit side of the ledger as the expenditure: **and forfeit his life.** What is the net profit in the transaction? It is zero! Only the devil can manipulate the books so that this absolute bankruptcy does not appear, till the books are finally audited. Yet many serenely go on doing the great business of life this way. In the Greek the two infinitive clauses are the subject of the main verb, and the second infinitive, which is passive, may be translated as a passive: "that his soul be forfeited," or as a middle: that a man forfeit his soul" (Robertson chooses the former).—To clinch the conclusion thus shown to be inevitable Jesus adds the second question which again involves a reason. The question is de-

liberative using the subjunctive *δοῖ*. With the soul forfeited as a penalty (*damnum*), what is there that a man shall give **in exchange**, as a thing to exchange, or trade it back for? The idea of course is, that he has the whole world as his possession. Can he offer anything of sufficient value to get back his forfeited soul? There is nothing. All figuring here will again find the true answer zero. Jesus here reckons the soul at its real value — to you and me its saving is worth more than many worlds. We would trade them all in if we could to redeem our souls from destruction. And yet men allow themselves to be cheated like the veriest fools, trading their souls for a tiny piece of this world. They are worse than the benighted savages who are ready to take a few beads or a glass of fire-water in exchange for their valuable lands. Christ's questions remind us of his own temptation, when the devil offered him the whole world. And his reference to the "exchange for his soul" plainly points to the one price which can indeed buy back our souls — his own life, his own blood. He could forfeit it for our sakes and take it back again. And this great price the risen Savior freely offers us now that we may take it by faith. Only they that take it cannot at the same time also take the world. It will always be either — or.

38. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

This last **for** is necessary to establish all that was said before about saving and losing the soul. Since the last two questions dealt with the negative side, the losing, this side is here retained ("ashamed"), and the counter part, namely Jesus acknowledging a man on the last day, is not added. The construction is the same as in v. 35, the relative clause with the futuristic subjunctive, followed by the future indicative. To be **ashamed of me** is to count Jesus of little worth. Yet

it includes that one have come in contact with him and have made an estimate of him. "Ashamed" points to the cross of Jesus, to his lowliness, and to the estimate men put upon him generally. Does he seem to bring us too little? Are his spiritual gifts and treasures too intangible against the things we may get apart from him? Does the judgment of worldly men affect us, so that we fear to acknowledge Jesus by word and deed in consistent faithfulness as our only Lord and Savior? — Jesus adds something as in v. 35, but now, instead of the Gospel, he adds **my words**. These *are* the Gospel, the embodiment of all his saving teaching. One may be ashamed of them in openly repudiating them, or in tampering with them to make them square with human wisdom, moral, humanitarian, scientific, and other progressive ideas. — The danger and temptation threatening us is indicated by the modifiers: **in this adulterous and sinful generation**, compare Matth. 12, 39 for Reminiscere. Jesus is speaking to Jewish hearers. "Adulterous" refers to the covenant relation of the Jews which they had broken by their formalism, work-righteousness, loss of spiritual godliness. So little did they know God that when his own Son came among them they could not recognize him. "Sinful" follows in our passage, in Matthew "evil" precedes. Both words refer to the same thing, actual sins. The generation Jesus faced and which his first followers had to face was one that had missed the mark set for it by God in his blessed Word, that mark which they should and could have reached by faith and godly living if they had submitted to his grace. This generation scorned the Son of man and all his words. — What now of any man who yields to this evil influence, and when he balances this generation on the one side and Jesus on the other, becomes ashamed of him, forsakes Jesus, persuades himself he can get more from this generation than he could possibly get from Jesus? The same idea of two kinds of values, which Jesus has used before, appears

here again, only in an altered form. Shall a man choose Jesus or shall he choose the approval of "this generation"? What that choice involves will be fully revealed at the last day: **the Son of man shall be ashamed of him, etc.** He uses his beloved Messianic name — he who is more than man come in the form of man. As such he will appear again at that day, **when he cometh** (literally: "shall come") **in the glory of his Father**, which was his before the world began, John 17, 5, the glory then fully exercised also by his human nature, **with the holy angels** in his company to be his assistants in the final judgment. How will that generation appear at that day and in that presence? What will their influence and approval amount to then? or their disapproval and ill-will for that matter? In making the application from Jesus' words to our generation let us observe that we must think here chiefly of all those who call themselves Christians but are untrue to his Gospel, not of those who openly spurn Christ. Note that this reference to Christ's glorious coming involves his resurrection from the dead and his ascension to heaven, for which reason also "Son of man" is the right title for him to use. This is the underlying thought which makes our text one very proper for after Easter. Thus Jesus will repudiate, must repudiate all who refused to honor him and his salvation. What then of their souls? They thought they would save their *ψυχή*, they will find that by that very thought and their acting on it they lost their *ψυχή* forever. Thus Jesus calls on us all to believe in him and follow him, setting all the great issues at stake clearly before us, so clearly that any man can see them and feel their weight. This is how his mighty grace would break down the barriers of our blindness and deadness of soul in order that faith may enter in and our souls be saved.

med'24

SERMON.

Christ's followers have all made a mighty choice and abide by it. We may also say that they constantly repeat that choice, and having made it once and again find it easier to repeat it whenever an issue involving that choice presents itself. It is Christ's grace which wrought in them to make that choice, and his grace alone by which they are able to abide by it. Left to themselves they never could and would have made it, for their wills were bound by the chains of sin. But he came by the Gospel and set them free; he graciously wrought in them to will and to do according to the saving pleasure of his will. Thus did they make the choice, and thus they rejoice in making it anew. But it is vital for us all that we ever keep before our eyes just what our great choice is, and how blessed it is that Christ's grace has moved us to make it and now works in us to abide by it.

For one of the great errors of Christians is the idea that in some way they can evade this choice, or can compromise the issues involved. Many of them try to serve two masters, and persuade themselves that they are able to so do successfully. They think that they can save their souls, and yet hold to the world; that they can follow Christ, and yet not let loose wholly of sin; that they can gain eternal life in the end, and yet walk on paths that lead in other directions. The thing has been tried over and over again; nobody has ever succeeded in the effort. But people are loth to learn from the terrible mistakes of others. You can falsify your life's ledger, but always the falsifications appear when in the end the books are audited. Every false entry will stand out against you, and you will be unable to explain it away. The devil is behind this false book-keeping; he laughs when you make the false entries, for they are always in his favor. He wants you to cheat yourself, for he knows that thereby you are cheating Christ also of the reward of his suffering and resurrection. Christ wants to save your soul for himself, and therefore he tells you so plainly what the issue really is. There dare be no compromise, only a decisive, clean-cut either—or. Let us look at it clearly, our text is full of it—

Christ's Mighty Either—Or:

Either self—or Christ: either a life without the cross—or one with it; either the world, really only a piece of it—or the soul: either the approval of men—or that of Christ. May the grace of God keep us from ever wavering in our choice!

I.

Christ's great either—or is first of all a choice of *masters*. Who is to be your lord and master? Is it to be **your own self**—or is it to be **Christ**. That is the issue, if you want to face the truth. Here Christ comes to you anew, shows you who he is and what he has for you, and then bids you: Deny yourself, and follow me!

It seems very attractive to be your own master, to do as you please, to obey nobody else. Does a thing seem good to you? well, you take it, proud of your own independence. Does a course of action seem profitable to you? you simply go ahead with it, satisfied with your own insight and wisdom. The church does not seem to pay—you yourself decide the matter and discard the church. (Christ is opposed to so many things you like,—you sit in judgment on him, and place yourself where his Word about these things does not trouble you.) Some Christless organization offers you all kinds of business and social advantages—you do not ask Christ's judgment in regard to such a connection; you decide the matter yourself. The study of God's Word for you and your children, this constant attendance at worship, this praying and reading God's Word at home is rather tiresome for the flesh and takes considerable of your valuable time—at least *you* think so, and so you drop these things and fill your time and thoughts with something else. Christian people, too, are not always attractive, even if they are God's people—and so you decide upon a different class of associates. Church work, benevolence and charity seems to require a lot of money—you settle the matter by putting your money where you think you can get a better return for it. Sunday is a day you find you can spend much more to your liking in pleasure, sleep and loafing around, reading the big Sunday issues of the papers, or doing a little business perhaps—you decide accordingly and ask nobody else. That is a brief story of self as your master. What a fine thing to be independent like that, to have no Lord Jesus Christ to interfere with you and the way you direct and manage your life.

But stop a moment! When Christ says: Deny yourself, disown your own thought and will (in directing your life) follow me, (trust me and my leading in all things)—do you really see why he says that? Let me assure you, it is not to your disadvantage, but to your everlasting advantage. Who is this that asks you to follow him in faith and trustful obedience. Why, it is God's own Son, your rightful lord and master. Even if we could say nothing more, this ought to settle the matter for you. It would be dangerous to be a rebel against God and his Son. (You know, traitors to any country are usually shot or hung.) To try to be a kind of

an anarchistic lord of your own will surely cost you dear when at last you face the Lord who has made you and to whom you belong.—But his call to you to follow him is based on ground far higher. This Son of God came on earth to suffer and die for you that you might escape the slavery and curse of your sins; he went into death and returned again from the grave that he might bring you eternal freedom from death and a life full of comfort, joy, and peace here on earth and full of eternal blessedness in heaven. It is your Savior who calls to you: Follow me! Look at the marks in his hands and feet and at the open wound in his side—these he suffered for you, miserable sinner that you are, that you might escape the penalty of your sins. In those holy wounds see what this Lord offers you: forgiveness of sin, life, salvation, adoption as a child of God, help, deliverance, consolation, and finally eternal joy. That is the kind of a lord he is. And to follow him means to possess all these priceless treasures in communion with him. Make no mistake about; see clearly what is involved in this mighty either—or of his.

This is the issue: either self as your master, with the little passing satisfaction, sham independence, and deceptive advantages you are able to secure for this poor life—or Christ as your Lord and Savior, giving you earthly care and help too, but in addition thereto all that the soul needs in the true priceless treasures bought by his own blood, treasures for this life and for that to come. As for me and my house, our choice is made forever, and every day of our lives makes us more thankful to Christ that by his grace he has led us to follow him alone.

II.

In Christ's great either—or a vital element is *the cross*. He never makes the least effort to hide it; in fact, he sets the cross plainly before our eyes and calls on us, as here in our text: Take up your cross, and follow me! That puts the issue in a new form: either **a life without the cross—or one with it**. But again, here is Christ to show us clearly just what is involved in declining to bear the cross after him, or in courageously taking it up and following him.

The word "cross" is very significant, and Christ purposely chose it on that account. You remember how when he was condemned men laid the great wooden cross upon his lacerated back and made him carry it out toward Calvary, and how he broke down beneath it, and they had to get Simon of Cyrene to carry that cross for him. So the cross has come to be a symbol of all that is painful in connection with the Christian profession and life. And nobody denies, (least of all Christ himself;) that there is a load of painful things which goes with following him. The

great question is, will we fly from this load—or will we take it up and bear it after him as he bids us.

Now a life without the cross seems very attractive. All you need do to avoid the cross is turn away from Christ, his Gospel, and his church, and you will have no cross to bear. Nobody then will make fun of you for being a Christian, for listening to things the Bible says, for being so devoted to the church and the work of Christ. (Nobody will turn against you for confessing Christ and for contradicting and rebuking their wicked, godless ways.) There are jobs you can hold, there is money that you can make, positions and advantages you can get, if you discard Christ and free your conscience from his control. Moreover, Christ himself will let you go, if you refuse to follow him. He will not ask you to do any hard and painful service for him; nor will he lay any trials and afflictions upon you, as he always does with every one of his followers. You can be like the boy who runs away from school—no teacher, no lessons for him, nothing but the sweet pleasure of his own will. You can be like the rich man in the parable, faring sumptuously every day; not like that poor Lazarus, covered with painful boils, with only crumbs to eat and dogs for his friends. What a fine thing it seems to be to get rid thus of the cross.—Only remember, that those who have no crosses to bear, do not always have a life merely of pleasure and advantages. The Bible says: "Many sorrows shall be for the wicked"—sorrows mark you, not crosses. (Men's sins have a way of finding them out after all. A man for instance lets his children grow up without Christ—afterwards perhaps they break his heart. A man piles up money without Christ—in the end that money is like a load on his soul which drags him down. You get many friends by turning away from Christ—only they too help to hold your soul in the power of the devil.) But, of course, you will have no cross to bear, if you do not follow the Savior.

But let no man misjudge the cross, when here again Christ asks us to take it up willingly and to rejoice in bearing it after him.) While there is something painful about the cross, and ever will be, there is also something infinitely blessed.—Every man who bears the cross is marked by it as a follower of Christ. Whatever you truly bear and suffer for Christ's sake is like a badge of honor given to you by Christ himself. (It is like the service medal given to a soldier or general for some special deed of valor. It costs something, but it is worth far more than it costs. Whoever suffers mockery, loss or persecution for Christ's sake, as Christ himself says, loses his life. Martyrs have lost it altogether by being actually killed; but countless others have lost it in part, by losing some of the earthly things of life, some position, honor, money, friends, pleasures, and the like, and receiving

instead slander, harm, enmity, and other painful inflictions. (Alas, many Christians, like Peter at the trial of Christ, try to avoid the shame, danger, and loss, by denying Christ, hiding their faith, refusing to stand up for Christ. They escape the cross, but oh, how their consciences look when they are through! Peter went out and wept bitterly, and thus took up again the cross he had thrown away.) But mark the other side of every loss you suffer for Christ's sake. The Savior says: he who thus loses his life shall save it. When Stephen, the first martyr, died for Christ, Christ himself received his soul in glory. Stephen lost nothing but his earthly life, he gained a thousandfold more in the life to come. When Paul, the great apostle of Christ, suffered all kinds of hardships and persecutions in his work, he indeed lost many a thing people count dear; but he gained thousands of souls for Christ, his own name shines to-day with imperishable splendor in the kingdom of heaven. We bless him to this very day for what he has done. He gained infinitely more than he ever lost. (And now) to be true to Christ (at whatever cost) always gains us a clear conscience, always insures us the blessing of our Savior, always helps our brethren. We lose the things that count the least, and gain those that count the most; we lose what is for a day, and gain what is for eternity; we lose what is only for this life, and gain what is for the life of the soul forever. (And the same is true of every affliction the Lord sends us. It is his training school. The boy who runs away may have a pleasant time, but he loses the education which is a thousand times more valuable. Let him keep that up, and he will become a loafer, utterly worthless. Let a man bear the cross of affliction: it will train and discipline his soul for Christ and his kingdom. Blessed are the cross-bearers, for they grow more and more Christlike in patience, courage, purity, nobleness of soul. What they lose is nothing compared with what they gain. (Woe to those who have nothing but sorrows, but glory to those who have the cross and what it brings!)

Mark well, then, what is really at stake in this mighty either—or of the cross. To avoid the cross is to avoid Christ, to avoid aiding his Gospel and cause, to avoid what is highest and best for your own soul. By his grace let us (choose these highest things,) taking up our cross as he gives it to us to bear, and bearing it with his blessed help. Only the cross leads us to the crown.

III.

Christ's mighty either—or involves a third issue. We may call it the issue of *treasure or gain*. The lives of all men constantly turn on it. Only so many never know what the issue really is until it is too late. For this very reason Christ comes to us, as he does here in our text, to open our eyes and show us what is

really at stake. It is either **the world**, and what you may gain there for this life—or it is **your own immortal soul**.

Q Men constantly think they must devote themselves to the things of this world. Thousands completely use up their time and efforts in this direction. Some see that there is a higher treasure to strive for, a truer gain to secure. But alas, they merely divide their efforts. They put a little exertion on their souls; they make the spiritual things of Christ a kind of side-issue. Sometimes they have the idea that when they come to die they will devote themselves whole-heartedly to their souls. But very few people are able to direct their dying. At best it is very hard to make a complete change when that last important hour comes. Too late—is the sad story of many a man who attended to much business in all the active years of his life, but neglected the most important business of all, that of his immortal soul.

† Christ puts the case clearly before us now while there is still time. Suppose a man gained the whole world by the work of his life. What a glorious achievement that would be! He would be master of all its millions and billions of money. He would be president, king, and emperor of all its peoples and realms. He would have so many servants and subjects he could not count them all. All the pleasures, beauties, and glories of the world would be his—such a wealth of delight he could not take it all in. Yet let us suppose that he could. Add on top of it all, the wisdom, knowledge, learning, and science of the world. He would know all the secrets of nature, all the mysteries of earth, and sea, and air. What a wonder of mental riches added to all the material, imperial, and esthetic! Of course, no man ever could achieve so much. It is a mighty thing when a man owns a few billions now, or becomes the president of one great nation; or rises to the top of one department of art or learning. The great mass of men is satisfied to get a small piece of this world, some little corner of it to call their own. Purposely Christ puts before us, not what we actually are able to get of the treasures of this world, but all the vast unattainable wealth of what the world has to offer, in order that taking the right measure of it all we may become undeceived as to its apparent value and see where the true treasure and gain is found. If a man gained the whole world and had it all his life long he would after all be just like you and I are to-day—in the hour of death he would leave it all behind, not one particle of it could he take along. And if he had only this, his soul would go out of this world as an absolute beggar. For as Christ puts it: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world—and lose his own soul?"

C The one thing for you and me to learn is that (now, in the hour of death, and so in all eternity) the true wealth is that of

the soul alone. ^{Have you faith?} Is the gold of faith yours? then you are rich indeed. ^{What if you have the pardon of Christ's blood?} (Is the pardon of Christ's blood yours?) then you have what neither diamonds nor rubies can equal. Is the righteousness of Christ yours? then you own the true wealth of heaven. (Is the favor of God yours in Christ Jesus? then an eternity of glory awaits you.) These are the real values, ^{which} for they never fade, (the light of heaven only reveals their glory and greatness more completely.)

+ ^d Balance these two against each other, and then tell me which are you determined to have by the grace of God? Let the fools in this world chase the treasures that last for a day if they will, forgetting their souls and the real treasures, you must ^{always} look ever and ever at the soul alone and at the glory of the wealth which Christ is offering you. Never fear that you will not get enough of this world's wealth—God always takes care of his children. If he gives you an abundance of earthly goods and blessings, look doubly to your soul lest that through fault of yours come short. But never for a moment hesitate between the two. Trade not a single soul-treasure for the fading treasures of earth. In this mighty either—or understand once for all that the soul alone counts. Though you had all the world as your own, yea, a hundred worlds, they could not buy your soul back from death and hell in the hour of death and judgment. Too late many a man has recognized his mistake. That is why Christ warns us again to-day.

IV.

And so the mighty either—or which he puts before us reaches its final goal. It is not a question of to-day only, ^{for} of the few men we come in contact with now, but ^a question of the last great day, of the presence in which we shall then stand, of the verdict which shall then be pronounced. / Once for all we must see the issue as it stands: either **the approval of men** here in time—or **that of Christ** on the day of judgment and to all eternity.

An adulterous and sinful generation Jesus called the Jews of his time. (This is what he meant.) God had given them his (revelation) his Law, his covenant, his promises. What did they do? They falsified his Law, they were faithless to his covenant, they perverted his promises. They were like a woman untrue to her husband, (a wretch covered with shame and sin.) Then when Christ came what did thousands do who heard him and saw his miracles of grace? They listened to their priests, the Pharisees, the rabbis; they refused to be identified with Christ, they were ashamed of him and his words.

This thing is repeating itself to-day. Only here now is Christ himself, here are his words) in Holy Writ, here is all his mercy

and grace and the blessings he has in store for us. But what do we see? The old unfaithfulness over again. It is not necessary here to think of the world and men who openly reject Christianity. (It ought not to be necessary for Christ to warn us against them.) But look at many of those who profess to follow him, and yet openly dishonor him and his words. He said he was the Son of God—they stand in their pulpits and preach that he was not. He said that he paid his blood as a ransom for our sins—they preach that we need no ransom at all for our sins. He said he would rise from the dead, and he did rise—they tell us that this is all a mistake. He said we must observe all things whatsoever he said unto us—they tell us we ought to be liberal and free, we need not trouble about pure doctrine, (faithful church practice) loyal confession of Christ, careful Christian conduct in all things. That is the adulterous and sinful generation of our day. (It takes in every falsification of Christ's words, every unfaithfulness in teaching his Gospel of truth to men. Many are altogether nasty with this adultery, others still love some of it and will not be pure as they ought to be.)

Here is the warning of Christ to you and me and all who mean to follow him truly: Be not ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation! We are facing another either—or. Either we heed what these men of adulterous minds say and court their approval—or we heed solely what Christ says and glory in his approval alone. (Do you know what that means? Never look to men, but only to Christ. (Never tell me that other preachers say this and that, and then ask why we cannot say and do the same.) Never point to other churches who are not so strict in doctrine, not so careful in practice, who take in all kinds of people as members, and let their preachers and members do all kinds of things which we forbid. Never raise the question: If the members of other churches can do this or that, why cannot we do the same? (The young are especially in danger of being affected by the teaching and actions of disloyal, unfaithful churches, their preachers, and members. They see that their doctrines and ways are popular among men; they find that their own instruction and what it has taught them is highly unpopular. They hear themselves called narrow, bigoted, unprogressive, behind the times. They are laughed at and mocked. It is the way of this adulterous generation—it is always proud and arrogant. But the miserable means it uses to make us ashamed of Jesus and his words ought not to hide from our eyes its shameful, disloyalty to Christ and his words. From disloyalty let us flee as from the noxious defilement of adultery. For if unfaithfulness among men is bad, a thousand times worse would be your soul's and my soul's unfaithfulness to Christ.)

(See the issue as it really is. This is not a question of men at all, it is solely a question of Christ. If all men in the world should approve some false doctrine, that would not make it any more pure and true than if only one man approved it. Why look to men at all and ask whether they approve or not? Look to Christ.) If he says: Believe this! then believe it; for then it is true and blessed indeed. If Christ says: Do this! or: Avoid and oppose this! follow his words, for they alone are safe and blessed. What if thousands of men deride you for thus sticking to Christ's words, what if they do heap reproach and shame upon you, what if you feel the burden of being unpopular, the sadness of standing alone? Better alone with Christ, than without ^{him} among millions of men. Better pure in faith, true in conduct with Christ to approve, than adulterous and sinful with only men to praise and support you. — For the day of reckoning is coming fast. This thing of being popular and unpopular is going to take a mighty turn. The hour is coming when the great Lord (of the church, our Master risen from the dead and enthroned on high,) will appear in the glory of his Father, and all the holy angels of God about him. Then where will the praise be, and where the shame? Then how will all those look who falsified the words of Christ and taught men to set those words aside? And where will the loyal band be which looked to Christ alone and kept true in all things to what he has said? Hear what he says, and what he will make good on that great day: "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Keep that day before you. It will help you (mightily) to disregard the false and lying approval of men, and to seek alone the eternal approval of Christ. (So keep before you this vital either — or of Christ. Blessed are they who willingly bear the shame of men by holding faithfully to Christ alone and to his words.)

Either — or, you cannot avoid it, for Christ himself has placed you at the crossing of the ways. Let us thank him for making the issue so clear, and for giving us his grace in such abundance to draw us to him alone. He shall be our Master, we want no other; his cross shall be our mark and distinction, we want no ease from its burden; his blessed treasures shall enrich our souls, we will trade none of them for the glories of the world; his approval shall be our consolation now and our crown on that great day, we will never exchange it for that of men. This is our choice: our souls rejoice in making it anew. And the grace of Christ will keep us true until the day of glory comes.

OUTLINES.

Almost every verse of this text offers a grand thought on which to build a sermon. The text as a whole treats of our faithfulness to Christ. We may sum it up in the theme: What does it mean to follow Christ? The answer is made from a synthesis of the text: Cling to his words—give your soul to Christ—bear the cross.—A negative form may be found serviceable: The hindrances which Christ's followers must overcome: There are four that stand out in the text: The disinclination to deny self: reluctance to bear the cross; desire to gain as much as possible of the world; delight in the approval of men.—The last verse contains the significant word "ashamed," around which the familiar hymn has been built. Its first lines offer a theme: "Jesus—and shall it ever be, a mortal man ashamed of thee?" Of thy words?—of thy gifts?—of thy cross?

Christ's Followers are Christlike.

1. *They keep his passion and resurrection before their eyes.*
2. *They take up their cross and follow him.*
3. *They lose their life for his sake and thus save it.*
4. *They are not ashamed of him thinking of the glory to come.*

Christ's Cross-Bearers.

1. *Do you pity them?—their load is heavy.*
2. *You should envy them—see who is at their head!*
3. *You must join them—behold, whither they go.*

A Study in Eternal Profit and Loss.

1. *The whole world against the soul.*
2. *The life temporal against the life eternal.*
3. *The cross in time against the glory in eternity.*

Why must Every Member of the Church Follow Christ?

He must do it:

1. *For the sake of Christ—who is his blessed Savior.*
 2. *For the sake of his own soul—which he surely means to save.*
 3. *For the sake of the Gospel—by which he is saved.*
 4. *For the sake of his own generation—if possible to save them.*
 5. *For the sake of God and the holy angels—that they may not be ashamed of him.*
-

CANTATE.

John 17, 17-24.

This beautiful text for the last Sunday in the Easter cycle deserves all the attention we are able to give it. It is part of Christ's high priestly prayer for the church. It embraces in one mighty sweep the entire church from the days of the apostles on down to the final consummation when we shall be with Christ where he is and behold his heavenly glory. Christ prays for *the oneness of his church*, the oneness wrought by his sanctifying truth, the oneness binding us all forever to him, the oneness wondrously to be revealed at last when we are gathered about him in glory. That mighty prayer is being constantly fulfilled. What it really asks for us all ought to be deeply impressed upon us in the light of the resurrection of Christ, the great Head of the church. The world is full of false ideas of this oneness. The old error of Rome which thinks only of external union vitiates so much of the work and effort of Protestantism. Men labor and strive for outward union and think that this is what will make the church what it ought to be, that this is what will impress the world and win it for Christ. They are sadly mistaken. How sad their mistake this prayer of Christ reveals. The real oneness is a far deeper, holier, higher thing. If this is attained, as it is bound to be in all who really belong to Christ, all outward forms and organizations will take care of themselves. Let Christ's holy thoughts be made completely our own, and so let us live and labor in his sanctifying, unifying truth.

Christ's great intercessory prayer contains three grand parts. He prays for his own glorification, which is the foundation upon which his entire intercession rests, v. 1-5. He prays for his apostles, that God may

keep them against the world and sanctify them in the truth, v. 6-19. This section of the prayer, especially the closing sentences, has its application for all of Christ's believers, although the special office of the Eleven must be held fast, together with their special qualifications and prerogatives. Finally Christ prays for the whole church, v. 20-26, its oneness and its consummation in glory. Our text takes in the closing verses of the second section and the major portion of the third.

17, 17. Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth.

Jesus contemplates the Eleven as he is about to leave them in the world. By means of his Word Jesus has separated them from the world, the world will hate them, he prays the Father to preserve them, because of the task they are to carry out in the world. This preservation includes providential care and protection, but there is far more in it; our verse reveals how much more. Jesus prays: **Sanctify them in thy truth.** The verb is an aorist, evidently complexive, i. e., embracing in one the sanctifying activity of God. The verb ἀγιάζειν = set apart for God, separate from all profane connection and devote wholly to him. But in the case of the Eleven this setting apart unto God is not the first act of this kind. Jesus has already said: "they are thine" — "I kept them in thy name" — "I have given them thy Word." Verse 16 plainly says that the Eleven "are not of the world." All that Jesus has thus done for them by his personal work in the past must be called a sanctifying and setting apart of the apostles unto God. This work might be considered as ended if the apostles were now to leave the world in company with Jesus; the final sanctifying would then take place in the moment of their death. But they are to remain in the world, and so they must be kept, kept especially by this sanctifying of the Father. The idea is comprehensive. All the sanctifying work of God is embraced in it. The modifier **in the truth** helps to show that.

"The truth" is the entire revelation of God as it centers in Christ and purposes our salvation. All the divine realities are meant as God wrought them, as he was even then working them, and as they were shown unto men. The preposition *ἐν* is not instrumental: through, or by means of the truth. The thought is deeper: in union and communion with the truth. The preposition marks the sphere of the action. Jesus has already placed the apostles into this sphere; they are no strangers to the truth. It has surrounded their souls, lifted them away from the world and upward to God. Now this is to continue, to be intensified, perfected in all directions, and thus carried forward to its ultimate goal. It is a great cheapening of the thought to read "in the truth" as meaning only "truly." — Significantly Jesus adds: **thy word is truth.** These two are identical. The adjective in Greek is stronger than the possessive pronoun would be. Jesus has already said: "I have given them thy word," v. 14. "Thy word," then, is all the teaching of Jesus. We need not say that this embraced the entire Old Test. revelation. But it included all that the Father had given the Son to communicate to the apostles. All this blessed "word" the Holy Spirit would enable the apostles to remember, both for them to penetrate into it more and more, and for them to communicate it to others. The word "truth" speaks of the saving realities as such, without laying special emphasis on their communication, while "thy word" includes also the latter.

18. As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world. 19. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

In order to support his petition Jesus adds two statements in the nature of reasons. These show that the prayer for sanctification refers to the calling of the apostles in the world. Jesus parallels his own mission with that of the apostles: **As thou didst send me into**

the world, namely on his great mission as our Redeemer, **even so sent I them into the world**, in connection with this same mission. The parallel lies in two points: both Jesus and the apostles are *sent*, have a divine mission; and both are sent *into the world*. But there is a difference in the sending: Jesus, himself sent, sends the apostles. Jesus thus carries the divine mission to a certain point, and at this point others are added for the great work. A certain part of the great work for which Jesus came into the world is thus graciously transferred to the apostles. The translation: "even so" is inexact. The emphasis and parallel is not on the manner, but on the persons: "*I also sent them.*" This reveals the true greatness of Jesus: he sends, as the Father sends. But he sends secondly, the Father sends first. We may say the first sending contemplated the second and involved it. In it, as in his own mission, the Son executed the Father's will. In this connection, however, it seems necessary to note that the mission of the apostles into the world must not be taken in too narrow a sense, as so many commentators are inclined to do. The Eleven were sent without question as apostles, in fact the word apostles means men who are sent. But already as followers of Christ they are sent into the world, and all believers have this sending. While we are all separated from the world and dedicated unto God as his own peculiar people, we are nevertheless here in the world for the world's sake, in order to show forth the praises of him who has called us out of the kingdom of darkness into his marvelous light. In v. 21 Jesus states of our oneness that its purpose is "that the world may believe." Let us keep together what belongs together. On the basis of the entire mission of the church in the world rests every special office of men in the church, beginning with the highest office of all, the apostolate. Jesus uses the aorist **sent**, because the first setting apart of the apostles is meant, which now would be followed, when

all would be ready, by the special order to begin the great work already assigned to them. — How the mission of the Eleven is connected with their sanctification is now made plain by a second statement and parallel. **And for their sakes I sanctify myself**, namely now — the tense is present. The reference, then, is not to the sanctifying spoken of in 10, 36, which preceded or accompanied the original mission of Jesus when he made his entry into the world and in an absolute and supreme sense became the Holy One of Israel. Jesus is speaking of a sanctifying act in which he is engaged in the present moment. In our endeavor to understand just what he means we must hold fast that the verb "sanctify" cannot have two different meanings in this verse, for here Jesus sanctifies himself, and the Eleven are also to be sanctified. The two acts must therefore be essentially alike, although the former is active, the second passive. "I sanctify myself" does not mean then: I set myself apart as a sacrifice; for the apostles were not to be set apart thus (as martyrs), cf. v. 17: "Sanctify them in the truth." That a close parallel between Jesus and the apostles is intended we see from the emphatic "I" placed over against the equally emphatic "they themselves." Both are to be set apart in a similar manner, although, of course, the office of the one is infinitely higher than that of the other. Yet both are sent, both have an office, both offices are divine, and holy, and so both bearers of the office need to be set apart, devoted in a holy sense to their respective offices. We obtain all the reference we need to the death of Christ in thus drawing the parallel, yet without either disturbing the meaning of the verb, or involving the apostles in some kind of sacrifice on their part. The sense is simply this: As Jesus sets himself apart completely for God in the mission allotted to him, so the apostles, for whose benefit he thus sets himself apart, are to be themselves set apart unto God in the mission allotted to them. — The phrase **for their sakes** suffi-

ciently marks the special character of Jesus' mission and self-sanctification. Spoken at this time, the night in which Jesus was betrayed, with the verb in the present tense, whatever else it may include, it surely includes also that hardest part of Jesus' mission, his death on the cross. Godet endeavors to make plain how Jesus thus sanctified himself. He speaks of the natural inclinations of his human nature, and how Jesus constantly brought these into subjection to his work. The present tense "I sanctify myself," however, should make us think of the significant hour upon which Jesus now had entered. The very prayer in which he is engaged is part of this sanctifying act of his. The prayers in Gethsemane will be the same. In fact we may say every act and movement, every thought, feeling, purpose, and will of Jesus, as now he entered his passion, displays to us how he sanctified and set himself apart wholly to the mighty mission assigned to him. — The connection of the sanctification of the apostles with the sanctifying act of Jesus is plainly marked. Jesus does not say: that in like manner the apostles may sanctify themselves. That would be impossible, even granting their lesser tasks. While the act of Jesus may serve also as an example for us, and in particular could serve as an example for the apostles, Jesus points to something far more vital. First he indicates *the purpose* of his own act, which is one in behalf of the apostles: **that** they themselves also may be sanctified. Jesus' act enables the apostles to become sanctified; without his act this could not be. All their sanctification is the fruit and outgrowth of that of Jesus done for their sakes; and this is the purpose of Jesus' act. Secondly, while Jesus sanctifies himself, the apostles are to **be sanctified**, namely by another, the Father, v. 17. They could not set themselves apart, God must do it for them using what Jesus does in their behalf. But while they thus receive sanctification, this sanctification is like that of Jesus, a setting apart of their entire persons to God and

the mission he gives them. And because of their dependence on God in this matter theirs is to be again a sanctification **in truth**. Because the article is absent commentators incline to the interpretation that "in truth" here must mean only "truly." One wonders why, if this is to be the sense, the adverb is not used, ἀληθῶς. No, the phrases are too marked, for the one with the article in v. 17 to mean one thing, and the other, in v. 19, to mean another. The absolute "in truth" and the concrete "in the truth" flow into each other, since the noun "truth" is surely one. This must be so when the same verb goes with each, and the same agent with the verb. Moreover, in the Greek abstract nouns may or may not have the article. Finally, compare 2 John 1-4 and 3 John 1-4, where this very noun appears now with and now without the article in the same sense. — The first fruit of Jesus' self-sanctification is to be the sanctification of his apostles. It goes without saying that as Jesus sanctified himself, not for the apostles alone, but for us all, so the power of his act extends to every one of us, for we too are in the world as the apostles were, although our calling is not as high, and we need his grace and gift as much as they did. The church, therefore, rightly prays again and again: "Sanctify us in the truth; thy Word is truth."

20. Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; 21. that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me.

The final verses of the last section, while still referring directly only to the apostles, in the nature of the case already reach beyond them to all the believers in Jesus. But now the prayer extends its scope. The apostles, sent into the world, will not be sent in vain. Whatever the opposition they will meet, their work will succeed. Sanctified and enabled by God they will bring thousands to faith. These too need the Savior's inter-

cession. And so he prays not for the Eleven only, but for the entire church to be. Note the verb used: *ἑρωτάω*, **do I pray**, or make request. It is dignified and lofty; the verb to use when all servile notions are to be excluded, when an equal makes a request of an equal, one king for instance of another. Only the Son can thus address the Father; the verb is too high for us adopted children to use.—There is a clear distinction between **these only**, concerning whom Jesus prays, namely the Eleven, and on the other hand the church generally: **them also that believe on me through their word**, concerning whom Jesus likewise prays. The “also” connects the two classes, for they are not opposite. Here is a true and beautiful definition of the church: the company of all those who believe. The present participle is timeless; the act of believing, i. e., continued and enduring believing, is meant, no matter as to the time. The object of this faith is the same as that of the Eleven: **on me**; the trust of all believers is directed toward Christ as the only object justifying such trust—he himself by his person and work has called it forth.—But the medium is mentioned: **through their word**. Thus the office of the apostles is connected with the whole church, and all that Jesus has asked for the apostles refers mediately also to the entire church. The singular is used: “word.” This combines all the teaching and writing of the apostles into one concept. The term “word” has the idea of communication. It is “their” word because they are the agents who communicate it; really it is God’s Word, v. 17, and its substance is “the truth.” Word and faith are correlatives, the one intended to produce the other, the one always resting on the other. There is no church apart from the Word, because there is no faith apart from it. This is what makes it so dangerous to leave the Word, or to falsify it, or to be ignorant of it. It is well to observe also that passages like Eph. 2, 20 show that in his prayer Jesus considers the word of the apostles as the

fountain of faith for the church of all time. Only few men comparatively heard the apostles while they lived; they still speak to us through the New Test., their inspired writings. Jesus beheld the church of all future ages, with its millions of believers, when he made his intercessory prayer. He saw the Word winning one victory after another down to the end of time and in his prayer reached out to press the whole church to his heart.

V. 21. The *iva* clause is sub-final, i. e., it states, not the purpose of the Savior's praying, but the thing which he asks of the Father for the church. This object is spiritual oneness for the whole church, i. e., for all who truly believe. In **all** lies the idea of number, in fact a vast number, cf. the neuter in v. 2. "All" and **one** are side by side in the Greek, throwing the thought in each into bolder relief by putting the one against the other. Originally they that are comprised in "all" are scattered far and wide and divided in thousands of different ways, in nationality, age, education, social standing, personal characteristics, etc., etc. Christ's prayer is that they may be "one," i. e., one thing (neuter), one body or whole. Of course, this includes also the apostles. The oneness meant is in distinction to the world, and in opposition to it. Meyer conceives of this oneness as ethical: oneness of mind, of effort, of love, etc., on the basis of faith, Eph. 4, 3, etc., Rom. 15, 5; Acts 4, 32. Keil thinks that it is to be like that of the Eleven, separation from the world by the Father's keeping, and sanctification (setting apart unto God) in the truth. But he also points to what follows: **even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us**, and then defines the oneness as something referring to the being of believers: being and living in God and Christ. This, of course, involves oneness of will and mind, but goes beyond that—a mystical oneness of being, mediated by the Spirit, making them all one in the Father and the Son. Gerhard makes this clearer: "The

Father the root, Christ the trunk, the Spirit the sap, the believers the branches drawing into themselves the sap, and the Christian life the fruit of one tree — the holy church." We must draw the clause "even as thou," etc., to what precedes, not to what follows (by inversion). This, however, makes the oneness one that centers in God and Christ, not a oneness merely of the members of the church among themselves. As between the Father and the Son (and we are free to add the Holy Spirit) there is a wonderful, incomprehensible interpretation, the *περιχώρησις* of the dogmaticians. In like manner, *καθώς*, is this wonderful, incomprehensible oneness of the church. That it centers about God and Christ we see from the addition: **that they may also be one in us.** This clause does not depend upon the preceding one, but parallels the former object of Christ's prayer, by restating it; the second *ἵνα* merely repeats and takes up again the first. — We may then describe the oneness of the church for which Jesus prayed as follows: The Word fills the souls of believers with faith, joining them all to God and Christ (through the Spirit); this is a oneness of all with God and Christ and with each other, so that we are in him and he in us, and by virtue of this we are all, in the highest and holiest sense, one body. One might ask why Jesus prays for this oneness, since it seems that it is present at once when the church (believers) is present. The answer lies in the Word. Only by receiving the Word is faith present, and the smallest measure of such faith joins us to the mystical body of Christ, introduces us to the oneness of the church. While this is true it is only the beginning. Our apprehension of the Word is to grow, the range and inner power of our faith in that Word likewise; and as this advances and is perfected our oneness with God and Christ and our oneness with each other becomes more and more what Christ would have it. Its mystical side must never blind us to the medium which Christ has set for it, namely his Word. We have no

Christ and no God without that, and no oneness without them; so also we have no church and no oneness in the church, or of any member with the church, without the Word. On the other hand, the more we have of the Word in our hearts by faith, and thus also ruling us in our lives, the more perfect is our oneness. The Augustana, then, is right: "Unto the true unity of the church, it is sufficient to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments," and human traditions are not necessary to this unity. Being spiritual and mystical this unity is invisible, and does not consist in any form of outward organization. How far, however, it is from being merely imaginary, the Apology shows, and all men see, when we look at the divine medium of this oneness, namely the Word. The practical side of this oneness appears here also: we hinder the fulfillment of Christ's prayer by every deviation in doctrine, practice, and life from the Word; we help to bring about its fulfillment, or rather God does this in us, by bringing us completely into the obedience of his Word. They rend the church who deviate from the Word, also they who demand things other than the Word. God preserve us from this sin! — The last is a purpose clause: **that the world may believe that thou didst send me.** The relation of the Word to the oneness of the church shows sufficiently that though it is spiritual it will make itself felt in the world. While Christ does not intercede for the world, v. 9, as he does for his own, the world is still the object of his love and his saving efforts extend to it, but altogether through the church. And so, at this point, Christ's prayer reaches out to the world. Philippi, 5, 3, 14, calls this oneness of the world a propaedeutic mark of the church for the world, a pedagogic means for leading it unto faith. The world is bound to see all true believers clinging to the Word and thus one in Christ; it sees the power of Christ effective in the church through the Word. The more perfect our oneness the

more will this oneness appear and the stronger will be its effects upon our surroundings. The more schism, heresy, and divisions prevail, the more will this effect be hindered. The world is to believe "that thou didst send me," i. e., believe in the whole mission of Christ, which is the saving contents of the Gospel. The purpose here expressed is one of grace alone. The idea is not that the whole world will finally believe, nor that there is a kind of compulsion about the oneness of the church. To the end many will not believe, no matter what the oneness of the church may be; and always faith will be due to the converting power of the Gospel which is brought to bear by the church upon the world. Luther: "This is the fruit which is to follow from this oneness, namely that Christ's Word is to break forth more and more and be accepted in the world as God's Word, in which an almighty, divine, unconquerable power and the treasure of all grace and blessedness reside." Keil adds: "This being and living of believers in Christ conveys to the church a world-conquering power, and serves to realize the purpose of Christ's mission into the world."

22. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one; 23. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected in one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me.

"What glory is this which Christ has and gives? It is what he has said just before, that they may all be one (saith he) even as the Father and I are one. This is the excellent treasure, and a fountain, yea the real source of all divine gifts, life, comfort and blessedness, if only one could believe it! Faith is not a slothful and idle thought, but a living, serious, comforting and undoubting confidence of the heart in such excellent glory, by which we are one thing with Christ and through him with the Father; so that, just as little as Christ can be

sundered and separated from the Father, so little may Christendom and every Christ-member be separated from him, and thus all hangs together and is bound together, as has been sufficiently said."—Luther. The **glory** here meant is the one spoken of in v. 1 and 5, the eternal glory of the Logos, given to the human nature of Christ. **Thou has given me** (perf. tense) refers to the Incarnation. This glory Christ possessed all along in his human nature. It shone forth again and again in his miracles. In v. 1 and 5 he prays that it may now shine forth in all its splendor, i. e., in the exaltation of his human nature, in the full exercise of all the divine attributes bestowed as a gift upon his human nature.—Of this glory Jesus says: **I have given unto them**, i. e., all believers. This is by the indwelling of Christ, by which we are made partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. 1, 4. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is." 1 John 3, 2. At the Parousia the glory now already ours by the gifts of Christ's indwelling will be fully revealed, just as this glory, veiled during the humiliation of Christ, was fully revealed in his exaltation. The two perfect tenses are not proleptic (Goebel), but speak of a past act combined with a present effect, as indicated.—The gift of Christ's glory to the church has this purpose: **that they may be one, even as we are one**. Christ's glory and indwelling, of course, does not supersede or set aside the Word in regard to our oneness; on the contrary, it rests on the Word. But the possession of Christ's glory, once it is ours as believers in the Word, constitutes our bond of oneness. With all believers sharing Christ's gift they are made one by it. **Even as we are one** must be read from the standpoint also of Christ's human nature. This is the link by which we are bound to him and the Father. Through his human nature, in which all the Godhead dwells bodily,

Jesus is our Savior, and all his saving gifts come to us through this nature, in particular here the gift of his glory. — That this gift is indeed by Christ's indwelling in us is now clearly stated: **I in them, and thou in me**, the Father in us through the Son to whose human nature he gave the eternal glory. Some try to read these words as a separate sentence, supplying a verb; it seems more adequate to read these words as an apposition to the preceding, since there is no connective. This leaves the entire statement, beginning with the gift of glory, as a compact whole, which the thought certainly requires. The interpenetration of the Father and the Son, by way of the Son's human nature, is made a glorious possession of ours, constituting the crown of our spiritual oneness as believers. Luther exclaims at these revelations of Jesus: "See how his mouth overflows with words!" — Once more the effect of this indwelling is mentioned: **that they may be perfected into one**, only now the statement is deepened by inserting a significant verb. The passive indicates that Christ will do this perfecting, we receive it at his hands. And it is a perfecting, the same verb as in the Good Friday text, John 19, 28. It means: bring to its goal. The oneness, then, is not at once at its goal. Just as the fuller appropriation of the Word more and more perfects the oneness of believers, so Christ's indwelling in us and the gift of his glory by his indwelling is to fill us more and more. In all things we are to grow more Christlike, in the development of our faith and all its fruits, until the goal is reached, namely our translation from this world and our own glorification. — But here again the great saving purpose of God is brought in, for the church with every one of her possessions exists in the world not for herself, but for the world. So Jesus adds again: **that the world may know that thou didst send me, etc.** The verb is forward for emphasis. The world is to know or realize by what it sees of the church that the mission of Jesus is just what the Gospel says it is. The

glory and indwelling of Jesus perfecting the oneness of the church will have an effect upon the world. Christ will be reflected in the church so that the world can and will know it. The knowledge of faith is meant; the entire context forbids an unwilling and forced recognition. — An amplification follows, one in harmony with the previous elaborations: **and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me.** God's love for Jesus is transferred to all who are one with Jesus. The aorists are complexive, embracing the whole of God's loving. Jesus says, the world is to recognize this; not the world as it remains world, for this will be blind as regards the church and God's love; but the world as the grace of God and his love shed abroad in our hearts affects many in the world, draws them by this recognition, so that they too come by faith into this circle of love. All the manifestations of God's love for us are meant, especially as these appear in the faith, love, virtues, leadings, works of the church. Here men will see the fruits of God's love in the church, and the blessedness of being under this love, possessing its gifts and responding to its leadings and promptings. Thus the heathen neighbors of the first church saw the evidences of God's love in the members of that church; compare also Acts 2, 47: "Praising God and having favor with all the people," which, as Luke writes further, drew many to the church. Thus the oneness of true believers in Christ and God, both by the Word which makes them one and by the love of God who dwells in them and blesses them will prove effective in the mission of the church as regards the world.

24. Father, that which thou hast given me, I will that, where I am, they also may be with me; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

We may say that beginning with verse 24 the epilog or conclusion of the prayer begins. The nominative is frequently used as a vocative, so here: **Father.** The

bare word "Father" shows that the Son is here speaking on the basis of his relation to the Father as such. There is no emphasis on the main verb **I will**; the emphasis is first on the *persons* concerning whom he expresses his will, and secondly on the object which he wills regarding them. Therefore **that which thou hast given me** is put forward, in the form of an absolute nominative, picked up again emphatically by the following **they**. The neuter is used, though persons are meant, to bring out, as so frequently in John, the category as such and all who belong to it as one mass or whole. This neuter is much like the neuter *ἐν* in v. 21 and 23. All believers are one great gift of the Father to Jesus, given to him by the work of God's grace in us which made us Jesus' own. In the perfect tense this gift is viewed as having been already made, since with God there is no time, and all the future is like the past. — Jesus says: **I will**. The American committee on the R. V. insists on the translation: "I desire." This is too weak, for Jesus is indeed uttering his will. Not, of course, as a demand: *sic volo, sic jubeo*; nor as when one makes his last will and testament, since Jesus came to execute the Father's will, and cannot now turn things about and make the Father execute his will. The word here has no emphasis, yet when Jesus puts it thus we must know that his will is in full accord with that of the Father, and that his thus willing is only a putting into effect of what the Father himself wills. — The *iva* clause introduces the object willed: **that, where I am, they also may be with me**. It is certain that God in giving us to Jesus meant no separation of Jesus from us, but the very contrary. Hitherto Jesus had been with his own, visibly united with them. Now this was to cease, in a way a separation was to take place, one affecting also all believers to come. This is to be passing and temporal. All his believers are to be "with" him, i. e., in his company. And this can be only "where I am," in heaven, in the glory into which Jesus is re-

turning. So Christ's prayer lifts the whole church from earth to heaven, from the lowliness here below to the exaltation above with Christ. — The second *ἵνα* expresses purpose: **that they may behold my glory**, and here the emphasis is on the verb, the beholding. The verb is used of something grand, glorious, wondrous; its present tense signifies continued beholding. To behold the **glory** of Jesus must be taken as referring not to the divinity as such, but to the glory of the divinity as filling, and shining forth, from his human nature. It is the Son *ἑσσαρκος* whom we shall behold in his heavenly exaltation. To behold him thus is eternal blessedness. This beholding, as the previous "with me" shows, involves our transfer into heaven and the presence of Jesus, and at the same time our own glorification, 1 Cor. 15, 48; 1 John 3, 2, for only glorified eyes can behold in blessedness the glory of the exalted Redeemer. That the glory of Christ's human nature is meant we see from the addition: **which thou hast given me**. We may read either the perfect or the aorist; the verb is not future: "shalt give," for Christ's human nature was made a partaker of all the divine glory in his Incarnation. This glory, not displayed, nor fully used during the humiliation, shines forth from him, and is used in all its completeness, in his exaltation. This is what our eyes will feast on above. — Not that Jesus has two glories, and that we shall see only one; no, there is the one glory of his divine nature, imparted to his human nature, for us to see in heaven. This thought underlies the addition: **for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world**. This means just what it says: the Father in all eternity did love Jesus as he would walk here on earth in the flesh and do his good and gracious will. The love which the Father declared in saying: "This is my beloved Son," goes back to all eternity. In this love Christ's human nature received the glory of God, and after the humiliation this glory was exercised fully by his human nature in his exaltation. All these wonders

of grace in the Son of man, wrought in time and culminating in our own glorification and beholding of our Redeemer's glory in heaven, go back to all eternity and center there in the love of the Father. Thus the prayer of Jesus, reaching back to all eternity, to the love of God, at the same time reaches forward to all eternity and to the blessedness which there shall be ours. This is the crown and the culmination of the oneness of the church in Christ Jesus.

SERMON.

The Christian church ought to be one. On this point there is general agreement among those who bear the sacred name. But there is no agreement whatever when it comes to saying what this oneness is and how it is built up and secured. The old error of Rome, which makes the church an outward organization and therefore strives to secure an outward oneness, has hosts of advocates far beyond the pale of the papacy. Outward greatness, immense numbers, power of organization, domination by such power in the world, these are the things which impress too many who call themselves Christians and try in their way to follow Christ. Instead of helping to unify the church, instead of giving themselves into the hands of Christ that he may work in them the fulfillment of his great high priestly prayer for the oneness of his church, they oppose him, they try to unite the church, but, as has been well said, they unite it to pieces. Many of them actually separate themselves from the church of Christ by their misguided efforts at uniting it.

How shall we be kept from these terrible mistakes? How shall the great prayer of Christ find a genuine fulfillment in us? The answer is simple indeed. Let us listen to Christ alone. He alone, the great founder and Head of the church, is able to direct us aright. The blessed words in which he prayed for the oneness of his church are before us; from them let us learn his own heavenly thoughts concerning

The Real Unity of the Church.

I.

It is a unity created by the Word.

When the Lord founded the church and called on men to follow him he gave them his Word. At the end of his earthly life,

when he prayed for his apostles, this was the great statement he made to God: "I have given them thy Word." When he prayed to God for their keeping in the future, this was his petition: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth." As he looked beyond the apostles to you and me and the coming members of his church, he said of us: "which shall believe on me through their Word," the precious Word of the Gospel which he commanded his apostles and church to preach.

Here he shows us plainly what his church really is and in what its unity or oneness really consists. Not those are his church who merely call themselves Christians, or who belong to some outward organization called a church. Christ's church consists of all those who truly believe in him and in his Word. All others are outside of his church. "I never knew you," is his final verdict concerning them. They may now be popes, bishops, priests, preachers, or other officials in organizations called churches—not one of them is a member in Christ's church except he believe in Christ as his Savior and in his blessed Word of salvation. This applies to us as well. A man may be born and reared in the Lutheran Church, he may be a pastor and preach from this pulpit, he may be the synodical president of our entire church body, faith in Christ and his Word alone makes him a member of the church of Jesus.

What, then, is the oneness of the church? It is nothing outward at all. The inner tie that binds us together is the one that joins us to Christ, the living faith in our hearts, planted there, maintained and strengthened by his Word. The real unity of the Christian church is spiritual, a wonderful invisible bond that reaches up into heaven and unites each soul to Christ, the Head of the church, and by doing this unites us to all others bound by the same tie. But remember this tie is wrought by the Word of Christ. "Faith cometh by hearing," writes St. Paul, "and hearing by the Word of God." There is only one way to have Christ, and that is by his Word. Whoever sets that Word aside cuts himself loose from Christ, and whoever sets any part of that Word aside, endangers his connection with Christ and thus with his church.—In order that we may make no mistake here Jesus uses another term for his Word, namely "truth"—"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth." Men may say they believe the Bible, in fact thousands boast of that. In reality he alone believes the Bible who receives into his heart the blessed truth which it teaches, its holy, saving doctrines, just as Jesus himself, his prophets and apostles taught them. Nor can any man deceive Christ in this respect. He may be great and learned, rich and powerful, unless he lets the simple teaching of Christ fill his soul and bind him

to Christ, he is an outcast and reprobate. Only Christ's truth sanctifies the soul, that means separates it from the world and lifts into true oneness with Christ and his church.

But here see how much depends on the Word of God when it comes to the church, to its wonderful oneness with Christ, and to your own real connection with Christ and his church. The more we cling to the Word of God in all things, the more fully we are joined to Christ and his church. This Word is like a mighty cable binding us to Christ and his salvation. Do we want to sever any of its strands? do we want to let any of its blessed truth go? In the same way, the more we all abide by the Word of God in this our congregation and in our synod, the more we ward off all false teaching contrary to the Word, and all practices in the church and her work and in our own lives contrary to the Word, the more will we strengthen our own bond with Christ and his church, and the more will we aid others in their union with Christ. It is like the loyalty of a nation to its government when at war with some powerful enemy. Half-hearted loyalty may still leave us one with our nation, but only complete devotion in heart and deed will really make that national unity what it ought to be and develop all its strength.—On the other hand, who is it that disturbs and injures the unity of the church? Every man who in any way repudiates any part of God's Word of truth. It is bad enough for himself and his own relation to Christ and the church, and it is equally bad for all others in the church affected thereby. Let no man make a mistake here. You may unite crowds of people outwardly into a grand outward church organization by setting aside this or that teaching of the Word—never does this build up the unity of the church. We might gain a thousand outward members for our congregation by admitting people not ready to believe what we know God's Word wants us to believe, and not ready to obey what we know God's Word requires of us all. By thus setting aside the teachings and requirements of the Word we would only help to weaken and tear down the unity of the church of Christ, endangering ourselves and others alike. It is the same with larger church bodies. The Word and the Word alone, Christ's saving truth and that truth alone, makes us one with him and in him with each other in that true inner oneness for which the Savior prayed. The less loyal we are to that Word, the weaker is our union, sometimes losing contact with Christ altogether. The fuller and stronger our hold on the Word, and its hold on us, the greater is our unity, blessed alike for us and for others. God give us the fullest possible measure of this unity dependent on his Word.

II.

But we must know the full mystery of the real unity of the church. It is far deeper and more wonderful than all those suppose who look only at its outward side. **It is a unity that centers in Christ.**

Behold, what the Word of God does when its blessed truth unites us to Christ. Here are the words of Jesus' prayer: "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." And again he says of his believers: "That they may all be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." Here is what the unity of the church and its members really means—not an outward bond or tie at all, but Jesus Christ himself dwelling in our hearts by faith and thus by his own presence in our souls making us all one—truly, spiritually, really one in him.

The Word of God and faith in that Word unite us by planting Christ himself into our hearts. When he fills my heart, and equally fills your heart, we are one indeed. And this oneness is extended to include thousands and millions of others. You see at once if any man comes with Christ only on his lips and not in his heart, he cannot be one with us in this heavenly union. And on the other hand, the more we all give our hearts to Christ, the more he lives in us, fills us with his gifts and blessing, governs and controls our thoughts, words, deeds, and all our lives, the more perfect will our oneness be in him. That is why Jesus speaks of our being "made perfect in one." Not lightly are our hearts to hold him, but with all their might, not one corner of our souls is he to possess, but our whole mind, heart, and spirit, with every power and faculty. And there is nothing more blessed, wonderful, and heavenly here on earth, than for poor sinners thus to be made the abode of Jesus, living in constant communion with him, and thus through him in the real oneness and unity of his church.

This is indeed a different thing than outwardly joining people together in congregations and churches, while their hearts are far from Christ, though thousands be thus outwardly brought together. It is a much harder thing, too, to accomplish than building up outward aggregations and collecting mere crowds. To put Christ into a man's heart is a divine work, we can do it only with the Word of Christ. And many will not submit to him. But oh, how valueless the mere drawing of crowds; how infinitely valuable to put Christ into the sinner's soul! With Christ comes his pardon and peace, his help and support, his comfort and joy, his purifying and ennobling power, his love and light. It is like heaven itself coming down here to earth, down where we can taste and feel it day by day. Oh, open your hearts wide, and take your Savior in

that he may be your all in all! And then see that this Savior joins you together with all others in whose souls he dwells likewise. This is the real oneness of his church.

And now you will see what furthers and what hinders this oneness. Here are people who contradict Christ. Do you suppose that is letting him into their hearts? Here are some who pervert his words. Do you think they are thereby opening their hearts to him? Here are some who disobey Christ, drawn by their own sinful desires or the allurements of the world. Do you suppose they are thereby decking their hearts to receive him? And now shall we say nothing to all this, just that we may have as many of these people in our congregations, and thus ourselves help to grieve Christ, be guilty of other men's sins, and thus on our part too hinder Christ's coming into our hearts and the hearts of others? No; while we never can look into a man's heart, to know whether Christ is really there or not, while this forever remains his exalted prerogative, yet this we know that when men deny him with word and deed, refuse to submit to his Word and will, we who mean to have him dwell in us and rule us cannot agree with them, cannot declare ourselves one with them. And if we become like those others, disloyal to his Word and will, let us know that we are turning Christ from us, that we are not one with him and with his church. For the real oneness of the church is in Christ alone, and the more he dwells in us all the more perfect is that oneness.

He in us and we in him; let this be our constant prayer. He in all who profess his name, and every contradiction and deviation from his Word and will taken from us all, this is what makes the real unity of the church and builds it up to what it ought to be.

III.

And now see the blessed purpose of this genuine unity of Christ's church in him through his Word. It is far from being only an ideal thing for us to enjoy by ourselves. **It is a unity that reaches out to the world.**

In his priestly prayer Jesus asks that we may thus be one with him "that the world may believe" that the Father sent him. And again he says: "that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." The unity of the church here on earth is to be a saving power and influence for the world. By this our oneness with Christ through his Word men are to be brought to believe in Christ and thus to be drawn themselves into this oneness with him. The great missionary power of the church lies in this its real spiritual oneness.

It is easy to see how these things belong together. Think how the apostles were one in Christ. Their hearts were wholly

his, and moved by him they preached and taught Christ and they lived and practiced Christ. What was the result? Thousands were thereby drawn to Christ. Like a snowball, small at first, but rolling on and on, the church grew and increased mightily. This is what the oneness of Christ's apostles in him did.

It is the same to-day. When men are one in Christ theirs is a power strong to save others. When Christ fills us our faith shows itself in a thousand ways. We confess his name by word and deed. Men feel the Christ that is in us and makes us one. And so many of them are won for him. Oh, for a church wholly one in him! If all who profess his name were really filled with him, how they would all unite in preaching Christ and his salvation, how they would all second that preaching by their lives! And men would hear and see and feel it. The heavenly power of it would attract them—surely, many would believe!—But see the sad picture as it is in so many. They are not one in Christ. Here some deny and falsify this teaching of his, some that teaching. Here some disobey these commands of his, some those commands. They will not let Christ bind them into one. Even in our own midst much of the inner oneness is lacking because we do not take into our souls the blessed Christ as we should. The effect is plain. We are not the power we ought to be in saving men and drawing them to Christ. In unity there is strength. This is true of the spiritual Christ-unity of the church. An army that does not march and strike together under a unified command, under the one command of its real general-in-chief, cannot win the great victories it might easily win if only it would combine as it should. One is our Master, even Christ. In oneness with him and thus with his church, let us glorify his name by winning men for his kingdom!

IV.

But look now, as Christ did, up to his heavenly Father and the world to come. See there the full glory of the oneness for which he so earnestly prayed. As this real unity of the church is far deeper and more blessed than thousands have thought, so also it is far more glorious in its ultimate goal. **It is a unity that culminates in glory.**

Our Savior's high priestly prayer rises to this heavenly height: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The spiritual, earthly unity of the church in Christ is to culminate in the eternal glory of Christ and his church when now our work is done on earth. This is the crown of our real oneness with Christ.

The Savior who dwells in our hearts now, made ours by his Word and held fast by our faith, dwells at the same time in the infinite glories of heaven. But he dwells there, not merely as the Son of God, but as God's Son made man for our sakes. There in heavenly glory is his human body and soul, now shining with divine glory. It is he who hung upon the cross for our sins, he who burst the bonds of death and the grave for our deliverance. When he went to that sacrifice and from that sacrifice to his heavenly glory, this was his prayer, that we who are one with him by faith and through him with each other be finally gathered around him in that eternal glory of his beyond the skies. What does it mean? This that he in whom we are one now as the great Head of the church shall be lifted away from all these imperfections of earth at last, to see that glorious Head with our own eyes, ourselves made glorious like unto him, and blessed forever in that heavenly vision and all it implies. O wonderful unity of the church! As Christ reaches down to us now from on high making us one with him in this world, so we are to reach up at last unto him into heaven and blessedness forever.

Does it make any difference, then, whether we are really one with him, and whether we are really bound together into one now through him? Will we ever be careless now about his Word and will, about our faith and love, and about our task of winning men unto him? Away with all that endangers this precious unity, or tends to weaken, corrupt, rend, and destroy it! Let others be blind and indifferent if they will, we will hold to him and hold together in and through him. Hear what he prays here to his Father: "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one." With him ours now by this faith of ours and this indwelling of his, his glory is ours now already. Even now as his church in true oneness with him we are heirs of heaven. And though it doth not yet appear what we shall be, we know, because we have him as our Head, that in due time it shall appear: we shall be like him—we shall see him as he is! Ours is a unity that culminates in glory.

Grant, O Lord, that in us all thy blessed prayer may be fulfilled!

OUTLINES.

The text has a depth and wealth of thought that will tax any preacher. In all probability he will have to treat some parts with considerable brevity. Central in the text is the oneness of the church,—surely, a timely subject. We may take the theme: Christ's great thoughts on the oneness of the church: on the bond

which produces it—on the power which lies in it. Or, more detailed: The unity of the church as Christ prayed for it: spiritual—in the truth—in Christ—in possessing his glory—in separation from the world—in working for the world—in heavenly glory.—We may also begin with the truth and its power: The sanctifying power of the truth: It separates us from the world unto God—it makes us one in Christ Jesus—it fits us for our mission in the world—it lifts us up to behold him who is the Truth in all his glory.—Another way is to start with the world: How shall the church accomplish its mission in the world? By drawing into itself all the power of Christ through his Word—by giving out from itself all the power of Christ in the Word.—A fine spiritual sermon may be drawn from this text on: Christ's indwelling in the church: he enters by his Word of truth—dwells in us by faith—makes us one by his indwelling—enables us to do our mission in the world—at last draws us to himself in heaven.

Christ's Final Prayer for the Church.

1. *A prayer for sanctification in the truth.*
2. *A prayer for oneness in him.*
3. *A prayer for our work in the world.*
4. *A prayer for our eternal union with him.*

"Sanctify them in the Truth!"

1. *The truth which is to sanctify us.*
2. *The sanctification which the truth is to work.*

The Great Work of the Church in the World.

1. *Filled with the Word,*
2. *Made one with Christ.*
3. *We are to bring this Word to the world,*
4. *Draw men to Christ,*
5. *That together we may be forever with Christ:*

"That they may All be One."

1. *The wonder of it—Christ's indwelling.*
 2. *The realization of it—sanctifying truth of the Word.*
 3. *The power of it—that the world may believe.*
 4. *The promise of it—that they may behold my glory.*
-

THE PENTECOST CYCLE

(599)

ROGATE.

Matth. 6, 9-13.

The Pentecost cycle begins with Rogate and extends to Trinity Sunday, which completes the festival half of the church year. This cycle is not only the shortest of all, but contains no less than three festival heights, Ascension Day, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday. Nothing needs to be said on these three festivals, the significance of each is obvious to all who have a proper conception of the church year. Only two texts are thus left for consideration. On the first of these we need say only this that its name indicates its message—it is the great prayer Sunday of the church year; any good text on Christian prayer will thus fit the day. We have chosen one which is desirable in many respects—the Lord's Prayer. The subject of prayer belongs in this cycle, because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of prayer. This leaves Exaudi. Any text which treats of the Holy Spirit or his work would be likely to fit a Sunday so close to Pentecost. The one presented in this series is chosen with a view to the doctrine of Inspiration, a subject which ought to find a place in the church year at the present day. One of the pericopes in John's Gospel might have been selected; the trouble is that these have all been preempted either in the old line of gospel pericopes or in the Eisenach line of texts. This leaves little beyond the text from Matthew or one of its parallels.

Turning now to our Rogate text and comparing this carefully with Luke 11, 1, etc., the weight of evidence and argument is in favor of *two* occasions when Jesus laid down this form of prayer. More than once Jesus repeated certain sayings of his. And this duplica-

tion in regard to the Lord's Prayer may well have aided in giving this prayer its early vogue in the church. The Lord's Prayer fits well into the section of the Sermon on the Mount in which we find it. Instead of ostentatious prayer Jesus urges private prayer. Against vain repetitions in praying he wants us to remember the omniscience of God, and then gives us a form of prayer illustrating just what he means. At the same time the prayer now given amplifies the previous instruction regarding individual prayer. Jesus now uses the plural, showing that we are to pray both individually and conjointly. One must make quite free with the sacred texts to reach the conclusion of Zahn that the Lord's Prayer was given by Jesus but once, and that Luke has the historical connection as it was. Matthew's connection, as here given, cannot be set aside so easily.

6, 9. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed by thy name. 10. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.

The connective **therefore** must not be overlooked. In giving the following prayer Jesus intends to illustrate what he has just stated. But in noting this let us observe that mere brevity and avoidance of repetition is not enough; we must follow Jesus also in this that our brief and carefully chosen words contain the thoughts and desires that ought to constitute the substance of our prayers. While in the petitions and form of address shown us by Jesus there is not a single superfluous word, this is due not to care as regards style and expression alone, but in reality to the substance itself of what is embodied in the prayer. — The Greek *οὕτως*, thus, **after this manner**; here refers to what follows, yet on the basis of the previous instruction. While the *manner* of praying is thus to be shown, this is not manner in regard to form merely, but form coupled with content, the latter governing the form appropriate to it. Behind this *οὕτως*, then, lies the right

faith and understanding which will produce a prayer such as in every way is acceptable to God. One might use the very prayer Jesus here offers us, and yet it would be all wrong, if one copied the prayer only outwardly, while it is meant only as the genuine expression of those who have the mind of Christ. — The verb used here for “pray” is regularly employed of prayer as directed to God and as constituting an act of worship. It is thus a sacred word, more restricted than words which mean to make petition, to beg, etc., which may also be used in asking things of men. — The subject is emphatic, *ὑμεῖς*, **ye**. In the Greek the word would not be written at all, if it were not emphatic, the second person plural lying already in the verb form; also it would not be put thus strikingly at the end. Jesus here places his disciples in opposition to all who pray in a faulty and wrong manner, the Gentiles in v. 7 and the Jews who like them use vain repetitions, and the hypocrites, v. 5, who pray only to be seen of men. This emphatic *ὑμεῖς* calls on us all to remember who we are, when we go to pray, God’s children in Christ Jesus, who know their Father in heaven and how they ought to appear and speak in his presence. Eccl. 5, 1. Now follows the prayer.

The first word in the original is **Father**, which the German and other languages retain as first, but which our stiff, inflexible English and American idiom simply will not permit. It lies on the surface that only a true child may rightly say “Father,” i. e., only those who hear and do the words of Jesus, Matth. 7, 24. Loehe endeavors to draw a distinction between “Father” as used in the Creed and in the Lord’s Prayer. He thinks Father in the Creed is set over against the Son, and Father in the prayer over against us. It will hardly do to press this, for the Fatherhood confessed in the Creed is the confession of the same *faith* which expresses itself in prayer, there too using the word Father. This word, as Jesus lays it upon our lips in-

cludes faith in Jesus and thus shuts out all who refuse to believe in him. Because faith alone is able to address God as "Father" in the true sense of that word, this very first word of the prayer requires that we pray it only in Jesus' name. All unitarian and deistic notions are barred at the very threshold. Only a superficial reading of this vital first word can make an exegete (Zahn) say that any Jew could have prayed the Lord's Prayer, for the reason that in some Jewish utterances God is called Father. Because the sacrifice of Jesus was not yet made is no reason to subtract one iota from the word Father in this prayer; it means: our Father through faith in Jesus Christ his Son; and this, not in a supposed sense of the later church, but in the sense of Jesus when he first uttered the word. But two things are true: the word separates all who are children of this Father from those who are not children; then, however, it acts as an invitation to all who are not children to become children. — **Our** Father stands for the possession of faith — not only that we on our part appropriate him, but also that he on his part endorses that appropriation. Let us not overlook what thus lies in the genitive. But it is plural, so that whether one prays this prayer by himself, or in union with many others, always an intercession for all the other children of God is included. Thus love joins faith in "our Father." But are we not to pray for others? Compare John 17, 9. No, we are not to put God's children together with those who are of the world. Yet we pray for the world in this Lord's Prayer just as Jesus did in his Great Intercession, where repeatedly he said: "that the world may believe." In this manner the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer take care of the world. The one avenue to God's blessings for the world, as for us, is faith in Christ. — Highly significant is the addition: **which art in heaven**, which, of course, does not mean *only* in heaven. While the word Father draws him down to us with all the love that this word

connotes, this final addition reveals the greatness of him who is thus drawn down. He is infinitely above all others called fathers, his love, power, resources, gifts are according. While God is omnipresent, he is nevertheless gloriously present in heaven, the plural here standing for the usual Hebrew term *haschamajim*, for which our idiom has the singular. For us this word is like a great curtain behind which there are wondrous divine beauties and unspeakable glories, for the true dwelling place of God is heaven and the angelic world above. We are still far from this also our true home. This prayer is for the church militant, which will soon become the church triumphant. Our guarantee for this hope is that our Father, our real Father, is in heaven. Thus in this address hope is added to faith and love.

Loeche points to the first three petitions as a parallel to the first three commandments. Each of these three first refers to God above, then the petitions that follow, like the commandments that follow descend down to our earthly affairs. Note the pronoun **thy** which binds the first three petitions together and separates them from the rest which have the pronoun "our" in different cases.—God's **name** is more than any individual term by which we refer to him, more than all these terms taken together. His name is that by which he makes himself known to us, his revelation. It is the height of presumption to invent any name on our part for God, such as "the great architect of the universe," and others, some the result of open deviation from his revelation, others the result of perverted piety. God's Word is God's name, his complete name made known for us to know God and enter into communion with him. In every passage of Scripture God looks out to us, and we must see *him* there. But Christ is for us the name by which we must fully know God, John 14, 9.—**Hallowed be thy name** contains an aorist passive imperative. This and the following two imperatives are striking since they are all in the third person. Who is

the agent behind these imperatives? The answer is: God himself, for the name, kingdom, and will are his. God's name is not a sound merely, a concept, a thought revealed to us—it is God himself in his revelation to us—nothing less. His kingdom is not the mass of his subjects merely, but his kingly authority, dominion, power, and rule as revealed in all his subjects. His will is not a statement of what he wants, but he himself in his action of willing and accomplishing his will. These imperatives are right then, only they reach up higher than we usually think.—While Zahn does not inquire in regard to the agent involved in these imperatives; he is one of the few who is struck by their tense. He thinks they have a tone almost mandatory. It is a fact, and the following imperatives are markedly different. What these three petitions thus insist on simply *must* be done. God could not consent to the opposite, nor any of God's children. As far as the aorist tense is concerned this should be combined with the substance of the petitions; together they convey the sense that God will certainly bring to pass what is here in this striking way asked of him.—In the imperative **hallowed** be there is, of course, no thought as if in any way an increase of holiness could be given to the name of God, or to God himself. He and his revelation are what they are irrespective of us. But there is the implication that God's revelation of himself is not received and honored by many as it should be. Even we who try to hallow the name come short in many respects. And hallow, or sanctify, means to set apart above everything common and profane, to esteem, prize, honor, reverence, adore as divine and infinitely blessed. Loehe shows how this hallowing is denied the holy name by every alteration of his commandments and every disobedience against them, likewise by every perversion of his doctrines and promises, and every withholding of faith. God's name is hallowed, to sum it all up, when his Word and revelation with all that they contain are received

as what they are, filling us completely with all their blessed power, and when all that is contrary is struck down and removed forever.

By the **kingdom** of the Father "the kingdom of heaven," the Messianic kingdom is meant. As the heart of the name is Christ, so the heart of the kingdom is Christ and the blessed powers of salvation which emanate from him now and through the ages. The culmination is in what we usually call the kingdom of glory, although in reality his kingdom is all one. The imperative: let it **come**, implies that it may still be extended. A right conception of the kingdom as the exercise of authority through Christ and the Gospel of grace will include an intensification and perfection of this authority in us who already bow to our heavenly King, and, of course, it will take in the conquests of God through Christ and the Gospel throughout the world till the end of time and the consummation of the kingdom. The coming of God's kingdom means the defeat of the kingdom of that wicked old Pharaoh Satan, pictured in the escape of Israel from the Red Sea and in the drowning of those pursuing hosts.

The Father's **will** as Luther has put it so well, is his good and gracious will. John 6, 40. Not that God has more than one will, but that the highest aims and purposes of his one will regarding us and the things pertaining to us center in his grace and goodness. That gracious will also centers in Christ, operates through him, and will reach its goal by his hand. If there were no opposition to this will of God we would hardly need to utter this prayer, but here the same undercurrent of hostility in "the devil, the world, and our own flesh" is implied. In this petition we put our own wills into complete and full harmony with the Father's will, and thus into opposition against the will of all his foes. It is for every man to realize this fully when he makes this prayer. Moreover, this energetic insistence on our part that God's will be completely done means that he

alone shall have the directing also of all our lives and that we mean to take from his hands whatever he sends us in harmony with his blessed will, also crosses, trials, sufferings, etc. — **As in heaven, so on earth** belongs to the third petition, and is not intended as a modification of all three. We cannot say at all that the kingdom can *come* in heaven, it has always been there. Ps. 103, 21 shows how God's will is done in heaven; this is how God's will is to be done on earth also — perfectly, with every creature an agent of that will, rejoicing to carry out its desires.

Glancing back at the three petitions we cannot agree with those who make the kingdom the highest petition, and say that in the third we step down again from this lofty height into the practical matters of every day life. There is instead of this a climax: first, the revelation of the Father; secondly, his authority and rule; third his own personal will, which exercises this rule, and therefore also has made his revelation. Of course, God is in his name, and in his kingdom; but his will is indeed God himself. And these impressive aorists convey more than that these petitions may be realized only to a certain degree, say as much as possible; they declare a complete and perfect hallowing, coming, and doing, and thus all three look forward to the great consummation, when every opposition shall be thrown down forever, when all the kingdoms shall be God's and Christ's, when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, when God shall be all in all.

11. Give us this day our daily bread. 12. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13. And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

We are free to admit the symbolic significance of *three* petitions as pertaining to God (Trinity), and *four* as pertaining to the world, thus making the sacred number *seven*, God in connection with the world. Even in such points this is the perfect prayer. Yet Luke's

version shows us that the real inner perfection is not in so many petitions, or in so many words, or in anything formal, but in the substance of what we pray. This, however, ought not to be used in breaking down the fixed form of prayer which the church for practical and liturgical purposes has established in its use of this prayer. — Here now the second person is used throughout, and we ought to feel the difference, because the objects now mentioned cannot be identified with God himself as his name, kingdom, and will evidently can be. The aorist tense, however, is adhered to also in these four petitions, and properly so when we see what each petition asks. In these petitions we again have an upward trend, so that the prayer would lose its true progress, and be disarranged in its perfect order, if the petitions were not kept as they are.

There is a fine understanding of our position among the troublesome things of our earthly life in this providing for our earthly sustenance first of all. Jesus takes the bread question out of the way at the first stroke, to leave our hearts free for the more vital things. In the Greek **bread** is put forward for emphasis. The old interpretation which tries to see spiritual bread here needs hardly to be mentioned. "Bread" is a concrete and compact term for what we need to sustain our bodily life, and Luther has shown us in his Catechism how to read the true sense of it. — The adjective **daily** (bread) has caused a lot of trouble, because in the entire Greek language the word ἐπιούσιος appears only here and in Luke 11, 3, and linguists are unable to settle the derivation. The Vulgate and Jerome have *supersubstantialis*, followed by the English Douai version: "our supersubstantial bread" — which no ordinary man will understand. This attempt at the word would make the bread here prayed for signify the spiritual Bread of Life. The best efforts so far derive the word from the noun οὐσία in the sense of life, existence, so that the adjective would mean: *was zum*

Dasein gehoert, what belongs to our existence. We would then translate: "our needful bread," or: "our bread needful for life," cf. also Am. Com. R. V., and the exhaustive discussion Cremer, *Woerterb. der neut. Gräzität*, 10th ed. by Koegel. Another derivation is from ἐπιούρα (ἐμέρα), which would mean: "our bread for the following day. While the matter is not fully determined to the satisfaction of the linguists, we seem to be safest with the first derivation here given. "Daily" must then be corrected accordingly. The aorist imperative **give** must be read together with the adverb **this day**, of an act of the Father repeated day by day, for which Luke has: "continue to give us day by day." We are, then, to be satisfied to have enough for the day, and are to renew our petition daily, depending on the great Giver alone, and this from one day to another. God often and generally gives us far more than daily sustenance, intending that we shall take good care of his gifts; but even the greatest abundance may be swept away over night, so that even in the midst of plenty our real safety for earthly bread is with God alone. Ps. 37, 25.

In the fifth petition the verb **forgive**, remit, dismiss, send away ("as far as the east is from the west," Ps. 103, 12) is first, and thus emphatic. The divine forgiveness is described as a removal of "our sins" (Luke), one so complete that our sins will never be found again. It goes without saying that this is by grace through Christ by faith—the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Neither Jesus nor the Scriptures know of any other remission. Our sins are here described as **our debts**, our obligations, these in the sense of the parable Matth. 18, 23, etc., debts once incurred which we ourselves are absolutely unable to pay. Our one hope is the divine remission by way of gift alone, i. e., gratis, for Christ's sake. The aorist here is of definite, final, complete remission. It does not lie in the tense that God is to repeat this daily; this is not needed, since we

ourselves pray this prayer daily. Justification is continuous for the believer — “richly and daily forgives all sins to me and all believers.” — **As we also have forgiven our debtors** is not the reason for God to treat us likewise, but the necessary *requisitum subjecti* (Calov) without which no believer would dare to appear before God asking his remission. In view of the remission we think of asking we must cleanse our hearts of all resentment toward others. Note that ἀφῆκαμεν is an aorist: as we did forgive. This forgiveness on our part is an evidence that God’s grace has not been in vain in us, that it has wrought faith in our hearts.

And bring us not into temptation turns from past sins still threatening us with their guilt and curse, to future sins and dangers which may again overwhelm us. James 1, 13 settles the matter as far as the tempter is concerned. The thought on which this petition rests is that our whole life is under the leadings and control of divine providence, and the petition asks that God may not carry us by his providence into situations which will be in the nature of a temptation to us. This implies a consciousness of our own weakness, which would succumb in the temptation. And **temptation** is not only the act of tempting or the action of being tempted, but also, and in this prayer especially, every situation which because of our weakness and flesh and the evil designs of Satan upon us may become dangerous for our souls if we are simply allowed to be carried into it. Zahn is right when he says that “temptation” takes in the realm of all attractive things which may arouse our sinful desires, as well as the realm of disagreeable things, like pain, shame, etc., which might drive us to sin. Our petition, then, is the opposite of all false security, temerity, rashness, and presumption. It cannot mean that we shall be so guided in our lives that no danger of temptation ever approach us, for this would mean that God forthwith take us out of this sinful world entirely. Its true sense is that God shall so guide

our lives that using the grace and strength we have and his help constantly offered us, in whatever situation his providence may place us, no temptation, in the effective sense may result, i. e., in the sense of actually bringing us to a fall. The sense is that God will keep us out of some situations entirely, because our faith would not be strong enough to endure them (Peter), and that his grace and warnings may indeed restrain us from ourselves entering them against his gracious will; on the other hand that he so strengthen us that we may stand amid the solicitations to sin which we are bound to meet, and which God's gracious will even wants us to meet, for the discipline and development of our faith. In the latter sense we must understand James 1, 2; our faith is the victory which overcometh the world, and thus resisting the devil he will flee from us, James 1, 12. Two things must not be overlooked in this petition: the faith which dreads to fall, and the assurance that in his own gracious way God answers this petition.

Some read the sixth and the seventh petitions as one because of the adversative conjunction, the sixth being negative, the seventh the corresponding positive — only this correspondence, when examined, is not close enough to make the two petitions halves of one whole. In fact, since the prayer purposely avoids vain repetitions, it is out of order to expect a negative and a positive statement of the same request side by side. This adversative **but** is due only to the negative form used preceding it. The verb is forward: **deliver us**, draw us away from; and the aorist = final, complete deliverance. — The newer commentators read ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ as a neuter: **from the evil** (against the R. V.). Placed absolutely as here, with not a single indication that Satan is meant, and with the same word preceding in 5, 37 and 39, where it certainly is the neuter, we cannot take it as intended for the masculine here. While temptation in the abstract might connote the tempter (Satan), the sixth petition speaks of temptation in con-

nection with providential leadings and thus shuts out this connotation. Moral evil in the widest sense is meant; not evil in the sense of pain and distress merely, except in so far as this also may be used to injure our souls. The deliverance here asked for is not partial, but complete. It signifies a removal from this whole world lying in evil, and that, of course, by a blessed death. While the petition culminates in this deliverance, it of course includes every deliverance preceding and in line with this great goal. In the nature of the case this petition is the final one—we need nothing more when this deliverance is attained. And so this petition closes the golden circle of prayer by linking the seventh petition into the first. God's name is revealed to us sinners in order that we may be finally delivered from all evil and translated into his heavenly kingdom where his will alone is done.

13. . . . For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Souter shows what textual authority there is for this addition; it is rather greater than one is led to expect by commentators, who sometimes refer to 2 Tim. 4, 18 as the source. For homiletical purposes this critical question need not disturb us. The doxology was added to the prayer when it came to be used by the church, and thus many early versions of Matthew, with slight variations, introduced these appropriate words. They contain praise, adding to that involved already in the address and underlying that contained in all the petitions. In the Timothy passage only the glory is mentioned. Here the **kingdom** is named, the whole realm in which God works, and the **power** or might by which he works, and the **glory** or shining forth of his attributes in all his working. These are all his and his alone as our God, who is our Father in Christ Jesus. Because we know and believe this we make these our petitions, and these great possessions of his guarantee to us the full and complete answer to this our prayer.

Every Lord's Prayer prayed in faith is heard and answered beyond the shadow of a doubt. And so we may indeed, yea must add: **Amen** = truth, verily! It is the seal of our faith and assurance. Too often the word is spoken lightly, without thinking. Many add it at the end of sermons in which they have uttered only their views or opinions, and at the end of prayers faulty, even wrong. All such at best might close with: Perhaps! they ought never to say: Amen! God help us by his Holy Spirit so to pray both this blessed prayer and all others that come to our hearts and lips that we may seal them in truth with faith's joyful and confident Amen.

SERMON. *used '27*

Many a time we have prayed this wonderful prayer which Jesus himself has given us. Alas, we must all confess—many a time without that concentration which its mighty petitions demand! This prayer is far more than a beautiful formula of words to use in praying. Jesus himself tells us that we are to pray "after this manner," namely with all that this prayer of his requires on our part. Let us follow this intimation of his and open our hearts to receive all that lies in this divine prayer.

Here are seven petitions—a chain with the sacred number, bringing God to us, and us to God. These seven petitions reveal our *sevenfold need*. In doing that they come to us with a *sevenfold admonition* in regard to these needs. Looking again we will see here a *sevenfold vow* which ought to follow the admonition as our response to it. And then this wonderful prayer brings us a *sevenfold promise* from Jesus that if we pray it thus as we ought our petitions shall indeed be heard. That, beloved, is

The Sacred Seven in the Lord's Prayer.

I.

Yes, these seven petitions reflect most clearly on our part **a sevenfold need.**

Many men are conscious of more or less need in their lives. If not always then at least when their needs become painful, terrifying perhaps in the vicissitudes of life, in sickness, calamity, distress of conscience, and in the hour of death. Then, perhaps,

too they cry unto God, and yet, oh, how much they lack to make their prayers what they ought to be in order to be heard! Learn here from the sacred seven in the Lord's Prayer what our need really is.

We need first of all the heavenly blessings, which are locked up in God's name, God's kingdom, God's good and gracious will. Too many of us are still like the children of this world, blind to their greatest need. When they pray they think of asking only temporal and bodily blessings. They look down, instead of looking up. Let us cease being children who cry only for playthings to make us happy for an hour; let us cry for the eternal things which will make us happy now and forever. That is why Jesus lays his Father's name upon our lips and bids us look up to him in heaven. Behold thus the heavenly blessings intended for us, and see how much we need these.

His name we need that we may know him as he is in all his love and mercy towards us. Look at Christ, your Savior, his cross and blood, his exaltation and glory. "He that hath seen me," says Christ, seen me in faith, "hath seen the Father." In Christ God is revealed to us—Christ is his wondrous "name." And Christ comes to us in the Gospel, in this Holy, precious Bible. This is God's name so full and clear that you may know him indeed. And mark it well, this is your first great need. You and every man that lives in this world needs to know God as he is revealed in Christ and in the Gospel of Christ. You need this blessed name. And how do you need it? So that its blessedness may fill your heart, that you may hallow and sanctify it by faith and a godly life. Unless you have this need satisfied, you will never have what you really need.

But the knowledge and faith which takes in his name opens his kingdom to us. "Thy kingdom come!"—here is our need. First of all that through Christ and his Word this kingdom come to us and take us in, and then that in ever fuller measure the blessings of this kingdom be ours. O the poor souls still in the kingdom of darkness! And here is the kingdom they need—its grace to cleanse and free them and to make them ready for the glory beyond. Let us never forget this vital need.

This need at once touches another, namely that for us in all things God's good and gracious will may be done, that will which would crush our foes, sin, world, devil, and hell, and lead us safely through this poor earthly life to our Father which is in heaven. Say it yourself, whether this is not our greatest need!

God's name, kingdom, will, and what they bring to us now in time and hereafter in eternity, this is our need.

Yes, we need bread too, earthly food, clothing, property. But stop! This need is not nearly as great as you think. You need,

really need, far less than you think. Does the millionaire need his millions, and you your hundreds and thousands? Look at this word "bread" and you have the answer. God is good and gives you a rich abundance perhaps. He more than satisfies your need, but let not that deceive you in regard to your real bodily need.

This is the least need, and therefore in the four petitions that draw us up to God after he comes down to us in the first three this little prayer for bread is put first. With this need settled look at your soul. It is sinful, guilty, a curse impending over it. What do you need? Forgiveness from God. Nothing but the forgiveness of God through Jesus' blood can cleanse your sin away. But here you are in a wicked world, a thousand temptations and dangers on every side. What do you need? That God guide and keep you that you may not be lost in temptation and fall a prey to the roaring lion seeking to devour you. And now with so much evil about you, sum all the rest up, what do you need? Deliverance. Daily deliverance from evil that you may be kept safe and pure as a child of God, and then in the hour of death may be delivered from all evil and translated into the eternal kingdom of God.

Oh, that we all might realize the vastness of our need! Here Jesus opens up its sevenfold greatness for us to see. See it aright, and then lift up your hearts and hands and pray to your Father in heaven to answer this mighty need of yours.

II.

In pointing to the need the voice of admonition has already called to us, but let us give special attention to it—in pointing to our sevenfold need these seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer come with a **sevenfold admonition**.

You who have long known the name of God—have you hallowed it as you should? Have you made it your rock of faith, your refuge of prayer, your anchor of hope? You who have had the kingdom come to you—have you been glad to be in it, or have you tried to run back into the kingdom of the devil? You who have known God's good and blessed will and how it ^{have you} would keep you in his grace—have you loved that will, desired ^{made it true, tried to run with it} with all your heart what it purposes? or have you (too) run counter to that will and followed the will of the devil, the world, and your own flesh? Do you hear these questions coming out of these holy petitions, reminding you of your lack of faith and faithfulness? Stop praying the Lord's Prayer until these admonitions bow your heart in true repentance; then pray, and your prayer will be better.

And again, you whom God has fed daily for so many a year of your earthly lives—have you thanked him as you should?

have you used his gifts as he desires? Or have you worried like worldlings when your abundance was less, and have you held in greed and avarice what he has given you? When he gave you so much that you should help build his kingdom with your money and goods, have you done it? or have you wasted all this kindness of his in pride and selfish desire? Stop praying for daily bread, until these admonitions go home in your hearts. It is one thing to get the bread—even the wicked get it,—and another thing to get it so that God's blessing rests upon it. May not the bread God gives you now rise up against you in the judgment day for the way you prayed for it and for the way in which you ate and used it.

You have asked for forgiveness—but do you hear this petition: “as we forgive our debtors”? Did you forgive? or did you expect God to forgive you your thousands of sins, while you refused to forgive one or the other sin of your brother or fellow man? You pray to be kept from temptation—have you kept away from it yourself when you knew it was there and were warned against its danger? Remember the folly of Peter and his fall; remember the falseness of Judas and the death he died. And so with evil and all the corruption of sin. Can you pray to be delivered from it while you still love it and cling to it in some form? And how about the end? You do not know when the fatal hour may come. What if then some chain of evil still held you? Too late in that hour many a soul has cried to be delivered.

A sevenfold admonition from the sacred seven in the Lord's Prayer. Seven cords to draw you down on your knees in repentance. Seven hands to free you from your unbelief, carelessness, sin. Seven voices to call you back to God. Pray, yes, pray these petitions, but only after you heed their admonitions.

III.

Admonition is meant to awaken a response. And surely this sevenfold admonition ought to receive a ^{proper} befitting response from you. What shall it be? There is only one, proper answer—a **sevenfold vow**. *It is in consequence of this vow that the Spirit of God*

This holy name in Christ and his Gospel, for which you pray that it may be hallowed—as you lift your hands in prayer to your Father, vow to him that with his help you will indeed hallow it better than before—cling to it more, love and use it more, and make it the signature of your whole life. And this kingdom of God and his Son, here in his church on earth, and in the glory of heaven above, for the coming of which you pray—as you pray add the vow that you will belong wholly to this kingdom alone, and live as a child of it, rejoicing in its blessings and manifesting forth its power in your life. Let that vow in-

clude that God may use you too in bringing this kingdom to others. God's gracious will, for which you pray that it may be done—do more than pray. Yield your own will to this will which is your salvation, and vow anew to God that your will shall not again support the will of the evil one or of those who are ruled by him. This is the right answer when from your past faults and sins you turn anew to God and pray for his name, kingdom, and will.

Part of your vow must include your earthly possessions, that you will hold them as God's gifts alone, and use them according to his will. (It is a hard vow unless your heart is wholly your Father's, but make it with his help. Only as you let loose from these earthly things will you really be lifted up to God.) Then add the vows on sin, temptation, and evil. It took the blood of God's own Son to win forgiveness for you. Say to God as you plead anew for this forgiveness which he so gladly and richly bestows: Father, I know its price, and I vow to hold it as my dearest treasure—and having this great forgiveness from thee no unforgiving spirit shall ever remain in me! Will you dally again with temptation? or talk with lightness and laughter perhaps of any evil? or forget what evil means when it still holds you in the hour of death? No, no—here vow to your Father, as you ask for his protection and deliverance, that you will walk his paths alone, the blessed paths of righteousness for his name's sake, and that you will flee every evil and give your soul only to him.

Holy and sacred ought to be these vows arising out of the sacred seven in this prayer, as holy as these petitions themselves. Christian vows are really Christian prayers, for none of us can make them except in complete dependence upon our Father's help. But made thus they will be acceptable to him and effective in our hearts and lives.

VI. IV

What will God's response be when thus the sacred seven in his Son's prayer makes us feel our sevenfold need, humbles us with its sevenfold admonition, and stirs us to make this sevenfold vow? Dear children of the Father in heaven, his answer will be, must be, a **sevenfold promise**.

The surest thing about the Lord's Prayer is the promise which every one of its petitions contains. Why did Jesus ask us to pray thus? Because God is anxious to do these very things for us. Not that any man dare be presumptuous and think he can do as he pleases and then merely by repeating these petitions secure the fulfillment of the sevenfold promise. This promise is not for presumptuous fools, but for God's beloved children. He wants them to see their need, but he sees it far better than they, and it moves him to extend his hand and open his heart to relieve it. But only they who know their need and cry to him from out their

need can receive the answer he is so ready to give. And that is the purpose of the sevenfold admonition in these petitions and of the sevenfold vow they would produce—to drop our carelessness and indifference, to come as we ought to come to this mighty and exalted Father of ours, that he may bless us as these petitions assure us that he will.

His holy name, full of light, peace, and joy for you, he will indeed help you that in and through it you may be sanctified for your own salvation. His wondrous kingdom, established for your sakes and filled with heavenly treasures, he will indeed make it yours and bring it to others through you, even as you pray, if only you do pray in spirit and in truth. And his loving, saving will—there is no doubt about its being done, and done upon you and in you in the highest measure, if you pray as he bids you through his Son) that it may be done.

All the treasures of earth are his. He made its gold and silver, he created the grain that feeds you, the cattle on a thousand hills are his. Will he ever let his own children suffer lack if they cry to him in this prayer for bread? if they come, not as greedy worldlings seeking filthy lucre, but as beloved children knowing and prizing their Father's love?—He who gave his own Son to die for us, will he not now apply that Son's blood in pardon to our souls, if we come to him contrite and believing as we should? He who knows our weakness and the Tempter's strength, will he hesitate to help us when we are tried while we serve and obey him? and will he not deliver us from wickedness and all its hurts, while we live here and in the final hour, if we indeed turn from evil and reach out our hands to him? Oh, the promise is sure. Its mighty sevenfold strands will never break. Heaven and earth will pass away, but not the words here written, the promises here given with Christ in them and the Father in heaven behind them.

Let this assurance make us eager and strong in prayer. And that the full joy of it may be ours let us pray "after this manner," namely as these seven petitions train and guide, instruct and move us to pray—with needy, repentant, faithful hearts. Then shall the promise with its sevenfold stream of blessing flood us with heavenly gifts, and our hearts shall break forth in praise and worship: "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

OUTLINES.

The Lord's Prayer is an excellent text for a homily, only in using this less usual type of sermon great care must be exercised lest the result be only a general sort of Sunday-school comment.

A homily has perfect unity, like any other good sermon, and while there is freedom in the development the whole of it is governed by the unity and helps to unfold it. — The natural divisions of the prayer may be used, either dividing between the third and fourth petition, or dividing into four sections: the introduction, the first three petitions, the last four, and the conclusion. — Theme: Christ's wonderful prayer for us all: its three petitions to bring God down to us — its four petitions to carry us up to God. — Let the Lord's Prayer teach us how to pray: with its address to God — with its petitions on the things of God — with its petitions on the things of men — with its conclude of praise and faith.

Our Most Beloved Prayer.

1. *Its contents.* — 2. *Its blessing.*

— Jeremias.

The Lord's Prayer the Greatest Lesson on Christian Prayer.

1. *On the way we should pray.*
 2. *On the things for which we should pray.*
 3. *On the faith with which we should pray.*
-

The Lord's Prayer in Jesus' Name.

1. *In Jesus' name we come as dear children to our heavenly Father.*
 2. *In Jesus' name we ask a right for heavenly and for earthly gifts.*
 3. *In Jesus' name we close with a joyful and believing Amen.*
- Anacker.
-

The Depth of the Lord's Prayer.

1. *Here is the true spirit of prayer.*
 2. *Here is the true ground of prayer.*
 3. *Here is the true blessing of prayer.*
-

We add an outline on this text for mission festivals. Instead of using only the second petition let us use:

The Entire Lord's Prayer as a Mission Prayer.

In praying it we will find:

1. It requires that we have *the right missionary spirit* (the introduction, and the first three petitions).
 2. It impels us to make *the right missionary offerings* (the fourth petition, "our" including the bread of our missionaries).
 3. It directs us to desire *the right missionary success* (the last three petitions: that men may find pardon, deliverance from temptation, and at last from all evil).
 4. It inspires us with *the right missionary faith* (the conclusion: it is all God's work, and the glory is his alone).
-

ASCENSION.

Acts 1, 6-11.

Our text is the fullest account the evangelists have left us of Christ's ascension to heaven; it ought to be prized and used accordingly. The old Epistle texts use Acts 1, 1-11 for Ascension Day, making a much wider text and thus changing the sermon. Even the five verses we have taken reach out beyond the ascension itself; nevertheless, they will enable us to concentrate more upon this great saving act of our Lord.

1, 6. They, therefore, when they were come together, asked him, saying, Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?

With μέν Luke introduces his new account, and with οὖν he joins it with what precedes, a favorite method of his. **When they were come together** cannot go back to v. 4, because v. 4 must have been at some place where the disciples could eat, while now we are on the Mount of Olives, v. 12, about 2,000 paces from the walls of Jerusalem, apparently on the crest of the height where the road turns down to Bethany, Luke 24, 50. It was the fortieth day after Christ's resurrection. Luke merely states the facts without explaining how it was that the apostles gathered here at this time, and how the Lord came into their midst.—They **asked him**, really: were inquiring of him (an imperfect), dwelling on the fact, also as if they had made out beforehand to inquire-fully into this matter. More words, it seems, were used by the apostles than the ones reported by Luke who summarizes their inquiry.—In addressing Jesus as **Lord** the term now means far more than an honorable title to a superior; it signifies: divine Lord and Master. The question which now follows is introduced with εἰ, which some think a Hebraism. The

best explanation of this and similar instances is that the statement thus introduced is connected with a thought in the speaker's mind, giving it thus an indirect turn: (We would like to know) whether thou dost, etc. Robertson suggests that there is an ellipsis. — **At this time** carries the emphasis. Now that Christ's promise to send down the Holy Spirit was soon to be fulfilled, thus reaching the great goal to which the Baptist had pointed, and to which Christ also had often referred (note v. 5), the Eleven imagined the time was at hand for the erection of Christ's glorious kingdom. **Dost** thou at this time **restore the kingdom to Israel?** i. e., bring it back into its former condition; reinstate, return. Luke 24, 21: "But we hoped that it was he which should redeem Israel." In his reply Jesus does not say that the kingdom will not be restored to Israel. But we must not be too ready to say with Besser that the ideas which the apostles connected with this restoration were entirely free from Jewish expectations and dreams of outward glory. Instead of touching any lingering misconceptions of this sort Jesus takes up the point of time concerning which the inquiry was made, and elucidates this so fully that other matters are thereby also clarified. There shall be a restoration when the time set by the Father comes, an apocatastasis or restitution of all things (Acts 3, 19, etc.), but not in any such anti-scriptural sense as some have supposed by adding in a restoration and final salvation of the damned. **The kingdom** here is the Messianic kingdom in its consummation and glory, under the wonderful reign of Jesus as the Messiah. And we must not read **Israel** as "the Jews," or the Jewish nation; the conceptions of the apostles were above any such crude nationalistic notions. Still their question reads as if they imagined a glorious earthly and visible kingdom for the true Israel.

7. **And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority.** 8. **But ye shall receive power, when**

the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The inquiry is fairly answered, giving the very information the apostles needed. The emphasis is on **not for you**, over against which is placed **the Father**. The genitive with *ἐν* = it is not your part, your prerogative, *nicht in eurer Macht*. **The times** are wider periods, **the seasons** specific narrower periods, such as are connected with special occurrences. By using the plural for both time terms Jesus makes the entire statement general; in the whole course of the kingdom the apostles are not to concern themselves with times or seasons — all these matters about times are reserved by the Father. The application to the matter of the restoration of the kingdom, i. e., its culmination in glory, was obvious. — The relative clause: **which the Father, etc.**, really states the reason why the apostles cannot know the times or seasons, namely because they are of this kind that the Father **hath set** (them) **within his own authority**. The sense is: the Father has reserved them for himself. On the prepositional phrase compare Matth. 21, 23. The aorist "hath set" closes the matter; this was done long ago. And the "authority" includes the power of the Father; it is the domain where he alone has the right and the power to determine. This is certainly clear, and ought to dissuade all time-setters, cf. Mark 13, 32. The fine old exegete Bengel may serve as a special warning for us, since he made this one mistake, he tried to set the time of the return of Christ, and most miserably failed. — Instead of troubling about times and seasons, the apostles have something far more important and beneficial to do. Jesus withholds the information about the time, but he extends this promise: **ye shall receive power** for the great task which is to take up all their time and strength. Spiritual power is meant, a complete and adequate equipment of mind and soul to help build and extend the kingdom of grace. A

genitive absolute explains how they are to receive this power: **when the Holy Ghost is come upon you**, describing exactly in advance how the Pentecost miracle would occur. In a moment Jesus will leave these men, but he leaves them with this promise; in fact, his leaving thus is to make good that promise, for the ascension of Christ was necessary in order to send us the Holy Spirit as he did.—Though the connection is only “and,” the thought shows that we are dealing with the wonderful result of this empowering. The future tense: **and ye shall be my witnesses** reads like a continuation of the promise. This is no admonition; it merely states a future fact—there is and shall be no question about it. And the Lord says not only that they shall be heralds (preachers) of his, but **witnesses**, in the sense of 1 John 1, 1—men who have themselves seen, heard, touched, experienced, and who are qualified, and even called, to testify accordingly. We must not read too lightly over this word “witnesses.” In the sense that the Eleven were Christ’s witnesses none else could be. All the great things they saw could never be repeated; yet all these things had to be made known, and made known properly not only to the men of that age, but to the men of all ages. For this reason the apostles were specially equipped by the Holy Spirit. They received the gift of inspiration. Thus they preached, taught, and directed the church, filling the world of that day with the Gospel. At the same time their testimony was set down in inspired records to be their voice of witness to all ages and literally to the ends of the earth. Men like Mark and Luke, not apostles, also wrote by inspiration, but they wrote not apart from the apostles, but in close connection with them, Mark with Peter, Luke with Paul. Moreover, while individual names attach to the four Gospels, it surely would be a mistake to think that the apostles who left us no writings had nothing whatever to do in sending forth the divine testimony which now is ours.—The course of the future

work of the apostles is now prophetically outlined: **both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth.** The Greek correlative "both, and" is extended by adding two more "and." Paul went even to Spain, Thomas to India; but their testimony has gone much farther, and is still going to-day.

9. And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. 10. And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; 11. which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.

This ninth verse is invaluable. Graphically it describes the ascension and gives us just what we need. The Lord has finished his words (note the aorist and its force). The eyes of all the apostles as they stood before him rested upon him (note the present tense of the genitive absolute, and its emphatic forward position). The verb means to see, to look, to direct the eyes and attention upon an object. Jesus was not suddenly snatched away out of their sight; he did not vanish as he stood before them. Thus he had left them repeatedly during the forty days—not so now, because his leaving now is to have a different meaning. Before this, when he would leave, they knew that presently they would see him again—now he was taking his visible presence away for good, he leaves in a new, wonderful, heavenly way. They see it all with their eyes as the witnesses they were to be. An awed silence falls over them. Slowly, majestically, mightily the Lord rises from the earth heavenward, higher and higher. Their eyes wide with astonishment follow him and strain in looking. Far aloft they see the holy body of Jesus, until at last a filmy cloud folds him in. They still gaze after him—but he is gone. They know whither—he has

ascended into heaven. A simple aorist describes the fact: **he was taken up**. Luke 24, 51: "he was carried up into heaven." The passive voice points to God as the agent. But this passive is like that concerning the resurrection, it has parallel statements in the active voice: "ascending where he was before," John 6, 62; "I am not yet ascended unto the Father," John 20, 17. God raised him on high, and he rose on high; *opera ad extra sunt indivisia*. Eph. 4, 10. Chrysostom says: "Of Christ's resurrection the disciples saw the final part, not the first part, but of his ascension they saw the first part, not the final part." Not for his own sake was Jesus thus taken up visibly, till visibility reached its limits, **and a cloud received him out of their sight**, not accidentally, but according to his own plan and purpose. This was all for the disciples and us—it is the great article of our faith: "he ascended into heaven." But what occurred when the cloud enfolded him? Instantaneously, timelessly, by virtue of his omnipotence, he was transferred into heaven, the heaven of God and his angels and saints, and there he sat down at the right hand of power, i. e., began the infinite, unlimited exercise of his power and glory according to his human nature also. Cf. Philippi 5, 1, 185; *Eisenach Gospel Selections* I, 614, etc; *Eis. Ep. Sel.* I, 608; *F. C. (J.)* 518, 13; 623, 119; 629, 26, etc. It is beyond us how men like Zoeckler can bring in allegorical notions regarding the cloud, saying that it served "to make visible the gracious, saving presence of God." Meyer does the same thing, followed even by Stelthorn: "The cloud . . . is the visible revelation of the presence of God, who receives the Son unto himself into the glory of heaven." The cloud was nothing but the divinely chosen earthly means to remove in a final and appropriate way the visible body of Jesus from the eyes of the disciples. They were to cease looking; Jesus was not rising on and on in the regions of distant space—he was gone—gone where there is no space, time, or any mundane

restriction. These cloudy allegories dare not becloud this stupendous fact in Christ's great saving work.—The fine description in the 9th verse continues in the 10th: **And while they were looking**, etc. The imperfect of the copula together with the present participle expresses duration more strongly than the simple imperfect tense by itself, and the verb now used differs from the previous one: they were intently gazing upon Jesus as he ascended. They were doing this **as he went**, the present participle coinciding with the previous verb tense. This once more brings out the fact that the disciples witnessed the ascension—we see them here in the very act. Indelibly the scene was impressed upon their souls.—Now, not after the ascension, but in the midst of it, a second astounding thing, so that Luke exclaims **behold!** in telling it. **Two men stood by them in white apparel**, and we need not to be told that they were angels. These two remind us of the two in Joseph's tomb—perhaps they were the same ones, but this is only conjecture. The presence of the angels marks the ascension as one of Christ's great saving acts. Here again the angels appear as "men" in human form, in order to draw as near to us as these heavenly spirits can. They are, of course, without sex, Luke 20, 35, etc., but they come visibly as men, i. e., young men, images of strength and beauty combined, never as women or maidens—a point which only the best painters and artists have noted. Only the whiteness of their apparel is here noted. Someone has asked about the garments of Jesus when he appeared during the forty days, the garments in which he ascended. They were like those of the angels here, chosen for his purpose and fully adapted to it. Whiteness signifies purity, holiness, heavenliness. No second look was needed to tell the apostles who stood in greatness, power, and glory before them. They were not left to strain their eyes looking at the cloud in which the Lord had disappeared. These angels came to complete what was neces-

sary in this act of Jesus. They are his spokesmen who at once confirm the ascension and connect it with the future return of the Lord. This is another part of the answer of Jesus to the apostles concerning the restoration of the kingdom to Israel. Between this glorious hour and that return lies their world-wide work of witness bearing, then however the consummation of the kingdom shall be ushered in. We cannot entertain the idea, which some have hazarded, that Moses and Elijah were the two men in white apparel—a mere fanciful guess. The pluperfect = had placed themselves beside the apostles, and thus were there. — The apostles are addressed as: **Ye men of Galilee**, which is not intended to say that they were all born and reared in that province, but that they were associates of Jesus who labored so long in that country and who himself was known as a Galilean. All their past life with Jesus in Galilee is recalled by this designation. — The question: **why stand ye looking into heaven?** is not intended to chide them for doing this. It was only natural for them to gaze after Jesus in this manner. The question is meant to arouse their minds, so that mere astonishment may give way to thought. And this thought is to connect a mighty promise with what they have just seen. So the angels connect these two: **this Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven**—this is the miracle of grace—shall return, etc., which is the promise. Perhaps a gesture of the hand pointed upward at “this Jesus.” They use the earthly, personal name by which the Savior was known during the days of his flesh. It is “this Jesus,” and no other, who ascended to heaven, the Godman; and in his human nature he was taken up. The passive participle points to God as the one who received him up, only now the phrase “from you” is added. A separation has taken place, but only an outward one, as far as visible intercourse is concerned—invisibly, according to his own promise, he will continue with them *always* even unto the end. Not

merely away from them, but "into heaven," has he been received. It was but a moment since they saw his form, but the reception into the heavenly world is already accomplished. What this meant Jesus himself had told them,—not mere rest while they struggled here below, but a mighty and blessed exercise of power and authority. The angels have nothing to add to all that Jesus had told them on this subject, they only restate in the most emphatic and direct form what the Lord himself had said.—He **shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.** We feel at once that the apostles were to expect a visible return of the Lord. "So," or "thus," already states it, but it is fully described by the added relative clause, into which the antecedent, namely "manner," has been attracted in the usual Greek fashion. He "shall come"—that is all; when, is not for them to know. The return shall be a coming like this, i. e., as far as the movement is concerned, only reversed, of course, a descent, instead of as now an ascent. Beyond this the words do not go. That he will appear in all his glory, and with all the angels of God about him, and thus in a different manner from his ascension, he himself had said. By the same power he will return, namely by his omnipotence. And "this Jesus" will so return, in his human nature, so that the eyes of men will behold him just as the apostles beheld his ascent.—But the earth is a sphere—how then can all men on the globe behold the descent of Jesus from heaven at the last day? Our present day cheap science may need an answer to this question. It is found in 1 Thess. 4, 16-17, especially in the statement: "to meet the Lord in the air." A few tremendous changes with this old earth, the dead slumbering in it, and the living at that day, shall attend to all the details necessary, so that we shall all see the Savior's return.—Another point: Jesus is visibly present as man in heaven now, and shall so be present and seen on his return. But no man knows how many modes of presence he has besides this—they

utterly transcend our finite imagination. While present visibly in heaven so that angels and saints behold him, he is wondrously present wherever two or three are gathered together here on earth in his name, and that not according to his divine nature only, but equally according to his human nature. How is that possible? Finite minds cannot answer that question and have no business with it. While visibly present in heaven he gives us here his body to eat and his blood to drink in the holy sacrament. How is that possible? The same reply must be made. While visibly present in heaven, where also dying Stephen beheld him, he fills all things, again not with his divine nature only, but also with his human nature. The wonder of it is infinite. But as for us, we know the facts only, not the manner. Little children ask many things they cannot possibly comprehend, the facts must suffice them. Let us be content to believe our almighty and all-glorious Lord like true children of God.

SERMON.

Out on the beautiful crest of Mount Olivet, within sight of the city of Jerusalem and its white marble Temple gleaming in the distance, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ ascended to heaven. So near the spot where he passed through the great agony, when drops of blood like sweat trickled from his pores, in the night in which he was betrayed, he now stood, risen from the dead, his body wondrously glorified, ready to assume his heavenly throne above. The same disciples were about him as in that night in Gethsemane—with one significant exception. For the last time they heard their Savior speak to them with his own lips, then they saw him ascend in majesty to heaven, and angels of God spoke the words that dismissed them from the sacred spot with undying joy and exultation in their hearts. That joy is ours to-day. It marks every return of the great day which commemorates this miracle of our salvation. May God sanctify and increase.

Our Joy in Christ's Ascension to Heaven.

It is joy in his own exaltation, and in what that exaltation means to us.

I.

We rejoice in our Savior's ascension to heaven because of **his own exaltation** in thus ascending on high.

When Christ arose from the dead on Easter morning he entered a new and glorious mode of existence. He now used all the heavenly powers that belonged to his human nature since it came into existence in the body of his mother. No longer was his body subject to the ordinary laws of time, and space, and earthly conditions. Suddenly he would appear to his disciples, and when he was done speaking with them as suddenly would he be gone. A heavenly glory was poured out over him, and all his disciples saw that he was indeed the Son of God. For forty days this wonderful intercourse with his beloved disciples continued. They were to know indeed that he was risen and glorified, and from his own lips they were to hear the things they needed to know from the Scriptures and in explanation of all that had occurred and was yet to occur in the blessed plans of God.

Then at last the crowning act of all was to take place—the ascension of our Savior to heaven itself and to the throne of his eternal glory at God's right hand. It is the final and most transcendent act of his exaltation.

As the glorified body of Jesus stood there on Mount Olivet—when the last mighty words had been spoken, bidding the disciples preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth—a silence fell over the sacred group. And the great act of exaltation began. Slowly, majestically, wondrously the body of Jesus rose from the earth. Wide-eyed with astonishment the disciples beheld it. The hands once nailed to the cross and still bearing those holy wounds, were spread out in blessing over them, as the glorious form of Jesus rose higher and higher. Not an eye was turned from him as he ascended heavenward. Far in the upper regions now they saw his body, then a filmy vapor of cloud closed around him, and they saw their Savior's human form no more. He had ascended to heaven.

Only the first part of that wonderful ascent could human eyes behold. Heaven itself the disciples could not see, nor the Savior's entrance into the pearly gates beyond. When that vapor cloud hid him from their sight, when that which they could see and were therefore given to see, was finished, then all in an instant, with power and majesty transcending all earthly things, our Savior's body was transferred into heaven itself. We can speak of it only in an imperfect, human way. The great golden portals stood ajar to take the mighty conqueror in. All the hosts of heaven shouted with joyful acclaim. Angels swept down to re-

ceive him. We may think of the Psalmist's words when he sings of these angel hosts shouting to each other: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads. O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah." And there on his mighty throne, shining with the divine light and glory of God, our Savior sat down. This was his eternal exaltation in heaven.

Think for a moment what it means. Jesus, our Savior, sat down at God's right hand of power in heaven. It is he whom they nailed to the cross and laid in the grave—the same body that suffered so much, the same soul that was sorrowful unto death that night on Mount Olivet. For this was the human body and soul of God's own Son made partaker through the Incarnation of all the power and glory that belonged to him as the Son. Now he used it all most completely, and will use it all.—His great redemptive work on earth was done. Sin was atoned for by his death, Satan and hell were defeated forever, salvation was bought for us all, the glorious Gospel of life and peace for sinners ready to be sent to all the world. Thus did our Savior ascend and take his throne on high.—And not for himself was he exalted thus, though all heaven rang with the praises of what he had done. For us he ascended, for us he assumed that exalted throne, far above principalities, powers, might, dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. He ascended on high to sit at God's right hand of power, that means to exercise and rule forever with this power, alike in heaven and on earth. And not as the Son of God only, but also as man, in the oneness of his divine person. He himself said it, and meant it of his human nature: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." And his apostle writes: God "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." That infinite power lies now in his pierced hands in heaven, and its one purpose is the salvation of men and our own eternal glorification.

Oh, that our hearts might realize in some proper measure at least what took place when Jesus ascended thus to heaven, that we may rejoice in his exaltation! Mighty is the death of Christ—it rent sin and death in twain; blessed is the resurrection of Christ—it displays all his saving victory. But we must add one more stupendous deed, completing in its sublime way all the rest: infinitely glorious is the ascension and heavenly exaltation of Christ

—it crowns all his work as our Savior, enthroning him as our King and Savior forever. To realize what this means must fill our hearts with boundless joy.

“For this he taught, and toiled, and bled
For this his life was given;
For this he fought, and vanquished death;
For this he reigns in heaven.

Join, all ye saints beneath the sky,
Your grateful praise to give;
Sing loud hosannas to his name,
With whom ye too shall live.”

II.

Our joy in the ascension of Christ to heaven must be deepened and increased when we see **what his exaltation means to us.**

It means a blessed kingdom of grace here on earth. The last thing Jesus said to his disciples before he ascended in glory to heaven was this assurance concerning his kingdom of grace and salvation on earth. He promised them the gift of his Holy Spirit from heaven; he promised to fill them with the power of his Holy Spirit, and to make them witnesses to preach the Gospel with success among men—in the first place right there in Jerusalem where Jesus had been condemned, then in the whole Jewish land, in the adjoining land of Samaria, yea in all the lands of the earth. It was a kingly promise indeed. It was a promise resting on his exaltation in heaven. For only one who rules in heaven can send down from there God's own Holy Spirit to fill and bless the souls of men. Only one who governs the whole earth, controls with his power and might every nation and land, can send his witnesses as he deems best to the very ends of the earth. You know how his exalted word has been kept. Only ten days after Christ's ascension the Holy Spirit was given with wonderful signs. That little band of apostles, so timid at first, became fearless and strong—Jerusalem resounded with the Gospel, and thousands believed. To be sure, persecution broke out, but Jesus ruled in heaven, ruled in the very midst of his foes. The blasts of persecution in Jerusalem scattered the Gospel into many lands. Soon there were churches in the most distant parts of the civilized world as it then was. St. Paul went as far as Spain and the Atlantic ocean. St. Thomas penetrated even to far off India. The holy Gospels were written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the letters of the holy apostles by the same Spirit, and the great book of St. John's Revelations. Thus when the apostles died at last, nearly all of

them martyrs to the faith, their mighty witness went on and on through the world. It still resounds among the nations of the earth, and nothing shall ever conquer it or bid it be silent. Why? Because Jesus Christ sits and rules in the heavens. His hand is over his witnesses, guiding them one and all; his power protects his church; so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. This is what the ascension of Christ to heaven and the glory of his exaltation mean to us.

They mean still more. For we must connect with his exaltation not only his own words and promises before he arose, but also that word and promise which he gave through his holy angels the moment after he was risen on high. There they stood on Mount Olivet while the disciples were gazing toward heaven watching their Savior's ascent, and then they added to the first promise this second one of his, that their ascended Lord and Savior would return in glory even as the disciples had seen him leaving them. What does it mean? This that the earth shall stand only as long as our Savior needs it for his kingdom and church here among men. Then, when his work here is done, when his Gospel has drawn to him all who are his, Jesus Christ will return. That shall be the last day of earth. He shall come in glory as he went, only all the angels of God shall return with him. He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. By his almighty power all the living and the dead, from all the ends of the earth, shall be gathered before his heavenly presence. You shall see him, and I shall see him, when then he sits before us on his great white judgment throne. His holy angels will gather us and all the children of his kingdom at his right side. From his own lips we shall hear the mighty word which shall usher us forever into the glory that is his: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Then shall the righteous, who washed their garments by faith in the blood of the Lamb, enter into life eternal; but all his foes, who would not have this exalted Savior to rule over them, will be cast into outer darkness forever. Thus our great ascended, exalted King will translate his kingdom of grace into the kingdom of glory.

And all this is our joy now. We rejoice when by his holy Word his Spirit works among us to-day; we know it is the work of our exalted King making us ready to meet him at last. We rejoice when we see his church, kept safe through hundreds of years, still going on its course of victory; we know the hand of our exalted Savior is guiding it. We rejoice in hope of the great day to come when our exalted Savior shall return, and when we and all his saints shall share his glory forever. Our joy is so great in Christ's ascension because it means so much to him and through him to us.

"Glory unto thee be given,
 By men and by the host of heaven,
 With harps and with the cymbal's tone.
 Twelve pearls are thy city's portals,
 Wherein we dwell with the immortals,
 With angels high around thy throne.
 No eye hath seen such sight,
 No ear heard such delight,
 Hallelujah!
 Thine hour is this,
 O Heavenly Bliss,
 Thine now, and shall be evermore!"

OUTLINES.

The text is simple in the substance which it presents; first, and most important, the ascension itself—secondly, the promise concerning the kingdom—thirdly the promise concerning the return. We may divide into three parts; or we may throw the two promises together, making only two main parts. Another way is to allow the ascension itself to dominate the entire sermon, utilizing what is said by Jesus and by the angels without assigning to these sections separate main divisions of the sermon. A two part division is shown in the sermon given above. One with three parts may follow lines like the following: Christ's ascension to heaven a mighty article of faith: 1) Our faith rests on the great fact of Christ's ascension: 2) Our faith lives and labors in the power of Christ's exaltation: 3) Our faith rejoices in the hope of our ascended and exalted Savior's return.— Making the ascension itself supreme we may say this: Our Lord's ascension to heaven: He finished his own work on earth in this glorious manner—he added this miracle of grace to all his previous work—he rules over the angels in heaven and over men on earth—he will carry his glorious work of salvation to a blessed conclusion.

The Miracle of Christ's Ascension to Heaven.

1. *A miracle of divine power.*
2. *A miracle of divine blessing.*
3. *A miracle the power and blessing of which fill us with joy and hope.*

The Infinite Blessings of Christ's Ascension to Heaven.

1. *Our exalted Lord rules over us.*
 2. *An imperishable kingdom is about us.*
 3. *A heavenly home awaits us.*
-

The Mighty Change Wrought by Christ's Ascension.

1. *Heaven is changed — our Savior is there.*
 2. *Earth is changed — the church and its work are here.*
 3. *We are changed — faith and hope fill our hearts.*
-

Our Faith in the Savior's Ascension.

1. *It lifts us to heaven with its strong assurance.*
 2. *It puts us to work on earth with its joyful zeal.*
-

EXAUDI.

Matth. 10, 19-22.

A glance at the Bible references usually printed in connection with the first two verses of our text is sufficient to show that our text may well be utilized for a sermon on *Inspiration*. There is no question as to the necessity of preaching on this doctrine to our people in these days of destructive biblical criticism and superficial ideas concerning the divinity of the Bible and concerning its Inspiration — if this be yet in some manner admitted. Our people ought to hear again and again just what divine Inspiration is, what it has given them in the Scriptures, how we are so thoroughly assured about Inspiration, and what blessings this assurance conveys. A most excellent time for this in the schedule of the church year is in the Pentecost cycle, and here the natural place for such a sermon will be Exaudi Sunday.

Matthew combines the instructions which Jesus gave the Twelve when he first sent them out, with later instruction concerning their mission in general. This is evident when the parallels are compared, Mark 13, 9-13; Luke 21, 12-19. Our text is from these important later instructions. Weaponless, defenseless Jesus sends his witnesses out into the world to preach his Gospel, even as sheep among wolves — he will go with them, keep, and protect them. Amid these dangers they are to use wisdom and prudence, and not to act foolhardy and presumptuous, for both the Jewish religious authorities and the Gentile secular authorities will threaten them. By a wise and prudent course the followers of Jesus may avoid these hostile powers. But only to a certain degree and under certain favorable conditions. Though ever so careful themselves, yet

without any guilt of their own, since they, of course, are absolutely faithful to their Lord and his commission, they are bound in many instances to run foul of these hostile authorities. Here our text sets in:

10, 19. But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. 20. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.

The danger for Christ's heralds and confessors is by no means merely imaginary or slight. Even the Jewish synagogues retained the right to inflict scourgings and other severe disabilities upon refractory Jews in the days of the Herodian and Roman authority over the nation, and the Jews were quick to use this power of theirs. The secular authorities, of course, could exercise also the *jus gladii*, order scourgings, imprisonment, and capital punishment. City authorities, pro-consuls or governors, and procurators were liberal in exercising these painful powers of theirs, against which there was little protection or recourse even when men suffered wrongfully. The conditional clause with which v. 19 opens is one of expectancy: **when they deliver you up**, namely your accusers whoever they may be, men who object to your preaching and teaching in Jesus' name; when they drag you before the constituted authorities, ecclesiastical (Jewish), or civil (Gentile), and hand you over to them as evildoers. The condition intimates plainly that this will indeed be done, and the conclusion in the sentence deals with this actuality. — To be thus arrested and brought before trial courts low or high will indeed be a trying experience for Christ's followers. Think what it would mean for us to-day. Christian pastors and laymen! We certainly would be thoroughly upset by such an experience. Aside from the shame, fear, and other conflicting emotions which would come over us, there would be the terrible anxiety about the trial itself and our defense before our judges.

Not merely, however, that we may defend ourselves properly to escape the infliction of penalties, the deeper anxiety would be to defend ourselves so that the honor of Christ and his Gospel may not suffer at our hands because of our mental confusion in the midst of such upsetting experiences and because of any mistakes we might make because of our weakness, ignorance, or other handicap. These are the thoughts which underlie the admonition: **be not anxious**, do not worry, think earnestly, scan minutely. In negative commands the aorist subjunctive is used instead of the imperative, but in exactly the same sense. The aorist is strong: cut off all such anxiety once for all, dismiss it completely! — In such trying situations Christ's followers are not to worry in the least: **how or what ye shall speak**. The direct question would be one of deliberation or doubt: How shall we speak? What shall we speak? and would thus have the subjunctive, which the indirect form retains. Note the fine psychological touch in adding "how" to "what," and in placing "how" first. Worry of this kind deals especially with the uncertainties of the coming situation of trial, and a man pictures it first one way, then another — how he would speak if things went so, how if they went differently; then too he thinks of just what he ought to say. This injunction, not to give the matter the least care or thought, is certainly striking. Even the powers, abilities, faculties, talents, wisdom, faith, courage, etc., which God himself has given us and which he, of course, expects us to use, are to be left out of our consideration entirely. We shall not reckon with them, rely on them, or begin preparatory work with them. We are simply to put ourselves completely in God's hands — he, and he alone, will take care of our case, in a thousandfold better way than we could possibly do it ourselves. — **For it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak** — is a direct, unqualified promise. The passive verb includes an agent, who is none other than God himself. In the

verb "give" lies the idea of God's unmerited grace and goodness; and as the Giver so will be the gift, far beyond what we could achieve—a surprise to ourselves. In "what ye shall speak" (here a relative clause) the actual speaking is included, so that the "how" does not need to be mentioned. Zahn is afraid this statement of Jesus may be used in support of the doctrine of Inspiration, and so he hastens to assure us, first that the gift here promised is not for the apostles alone, secondly that it does not include a constant Inspiration of speech which shuts out any and every error and imperfection. On the first point, nobody thinks of assuming that Christ's promise is so narrow as to include only twelve men. This, however, is in perfect line with the doctrine of Inspiration—God was able to give to *any* man whom he chose as his instrument, without any special effort on that man's part, what he wanted him to speak, or to write. On the second point, it will take more than Zahn's assurance to convince us that God gives to men, when he makes them a promise as he does here, words and things to speak that are mistaken and faulty. The good sense of Christians would soon tell them that they could do that well themselves. Furthermore, there is no intimation here that the promise of Christ extends beyond the time of trial; the promise here given is not a "constant" Inspiration. But the thing to note most emphatically here is that what Jesus promised was Inspiration in the full sense of the word. And therefore this promise when placed beside others, assuring the apostles of the gift of his Holy Spirit to bring all things that he had taught them to their remembrance, sheds a light upon them which is exceedingly valuable. God gives in Inspiration, man receives. God gives what to speak, man speaks what is thus given. And if God does this for his disciples in the hour of their own personal danger as a help to them, dare we discount his promises of the very same kind when given in regard to the whole teaching of Jesus and its full and safe

transmission to the whole world? Only specious reasoning could think of maintaining the negative. But the case is stronger still. — Jesus explains what he means by his admonition and this promise of his: **For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.** For Christ's followers to worry about how and what to speak includes the supposition on their part that *they* are to do the speaking, i. e., that *they* are to produce the how and the what. But this supposition is completely removed from the case, the speaking in this sense is not theirs at all. In this sense it is the speaking of the Holy Spirit, and his alone. And we must note the verb, which is highly significant: λαλεῖν, not λέγειν. The latter refers to the thought spoken, and if this were used and we would press it, we might think that the Spirit was to furnish only the thought, the substance of what was to be spoken, leaving the formulation, choice of words, etc., to the human speakers. All such ideas are rendered untenable altogether by this verb λαλεῖν, which signifies only to make utterance, to open the mouth and say a thing, no matter what the thing may be. The opposite of the verb is "to be silent" and do no saying at all. This verb plainly includes the sounds made by the mouth in speaking, the words themselves used in saying whatever is said. The verb is repeated, so that nobody shall dodge it: "ye that *speak*" — "the Spirit that *speaketh*." The very speaking is to be the Spirit's, and this so exclusively that we have the negative — it is *not* to be that of the human speakers. And yet those human speakers are to speak after all. How? The Spirit speaketh **in you**, says Jesus. This is not a mechanical speaking, as if by some force or violence the Spirit made these men speak. They are not to be automatons, like a mechanical device for making sound, a sort of phonograph. They are not to be like the demoniacs, whom the demon controls against their own will and makes their organs of speech utter things simply from the dominating volition of the demon. On

the contrary, the disciples themselves speak, mind, heart, and all necessary organs operating freely, naturally, consciously, and with unfettered volition, but all in willing, trustful, joyful dependence upon the Holy Spirit given to them. And this Spirit so extends his power and gifts to them, that without effort they find just what to say and how to say it, down to the last word. Moreover, he helps, directs, and controls them in their ordeal to such a degree that no mistake is made, none by reason of faulty memory or intellect, disturbed emotions, or any other cause. And the disciples who receive this blessed gift of the Spirit in the hour of need, rejoice to receive it, and know the source and greatness of what they received. They speak, and yet they do not speak, but the Spirit speaks in them. It is a clear case of Inspiration — one clearly described to show us just what Inspiration in general is, so that we may know also what the Scriptures mean when they say that "every Scripture is *inspired* of God," 2 Tim. 3, 16, and that holy men of God spoke as "carried along by the Holy Spirit," 2 Pet. 1, 19-21. Our passage restates what we read so frequently, namely that God speaks "through the mouth" of his prophets, using the significant preposition *διὰ*. Cf. Is. 59, 21; Hos. 12, 11; Ez. 3, 27, and many other passages. The word thus spoken or written is constantly and most emphatically called the Word of God; especially is the written Word treated as God's own utterance in the fullest sense. "It is written" is the final appeal even of God's own Son when he uses the Scriptures. Thought and word are always combined as one thing — there is no Inspiration except verbal Inspiration. Summing it up, both our passage and what is taught in the Scriptures throughout on their Inspiration, centers in these vital points: God is the *causa efficiens*, men are the *causae instrumentales*. God moves to speak and to write, furnishes the thought and words, controls the utterance or the writing so that it shall be just what he wants it to be, no more, no less,

and in the form in which he wants it. There are not "two factors," as Schodde and others suppose, working in a kind of synergistic partnership; on the contrary the divine efficient cause and the human instruments operate as one — no line can be drawn between. "With the clearest consciousness, with the most active participation, with the highest reverence and joy they (the inspired men) gave themselves to the Inspirer. And what they received from him they wrote down as it was given them, without clouding it by the additions of their own mental activity subject to error. Without prejudice to their own individual peculiarity, without doing violence to their own thinking and willing, the Holy Spirit took the persons of these holy men into his service, made them media, willing instruments of his revelation, and unnoticed, influenced their spirit so that it could move in its own peculiar way, and yet was wholly in the hand of the Holy Spirit. While writing their power of thinking, their memory, etc., were by no means put out of action; but all were placed at the service of the Spirit, who set this entire apparatus, memory, human research, power to arrange, etc., into motion, and gave to the pens of the holy writers his heavenly wisdom, his divine thoughts, yea also the right words. What, therefore, poured forth from the mouth, from the pens, from the spirit of the prophets and apostles was not their own, not the word of man, but God's Word, the product of the Holy Ghost." — Rohnert. In trying to illustrate the *causa efficiens* and the *causae instrumentales* the dogmaticians use the figure of the clerk or amanuensis who receives dictation from a superior. Shamefully have modern deniers of Inspiration abused this illustration. They have charged our fathers with a "dictation theory," calling it mechanical, etc. A mere illustration is not a "theory" — our fathers had no theory. They held to the two unassailable facts, the divine efficient cause, and the human instruments used by this divine cause. Every illustration aims only to picture one point, and that

point is indeed pictured by the figure of human dictation. To abuse, misread, misapply, strain, or in any other way maltreat a mere illustration or figure is no credit to a man's mental powers, no matter how ably he may otherwise employ them. Another figure is that of the blowing of a flute: when not blown it is silent, but when properly blown, all its powers are called into play, every fiber vibrates, and the melody conceived by the blower is heard in all its beauty. It is a figure, but to the point. So the plectrum and the lyre—as it strikes the strings, the whole instrument responds and the beautiful notes resound. In all of these figures we have the reflection of our text: It is not ye that speak (*λαλεῖν*), but the Spirit that speaketh in you. Yet, if any modern scholar is able to match this Scripture, and others of the same kind, with better figures and illustrations, less “mechanical,” more dynamic, or otherwise more appropriate, let him come forward! But to assail the illustrations in order to prejudice the doctrine is unfair scientifically and discreditable ethically. Because the Bible is inspired we confess: “that the Word of God should frame articles of faith; otherwise no one, not even an angel,” *Smalc. Art.*, 315, 15. “We believe, teach, and confess that the only rule and standard according to which at once all dogmas and teachers should be esteemed and judged are nothing else than the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Test., . . . and the Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas should and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they be good or evil, right or wrong.” F. C. 49I, 1 and 7.

21. And brother shall deliver up brother to death, and the father his child: and children shall rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. 22. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.

The previous promise is not to be read as an as-

surance that those for whom the Holy Ghost will make defense as indicated will thereby invariably escape. The promise is only this: the disciples brought to trial will make the defense which will be a credit to their faith, a support to the Gospel, and an honor to God. They may or may not be freed—that is in the hands of providence who uses his human instruments as he needs them, and again when done lays them aside. This is the side taken up by this second promise which speaks of those enduring to the end, and what their lot shall be.—Christ's messengers and confessors will come to face evil days indeed. Before Christ returns there shall be persecution which will destroy even the natural ties of human relationship: **brother shall deliver up brother to death**. Here and in the following statements there are no half-way steps, the extreme of hate is reached at once in death. Two powers, writes Besser, are stronger than natural human love, the one born of hell, the other born of heaven. Here hellish hate overrides the natural affection of one brother for another.—**And the father his child** places paternal love beside fraternal love—both equally turned to hate. The reverse is added in a fuller clause, now using the plural: **children . . . parents**. If in no other way this is a climax at least in numbers. **Shall rise up** is the regular word for rebellion and rebellious uprising. So also there is the fuller statement: **cause them to be put to death**, though here too only the death limit is mentioned. The whole verse has in mind denunciation and accusation before legal authorities ending in conviction and summary capital punishment. In the first ten great persecutions of the early church these words were literally fulfilled. There have been more incidental fulfillments since, but we shall meet the same pitiless and unnatural persecution again in all its intensity as we approach the end.—For the general situation will be this: **And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake**. The verb deserves notice, since it stresses the durative idea by cir-

cumscribing the future tense: ye shall continue to be hated. As throughout the Scriptures so here the popular way of expression is used for general hate, "by all men." The followers of Christ shall not be very numerous as the end approaches: "Howbeit when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18, 8. We must dismiss the unbiblical expectation that the world, or the majority of men, shall be won for Christ in the days to come, among these hosts also the Jewish nation as such. The picture grows sadder and darker as the end approaches. "For my name's sake" means, of course, for Christ's sake, but it refers especially to the revelation of Christ which we have in his Word — always this revelation = "my name." In addition we may note the special hate for the "name" in the narrower sense, the name Jesus and Christ. The persecutors of the apostles hated it so that they avoided pronouncing it where they could, and this phenomenon persists to-day, for instance in some of the secret orders, notably Freemasonry. Only they are hated for Christ's name's sake who are true to him and his Word. To avoid that odium many to-day compromise with the Word and its plain teachings. They buy the applause of men at a fearful price. — What has Jesus to offer his followers here? Another golden promise: **but he that endureth, etc.** Note the aorist participle: "he that did endure" and so reached the end. Meyer certainly forgot verse 21 when he ruled out death in v. 22 and insisted that **to the end** = *usque ad finem horum malorum*, i. e., the return of Christ to judgment. How about the martyrs all who shall die? how will they endure till Christ's return? For them the end will be their own blessed death for his name's sake. The end then must be read to comply with the context. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life," Rev. 2, 10. The admonition that lies in the participle "he that endureth" can be met by reliance on Christ. — The subject is emphatically repeated by *οὗτος*, **the same**, i. e., the

man just described; no other **shall be saved**, i. e., delivered and brought to eternal safety—as Meyer rightly adds: the lofty term used throughout the entire New Test. for the Messianic salvation. In the entire picture of what was to come Jesus had in mind both his saving help all through the days of conflict and the consummation of that help in his return at the last day. His Spirit is our help, and his salvation is our hope.

SERMON.

Next to the vital question: "What think ye of Christ?" comes the question: What think ye of the Bible? A chorus of conflicting, wrong, inadequate, misleading answers is heard to-day. The Bible?—why, it's a book of fables and legends! That is the unbeliever's answer. The Bible?—oh, it is a good book, but some parts of it cannot be received as they stand. That is a reply of the liberalist in the church. The Bible?—beyond question it is the Word of God! That is the true believer's most emphatic answer; and it is ours.

Now why do we make this answer? For this great and decisive reason: The Bible is inspired of God—that makes it God's own Word, that makes it the rock of our faith, the anchor of our salvation. The great question concerning the Bible is really the question concerning its Inspiration of God. If the Bible is truly inspired of God, then it is his Word and the everlasting foundation of our faith, even as Jesus says: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall not pass away. If it is not inspired, namely in the true sense of that word, then we have no sure guide and support for our souls in life or in death.

Thank God, we need not remain in doubt or uncertainty! Right here in our text our Lord himself tells us clearly and fully just what the divine Inspiration is. Here is one of the simple keys which unlocks for us and every true believer in Christ all that we need to know concerning

The Wonderful Doctrine of Divine Inspiration.

I.

Our Lord Jesus Christ made a wonderful promise to his disciples in connection with the terrible days of persecution which he saw coming upon them. Ten terrible persecutions devastated the early Christian church under the Roman emperors. Thousands

of believers were imprisoned and tried by heathen tribunals, and great numbers of them were put to death, some with the most hideous torture. Since those fearful days there have been lesser outbreaks of this kind. But Jesus assures us that when we approach the end of the world, the fires of persecutions will flame forth again more terribly than ever before. Brother will deliver brother unto death, fathers their children, and children their own parents. The passions of hell shall destroy even the natural affection of blood relatives. How shall Christ's followers ever be able to stand in these ordeals? Hear the Savior's promise and assurance—his Holy Spirit will support and aid them. And in this wonderful way: when men deliver you up, says Christ, "give no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak—for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." The Spirit of God will renew in those who are put to trial for Jesus' sake the blessed miracle of Inspiration—he will use their lips and tongue, he will speak through them.

The doctrine of divine Inspiration—the **Lord Jesus Christ describes it** for us; he tells us here what he understands by this wonderful act of his Holy Spirit for which we have the name divine Inspiration.

Mark well what he says: "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father." When believers are brought to trial for their faith, they are not to worry and think out in advance what they shall say in court before their hostile judges; when the moment comes God's Spirit will give them just what to say and the right words to say it in. So completely will this be the gift of the Spirit that though he uses their lips and mouth he, the Spirit himself, will be the speaker. He will use their faculties, their memory, intellect, mind, and will, and gladly, thankfully they will let him do it; and so, in the true sense of the words, even as Jesus says, not they are the ones who speak, but God's own mighty Spirit in them. That is what Inspiration means. It is the act of God's Holy Spirit when he gives to a man just what he wants that man to say and when he enables that man to say it exactly as he, the Spirit, wants it said.

No, there is no compulsion and violence about it. Think of a poor martyr locked in a dark prison cell. If he had only himself to depend on, how he would sink in despair. When brought to trial, weak and broken down in body and mind, how easily he might become confused, upset completely, how he might blunder in his defense, and even bring dishonor on his faith and his Savior. Will he not gladly accept the help of his Lord and the Spirit of his Lord? Why, every defendant in our courts seeks an advocate to conduct his case and speak for him. Vast sums are paid out

for legal help. It is the very opposite of compulsion. Only too often such legal defenders use lies, evasions, and legal technicalities to help their clients. But the principle of having legal spokesmen at court is universally acknowledged. Now Christ's followers are to have the best and highest helper and spokesman of all, God's own Spirit. He who fills their hearts, who has been their aid and support in all their life, he will help them. It will all be a glorious, wonderful gift. He will make them his instruments: with deep gratitude they will yield to him soul, heart, mind, lips, and tongue. And so he will speak through them. The Spirit's Inspiration will be their defense.

Need I add that when Christ's followers receive this help the things they say and the words they speak will be better, higher, truer than any they ever could have invented or put forth themselves? When the Spirit speaks he makes no mistakes, for the Spirit is God himself. That is the very purpose of the Spirit's speaking to say just the thing he wants in just the way he wants it. And no true believer could desire anything better, or would for one moment thrust the Spirit from his heart in order to speak himself. This is the glory of divine Inspiration, and surely they recognize it most fully who are granted this heavenly gift both for their own help and benefit and for that of others.

II.

And now let us apply this to the Bible. The wonderful doctrine of divine Inspiration as our text illustrates it—the **whole Bible reveals it**. What Christ promised his believers in their hour of trial is the very thing God used on a grander and more extensive scale in giving to his whole church for all the ages his own heavenly Word.

What did he answer to Moses when Moses was afraid to go to Pharaoh, saying: "I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue!" The Lord said unto him: "Who hath made man's mouth? . . . Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt say." God promised to inspire Moses, even as Christ here promised to inspire his own believers. No less than about 2,000 times in all we read the solemn declaration and testimony of the Old Testament prophets that the Word of the Lord came to them. "Thus saith the Lord!" "Thus saith the Lord!" is their constant refrain. It is just as our text says of these persecuted Christians: "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." Hear God speaking thus through Isaiah: "My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth." Is. 59, 21. Hear David declare: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.

The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me." 2 Sam. 23, 2-3. This is the testimony of all the prophets.

That is why our Lord Jesus himself treated the Old Test. and every part of it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the Word of God. Constantly he declares: "It is written!" —that is the final proof and assurance, because the Old Test. is God's own Word. What the prophets spoke by Inspiration that they wrote by the same Inspiration. In fact their writing was far more important than their speaking: only a few men heard them speak, millions were to read what they wrote. And upon their written Word Jesus, God's own Son, put his eternal stamp of approval, saying: "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Man's word perishes, but the inspired Word of God cannot perish.

As God inspired the Old Test. prophets, so also he inspired the evangelists and apostles of the New Test. They are placed side by side, these inspired writers of the two grand halves of the Bible. St. Paul writes: We "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Eph. 2, 20. Most solemnly Jesus promised his Holy Spirit to the apostles: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." It was thus and thus alone that the apostles could become the foundation of the church, teaching and writing the Word of Jesus by divine Inspiration, so that we to this day, and all men to the end of days have without any question just what Jesus said and taught. These holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, is St. Peter's assurance. Here again, what they taught by speaking was heard by far fewer than what they wrote. If they were inspired in what they spoke, God could not withhold his Inspiration when they wrote. It is as St. Paul assures us: "All scripture is given by Inspiration," and because it is so it is "profitable," as he adds, "for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Only a Bible really inspired could be what St. Paul here says, a perfect equipment for every Christian man. A Bible uninspired would be nothing more than what men can produce themselves, and all men left thus to themselves are—liars. A Bible partly inspired would throw us into endless doubt as to what is and what is not inspired. It would be a compass without a needle, failing to show where north really is.

But we must add what our text makes so plain. Christians at trial who are to receive the Spirit and his Inspiration are not

even to worry about *how* they shall speak. Not only the thoughts will be given them, but the very words. And that in a case where they alone are directly involved. Now think of the Bible, of the direct interest of millions and millions of souls involved in all ages of the world. Do you think for one moment that God inspired the Bible writers in a lesser degree than he promised these Christian martyrs in our text? Can it be that he gave these Bible writers only the thoughts in a general way, but did not watch over their words? When so much is at stake would God lower his Inspiration than when far less is at stake? When God gives, especially to his church, does he not always give in great abundance, with a truly royal, divine hand, more than we ask or think? The Bible is inspired both in thought and in word. The two are so closely welded together, that no prophet, apostle, or the Savior himself ever tried to split them asunder. Jesus said not even one letter, namely the very smallest of the old Hebrew alphabet, the little "jot" should be lost; yea, not even the "tittle," the little hook on some of the Hebrew letters. He spoke of these because the Old Test. was written in Hebrew. If the absence of a letter or piece of a letter shall not be allowed to spoil the Word of God, do you think God cared nothing about the words? No; we believe in Inspiration and in verbal Inspiration. No man can tamper with the words here written; he would surely tamper also with the sense. When Christ and his apostles point as they do to single words and impress these upon us, they all declare that the Bible has verbal Inspiration, namely the only real, true, and complete Inspiration.

III.

But there is more to this wonderful doctrine of Inspiration than merely to show that the Scriptures really teach it and that they show in a thousand different ways that they are indeed inspired. It is a doctrine intended not for human reason to speculate on or to find fault with or deny, but a blessed doctrine intended for faith and involving faith. And so we say concerning the doctrine of Inspiration: **all true Christian faith corroborates it.**

We may talk all day long to a blind man about colors—he will after all know nothing about them—he cannot see. Tell a man who has always been deaf about the wonders of music—he will not know what you mean, for he never heard a sound. Tell an unbeliever about divine Inspiration and the Word of God—it is love's labor lost. For this doctrine, like all the real treasures of the Scriptures, is for faith alone and can be received only by faith. The men who heard Jesus promise them divine Inspiration when put to trial for their faith, had God's Spirit in

their hearts and believed in Jesus: to them that promise was a mighty blessing, others would have doubted, denied, perhaps even mocked at it.

To know and believe that the Bible is inspired we must not only read the statements in it that say so, we must take this holy inspired Word and let its saving power work upon our hearts. Taste and see how good the Lord is in this his Word, and you will know that this is not the speaking or writing of mere men, but the speaking of God himself through the instrumentality of men. It is exactly as Jesus said to the Jews: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself," namely without God. The man who has found pardon and peace for his distressed conscience in the eternal Gospel of Jesus Christ and his blood, will know in a living way that this Gospel is of God and not of men. The man who has felt the Spirit of God in this Word, delivering him from the power of sin and helping him to a life triumphing over sin, will know in his inmost soul that in this Word God's Spirit speaks to him. The soul weighed down with grief and lifted up with heavenly comfort through this Word, will realize what this Word is which calls itself inspired. The more completely, then, we make trial of the Bible in our hearts and lives, the more completely will we know the divinity of the Bible and thus its Inspiration. For there is nothing under heaven able to do what this Word constantly does, save, regenerate, renew and bless poor, sinful, lost men.

When a man who has thus gotten from the Bible what God intended it to bring to him reads this Bible and sees what it says about itself, this that it declares its own Inspiration will not seem strange and incredible to him. No, it would be strange and absolutely incredible for a mere human book to do what this Book has done and does in him who receives it by faith. Never is the effect greater than the cause. Only fools believe that what is of sin and earth can carry us to heaven: God's children know that God's Savior and God's Spirit alone can carry us there, and when in this Holy Word of God he feels God's heavenly power, hears his voice, finds his blessing, his soul is satisfied. And this is what it means to believe in the Inspiration of the Bible. This is the faith which joyfully, thankfully corroborates the great Bible testimony and doctrine concerning its divine Inspiration. God grant this faith unto us all.

OUTLINES.

The text contains prophecy and promise; the latter is twofold. Apart from the special use to which the text may be put because of its clear statement on Inspiration, we may simply set forth in

the sermon its great contents in general. This, however, would make the text less suitable for the day. We offer the following in illustration of a more general treatment: Christ's promise for the evil days to come: the help of his Holy Spirit in the midst of persecution—eternal deliverance for those who persevere.—Turning to the special purpose of the text we may speak of: The miracle of divine Inspiration: wonderful and incomprehensible indeed—perfectly assured by Christ and his Spirit—completely accomplishing its object—our constant reliance in the Holy Scriptures—our special hope in case of greatest need.—An argument is furnished by this text and its parallels from the minor to the major: if the Christian's individual need is to be met by an act of Inspiration, can the need of the whole church be left to less? if even individual Christians are to be given how to speak in the great hour of need, can the prophets and apostles of God have been left to their own words when God provided for the greatest needs of his church?

The Heart of the Doctrine of Inspiration.

1. *It is the Holy Ghost who speaks, not man.*
 2. *Yet men are the instruments through whom the Holy Ghost speaks.*
 3. *When thus the Holy Ghost speaks through men we feel the divine power of his Word.*
-

The Divine Inspiration Promised in Persecution an Aid in Believing the Doctrine of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

1. *Here we see in what Inspiration really consists.*
 2. *Here we learn how far Inspiration really goes.*
 3. *And so we realize what the Holy Scriptures really are.*
-

The Spirit's Blessed Work of Inspiration.

1. *What it did for the martyrs in the days of persecution.*
 2. *What it did in the Holy Bible for us for all time.*
-

The Promise of Jesus to his Martyrs an Answer to the Questions on Inspiration.

Here we may learn indeed:

1. *What Inspiration is.*
 2. *How far Inspiration extends.*
 3. *What inspiration gives.*
-

PENTECOST.

Acts 2, 41-47.

There is only one real gospel text on Pentecost in the Bible, namely one historical account of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The moment we leave that we have nothing but texts on the Holy Spirit in general and on some of the phases of his work. One of the very best of these is our present text. It takes us to the day of Pentecost itself, and is thus more a Pentecost text than many others. It narrates the immediate result of the Pentecost miracle, the conversion of the three thousand at Jerusalem, and thus enables us to reach back in a very direct way to the great miracle. Our text, moreover, describes the first notable extension of the Christian church, the event which is frequently called the birthday of the church. In addition our text reveals the real object of the Spirit's coming, namely the planting of living faith in men's hearts, and we see here too the means he employs in this work, the Word and the sacraments. These are all glorious features in our Pentecost text, which if properly utilized at all will surely produce an excellent festival sermon.

Peter's great sermon is finished. It has made a tremendous impression—a host of people became thoroughly contrite for their sins. They were told to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Many other words of admonition were added which Luke sums up briefly: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." Now the fruits of the great miracle and this preaching of the Gospel are shown—the first Christian congregation is gathered in Jerusalem, only fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus.

2, 41. They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls.

We may read the Greek article as belonging to the participle thus making it a substantive: "Then they that received," etc., or we may make the participle a modifier: "They then, after they received," etc. The R. V. takes the second alternative. There were, of course, others who remained obdurate against the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit and his Word. — **His word** is meant of the substance of what Peter proclaimed. And when we are told they **received** this word, we must understand a spiritual reception, by faith. The verb with its preposition signifies a reception from some one, and this is what it was. Only the "word" was itself brought to them and had in it the power so to affect the hearers' hearts as to cause this reception. This was the power of divine grace, which is not irresistible, for many do wilfully and wickedly spurn it, yet a power shaped and adapted by God to fit exactly the sinner's condition, need and fully sufficient to accomplish its saving purpose. The reception of the Word must have been accompanied by some kind of confession on the part of these new believers. Luke is not concerned about the details, but only about the great facts themselves. — So he adds the summary statement that these people **were baptized**. We would like to know exactly by whom, when, where, and just how. Modern Catholic exegetes are giving up the idea that Peter alone baptized all. But others are very free in saying the Twelve were aided by a goodly number of other men from among the 120 first believers gathered in Jerusalem. Zoeckler is quite sure there were others. The only way to get an answer worth anything more than a guess is to examine the text, and here we find that all through only the Twelve deal with the multitude; note v. 37: "Peter and the rest of the apostles"; v. 32: "we all are witnesses"; who these are you see in v. 14: "**Peter**

. . . with the eleven." That ought to settle this question exegetically. As to the mode of baptism immersion is out of the question. Zoekler straddles the question, making the mode aspersion and immersion — which is just another guess. We do not know the mode; we know only that immersion was out of the question, since neither in nor near Jerusalem was there a body of water fit for such a rite. Every Baptist who has examined this question and discovered the facts has great difficulty here. One must either extend the time for this baptism so as to take the 3,000 to the Jordan, or one must invent some sort of pool in or near the city. There is no other real alternative. But since this baptism was the *first* Christian baptism strictly so-called, and took in so many on this important day, the mode used this day surely was decisive for future baptisms. It was *not* immersion, that is certain; so the following baptisms in Jerusalem and elsewhere were also *not* immersions. Once the old exegetical tradition, based precariously on later historical evidence, is estimated at its true worth, as nothing but such a tradition, the biblical evidence *for* immersion will be found actually to be nil, and the biblical evidence *against* immersion will be found astonishingly great; and this real exegesis begins in the Old Test., takes in all the Baptist's work, then the decisive baptisms in Jerusalem and those on through the Acts — not one, actually not one an immersion. To carry immersion into the Bible from later historical evidence is eisegesis, not exegesis. These are the author's findings after long and varied study of all the cases concerned and the evidence at hand. — Now Luke states the number: **about three thousand souls**. This is too large a number for twelve men to baptize in one day by immersion. Unfortunately for the Baptists Luke states that they were added **in that day**, and he says this right after mentioning their baptism. It was evidently the sacrament of baptism which **added** unto them, i. e., the apostles, this large number of new

believers. To this very day, we do not count one as added till he is really baptized. So the only legitimate conclusion offered by the text is that 3,000 people were baptized that afternoon in Jerusalem. There seems to have been not the slightest difficulty about it — never is when baptisms take place in the Scriptures! This is very significant. And these were **souls**, which again is unfortunate for the Baptists. Why this wider word, right after Peter's pointed remark that the promise is "to you. . . and to your *children*"? Were some of these "souls" baptized that day children? It is more than probable. And this is true — "souls" count with God, just "souls," not merely adults and grey heads. A most wonderful expansion of the church was this on Pentecost day! One must think the thing over and try to imagine it exactly as Luke records the great event — the wonder of it all will then come home to the mind with increasing effect.

42. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Here we have what followed the day of Pentecost, but as its glorious fruit and outcome. This blessed effect has gone on down to us to-day who do still as Luke here writes. We have the participle with the imperfect tense of the copula, which stresses the idea of continuance, so that the R. V. puts "continued" into its translation. The verb means "to adhere firmly," "to persist with strength." These were whole-hearted believers and showed it in every way. It was the blessed effect of the Holy Spirit's work through the Word. — Four modifiers are added, grouped into pairs. **In the apostles' teaching** is first. This is fundamental. Won by the Word we must abide by the Word. The "teaching" is here not merely the doctrine, but the doctrine as it continued to be taught by the daily work of the apostles. These were ardent listeners and learners. Their baptism could be hastened, as it was, because as Jews they

were highly instructed to begin with and needed only the fundamentals of the Christian faith. But after that they needed the fuller teaching which the apostles at once made their chief work. And here again only the apostles are named; we read of no others who helped in this business — which is another exegetical pointer on the baptism. — With the teaching the **fellowship** is coupled, cf. 1 Pet. 2, 17; 5, 9 “brotherhood.” This is fraternal Christian fellowship or communion, manifested in gatherings and other intercourse, and it included not only the apostles with these 3,000, but these and all the other believers. They were one body inwardly by oneness in Christ Jesus, and showed this outwardly. The word here used is read by some, not as *communio*, but as *communicatio* = impartation of alms. The word may be read in the latter sense when there is a plain hint to that effect, which there is not. Let us be satisfied with what we have and not try again to import ideas beyond what the text gives. — The second pair is introduced as a pair by the omission of a connective word; yet all four modifiers are after only one preposition, being thus all bound together into one grand whole. **The breaking of bread** is that of the eucharistic bread in the Lord’s Supper. Meyer wants to stress the article to mean “*their* bread” eaten at a joint meal. Now the sacrament was celebrated at the end of a joint meal, but the article with bread points to the sacramental bread, not to the bread generally. “The breaking” is for the purpose of distribution only, the bread of that day being baked in flat loaves and never cut, but simply broken. There is no symbolism in this breaking or in any other part of the ceremony. Krauth: “Bread is an inanimate thing: how can breaking it be like the putting of a human being to death? Breaking bread is the very symbol of quiet and peace, who would dream of it as an appropriate symbol of the most cruel and ignominious death? Bread is the representative food, and used in metaphor, is the symbol of spiritual or supernatural food. The

breaking of bread is the means of giving it as food, and taking it as food, and as a symbol, the symbol of giving and taking a higher food. No one would dream of breaking a piece of bread as the symbol of killing a human body; and if so extraordinary a symbolic use of it were made, it would require the most explicit statement, on the part of the person so using it, that such was its intent; and when he had made it, the world would be amazed at so lame a figure." *Conserv. Ref.* 723. But when people lose the substance of the sacrament they are bound to seek a substitute at least in some symbol. — The last modifier is **the prayers**, and these were meetings for united Christian worship, 4, 24, etc., and gatherings in the Temple for the Jewish devotions at the stated hours, 3, 1, etc. The word used refers to prayers as made to God alone, acts of worship. — Here in brief form we have a description of the religious life of the first Christian congregation. All the essentials are present, in proper order and harmony. The church has always felt that this is a model picture. One might wish that Luke had told us more. Where were these gathering places for so large a congregation which also continued to grow rapidly, soon including 5,000 men, 4, 4; cf. 5, 14; 6, 1 and 7? Various guesses have been hazarded; the church seems to have had no special trouble in finding accommodations. Did the apostles conduct "prayer meetings" in the modern fashion? The mention of "the prayers" in the connection here shown furnishes no support for the claim, and the rest of Luke's story is all in refutation of it. Only special occasions show solemn gatherings for prayer. The dominating feature of the apostolic services is the Word.

43. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45. and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need.

Luke states in his descriptive account what im-

pression this congregation of devoted believers made upon their surroundings. He uses the descriptive imperfect, and puts **fear** emphatically at the end. **Every soul** refers to all those who came in contact with the church and saw what was going on. "Fear" must be taken in the sense of awe, and this fear seems to have led many to accept the faith. People felt that higher powers were at work. It is one thing to have such an impression, and another to act upon it promptly and to draw the right conclusions for one's own soul. Many a man to-day feels the presence of something higher in the church, but does not therefore join the church. Luke uses the imperfect tense twice in v. 43, picturing to us what he here describes. — **Many wonders and signs** also kept occurring in these days of the early church. The first of these terms, never used alone in the Scriptures, since heathen religions also had "wonders" or prodigies, brings out the astonishing side of these deeds. The second term has an ethical sense — it speaks of Christ's power and grace thus displayed. The signs were divine seals and attestations, accrediting the divine commission of the apostles, and calling upon all who saw them to accept the Word thus attested. The signs that are left to us to-day are the spiritual victories which the Word still works. — **By the apostles** is really: "through the apostles." They were the instruments only. The apostles never wrought miracles at will; nor did they ever try to work one, and then fail in the attempt. They acted only under Christ's direct control. — A new feature is added: **And all that believed were together**, using the aorist participle, which means to state either only the simple fact of their believing, or to emphasize their coming to faith. All believers are meant, including the apostles and the 120. Their distinguishing mark was faith. God alone is able to see this directly; we only indirectly; and our judgment must always be reserved as to the actual faith. We are able to decide safely only on the basis of a

man's confession, and to that alone God has bound us. — All, we are told, **were together**, literally: at the same place. Commentators err in both directions, some trying to make these thousands all actually live together in Jerusalem, others trying to reduce the number in some way or other. Luke is simply describing to us the first Christian congregation in the world, and one of the features to be noted is that the members of this congregation all met together. The remarkable thing is that this great and growing number did so meet, drawn by the bond of their faith. They found a place, or several, apparently without difficulty. — Remarkable likewise is the next feature: they **had all things common**, not by a transfer of all money and property into a common treasury, but in that every individual of means allowed others, as they had need, to share the benefit of his possessions. The Twelve had had a common treasury, Jno. 12, 6; 13, 29, though without communism, and so there was a spontaneous and voluntary manifestation of love among the members of this first congregation, each allowing the other to count fully on his support. — We are told how this thing was done: **and they sold their possessions and goods**, lands and houses, and also other property. The imperfect tense shows that this was done gradually, now one, now another brought his offering. Barnabas, 4, 37, had a field and disposed of it; what all he retained we do not know. Ananias and Sapphira were told they could have kept their property or its price, or could have brought only a portion, but openly as a portion. Some kept their properties, Acts 12, 12; 21, 16; Jam. 1, 9 and 27; 2, 1; 3, 14. — What prompted this proceeding we are told: **and parted them to all, according as any man had need**, and again we have the imperfect, and the construction for iterative action in the subordinate clause. Some did have need, and this occurred from time to time, and then distribution was made. The great bulk of the congregation had abundant possessions and took this way to help

the less fortunate. It is a base slander of this generous action to suppose that the Christians thought their property insecure because of the hostility of the authorities and therefore gave it away, or that like modern Adventists they expected Christ's return at once and therefore dealt so lavishly. What we see is a fine display of Christian charity. It was not perfect in all respects. Remember Ananias and Sapphira, the new management the apostles had to introduce, and the failure to follow the example of Jerusalem in other congregations. Yet the motive here at work has found a response in all the church down to our day.

46. And day by day, continuing steadfastly in one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart, 47. praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved.

The participle is of the same verb as in v. 42, only now **in one accord** is added to bring out the unity coupled with this steadfastness of faith and zeal. The assemblies **in the temple** were first of all participations in the Jewish worship, and then gatherings in the spacious colonnades of the Temple where the apostles freely preached and taught. The separation of the Christians from the Jews came about gradually; until it came the Christians used the Temple which Christ had honored and which had prefigured his work. — **At home**, as the Greek shows, might be a parallel to the phrase "day by day," and thus translated "from house to house." But here it is evidently in contrast to "in the Temple." There were some things for which the Temple had no facilities, such as **breaking bread**, which here too refers to the Sacrament. We need not think that only one house was so used (Meyer), or leave the question open (Weiss); the probability is that houses in various parts of the city were used. — The statement that **they did take their food** (the genitive with the partitive idea)

refers to the joint meal at the close of which the Holy Supper would be celebrated. The poorer members partook without themselves contributing. All had sufficient, and none lacked.—And this went on **with gladness of heart**, with great joy and rejoicing, and **with singleness** of heart, with simplicity and evenness. The latter term is from the adjective which means “without a stone,” hence even, smooth. We may say their hearts were undisturbed, unvexed by any trouble or passion.—Very fittingly we find them thus **praising God** for the great blessing they had found in Christ, and for all the additional individual blessings.—The result of their conduct as far as the people of Jerusalem were concerned was in keeping with all that we have read: **having favor with the people**, no criticism, but good-will. What a beautiful picture of this morning hour of the church! But a short time ago Christ was haled to the cross, and now his followers, full of his Spirit, proclaim his Gospel with great freedom and exhibit all its peace, joy, and love in their lives. Soon, indeed, the sky would cloud over and the storm would scatter this peaceful flock. But the goodness of the Lord has given his followers again and again peaceful, happy days, like these in the beginning in Jerusalem. Do we always use them as did these young believers?—No wonder that the church grew: **the Lord added to them day by day**, he who is the head of the church, who alone can add members, and who always does it only through his grace and Word. We want numbers, but we want them in the Lord’s book, not merely in our church records. **Those that were being saved** is rendered by the American Committee of the R. V.: “those that were saved,” for which, however, the usual form would be the perfect and not the present participle which we have here. These present participles in Greek when made substantives are quite generally timeless and intend to give only the quality. Only people who really have salvation are really added to the church. This is the Lord’s

great purpose, and it must be ours likewise. The saved were added **to them**, which is the same phrase as in v. 44, literally: "to the same place," i. e., place of assembly, and thus "together" (margin) with all the rest of the believers. They who receive the Lord's salvation through his Holy Spirit are joined also to the outward company of his church.

SERMON.

used 1926.

Pentecost is rightly called the birthday of the Christian church. Fifty days after the resurrection of Christ from the dead and ten days after his ascension to heaven the Lord Jesus Christ sent down his Holy Spirit from heaven to begin the world-wide spread of his Gospel among men. That very day it began in a most wonderful way. By the power of the Spirit the disciples of Christ proclaimed to the great multitude that gathered about them in Jerusalem "the mighty works of God." They did it in many different languages which the Holy Spirit enabled them to speak that day to show how the church of Christ would spread by the Spirit's power into all the lands of the earth. Then St. Peter arose and preached his great Pentecostal sermon on the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which had just taken place. He told that great multitude of the prophecy of Joel, who hundreds of years before had foretold the outpouring of God's Holy Spirit; he pointed all these hearers of his to Jesus Christ whom they had rejected and nailed to the cross, whom God had raised from the dead and exalted at his right hand in heaven, and who now had manifested his heavenly power and grace by sending down his Holy Spirit. The effect of all this was tremendous—3,000 people turned in repentance to Jesus Christ. The first great spreading of the Christian church began. It began at Pentecost through the mighty coming and work of God's Holy Spirit, and it has continued ever since.

The first Christian congregation was formed on that day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem. It was the mother congregation of all Christendom. All her true daughters, even as we to-day, love to look back to her and study her features, in order that by the Holy Spirit's help we too may become more and more like unto her. Our festival text gives us a complete picture of

The Spiritual Beauty of the Church that was Born at Pentecost.

The first church at Jerusalem, the mother of us all, was born, molded, and formed by the Spirit of God. God's Spirit wants to make us (in all essentials) like unto her. *in love & etc.*

I.

God's Spirit made **the first church a true church**. The greatest beauty of the first church is this that in the fullest sense of the word we can call her a true church.

She was a true church because she had the pure Word of God and held to it. St. Luke tells us that all her members gladly received the Word; and again he says that they all continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine or teaching. He means that nothing but the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, as the apostles had received it from Christ, and as the Holy Ghost himself enabled them to restate, preach and teach it, ruled in this newly born congregation at Jerusalem. (And) he means in addition that (from the apostles on down) all the members of the congregation (with all the strength of their hearts) held to this pure Gospel, earnestly and truly believed it and shaped their lives accordingly. They were not only one in the faith, but one in the true faith. Not one of the twelve apostles altered in the least the precious Word of God when he preached and taught it; and not one of all those 3,000 and more members in the church either openly or secretly objected to any part of this Word. (They all rejoiced in its precious truth; they were happy to know the full way of salvation in Jesus Christ; they all submitted to the truth and found no fault with any part of it, gladly putting away their former wrong ideas and practices. This is the wonderful spiritual beauty of the church born at Pentecost—it was a true church because it had and held the pure Word of God.

There are thousands of churches to-day, but you see at once that (any number) of them are not true daughters of the first church, because they no longer hold as she did to the pure Word of God. They preach and teach what they think best, no matter how much it contradicts the Word of Christ and his Spirit. And the churches are filled with members who think they can hold what they please of the Word of God, and can set the rest aside. Men mock at us when we point to Pentecost and this mother church of Christendom and insist on the pure truth of God's Word. (Not a single doctrine has escaped defilement, and some have defaced the Word altogether.) (At best some are satisfied to-day to come near to the truth as the Holy Spirit has given it to us in the Scriptures, but to be completely true to the Word and to put everything contrary to it away is too much even for them.) Alas, how the spiritual beauty of the mother church has faded and vanished in these who would be her true daughters and

are not! Let none of them mislead or deceive us by their false reasoning and hurtful ideas.

No church to-day is true unless it has the pure Word of God and holds it steadfastly in its faith and life. God's Spirit is not in error and false doctrine; in these and by these the evil spirit works, tries to get into the church, into her members, into her pulpits and seminaries if possible, in order to damage and deface the church, to undermine and destroy faith, to corrupt and drag down the life. Error and false teaching are not marks of beauty and health; they are like sores and boils in the face of the church, like cancers and tumors in her vitals, like infections and contagious diseases in her system. Truth alone makes for life and beauty, all error is disease and makes for death.

Oh, then let the beauty of the mother church and her loveliness of truth impress us this day of Pentecost. Here is the Word of God, true and pure as it was that day in Jerusalem, (and the Spirit of God in it.) This is what we must have and hold, from the pastor down to the youngest member in our church. Its preaching and teaching must be our delight. (The knowledge of this truth and the faith that rests in it must be our joy.) (It is beautiful in every part, for it is life and salvation.) Holding this we shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth fruit in season, and our leaves ever green and not withering. (Never let us think that God can delight in us when we are like a withering tree, its leaves yellow with disease, with no fruit at all or wilted, diseased fruit alone.) By the grace of God's Holy Spirit the beauty of the true church, (our Pentecostal mother, shall ever remain fresh and strong in us as her true daughter.

II.

(As God's Spirit made the mother church a true church, so he also made **the first church, a strong church.**

When we say a strong church too many people think at once only of a large church. Now the first church did have no less than 3,000 members to start with. But remember that these 3,000 Christians were the only Christians in the whole world at that time. That was not a very great numerical strength when you look at the millions on the other side. But in the kingdom of Christ mere numbers are not strength. We might have a church consisting of millions to-day, and yet it might be a pitifully, miserably weak church. Large bodies may be weak as well as small ones. Strength is not mere size, strength is inward power. And this true, strong, unconquerable power the first church in Jerusalem had. It was the power of faith which clung to the Word of God and the holy Sacraments. St. Luke tells us how the

entire membership at Jerusalem was baptized, how they were all together listening to the preaching of the apostles, and how they all gathered likewise for the breaking of bread, that is for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This is what made the mother church strong. She clung to the means of grace, the true fountain of strength; by the means of grace God's Holy Spirit kept flowing into every heart, and he is our true strength; clinging thus to the means of grace every heart grew in faith, and this is true spiritual strength. Ah, what a lovely picture, what true spiritual beauty—life, health, strength, vitality, power from on high in the hearts of the members of the first church! That is the strength we must have.

The world is full of churches, but are they strong? Here are cathedrals, bishops and priests, preachers and world-famous leaders, thousands of members, millions even, money enough, workers enough, and everything else. But where are the means of grace? where is the constant clinging to these means? where is the Spirit who works only in and through these means? where the faith which draws its life only from these means? Ah, here we see the weakness of many a church outwardly large enough. (There is not strength enough to hold the banner of the truth on high.) There is not strength enough to resist the old errors that still come to attack, nor the new ones that grow out of the old. Preachers and members surrender again and again, now to this lie of the devil, now to that. There sits the world right in the midst of the church and rules the members—the Spirit of God and his Word are thrown from the throne. Many a chain is worn by these members, and yet they call themselves free and strong. And their preachers are muzzled and fettered likewise, unable to preach the Word in the strength of the Spirit. No, they are not like the mother church at all. She was a free woman like Sarah, Abraham's wife; these are bondwomen, slaves, like Hagar, who with her son was thrust out and could not share in the inheritance.)

Let no mere show of strength deceive us, our true spiritual strength is in God's Word and Sacrament, in the Spirit of God who comes through these to fill our hearts, and in the strong, living faith which he thus implants and increases in us.) The less you are rooted and grounded in the Word the weaker you are, and the less you hear, read, and take into your heart this Word, the weaker you are. It is the same with the Sacrament. Oh, then let us make use of these heavenly means, that we may grow in strength, free and joyous in all things to do our Savior's will. The Spirit of God is our strength.) You are weak if you do not constantly open your heart to this Spirit as he comes to you in his holy means of grace. When he rules your heart, mind, and

will, then you are strong. You will cast off many a chain and fetter that now still holds you; you will run with joy the race that is set before you and never tire. (And so with faith.) Its strength is drawn from the means of grace and the Spirit of God. The less you go to this source and the less you take of it, the weaker will you be. But if you take as you should, your faith will stand strong and upright, confess on every occasion with joy, trample delusion and sin under foot, and triumph in all things in Christ. Even a little band of believers, all filled thus with faith, God's Spirit, and the strength of Word and Sacrament — how strong they will be. A congregation made up of such members will have the true spiritual beauty, will be indeed a fair and lovely daughter of the glorious old mother church in Jerusalem.

III.

(True and strong, and then devout.) The Holy Spirit made the first church a devout church.

The 3,000 at Jerusalem were steadfast in the breaking of bread and in prayers; they continued with one accord in the Temple for the worship there, and gathered in different places in the city for their celebrations of the Holy Supper. They were devout because they delighted in the worship of their Savior Jesus Christ and in all the exercises which go together with that worship. What a lovely spiritual picture — all these people gathered together again and again for preaching and teaching, for prayer and singing, for confession and absolution, for Baptism and the Holy Supper, for giving and offering, for benediction and doxology!

But here again let us make no mistake. Not all devotion is pleasing to God and the fruit of his Spirit. Look at the heathen at his worship — devout enough, but all his devotion an abomination to God. So men preach and hear, sing and pray in the churches, but all their devotion may be in vain. Only one kind of devotion has the true beauty which delights God, and is like a sweet smelling savor in his nostrils. It is the devotion which honors Christ alone, grows out of the truth in Christ alone, and is the expression of true faith in Christ and his truth alone. Yes, we are to preach with fervor and zeal, and you are to hear likewise, but only the pure, true Word of God. Come indeed and sing and pray, only let your prayers and singing be filled with the same Word. Bring your little ones to Baptism, and let older ones come too to receive this Baptism, but let it be the Baptism as Jesus and his apostles gave it to us, the washing of regeneration and renewing in the Holy Ghost: make it a mere sign, as so many do, and your devotion is in vain. Eat and drink with a devout heart in the Lord's Supper, but eat Christ's true body

there and drink his true blood, given and shed for the remission of sins, then alone will your devout participation in the Sacrament be acceptable to God; they who fail to discern the body of the Lord, St. Paul himself tells us, eat and drink damnation unto themselves. Many indeed cry: Lord, Lord! devoutly enough, but the Lord himself says, that he will tell them: "Depart from me; I never knew you!" God help us all that in every service we hold here in our church, and in all devotional reading, singing and praying in our homes, there may be the truth of God's Word and faith resting on that.

And the stronger this faith, the more fervent, earnest, zealous, and glowing in all its worship of God, the more will it delight God and resemble the worship of the devout mother church. Alas, how cold many of us are! How little it takes to draw us away from our worship! How readily we respond to worldly pleasure, calls of business, or other claims upon our attention! Make the comparison yourself with the beautiful picture in our text. Here is the fire of faith, the glow of true devotion—too often with us there is no fire and no glow. Let us repent of our indifference (and unspiritual ways,) and open our hearts to God's Holy Spirit that he may make us alive to his Word and truth and all our blessings in Christ. Then will we worship in spirit and in truth, and we too as a church of God will be true, strong, and devout like our lovely spiritual mother of old.

IV.

God's Spirit wrought in her also that fairest of all the fruits of true faith, Christian charity and love. He made **the first church a loving church.**

Not only were the members drawn together in fellowship and friendly association as brethren, they made the fullest provision for each other, and since some were quite needy a constant fund was provided that their need should be met. Think of it, people who but a little while ago did not even know each other, are now so filled with love toward each other that one after another who had wealth brought money, or sold a house or land or goods and so brought money, that none of their number might lack. It was altogether voluntary, and the more beautiful for that. The apostles did not need to scold or drive; they did not need to have fairs, sales, bazaars, or any other money making scheme. These early Christians gave—they just gave. It was the pure fruit of faith, wrought by the Word and Spirit alone. It stands as a model for all time, beautiful with the beauty of him who gave himself for us.

Are the daughters and would-be daughters like their mother?

Thank God, some are! They put away from themselves once for all every plan which would deprive them of the blessed joy and privilege of giving. They will not be robbed of this honor and blessing. And in the same way, when they give, they give as St. Paul bids us: "He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity," with singleness of heart. They lay every offering at their Savior's feet; they give as though they placed the gift into his own hand. They see him in their needy brethren; they hear his call in the work of the church which needs their money and support. O the loveliness of this heavenly grace! God gave, Christ gave, the Holy Spirit gives—can we as a true church of God refuse to give? Can the rose dispense with its beauty and odor, and still be a rose? Can music turn to discord, and still be music? Can the Spirit of love fill a heart, and yet leave it without love? Oh, let this loveliness of the first church shine in your eyes and win your hearts to a similar love. Light the candle of your love at this bright and shining taper. Away with mercenary motives—salvation cannot be bought even with millions. Lay the pure incense of true love to Christ and his brethren upon his altar in generous gifts. These he will take from your hands. They shine with the beauty we see in our lovely spiritual mother. A congregation of such givers is a true child of the Spirit, a daughter indeed of the first great church of love.

V.

God's Spirit who made so much of the first church could not but add true missionary zeal and fervor. He made **the first church a missionary church.**

"The Lord added to the church," writes St. Luke, "daily such as should be saved." Born herself out of Christ's missionary command to the apostles, the first church obeyed that command, threw her doors wide open through the Gospel and drew men in. And hers was real missionary work, for those that were added were drawn by the Gospel alone. (The Lord added them, writes St. Luke, not the apostles or church alone.)

Here is our example as a church with the Pentecostal Spirit and a true daughter of the first church. Not for ourselves alone do we exist as a church, but for the work of the Lord and for the salvation also of others. We are not to be like the Dead Sea only taking in the fresh waters of the Jordan and then to make them salty and alkaline; we are to be like the living spring, pouring forth a sparkling stream to make the desert bloom wherever that stream flows. We are to be like a city set on a hill, a safe refuge in a dangerous land, whither men may flee and find protection indeed. Every church must be a missionary church;

it cannot be less if it has the Gospel and the Holy Spirit. For these will constantly impel us to preach salvation to others.

But mission work is more than propaganda. The Turks, as history tells us, went out to conquer the world for Mohammed; they took the sword to do it with. (Even now in far off Africa the Mohammedans are zealous workers for their religion. Mormons are of the same type. All sorts of religious errors like to propagate themselves and gain as many adherents as possible. Weeds like to grow; but a garden consists of useful plants alone.) Missionary work is planting the true Word and Gospel in men's hearts. It is winning men's souls for Christ so that Christ himself will count them won. It is one thing to fill up a church with people, another to fill it with people of God. Sometimes true missionary work is slow work, hard work—few can be won. Let us never grow discouraged on that account, or do the work in any other way than that prescribed by Christ. (There are men enough building hay, wood, and stubble in the church, and making a great boast about it, but the fire of judgment will soon show what their work is; let us build with the gold, silver, and jewels of the Gospel alone. So shall we be saved, and those who join in faith with us.) The most glorious work that is done on earth to-day is the missionary work which helps the Lord add souls to his church as he did in the old mother church. God grant us a full share in that work.

VI.

And now to complete the picture we must add that the Spirit of Pentecost made **the first church a blessing to all.**

Even the Jews generally in Jerusalem recognized the hand of God at work in this first congregation. St. Luke writes of the members of the church that they had favor with all the people. God's true children, moved by his Spirit alone, following his Word alone, are surely good neighbors and friends. It is a blessing for others to associate with them. But the real benefit and blessing of having the true church in the midst of a city or community is far greater than mere friendly association. God's church is an open door of salvation to all still outside of it. So it was here in Jerusalem. God was guiding and blessing his flock that it might grow strong in spirit and in numbers. Those who viewed the church with favor were open to the Holy Spirit's influence: in many a case it was but a short step for them to enter and join themselves.

This too is part of the spiritual beauty of the church that in all its life and influence it is a blessing to all men who come in touch with it. The Spirit of God makes every true believer a

purser, nobler, better man in every way. If this result is not apparent in you, it is because you resist God's Spirit and yield to the old spirit of selfishness, meanness, hate, and wickedness. Alas, that many a member of the church thus helps to disfigure the holy body to which he belongs! The open sins, vices, and faults of church members have turned many a man away who otherwise might have been won for the church. Let every member in our church keep that constantly in mind.

In Jerusalem the true church found favor at first, but in due time, because the church was so true to Christ, persecution and hatred were turned against her. This was the lot of the mother church, and it is bound to be the lot also of her daughters, if they are daughters indeed. Only see to it that it may be our faithfulness to Christ that brings us the opposition of men, and not some sin of our own. Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. By trial the Lord purges his church to make her spiritual beauty shine the more.

Pray God then this day of Pentecost that his Holy Spirit who wrought so gloriously in the first church at Jerusalem may work equally in this church of ours and all her members, making us too in all things a church true, strong, devout, loving, full of the missionary spirit, and thus in every way a blessing also for others. So will the favor of God rest upon us now, his blessing aid our work, and the door of eternal glory be opened to us at last.

OUTLINES.

The natural connection of our text with the Pentecost miracle is easily utilized when we describe the first glorious work of the Spirit in the congregation in Jerusalem. This work centers in the means of grace and flows out from this center in a life of Christian love and godliness. So we may divide the substance of the text into two sections: The gracious work of God's Holy Spirit in the first church: how it centered in the Word—how it flowed out from that center in blessings abundant.—A simple and natural treatment will take up piece by piece of the Holy Spirit's work in Jerusalem: The mother church at Jerusalem a beautiful model for all her daughters: in doctrine and fellowship—in breaking of bread and prayers—in love and goodness.—The whole work of the church depends upon the Holy Spirit: we must use his means—we must submit to his power—we must take his blessings.—How shall we celebrate the birthday of the Christian church? There is only one real way in which we may

do it: her Spirit—her faith—her love—her faithfulness must this day be repeated in us all.

Praise God for the Holy Spirit and his Blessed Work.

1. *He has built the church.*
 2. *He works in the church through the means of grace.*
 3. *He adds to the means of grace a wealth of other blessings.*
-

Our Pentecostal Blessings.

1. *The Holy Spirit is ours.*
 2. *The means of grace are in our church.*
 3. *The evidences of faith and a Christian life are in our midst.*
-

Have We the Holy Spirit To-day?

1. *Have we the means of grace?*
 2. *Have we the gift of faith?*
 3. *Have we the marks of Christian life?*
-

The Pentecostal Church at Jerusalem.

1. *One in the true faith.*
 2. *Clinging to the means of grace.*
 3. *Rich in love.*
 4. *A blessing to all.*
-

TRINITY SUNDAY.

Acts 2, 37-40.

For the festival of the Holy Trinity we want a text which deals with the three persons of the Godhead. There is only one text which contains the name Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, namely Matth. 28, 19. Yet in a number of other texts the holy three persons are named side by side, and these too make admirable texts for Trinity Sunday. The one herewith offered belongs to this class of texts and at the same time presents other highly desirable features. In the first place this text contains the economic Trinity, i. e., the three persons as concerned in the great work of salvation. This is the doctrine of the holy Trinity which the Scriptures reveal and teach. God would never have troubled to show us anything of the unfathomable mystery of his being, if this had not been necessary in order to reveal to us aright his great work of creation, redemption, and sanctification. Through this work alone we ought to approach the holy Trinity and God's revelation concerning himself. Speculative metaphysical studies are fruitless and often dangerous to faith. Secondly, our text connects well with the Pentecost festival just passed, for it is part of the great Pentecost story as Luke narrates it. And finally, this text is well suited to close the entire festival half of the church year and at the same time to open up the great non-festival half of the long line of after-Trinity Sundays. In the name of the Triune God this text throws open the portals of salvation to the whole world of sinners in calling them all to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. The text is excellent, let the sermon be the same.

The scene is Jerusalem where Peter preached his great sermon on the prophecy of Joel and its fulfillment as then wrought before the very eyes of his hearers.

2, 37. Now when they heard *this* they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?

The transitional *δέ* connects with what precedes, and **when they heard** is simply an aorist participle, the tense of which places this hearing in advance of the following wounding of their hearts. See here what the proper preaching and hearing of the Word of God does! Some think this is true only of so-called missionary preaching; it is true of all genuine preaching of the Law and Gospel. Only in cultus preaching we have Christian congregations before us, people who already believe, though others may also be present. When they hear, the power of the Law deepens contrition already wrought and strengthens faith already implanted, yet in doing this and by the same power it works the first beginnings of contrition and faith where the hearing enables the Law and the Gospel to enter the heart. So the great assembly in Jerusalem heard Peter that day, and **they were pricked in their heart**. The verb is the same as that used of the spear entering the breast of Jesus on the cross, only the preposition is different; the spear merely entered the breast of Jesus, here the Word heard pierced through and through. The agent behind the passive voice is evidently the Word heard, and of this Word the part we call Law, which revealed the sin of these men, especially their share in bringing Christ to crucifixion, v. 23, and thus their opposition and antagonism to God. This consciousness and realization of their past enmity and hostility against God overwhelmed them. It struck like a sharp sword through their hearts, it pierced them inwardly like a spear with its keen point and edge. This is true contrition. It is the work of the Law which strikes like a hammer, cuts through like a sword or spear. The New Test. Greek

likes these second passive forms and uses many more than the classics. **In their heart** is an adverbial accusative: "as to the heart." We may say that the heart here points to the conscience, although heart is both mind and will. In all true preaching of the Word there must be Law showing the hearer's sin and its damnable-ness in the sight of God. Too much preaching in our day ignores the Law or seeks to soften it in some way; the result always is that men's hearts are left unpricked, unwounded—the conscience sleeps on. When rightly preached the Law in the Word always takes hold first, and we must be willing to let it take hold thus and do its work. Yet Law and Gospel belong together. The Law alone would frighten men into despair, but the Gospel accompanying the Law, while it does not weaken the Law in any respect, opens the door of hope to those struck down by the Law, even as we see it here in Jerusalem. — At once those who felt the blows of the Law and realized how grievously they had sinned against God in disowning his Son and Messiah **said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles**, what now follows. The little particle *κα* connects this utterance of theirs very closely with the wounding of their hearts. It was the very thing Peter had intended with his sermon, in which the Gospel was placed beside the Law, showing that God had made Jesus the great Messiah and Savior who now from his heavenly exaltation had sent down in his grace the gift of the Holy Spirit, and not at once judgment and destruction upon his foes. — So the sermon produced this question: **Brethren, what shall we do?** These contrite men use a very respectful form of address; they call the apostles "brethren" since all concerned here are Jews. The title here is not used in the Christian sense, only as one Jew might use it toward another. And we see that Peter's action and sermon has made no false impression as though he were the main man among the apostles, their head, or pope. No, these hearers perceive that he spoke only as one of a body of men, and they

address themselves to the entire body. Nor does Peter venture a correction. Yet these hearers address only the apostles, not all the believers present, including a considerable number in addition to the apostles. The Twelve were the called ministers of Christ, and they are here assuming their office, and there is no mistake about it on the part of anyone. — The question is one of doubt and deliberation, as the grammarians say, hence it has the subjunctive; and this in the aorist, because a certain definite act is in mind. Sometimes this question, because it asks about “doing” something, is assumed to be synergistic, as if these men imagined they could contribute something on their own part towards their salvation. This misreads the question and does injustice to the sermon of Peter. Nor do we see Peter correcting their question, telling these men: *You* can do nothing at all. No, there is no such stress on the doing, and on *their* doing. These men realize, and Peter’s sermon made them realize, that as far as they are concerned their sin is so great that they can do nothing of themselves to escape. Their question is the response awakened by the Gospel in Peter’s sermon, by the note of grace that the exalted Messiah had sent down his Holy Spirit making all these followers of his speak “the wonderful works of God.” “What shall we do?” is a question which first of all admits Peter’s indictment against them, and thus tacitly confesses the sin he charged them with. Then, however, it admits their utter helplessness — they know no way out and confess it. On top of this the question breathes complete submission and readiness to be directed by the apostles — they must show and lead the way. This is no synergism, but the effect and fruit of the Word. In the jailor at Philippi we see the very same thing in identical words.

38. And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. 39. For to you is the promise,

and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.

Instead of correcting the question, or even implying a correction, Peter answers the question exactly as it was made, telling these men what to do. There is no thought in any way as though these men could or should do anything of their own natural powers. They had shown sufficiently what the result would be if they did this, v. 23. But the Gospel is resounding here, the power of God unto salvation is moving men, and so Peter calls upon these men to repent. When God draws we may indeed follow — by the power and in the power of that drawing. When the Word has hold of the heart in true contrition it is able indeed to move that heart on to faith and thus attain the goal. It is all of God and his saving power alone, but it is always thus of God that not he repents in us or for us, but that he working upon us we by that working repent. It is our will that moves, and yet God alone and his grace which makes it move. And since it is all grace there is no compulsion or violence about it. Every response in man under the Gospel and grace is merely the proper, right, and divinely intended reflex of that Gospel and grace. — **Repent ye**, *μετανοήσατε*, is one of the most important concepts in the entire New Test. Originally it signifies to perceive or understand afterwards, i. e., too late; then it means to change one's mind, and thus: to repent. But all through the New Test. the word has been deepened in its meaning to signify a religious change of heart, one away from sin and guilt, unto cleansing and forgiveness. When used alone as here "to repent" signifies the entire change, including both contrition and faith; when "to believe" is added, "to repent" takes in contrition alone, but the contrition which goes with faith. The pierced hearts of these men were to turn wholly to Jesus as their Savior and accept him as such. And to produce this change from their former condition Jesus had been placed fully before them as what he

really is; he himself is thus the power that works the change. The aorist is used here by Peter, and stands for the single decisive act of the change. Sometimes the present imperative is used, and then the idea is a continuation in the change made. Of course, the definite, decisive act demanded by the aorist is to stand once for all; it is not to be disavowed later on. The aorist imperative in the nature of the case has a more peremptory ring to it than the present imperative. Cf. *F. C.* 590, 7, etc.; *Apol.* 181, 29 and 35. — **And be baptized** Peter could add at once, especially since these men knew about baptism through the Baptist's work. In v. 40 we hear that Peter made many necessary further explanations. The addition: **in the name of Jesus Christ**, which some persist in understanding of the formula of baptism, points to the relation into which baptism places a man. The name of Jesus is his revelation, that by which we truly know him and so come to rely upon him. And to be baptized in his name is nothing less than to place ourselves in the way he has arranged into union with him. For an adult this baptism is a full and proper confession of his faith, an open and decisive reception of Jesus as his Savior, and acceptance of his sealed and signed promises of grace and salvation. A refusal of Christ's baptism would be a repudiation of Christ and his saving gifts. He who wants a piece of property must want the deed to it; if he will not have the deed we may be quite certain he does not really care for the property, especially since here both the property and the deed are a free gift. — **Every one of you** makes the matter personal in the highest degree. Salvation deals with the individual, not with masses. Note the universality here — "every one," no matter what your condition or position may be. There is only one door and one way for all. And baptism is not a mere ordinance, as Baptists and others love to make it, so that the individual complies with a law requirement, much like the ceremonial requirements of Moses, circumcision for

instance. God does something for us in baptism; it is not that we do something for him. — This comes out very strongly in the addition: **unto the remission of sins**. While this is attached to baptism we must hold fast that baptism is attached to repentance. They all belong together. It is the baptism which is “unto remission,” and this is not a remission in the remote distance to be obtained later on and by some other means, but conveyed then and there by the baptism itself. Acts 22, 16 brings this out most clearly: “be baptized and wash away thy sins,” the very water of baptism removing the sins. The beautiful word *ἀφεσις* is used — dismissal of sins, sending away, i. e., as far as the east is from the west. And “your sins” includes all things wherein these men have missed the mark set for them by God. With all their sins gone the guilt incurred is gone likewise, none of it shall be reckoned against them. Baptism conveys this glorious complete remission; it does it through the Word and promise of Jesus connected with this rite. Yet not mechanically (*opus operatum*), but as the very nature of the gift bestowed by baptism, and as the very power operative in it require, the remission bestowed in and by baptism is held by the heart through faith alone. — This is seen too in the addition which Peter makes: **and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost**. The genitive is appositional: the Holy Ghost is himself the gift received through repentance and baptism. In Peter’s sermon the Holy Ghost at first came from without to work upon and open the hearts of Peter’s hearers. In the repentance thus wrought, and by this same Word and the baptism, the Holy Spirit made actual entry to dwell thereafter in these hearts. Thus to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost is to be put into actual communion with God. The gift as here promised by Peter is to each and every repentant and baptized soul, and cannot therefore mean the special charismata of the Spirit, speaking with tongues, prophecy, healing, and the like, but the presence

and grace of the Holy Spirit which always go with faith. And this gift is not to be conceived as separate from the Word and baptism or the means of grace. We must not imagine the Spirit as flying through the air to light only on some individuals in a mysterious way. Nor are we to think of this gift after the manner of so many of the "holiness" sects and preachers who think the Spirit is bestowed later in a sudden descent and rapture, instantaneously transforming those who thus receive him so that they now sin no more and possess total sanctification. This is the old error Luther fought so hard in the Anabaptists of his time. "Therefore," he writes, "this doctrine is to remain sure and firm, that the Holy Spirit is given through the office of the church, that is through the preaching of the Gospel and baptism. There must seek him all who desire him, must not despise the little band in which the preaching of the Gospel resounds, but must hold to that band, gathered and staying together in Christ's name, and must help pray." We do not hear of miraculous gifts bestowed upon the 3,000, nor is there the slightest intimation that these people or any of them were totally sanctified and removed from all sinning. — To draw all his hearers unto baptism in true repentance Peter adds: **For to you is the promise**, i. e., as Jews and thus hearers of the Old Test. revelation, to them first of all. Hence Peter's call upon them at this time is fully justified, and they should respond with alacrity and gladness. "The promise" is the Messianic promise now being fulfilled in the mission of the Holy Spirit: Peter had repeated it to his hearers from the prophet Joel, v. 16, etc. The emphasis is on the pronoun "to you." How could they turn away from this promise and gift meant so graciously especially for them, and for them when so far they had shown themselves so unworthy of it? Must they not hasten now, with shame and asking God to forgive them, to take this promised gift at last? — **And to your children** is significantly added. In the

entire Old Test. covenant children had been included; they are included in the new covenant likewise, "of such is the kingdom of heaven." This is a hard text for all Baptists and others who think children cannot believe (forgetting the Savior's word: "He that believeth not shall be damned"!), who have no real place for them in the church, and who in particular deny them baptism or neglect to baptize them. If the promise is intended for them as for their elders (and the intention is surely equal), then the Spirit and baptism are also for them; they who deny helpless children these blessings must surely answer for it to God. — But the Jews are not the only nation now for whom the salvation of God is meant: **and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him.** Here is universal salvation in Christ; here is the open door for the Gentiles. Bengel and Meyer are wrong when they think here only of the Jews of the diaspora; cf. Is. 49, 1 and 12; 57, 19; and v. 21 in our chapter. With *εἰς μακρὰν* supply *ὁδόν* = far away, along a distant road. The relative clause must not be read as a limitation of this universality. The promise is intended for all men without exception; the relative clause mentions those who, like the 3,000 Jews before Peter, will actually come to faith. They are not persons chosen by a mysterious decree of election or predestination, but called by the Gospel. Others too are called, but reject the call in wicked obduracy; these are obedient to the call and its grace. The aorist subjunctive is futuristic and views the entire work of calling as complete — the vast number of coming believers from among the Gentiles as one body. So glorious and grand is the promise Peter is holding up to his hearers. Perhaps it is well to note here how children are put in between the other two classes mentioned — a good safe place for them! "The Lord our God" is the Hebrew *Yahve Haelohim*, and in "our" Peter combines himself with his Jewish hearers. The God of the Old Test. is the God also of the New. And the thing to note well,

both here in Peter's words all through, and in the entire New Test. beginning with the Baptist, there is the freest mention of the three divine persons, and all Jews in the Bible accept these trinitarian names without a word of objection. There is not a unitarian murmur anywhere.

40. And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation.

The gist of Peter's admonition has been given; the close connective shows that the "many other words" were all in the same line. Literally Luke writes: "with other words more," i. e., more than the ones mentioned. The verb means more than "testify" (note the preposition in the compound); it signifies: to protest earnestly, to adjure. The aorist takes the entire adjuration with all its words as one, and as is so frequently the case with aorists of this kind the implication is that Peter's adjuration was not in vain. — The imperfect tense which now follows takes out part of the adjuration and dwells upon it descriptively in order to make the whole effort of Peter vivid for us: He "was exhorting them": **Save yourselves from this crooked generation.** Many passives are used in a middle sense; sometimes one is in doubt as here, where the passive "be ye saved" would not be amiss and would point more strongly to the Savior. The Jews who reject Jesus are called a "crooked" generation, Phil. 2, 15; Deut. 32, 5; they are like a crooked stick of timber which the carpenter has to throw out since he cannot use it for the building. Unbelief makes crooked in this sense. A strong argument and appeal lies in the term. Peter's words were effective — 3,000 gladly received his word and were baptized and thus added to the church that day. — For the Trinity Sunday sermon we must note how distinctly the Holy Trinity is spoken of in this text: "the Lord our God" — "Jesus Christ" — "the Holy Ghost."

SERMON. *used 1924*

In the sixth chapter of his great book of prophecies Isaiah describes the vision of God which was granted him: he saw Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the heavenly temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings—with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. It was the Triune God whom the prophet saw, the great God of our salvation.

The great prophet John the Baptist who stands at the head of the New Test. was granted a similar revelation of God. When Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan God the Father spoke from the open heavens: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!" and the Holy Spirit descended from the open heavens upon Jesus and abode upon him. It was again the Triune God, even more fully revealed—one God, yet three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is his name as Jesus Christ himself declared when his work of redemption was done and he was soon to ascend to heaven: Go, said he, preach the Gospel, and baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!

Our text describes how on the basis of all these revelations and at the command of Jesus the great work of bringing the Gospel to all the world was begun at Jerusalem. St. Peter, surrounded by all the apostles, preached to a great multitude at Pentecost; his sermon pricked their hearts and they cried: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" You know the blessed answer they received, one that pointed them to faith, baptism, and salvation, but all three of these bound up with the revelation of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. So the Christian church began with this faith in the Holy Trinity. On that faith she stands to-day, and will stand to the end of time. And it is for every one of us who stands with her to realize ever anew

What is at Stake in the Revelation and Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Three words bring it out: **God — Christ — You!**

I.

When St. Peter, and with him all the apostles of Jesus, began here in Jerusalem the great work of building the Chris-

tian church, when they preached, baptized, and brought men to believe in the Holy Trinity; when they went on thus, as the entire New Test. shows, till the Lord took them one by one to himself in heaven; when the church thus founded continued in the faith delivered unto her, and with one united voice confessed, and to this day confesses: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, and in Jesus Christ his only Son, and in the holy Ghost" — what is at stake for us all and for the whole world in this faith and confession? It is nothing less than **God** himself. In this faith and confession we have God, without it we have no God, only idols, phantoms, dreams, devilish delusions concerning God.

It is absolutely true, as the Scriptures declare: "No man hath seen God at any time." And again they say of God, the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, that he "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see," except by gracious revelation of God himself. 1 Tim. 6, 16. Nor do the Scriptures leave us in doubt as to the reason why sinful man cannot of himself see God: "For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire," Deut. 4, 24; Heb. 12, 29. Since sin has come into the world we are all shut out from God, and to approach him in our sins, if this were possible at all, would be only to be consumed like filthy rags in the fire of his holiness and righteousness.

There is absolutely only one way in which we can know God, draw nigh to him, receive anything from him, and be permitted to have communion with him, and that is for God himself in his infinite love and grace to draw nigh to us, to reveal himself to our hearts and minds, to open the door to us that we may come into his presence. And this is the thing that God has done. For God is love. He did not want to condemn and judge the world when it fell into sin, but he wanted to save it: For this and for this alone he drew the curtain aside; he came to men in a multitude of revelations — Isaiah was permitted to see him in a vision, the Baptist heard and saw the true God revealed, and most wonderful of all — God's own Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity came into our flesh and dwelt among us, so that St. John could write: "We beheld his glory, the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." St. Peter and all the apostles thus saw the Son of God. Hear their confession: "We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God." Through the Son of God they knew the Father, and through the Son they received the Holy Spirit. And in the power of this revelation they brought God, the only true God, and his salvation to the world.

But behold the wickedness and perversion of men — this

wonderful, blessed revelation which God made of himself they reject. (All the visions which God vouchsafed to his prophets in love for us sinners, all the revelation of the Son of God as our Savior with which God crowned his love, men make bold to deny.) A great host of men declare, there is no Son of God — Jesus was only a man like us to-day. There is no Spirit of God, all that the Holy Scriptures say of him is nothing. And this bold and monstrous denial of God's revelation of himself is made by those who make it because they claim if God is *one* God he cannot possibly be *three* persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. *They* decide what God can and cannot be; *they* determine what and who God must be. They have not seen him, and yet they say they know. ("The Only Begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," and this declaration of God's own Son they declare to be a lie.) In place of God's own revelation they set up their own ideas of God, and say that this is God, this what they think and say. Some of them try to carry their idea of God into the Bible and try to make it say what they think: others are bolder and set aside what the Bible says of God, and say openly it is not true. The whole Unitarian Church denies the Holy Trinity, and other churches like the Congregationalists and the Campbellites or so-called Christian Church have many Unitarian preachers and members. All who deny that Christ is the Son of God, all who refuse to worship him as God, are of this type. Their false creed and doctrine is summed up in the two points: the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. And that Fatherhood is not the one of which the Bible speaks, when it calls Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, but a fatherhood which consists only of his creatorship—he is father of the beast, and the tree, and the stone as he is father of man—that and no more.

What does it mean to think thus concerning God? It means one thing and one only—the rejection of the true God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and the substitution in his place of a self-made, self-invented god, which is an idol. God is at stake, and these men, even with the Bible in their hands, have lost God. For an idol is not only a graven image made of wood or stone with human hands: or a mountain or river, fire or the sun in the heavens, which men have worshipped as god. Men's brains can make idols as well as their hands, and the worst idolaters are not the poor, henighted heathen who deserve our pity, but these deniers of the Triune and only true God in Christian lands, who worship, or think they worship, the fetish and freak of their own brains which they call god. Every prayer they make to such a god is idolatrous. "I am the Lord thy God," says the very first commandment, "thou shalt have no other gods before me." And again: "I am the Lord: that is my name, and my glory will I

not give to another." And the Son of God declares: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

Let no man among us deceive himself for one moment. You may hear men say "God," and use the name "Father," and other names such as the secret orders have invented, "the great architect of the universe," and the like. This is *not* God, not your God, not the God of the Bible. See who they are that reject the Holy Trinity. In their company is the Jew, who to-day rejects Christ as his nation did in Jerusalem; the Mohammedan, named after his false prophet: the Unitarian, whose very name proclaims his unbelief; and all sorts of other unbelievers, who all reject the Bible God, One in Three, and Three in One. A mighty gulf separates us from them all. It is wider even than that between heaven and earth—as wide as that between heaven and hell. For there is only *one* God, he whom Jesus Christ revealed. They who reject this God have no god, except their own idols. And it is Satan's work, who first tried to separate man from God, that all these men are now still without God. Not for one moment can we join in their prayers to their imaginary god. The oaths with which many of them bind themselves, using the name of this dream god of theirs, are so many sins against the true God; not one of them binds because there is nothing behind them but man's own delusion. Away with all these idols and dream gods of Satan. Ours is the true God, the Father who made us, the Son who redeemed us, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us.

"Jehovah! Father, Spirit, Son.
Mysterious Godhead, Three in One!
Before thy throne we sinners bend;
Grace, pardon, life, to us extend!"

II.

In the revelation and doctrine of the Holy Trinity God is at stake—and **Christ** is at stake.

Why do you suppose God ever revealed himself and this great mystery of his being unto sinful men? Since he is (so infinite and great, so incomprehensible to finite minds,) so mysterious in his being, why did he tell us that he is one God, and yet three persons—a thing no human mind can grasp (or fathom?) There is a mighty reason for it, and a blessed, glorious reason for us. (We can sum it all up in one word—*Christ*! Or in Christ's own words: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.") Not on God's account, but on our account was the Holy Trinity revealed to us: (and on our account only) because God (himself, namely) the Father.

the Son, and the Holy Spirit, had to do a mighty work to enable us to escape from our sins and attain unto heaven. And this work centers in Christ, God's Son. No man can know it, can get the infinite blessing of it, except through Christ. And so God for our sakes revealed himself as three persons in one (infinite) being.

You see it all along in the Scriptures, and wherever the way of salvation is preached. Here is St. Peter in our text. What does he tell the anxious sinners before him: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." He means Jesus Christ whom he has again and again confessed to be the Son of the living God. If he is not God, then it is folly to believe in him, folly to be baptized in his name, folly to think that he can save us. No mere man can bear the sins of the world; no mere man can conquer death, hell, and the devil; no mere man can carry us into heaven. No man can save himself from damnation, to say nothing of saving others, millions of others. God's eternal Son—he alone can do this. And he could do it only by becoming man for our sakes and atoning for our sin and guilt. This is what Christ, the Son of God, has done. And even so the work was not finished. The third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, had to be sent by Christ to bring each one of us to repentance, to make Christ's salvation ours personally. Thus and thus alone can sinners be saved. It all centers in Christ, God's Son, but so that the Father sent the Son to redeem us, and that the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to sanctify us.

It is as clear as day what the denial of the revelation and doctrine of the Holy Trinity involves. Christ is at stake, and the whole work of God's salvation as it centers in Christ. If God is not three persons as he has revealed himself, then Jesus Christ, whoever and whatever he was and whatever he did, was not and is not God's only begotten Son (as the ancient Nicene Creed declares; "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, . . . of one Substance with the Father.") If Jesus was not and is not God, then there is no divine Savior for sinners, no eternal salvation for us who believe. Blot out the Holy Trinity and you blot out God's Son and our salvation. Then the heavens are black, then eternity is nothing but terror. Let them talk wisely, or mock scornfully, there is only one hope for fallen man and that is the blood of God's own Son shed for our redemption—take that, and nothing is left. Let them go on in their blindness and pride if they will, there is salvation in no other, "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." And if there is no salvation, then, as Jesus said of Judas, it would have been better if we had never been born.

Let no man among us deceive himself. Christ and our salvation is at stake. Every Christless profession of religion, every denial of his divinity and redemption, every Christless prayer, every Christless code of morals, every Christless hope of heaven and blessedness to come, consigns us all to hell and damnation. There is no use to soften the words—the plain truth is best. Here is the heart of our faith in the Triune God—his revelation is the revelation of our salvation. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is like the sun in the heavens—all is light. In him heaven is open for us. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has prepared a place for us; he himself will come to receive us, that where he is we may be also. This glorious hope of eternal blessedness is ours through the true God alone, the Triune God, namely through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

III.

In the revelation and doctrine of the Holy Trinity God himself is at stake, Christ and his salvation is at stake, and therefore also—you are at stake.

The revelation and doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not for one moment something for learned men only to dispute about. It is something of supreme and absolutely vital importance for your soul and for mine. If you lose God, you have lost everything; if you lose Christ and his salvation, there is nothing in the whole universe to make good the loss. Thus all that we have said about God and about the Son of God centers at last in *you*. Your soul is at stake in this revelation of God, whether by accepting this revelation of God your soul shall be saved, or by rejecting it your soul shall be forever lost.

That is why St. Peter in our text pointed all his hearers to God, his promise and redemption in Christ, and the saving gift of the Holy Ghost. The thing at stake was the soul of each one of his hearers, whether it should be brought into union with the true God and thus be saved, or whether the devil should succeed in keeping it from that union and in union with himself, and that soul should thus be lost. And that is why St. Peter wound up all his preaching and admonition to that multitude in the solemn call: "Save yourselves from this untoward generation!" You are at stake whether you shall be saved, or lost.

Would to God we might all realize it fully! When one sees the indifference of men regarding God, how they are satisfied when anyone says "god" unto them, even when they know he does not mean the Triune God, one is shocked. Do these men know their own souls are at stake? We all know that counterfeit money is no money; and a counterfeit God is also no God. Only the devil, and men deluded by him, try to

pass such a god off upon us. We all know that a rotten plank will not bear our weight in crossing a gulf; when we step upon it, we will fall to our death. A Jesus who is not true God is less even than such a plank; he cannot carry us across the gulf of eternity. Only the devil could offer us a Savior who is no Savior, so that trusting him when our soul steps out into eternity we shall be plunged to eternal perdition. And because the true God is so concerned about you, therefore he revealed himself, sent you his Son and Spirit, that trusting in them you may be safe now and safely reach the heavenly place prepared for you. Can we ever thank him enough?

This day then once more, with the whole Christian church let us confess our most holy faith: I believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost! In this faith let us live and die. Then the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost shall be with us now and evermore; and with the seraphim six-winged about the glorious throne of God we too may sing their mighty song of praise: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory!"

"Father, Son, and Spirit
Endless One in Three,
Now, henceforth, forever,
Glory be to thee."

OUTLINES.

For Trinity Sunday the holy names used by Peter in our text constitute the basis of the sermon. On these names as here used our salvation rests, and this must form the heart of the sermon. We may thus preach on: The glory of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity: Here is the glory of God himself in all its infinite reality — here is the glory of God's salvation in all its infinite blessedness — here is the glory of your soul and mine in all its heavenly possibilities. — The Triune God is our God: Ours through the Father and his promise — ours through the Son and his redemption — ours through the Spirit and his sanctification. — Naumann has this outline: How is the grace of the Triune God made ours? By repentance — by baptism — by the gift of the Holy Spirit — by the certainty of God's promise and call. Or, adding another thought to each part: *The entrance* of this grace is by repentance — *the impartation* of this grace is by baptism — *the power* of this grace is in the gift of the Spirit — *the certainty* of this grace is in God's promise and call. Anacker has the following: The blessed com-

munion with the Triune God, how shall we attain it? 1) Acknowledge in true contrition that we have been disobedient children of our heavenly Father. 2) Grasp in true faith the mercy of God brought to us in his Only Begotten Son. 3) Let the Holy Spirit work this repentance and faith in you daily by his sanctifying power.

The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity the Deepest Foundation of Christianity.

1. *There is no God except the Triune God.*
 2. *There is no salvation except that of the Triune God.*
 3. *There is no Christian church except that of the Triune God.*
-

Our Entire Salvation Rests on the Triune God.

1. *On the Father's promise and call.*
 2. *On the Son's redemption and remission.*
 3. *On the Spirit's regeneration and sanctification.*
-

Why do I Believe in the Holy Three?

1. *God so revealed himself.*
 2. *My salvation is bound up in this revelation.*
 3. *All adoration of God must rest on this salvation and revelation.*
-

The Blessed Mystery of the Holy Trinity.

1. *It is clearly revealed.* As in our text, so in the whole Bible.
 2. *This revelation is bound up with our salvation.* As in our text, so in everything the Bible says of our salvation.
 3. *We are constantly depending on this revelation and its blessedness.* This dependence in our text, and in all that the Bible says of our relation to God now and hereafter.
-

THE TRINITY CYCLE

(693)

THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

John 12, 44-50.

In the after-Trinity cycle many of the newer gospel pericope systems use the Acts in conjunction with the four Gospels, some of them beginning, as we have done, with a few selections already in the festival half of the church year. We here follow this lead, but instead of taking the texts from the Acts in mere chronological order we will here use them according to their subject matter, disregarding chronology as too slight a directive for the selection. — The general distinction between the so-called festival half of the church year and the non-festival half may be defined in different ways. It is carried through without exception in all the pericope systems offered to the church. In the festival half, we may say, the emphasis is always on Christ and his great saving acts, especially as these loom up before us in the great festivals. We see how Christ's kingdom on earth was founded and established by these acts. The objective side of grace and salvation is thus put into the foreground. In the non-festival half of the church year all this objective side is taken for granted, and we build upon it. The emphasis thus is shifted to the appropriation of Christ and his saving work. We are told more particularly of our introduction to his kingdom, and of our reception of his blessings. The subjective side of grace and salvation is in the foreground of our treatment. The emphasis is on us as believers, on the church and the members of the church. The difference as thus stated may be closely formulated and the treatment of the texts carried out accordingly; or we may do without a close formulation and content ourselves with the general character of the two halves of the

church year. In any case the cut between the two halves will not be radical, but in many respects relative. When the great objective facts of salvation are presented in the festival half of the church year the subjective element will also appear and claim its due in a secondary way; and in turn, when we enter the non-festival half, where the subjective side controls fully, the great objective saving acts of Christ form the real foundation of all that is presented. So the distinction holds, and the two halves constitute a mighty whole.

The following series of after-Trinity texts constitute one grand cycle embracing twenty-seven texts. They intend to present, as indicated above, **Christ's saving work in us**, and this in a progressive way. There are four sub-cycles. The first takes in ten texts, grouped around the central thought of *faith*. The second sub-cycle takes in nine texts, presenting *the general characteristic features of the life of faith*. The third sub-cycle adds four texts from *the life of faith in the church*. And the final sub-cycle, the last four texts, brings *the consummation of the life of faith*. Since, however, all twenty-seven texts rarely find room in the church calendar, because the after-Trinity cycle is lengthened or shortened to correspond with the brevity or length of the Epiphany cycle, it is well to keep this in mind so that when the cut in the after-Trinity cycle is made we do not lose the texts all from the end of the cycle, but drop out as many texts as must be dropped by the requirements of the calendar, from the entire list of twenty-seven, omitting a text here and there as may be deemed advisable.

The first sub-cycle of ten texts is arranged as follows. The cut is made at number ten, because this Sunday according to ancient custom deals with the Jews and their unbelief, compare Luke 19. 41-48 in the old gospels, and Matth. 23. 34-39 in the Eisenach gospel series. The first text, John 12. 44-50, is intended to open the entire after-Trinity cycle, presenting *the Light of the world in whom we must believe to have life everlasting*. Christ

thus stands at the head of the entire after-Trinity cycle and illumines the whole of it. Faith in him brings out strongly the subjective side and the general theme of the first sub-cycle. And the life made ours by faith is brought in in the very start; we shall hear more of it as we go along, and its glorious consummation will be shown us at the end. — The second text, Acts 17, 10-14, deals with the *Scriptures as the source of faith* for us all, giving us the fine example of the men at Berea. — The first step toward faith is *contrition*. Paul's words to Felix aimed at contrition, Acts 24, 24-27, but Felix resisted the power that reached out to his heart. — Now follows a text the center of which is *justification*, Acts 13, 38-42, from Paul's great sermon in Antioch of Pisidia. — Acts 6, 8-15 shows us Stephen "*full of faith*" and displaying the victorious power of faith against strong opposition. — In contrast with Stephen we are shown Ananias and Sapphira with their *hypocritical faith*, and God's judgment thereon. — A fine text follows in Acts 18, 24-28, on Apollos and *the full instruction in the faith* which he received from Aquila and Priscilla. — Tabitha, Acts 9, 36-43, gives us a concrete example of *true faith rich in good works*. — John 7, 10-18 is a text on *the assurance of faith* reached by the believer's experience of what faith is and what it brings. — Finally, we have Acts 13, 42-49, on the *obduracy* of the Jews over against which the faith of the Gentiles in Antioch stands out gloriously. This sub-cycle is at once rich and varied, giving us both doctrine and concrete living examples, in a cluster of highly desirable texts.

Our text for the First Sunday after Trinity shows us the end of Christ's ministry and sums up his great work of preaching the Gospel. In v. 36-37 we are told that on the Tuesday after his royal entry into Jerusalem Jesus departed for good from the Temple, preached no more, but hid himself among his friends in nearby Bethany. His public prophetic work was done. John summarizes the effect of it and the general result among the Jews in v. 37-43. He might have stopped with that

and thus closed the first grand half of his book. But he adds another paragraph, in which he combines previous statements of Jesus, and forms of them a general summary of Christ's call and testimony to his nation. It is an impressive declaration on the supreme importance of faith, and on the fatal error and doom of unbelief.

12, 44. And Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. 45. And he that beholdeth me beholdeth him that sent me.

This is not another address made by Jesus after his final withdrawal from the Temple and his hiding himself, v. 36. We must note that neither time nor place is mentioned or otherwise indicated. We hear nothing of the persons addressed, either friends or foes. And all the statements in this closing section are repetitions of previous words of Jesus. Some have supposed that Jesus uttered these words in his act of leaving the Temple, but v. 36 shuts this idea out most emphatically. Besser advanced the view that after leaving Jesus spoke these words to his disciples concerning the unbelief of the Jews, but this clashes with the emphatic statement: **Jesus cried and said**, which denotes public speaking, and never a declaration made only to the Twelve. Bengel is right in his *Gnomon*: the evangelist here sums up the essentials of all Christ's preaching to the Jews, in order to put their unbelief and rejection of Jesus' testimony in the right light. This is the mighty call Christ had issued to them, this is what he had said, and this is what they refused definitely to believe. The aorists are merely historical, stating the great past fact as such. — **He that believeth on me** at once strikes the key note — everything depends on our believing. For this Christ lived and labored, for this in particular he preached and taught. His whole work as it comes to us to-day in his Word is aimed at this central result. The matter is personal

—hence the singular. And believing means to receive in confidence and trust. We analyze faith as knowledge, assent, and confidence (*fiducia*), but the confidence is the real essential to which the other two elements are aids. The present participle expresses quality as such, and does not stress the point of time, though, of course, the quality is considered as enduring. The object of true faith is “me” — Jesus, namely he as he is in his person, mission, word, and work, all these combined. He is such as to deserve in the very highest sense and highest measure all the confidence of our hearts. Everything about him cries out and calls for such confidence, is of a kind and character to arouse it. The only natural and proper thing is to respond with such confidence; to refuse it is unreasonable, wrong, wicked. As in ordinary life when a man is revealed to us fully as being good, true, great, strong, kind, loving, and extends his help to us, all that he is calls forth our confidence and we yield it, yield it because he produces it; so with Jesus, only in his case, even as his person, word, and work show, on a far higher plane. — **Believeth not on me**, of course, does not mean to deny the believing, but has the meaning: “not on me alone,” as though I stood alone, or had come of myself. This is impossible, for it would mean that the believer did not know Jesus as he is. The believer does know him, and believes on that very account. — So Jesus adds: **but on him that sent me**. All through the Gospel of John, all through Christ’s preaching and signs we hear this word about “him that did send me,” Jesus’ great Sender. Him the Jews ought to have known from his mighty revelation in the Old Test. They claimed they knew him, but when his own Son and Messenger came to them they did not recognize him or trust him. The reason was that they never knew the Sender, and when his Messenger revealed him again, would have nothing either of this Sender or of the Son he sent. But the great Sender is the ultimate basis of our faith in Jesus. Behind this man Jesus stands

God himself; and he who sees that sees at once that this man is more than man, God's own eternal Son in the form of man. Thus he was sent, and this is what **believing in him really is**—trust in God and the Son he sent. For in this sending is the culmination and complete fulfillment of all his saving promises. There is no possible higher cause to awaken and enkindle trust in us miserable sinners whose only help is in this Sender and the Son he sent. The aorist is of the entire act of God, bestowing his Son upon us as our Savior.—The same thing is said in other words, deepening the sense. **He that beholdeth me** has the same present participle as before, only the verb now brings out a new side. To behold him is to see indeed and perceive fully who Jesus is. Faith has the eyes which thus behold, in fact is such beholding.—But the addition: **beholdeth him that sent me**, tells us that the Sender and the One Sent are not wide apart. We are not to make a deduction at long range, one which therefore may be uncertain and doubtful as to whether our conclusion is right. Between the prophets whom God sent and God himself there is a wide gap; between Jesus and his Sender there is none—in the one you see the other, for the Son is the express image of the Father, Heb. 1, 3. All that the Father thinks, is fully revealed in Jesus; and more than this, the Father and Son are one in essence, and so in will and in work. There is no division and separation between them. To see the Son is thus indeed in full reality to see the Father who sent him. Cf. 8, 19; 14, 9.

46. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me may not abide in the darkness.

The perfect tense, **I am come**, in the Greek signifies that once come Jesus is here. So he stood before the Jews all during his glorious ministry, and we may say so he stands before us still in his radiant Word. We have no article with **light**. Jesus is, of course, *the* Light of the world, and in this sense there is no other light;

he is truth itself, the very embodiment of all the saving realities of God for us. Cf. 8, 12; 12, 35; 9, 5. There is none beside Jesus in this respect. But in another sense he is not the only Light that God has sent. There was bright light in all the prophets of God. In so far as they all testified of Jesus he was the light that shone in and through them, yet in so far as they were bearers of God's light they too may be called lights. One might construe **into the world** with the verb, which would make it emphatic, since the modifier then precedes the verb; but the phrase here seems to go with Light — Jesus has come and is present as a Light for the world, intended for the world, shining into the world. The world is assumed to be in total darkness spiritually, like chaos before the first day when God called light into existence. This is the darkness of sin and death. The Light comes to drive away this darkness; this is its great mission and work. — But again we see that the whole matter is personal, because it centers in each individual: **that whosoever believeth in me**. The decisive thing for every individual is faith. There is little or no difference between *eis* and *en* as thus used with *πιστεύειν*, though we may say the former indicates the direction of the act of trusting toward its great object, the latter the sphere in which the act rests. Note the universality in "whosoever." If you are a believer this word "whosoever" is like a blank space into which you are to write your name, or — Jesus himself by this word writes it there for you. — **May not abide in the darkness** views the purpose of Jesus' coming as this is realized in the individual. "The darkness" is the one enfolding the whole world in its powerful folds. Man is absolutely helpless in it. God's Light must come of itself to him and illumine him, kindling faith within him, and thus filling him with light. That, and that alone, takes him out of the darkness. And so he "shall not remain" in it; and the aorist is a complete and definite denial of his thus remaining. What a glorious thing this com-

ing of the Light was! How every soul should have delighted to escape out of the darkness and live henceforth in the Light! What a monstrous thing that men, made for the Light in the first place, when now darkness has come over them, spurn the rescuing Light and hold fast that cold, killing, devil darkness!

47. And if any man hear my sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day.

Here Jesus deals with unbelief, namely unbelief in the sense of wilful rejection of Jesus. **If any man hear my sayings** implies that Jesus will say or have them said to the man in question. Always he and his Word comes to the sinner; he makes his words resound in the sinner's ears and consciousness. The "sayings" are the utterances of Jesus, the individual parts of his Word; the term stands thus for the different things which are said. In uttering them Jesus hands them, as it were, to the hearer through the medium of his hearing. The underlying idea is that the Gospel is to be preached and taught. — **And keep them not** = and guard them not. like a gift or treasure laid in a man's hand. Instead of recognizing its worth for himself and thus wanting it for himself, holding and guarding it that it may not slip from him or be taken away again, he cares nothing about the gift, he throws it aside carelessly and lets it lie as of no value for him, as a thing he does not want. The gold of Jesus' "sayings" he treats as counterfeit coin. The aorists are of complete and definite acts; they describe the final attitude. And the condition is one of expectancy — there will be men like this, there were then, and are now. How can men act so unreasonably and blindly! The very treasure laid into their hands has in it the power to make them grasp tight hold of it, even as in earthly treasures given to us there is this

effect upon us. But here are men who have no use for the most precious and valuable gift of all. — Jesus says: **I judge him not.** Why not? This is not the purpose of Jesus' coming into the flesh and of his divine mission to men: **for I came not to judge the world.** We may say, the world was already judged, Rom. 5, 16, and needed no special judge to be sent to it. Not for one moment did the Son become incarnate and perform his great mission with the purpose of judgment. His purpose throughout was not to judge and condemn, **but to save the world**, and the aorist subjunctive speaks of effective saving. That is what the world needed, it had the other already. Here again is the universal, antecedent purpose and will of God in all its graciousness and glory. How that word "save" ought to grip the soul of every man who is lost! — But how about such a man and his judgment? Jesus describes the man again, in order that we may know very certainly whom he means: **He that rejecteth me**, sets me aside as worthless for himself, **and receiveth not my sayings**, does not appropriate them and what they convey, his judgment is taken care of without further effort. The present participles are qualitative, marking the man as what he is. — He **hath one that judgeth him** (the participle is of the same kind); his judge is already at hand, sitting on the bench in his judicial robes with all the court officers in place. See what Jesus here says — whoever hears his Word has it, either as a savior, or as a judge. Once you hear Jesus' Word you cannot escape it; many think they can, but they are wholly mistaken: **the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day.** The WORD is the judge of every unbeliever. Jesus does not say "my sayings" shall be his judges; he now summarizes his sayings in "the Word," which is not a mere sound heard, gone, and forgotten, but the eternal substance of his utterances, the imperishable reality in every statement of his. This Word as a majestic whole shall be the unbeliever's judge. — The addition: "which I did

speak" is important, for it describes the Word as brought to the unbeliever by Jesus' lips and voice, so that he heard and knew it. It will be a mighty familiar judge whom the unbeliever will meet at the final judgment; if there is any surprise, it will be the surprise of this familiar Word. This Word decides every man's fate who heard it; it decides that now already, and the decision will be sealed for every unbeliever by a final judicial declaration at the last day, i. e., before the universe of angels and men. What a warning against unbelief! In the description of the unbeliever Jesus combines himself and his sayings — him the unbeliever rejects when he declines to receive his sayings. And so there is no discrepancy between the statements which say that Jesus will be the judge at the last day, and this which says his Word will be the judge. As the Word comes now from Jesus' lips, as he is in it and comes through it to us, so this Word will come from his lips then, he will be in it and act through it. Throughout in the Word we deal with Jesus.

49. For I spake not from myself; but the Father which sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50. And I know that his commandment is life eternal: the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak.

This "for" gives us the reason why the Word shall judge its rejecters at the last day. Jesus did not think it out and utter it of himself as his own human invention and thus apart from God. The Word comes from Jesus' Sender, whom he here names: **the Father**, the first person of the Godhead. The emphatic repetition **he** is really to be read: "the Father himself" — no less a person. The perfect tense: **he hath given** refers to the giving when Jesus came on his mission, a giving which thus stood for the whole life and work of Jesus. And this giving, as in all the instances in which Jesus says something is "given" to him, refers to his human

nature. The entire ministry and work of Jesus was thus under the Father's direction. The Father gave, the Son in human flesh, in the state of humiliation, took from the Father, and gave to us. This extends to the miracles as well, John 11, 41-43. — This is the meaning of **commandment**. We must read the word not in the Mosaic sense, but in the Gospel sense, for we too have *ἐντολαί*, commandments, from Jesus and the Father, John 13, 34. Because of this commandment to him the whole work of Jesus is an obedience to the Father; he did his will, not any will of his own. And this obedience is a sweet smelling savor unto God, Eph. 5, 2. But for us, all that Jesus thus said and did, is the Father's own Word and deed. This is the infinite and supreme majesty of it all. — As regards the testimony of Jesus it takes in both its substance: **what I should say**, and its form, **and what I should speak**. The English is weak in bringing out the difference. The former uses the verb which includes the thought in a marked way, the latter a verb which indicates only the sound of speaking. So completely was Jesus' Word that of the Father. Nor is Godet right when he reads the two aorists of "every case" in which Jesus spoke, as if a separate command was given for each case; these aorists are complexive, they view Jesus' saying and speaking as a whole. — While thus the real origin, the true character, and the full majesty of Jesus' Word is brought out, the idea that Jesus came not to judge but to save is held fast. All this greatness of the Word, while it shows us how terrible the sin of unbelief against the Word is, really has as its first and original purpose salvation, not condemnation. **And I know**, says Jesus, I who am thus sent, and who thus testify to all, **that his commandment is life eternal**. Its substance is that, and its form agrees with this substance. God's will, and the expression of it to Jesus to direct him in every word he uttered, was nothing but the true life, the ever-enduring life for us poor dead sinners. This is the purpose

of the Word, and it itself is the mighty spiritual means to effect that purpose in those who hear. This purpose is accomplished in every believer, and so faith is the aim of the Word, that for which it is designed and which it produces as its natural and proper fruit. See, then, what it means to spurn the Word! It means to cast eternal life away. — Knowing this glorious, heavenly purpose of the Word and all it contained Jesus brought it to us: **the things therefore which I speak** (or utter with my lips), **even as the Father hath said unto me** (and as once said they abide with me), **so I speak** (or utter them), and in no other manner. How could he, when all his own aim and will was to give us this everlasting life? The last word, then, of the entire first half of John's Gospel is $\lambda\alpha\lambda\omega$ — the great theme of these twelve chapters of John: Jesus' public testimony. And the last summary of John centers in these three: the Word — faith — everlasting life.

SERMON.

On this First Sunday after Trinity we leave the golden heights of the festival half of the church year where the great deeds of God for our salvation were revealed to us in the birth, the manifestation, the passion, the resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and his mission of the Holy Ghost. In the coming half of the church year we will follow the beautiful river of life as it flows in the Word of God and reveals to us how salvation and life everlasting, with all the heavenly treasures involved, are to be made ours now and forever. All these coming Sundays deal with one great theme — Christ's salvation made yours and mine.

And this very first text in the second half of the church year begins the great work by setting clearly before our souls the eternal issues involved for us in all that we shall hear. The holy words which you have just heard are from the lips of Jesus and summarize all that he preached to men during the three years of his ministry on earth. His work was done: no more would he speak to the multitudes in the cities, on the hills and mountains of Galilee, or in the great Temple courts in Jerusalem. And now that all is done, this is the sum, these are the mighty issues. They have run through every sermon he spoke, they stood forth in

every word he uttered. And it is proper that at the end of his work they should be focused together as we find them here in St. John's Holy Gospel. They mark all that we shall be told during the rest of the church year. Let us impress them upon our hearts —

The Eternal Issues in Christ's Final Word to the World.

They are the issues between light and darkness; between faith and unbelief; between life everlasting and judgment eternal. God grant that his grace alone may decide these issues for us!

1.

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." That is the eternal issue Christ sets before us, **the issue between Light and darkness.**

The whole world outside of Christ and apart from him is "darkness." It is denser and more terrible than any natural darkness in which we have ever been. For this is the darkness which lies like an impenetrable pall upon the souls of men. It is the dungeon darkness of sin, locking the poor prisoner in. It is the deadly darkness of the grave, holding him like a corpse in an iron vault. It is worse than that, for the prince of darkness, Satan, and the powers of darkness, the spirits of hell rule in it, and their devilish clutches hold the souls that lie bound and fettered beneath their power. Do not think that these are extravagant figures of speech, they are cold, stern realities in the fullest sense of the word.

What is the world without Christ? What is your soul without him? Oh, I know this earthly life is fair enough in many ways. The sun shines in the heavens, the birds sing, the flowers bloom: there is interesting work and pleasant play, there is love and music and fair aspiration. Men are satisfied with it all and go on day by day asking and seeking nothing more. They see only what is outward to the eye of sense, and that deceives them, because their very souls are blind and dead within them. The realities as they are they do not even know, to say nothing of escaping from them. — But look beyond this life without Christ — tell me what is there? Night, absolute night with eternal terrors. Let no man lie to you by hanging up a painted sun in self-made hopes of his beyond the grave. No colors which he can paint into that sun with his hand of flesh shed even the faintest glimmer into that void beyond the grave. Why is eternity one black abyss without Christ? — Look into your own soul — without Christ, what is there there? Night, darkness, just as black. For there is sin and unforgiven guilt, cutting off all connection with God and the true light above. Every sin is like another dark

dungeon door clanged shut against hope. Let no man lie to you by inventing a forgiveness of his own. What will it help a poor prisoner in some underground vault; if he succeed in getting a match and lights it—it burns for a trifle and then the night is blacker than ever. And that perhaps is the reason why most men without Christ do not even think of their souls, and live on as though they had none.—But look again. The soul without Christ is not only in itself dark, blind, and dead to the true life, it is in the power of darkness. For this spiritual darkness of which Christ speaks is filled with devilish forces, the great monsters of the pit. Where do all the crimes come from in the world, all this black mass of vice and shame, and all these deeds that we call lesser sins, but all of which belong to the same class? There any man can see the power of darkness; there are the Satanic forces in hideous openness. But that is all some men can be brought to see, and yet the open works of darkness are by far the least. What of these others—hearts without fear and love of God and Christ, souls centered in self and not in God, fighting God and Christ with their prideful self-made righteousness, striking down the very cross of Christ, trampling on his holy blood, and to justify themselves putting forth all kinds of doctrines and teachings—all born of the devil and black as he is himself? Immorality is black enough, but blacker still and more deadly even in their blackness are the wicked, perverted, destructive delusions with which men's souls are bound.—This is the darkness which Christ means when he holds up before us the great issue of Light and darkness.

Against it all he puts himself: "I am come a Light into the world!" And so the issue is joined. Christ is the Light, the only Light there is in the world for the souls of men. Down into this black world he came from the very throne and home of eternal light above. Like a mighty sun he burst into our darkness and sheds his radiance abroad. There is God—in Christ we see him, and all his heavenly world of unspeakable blessedness. And there in Christ is the way to God, straight, bright, clear, and wonderful, right up to the throne of light above. There in Christ's cross is the end of our sin and guilt, in his blood and cross the shining, radiant righteousness which God accepts and which Christ would give to us. And there in Christ is the power of heavenly light to enter men's souls and drive out the power of darkness and the devil that rules them. The dungeon is burst open and the soul released: the grave of the soul rent in two and the light of life enters in—like Christ's own open grave when the shining angels sat within it. And all this heavenly light of Christ, illumining the great eternity beyond and our own souls with radiance and power from on high, is gathered for us as in a sun that never sets, in his Holy Word. Here it shines in these heavenly pages, all of

them showing us Christ, Christ, Christ, and eternal salvation for us poor sinners in him. And this Word which he himself made shine through all the land of the Jews when he wrought out our salvation among them, he has ordered to be proclaimed unceasingly to all the world. Wonderful, heavenly, blessed Light! Oh, that all men who sit in darkness and the shadow of death might have their souls filled with it now and evermore!

II.

Light and darkness — this is the eternal issue placed before us in Christ's final word to the world. But locked up in this issue there lies another — **the issue of faith and unbelief.** "I am come a Light into the world that whosoever *believeth* on me should not abide in darkness." And again Jesus says: "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth him that sent me." On the other hand he had to add: "If any man hear my words and *believe not*," and "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words." That is the issue, one right in our own souls, whether faith shall rule there or its opposite unbelief.

Can it be possible that such an issue should ever arise? With an eternity blacker than midnight on the one hand, and on the other an eternity lit up by God and his grace in Jesus Christ to be made ours by God's free gift in Christ — can it be that a single soul should not at once be drawn from that desperate night to this heavenly light? With the black night of sin, guilt, penalty, and dread on the one hand, and on the other the heavenly light of God's own pardon and grace in his Son and the peace and joy of heaven itself as the result — can it be that a single soul should not at once be won from this accursed night to this blissful light? And yet once more, with the powers of darkness on the one hand, hellish powers to enslave in sin, error, lies, and damnable delusions, and on the other hand the love-light of freedom, a heavenly power to make us love what is godly and good, sweet and heavenly, and not only love it but rise up and do it — can it be that a single soul should not be conquered at once and carried from the power of night to this heavenly power of light? With the issue so clear, and turning on our own souls, must not everything, literally everything throw us into the arms of Christ and the heaven that opens for us there? Yes, a thousand times yes! And yet in the face of it all, men say no. This darkness which hell has brought they prefer to the light which heaven has brought. They hurl aside their own salvation, they will not let go their own damnation.

Why is this issue drawn for us anew to-day? Because it is so absolutely decisive for everyone of us now and every day.

Every doctrine and word of Christ rings with it. Every critical hour in our own lives, and many that do not seem critical to us, involve this issue, in an endless variety of forms. This is the issue in our own souls which means everything for us. Faith and unbelief—with faith heaven; with unbelief hell. Those are the ultimate issues; faith and unbelief determine them now.—Oh then, all you who believe, let the infinite preciousness of your faith stand out clearly to your souls. You believe—Christ is yours, all his love and all that his love has purchased and won for you. And with Christ the Father is yours, he who sent Christ for you that he might be yours, and all his blessings are yours, for you are his child and heir in Christ. You believe—Christ the Light is yours; in him you know God, salvation, newness of life, comfort, peace, and joy. Not one of these could be yours without Christ, and faith. In Christ his Word is yours, that which the Father gave him to give you, that which shall stand when all the words of men are fallen and forgotten. It is the Word of your salvation and deliverance, every syllable of it help, light, and hope for you. Who can measure the value of these gifts for your soul? Faith is the hand by which you hold them as your own.

Can it be, then, that you should ever forget your faith and what it holds for you? If your faith should go out—what an unspeakable loss! He who loses faith, like him who spurns faith, loses no less than Christ, God, and his own soul. How is it possible then that you should ever be indifferent about your faith, careless about nourishing and strengthening it by means of Word and Sacrament, hurting it by foolish sins and grasping at tainted worldly gain and pleasure? Will you let the devil hide the issue involved in faith from your eyes? And these doctrines of Christ and his Holy Word, all of them so many fortifications for your faith, why are you so indifferent about them, with not time enough even to make them your own like strong defences against the devil's delusions? Can it be that you see the issue only in part? And this thing of unbelief—how it fails to shock you when you meet it in men, when you see them acting on it, insulting Christ perhaps to your very face. And worse still, you are not always proof when men expect you to do as they do in their Christless ways of unbelief; you are afraid of them, of losing their goodwill, their help, the money, positions, honors involved. Is the issue clouded to your soul? Remember, then, it always involves your soul. And that is why Christ draws it here so plainly for you once more—light or darkness, faith or unbelief.

III.

And therefore also this final issue—the issue at last of **life eternal and judgment to come**. “If any man hear my words,” says Christ, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day.” And over against this judgment Jesus places the same Word held by faith. God commanded him to give it to us, and Jesus says: “I know that his commandment is life everlasting,” namely for you and me. That is the final issue: life everlasting—judgment at the last day.

How near are you to this final issue now? How many days have you yet on earth? There are some here who may have only a few months, weeks, or days left. And at best how quickly will our years go if yet they are many! It is absolutely certain for us this last eternal issue—life or judgment. It is folly supreme to disregard or forget it. If your earthly life is in the balance, will you take time for other things, trivial things, foolish things, and no time for your life? If your money is the issue, will you take time to make it secure, or let the time pass playing with other things, till the loss is upon you? But your soul in all eternity is infinitely above money, or earthly life, or any other earthly thing you can name. Surely, you must see this issue as it is, and secure eternal life and escape eternal judgment.

There is not a shadow of doubt about how the issue will be on the last day. All those who think that they cannot know, who are satisfied thus to go on with a faint sort of hope, who are content to take their chance with the great crowd of other uncertain and foolish people around them, are merely letting the devil cloud and darken the issue for them. Christ is the Light, he has made it clear and sets it clearly before you to-day. The Word decides—either with the Word by faith in our hearts, filling us with light and life and leading us to light and life—or with the Word we have rejected and neglected in open or secret unbelief facing us as our judge on that great day. That Word is here before you this day, the Word with Christ and God in it, to be put into your heart by faith and to stay there until Christ and God receive you in heaven. And that Word, as every unbeliever has met it here and locked his heart against it, that Word will face him in that fatal, final hour. Christ's own lips have **said it, and all the devils in hell cannot change it, and all the unbelievers in the world cannot erase it**: “He that believeth not shall be damned!” That is the verdict of the Word now, that is its unalterable verdict then. And the unbelieving and godless shall

go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal. This is the issue for every soul on earth.

Christ left the Jews when his work was done, but the issues drawn by him and in him remained. They stand unchangeable to this day. Thank God, they are made so clear in his Holy Word. Thank God, that in the very statement of them all that Christ says of himself as the Light, of faith and trust in him, of eternal life sure for those who believe, is a power reaching down out of heaven itself into our poor sinful hearts to cut us loose from darkness, unbelief, and judgment, and thus to give us salvation, now and evermore. Bless that heavenly power of grace; let it fill your hearts and hold them firm and true. Then the eternal issues as Christ drew them at last will not have been drawn in vain for you.

OUTLINES.

The chief features of the text stand out with such prominence that in making an outline the work will consist mainly in arranging these features and grouping them under a proper theme. We have Christ and his Sender—faith and unbelief—light and darkness—salvation and virtual judgment now already—life everlasting and the final judge. Taking these just as they are derived from the text we may use them as the main parts of the sermon, adding them all together in the theme: Christ's own Summary of his Teaching.—We may also lift one of these cardinal features into special prominence, for instance what Christ here says of his Word: The tremendous power of Christ's Word: Its illuminating power—its life-giving power—its judicial power.—The vital importance of faith: Faith accepts the Word—Christ—light—life everlasting.—Or we may center everything on Christ, which would make a very fine sermon at the head of the whole after-Trinity line of Sundays: In the name of Jesus Christ let us enter the Trinity season: In his name—that means with his Word: in his name—that means with faith in his Word: in his name—that means with him and his Word to give us light and life.

The Way to Life Everlasting.

1. *Christ.*—2. *The Word.*—3. *Faith.*—4. *Life.*

The Commandment that is Life Everlasting.

1. *The Word which Jesus brought.*
2. *The Word which brought Jesus.*
3. *The Word which brings us to Jesus.*

Christ's Final Word to the World.

1. *A call to faith and life.*
 2. *A warning against unbelief and judgment.*
-

Why is Faith so Essential?

1. *Because it delivers from darkness and judgment.*
 2. *Because it gives us God and life.*
-

Have You Heard God's Word from Christ?

Then one of two things is absolutely certain for you: 1) Either by that Word you have eternal life; 2) Or that Word will be your final judge.

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts 17, 10-14.

In any line of texts centering around the idea of faith we ought to have one good text on the Word of God or the Holy Scriptures. The text herewith offered is to fill that place. Jesus himself said: "Search the Scriptures!" and here we have people who "searched the Scriptures daily," and with the very finest result: "many of them believed." Our general subject, then, is *the Scriptures as the source of faith*. — Paul's trying experience with the authorities at Philippi came near finding a repetition with the city authorities at Thessalonica. The mob stirred up by the Jews missed the apostle, and the magistrates kept their heads and refused to prosecute Jason or any of the other Christians. But it was evident that serious trouble might yet result, and that prudence was the wiser course, since the chief work of Paul was already done, i. e., the planting of the Gospel in Thessalonica in a permanent congregation of believers.

17, 10. And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who when they were come thither went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Paul leaves Thessalonica for Berea, but he does not act on his own decision; though he was the great apostle, he listened to other people. He knew when they were right, and acted on their advice. There was, of course, no cowardice in Paul's leaving, the bravery he shows on every occasion shuts that out. His call as an apostle was to go from one place to another. These outbursts of persecution were only providential hastenings of his mission. The one thing that concerned him was whether the work was far enough advanced for him

to leave it. With this assured he could go, and did go. He had considerable help and assurance, however, in the assistants who worked with him, and he made it a general practice to leave at least one of them behind when his own departure was hastened. So here **Paul and Silas** are sent away, but nothing is said of Timothy who, it seems, had come on later from Philippi to Thessalonica. It is a fair conclusion that Timothy stayed behind and helped the young church.—The brethren sent Paul and Silas away **by night**. We are not told that any of them accompanied the travellers, as the Christians so generally loved to do when they could. "By night," then, means secretly, so that the hostile Jews should not know what had become of Paul and Silas, whether they were gone or not, or if gone, in what direction they had left.—Luke at once reports that Paul chose as his next place of labor Berœa. "If the journey was at all like what it is now, it may be simply described as follows: After leaving the gardens which are in the immediate neighborhood of Thessalonica, the travellers crossed a wide track of corn-fields and came to the shifting bed of the 'wide-flowing' Axios. About this part of the journey, if not before, the day must have broken upon them. Between the Axios and the Haliacmon there intervenes another wide extent of the same continuous plain. The banks of this second river are confined by artificial dykes to check the destructive inundations. All the country is covered with a vast forest, with intervals of cultivated land and villages concealed among the trees. The road extends for many miles through these woods, and at length reaches the base of the western mountains, where a short ascent leads up to the gates of Berœa." Coney-beare and Howson. The city is described as commanding an extensive view of the plain, and as one of the most agreeable towns of this section of Macedonia. Plane trees spread a grateful shade. The place is abundantly watered, as even its modern name Verria

or Kara-Verria indicates. Recent reports give it 18,000 or 20,000 inhabitants, though the recent war may have changed these figures. One reason why Paul chose this city for his next effort was the presence of a Jewish colony in Berœa, and the general situation of this fair city was such as to make it a link in the chain of churches he was extending across this section of Europe. Coneybeare and Howson give the distance from Thessalonica as about sixty miles, far enough to check any rapid efforts of Paul's foes to interfere with his new work. — Without delay Paul begins, and in his regular way, teaching in **the synagogue of the Jews**, who therefore must have been more numerous than the Jews at Philippi. The verb is not merely **went**, as the R. V. translates, but with the added phrase: "went away to the synagogue," this place of worship apparently being outside of the city somewhere along the Haliacmon river. This compound form of the verb, so common otherwise, occurs only here in the New Test.

11. Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. 12. Many of them therefore believed; also of the Greek women of honorable estate, and of men, not a few.

Here is certainly a beautiful picture from the pages of Paul's missionary labors. In this somewhat secluded town a fair and lovely congregation grows up like a tender violet in a quiet corner, like a lovely rose in a fair spot in the garden. Gerok sums up the story: an encouraging example of the right use of the Word, of willing obedience to it, and of true faith in it. It is a case where so many of the hostile influences which Paul otherwise met were absent. Luke compares the Jews of Berœa with those of Thessalonica and calls the former **nobler** than the latter. The word means: of nobler birth or race, but is used also of character, and here evidently in this sense. It was, of course, the

grace of God which had wrought this nobleness of mind. The Jews of this place were better Jews in having imbibed more fully the spirit of Israel and the Old Test., as we see by the use they made of the Old Test. and the readiness with which they accepted what they found there when Paul showed it to them. — The translation: **in that they received the word** is not quite exact; it should be: "who received," though it is true enough that this reception was the evidence of their nobler character. Paul found a good many Jews not ready at all to receive the Word, even when he showed it to them in their own Scriptures. There are thousands of Christians like this to-day. They profess to receive and believe the Scriptures, but when some doctrine or requirement of the Scriptures is shown them, they find all sorts of evasions and refuse acceptance and obedience. **The word** here stands for Paul's message concerning Christ. His method always was to present this to the Jews on the basis of the Old Test. revelations, and no doubt he did the same thing here. The aorist verb states the historical fact of the reception as such, and the following participle describes how this came about. To receive the Word = to believe it. — And this was not done with reluctance, but **with all readiness of mind** or eagerness. These people were concerned about what Paul taught; they were not cold or indifferent, as so many are whose readiness of mind all runs to money, pleasure, or earthly advancement. Spiritual things were vital things to them. Paul had met Jews like this before, but usually they were comparatively few in any synagogue, here the Jews generally belonged to this class. The apostle certainly must have been happy in working with them. — But these Bereans were by no means a credulous set, which would not have made them "nobler." Their eager and hearty acceptance came as a result of their **examining the scriptures daily**. We have both the singular "Scripture" and the plural "Scriptures" in the New Test., the latter describing the

Old Test. as composed of different books. The verb is used of questioning, sometimes of the questioning of persons in a court trial, also of previous or preliminary questioning, all of which fits here. Nor was this examination superficial, it continued **daily**, or "day by day," during the period necessary for reaching a decision. We must remember that some days at least were required, because copies of the Old Test. were not in the hands of all, and most likely a good part of the discussion was had in the synagogue. It makes no difference whether we read the Greek article before the phrase "day by day" or not; if we do the phrase is made an adverbial substantive, if we do not it is a mere time phrase. How long this examination took is not indicated, but the result is stated in "they received."—**Whether these things were so** is an indirect question using for once the optative so rare in the Greek of this time, especially the present optative. The things meant are those alleged by Paul and already summarized in "the word." Are they facts? That was the question, and when the Old Test. substantiated them, the Berœans believed them whole-heartedly.—**Many of them**, then, believed, though here too not all. The aorist **believed** is either: come to faith; or the simple historical aorist used in narrative. Andreae writes: "Here one of the Lord's own apostles taught, and yet the Berœans are praised not that they did believe even him blindly on his mere word, but first made examination and applied the test of the Word in trying out his preaching. This is liberty of conscience, this is evangelical searching of Scripture, this is the exercise of the universal priesthood over against all mere faith on authority!" Would that we had more Berœans in our churches to-day! Too many have a rotten foundation for their faith. They take the preacher's word for it, and let it go at that—just like Romanists. And preachers hold a doctrine because their synod tells them to. Some indeed are freer, but how? They go on what a few liberalistic

and lax men say and do in their church body and salve their conscience with such rank human authority. We need these Berœans more than many think. — Paul's success went beyond the synagogue, a good many heathen Greeks also came to faith. The women are mentioned first: **also of the Greek women**. It need not surprise us that the women thus took the lead, they often do, and it is said here to their honor, and to the shame of the men. The word for "Greek" is a feminine noun here used adjectively. These were prominent people, **of honorable estate**, literally "of good form," but used of superior social standing. Whether these were proselytes or not is not indicated; it seems they were not — the Gospel was winning its way among the Gentiles, and this surely must have made Paul happy. — **And of men** means, of course, Greek men, though the former term "Greek," being feminine, cannot be added to "men" as Meyer and Luthardt suggest. We may read between the lines here that at least some of the men were led to faith through the leadership of their wives. Blessed are these helpmeets who prove such in a double capacity! — **Not a few**, i. e., many, goes with all these heathen converts; and there is no trace of jealousy on the part of the Jews, as there was so often in other cases. So the young church was strongly established in Berœa, in this instance without any convulsions of local opposition.

13. But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was proclaimed of Paul in Berœa also, they came thither likewise, stirring up and troubling the multitudes. 14. And then immediately the brethren sent forth Paul to go as far as the sea: and Silas and Timothy abode there still.

The Thessalonican Jews did not get wind of Paul's work in this new locality until it was too late to frustrate it; but they finally found out where he was and heard of his success — how, Luke does not intimate. Very significantly Luke writes, they learned **that the**

word of God was proclaimed of Paul in Berœa — that was the reason for their wicked action. The second aorist passives are favorites in the Hellenistic Greek of this period. There are always opponents of the Word who are not content to reject it themselves, they must try to make others reject it also, and the means they employ to this end are generally as base as those used in the case before us. There is no high morality, even high natural morality, when men oppose Christ; they are ready to stoop very low. — The R. V. translates: **they came thither likewise**, but the adverb with “and” cannot be drawn to “came,” since they did not “also” come to this place. This “also” goes to the next action: also there **stirring up and troubling the multitudes**, i. e., with their slanderous and disquieting accusations. This is the action which they repeated and which justifies the “also.” The first participle means to move to and fro, the second is stronger, to shake or agitate severely. But quite significantly only “the multitudes” are mentioned, and we may compare v. 5 on the tools which these Jews chose to employ. The Christians, then, remained firm and undisturbed. And as far as the other people were concerned the effort of the Thessalonian Jews produced no further results. — Paul’s work was again finished, and so once more he listens to **the brethren**, who sent him “out and away,” as the verb puts it. In each case the storm seems to center about him, and his assistants are treated as of lesser importance. — The reading *ὡς ἐπὶ* might be taken in the sense of a ruse: “to go as if to the sea,” pretending this, in order to throw the enemy off the track; but *ζῶς* is assured: **to go as far as the sea**, i. e., and there set sail for Athens. V. 15 shows that some of the brethren accompanied Paul to this new place of labor. — As in Thessalonica Paul left someone behind to aid the young congregation; here Silas and Timothy remained. We are left to conjecture about Timothy, whether he had come to Berœa directly from Asia, or had been left by Paul in Thessalonica,

coming on to Paul from there. Lindhammer writes: "Seldom the children of light do as much for the truth as the children of darkness do against it — why? Well, the effort of the former is up-hill, that of the latter down-hill."

SERMON.

"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path," sang the Psalmist of old.

"To the law and to the testimony," cried the great prophet Isaiah to his people, "if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them."

"We have also a more sure Word of prophecy," adds the holy apostle Peter, "whereunto ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

And on all these Jesus Christ himself sets his seal when he bids us: "Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me."

One thing more we need in addition to these testimonies and admonitions from great men of God and from God's Son himself, namely an example of what their words mean. We have it in our text to-day —

The Shining Example of the Men of Berea.

I.

See the example in what they did.

St. Paul came to Berea on one of his great missionary journeys; he had his helper Silas with him, and presently his other helper, Timothy, also came. Berea was a beautiful city of 20,000 people in Macedonia. Most of these people were heathen and worshipped the old idols of Greece and Rome, but some of them were Jews who had the Old Test. revelation of God and came together in their synagogue for worship. St. Paul began with these Jews. He preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ to them, the Savior to whom the whole Old Test. pointed, in whom all the promises of God for our salvation have been fulfilled. What did these Jewish men of Berea do? Hear the glorious answer we are able to make: They "searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so." They did exactly what they ought to have done. what St. Paul wanted them to do, and no doubt helped them in

doing, what Jesus Christ himself would have bidden them to do — they took the Bible to see what it said in order to believe what there they saw. And here is their shining example for us.

Thank God, the Bible is in men's hands to-day! Whoever will can have it in our whole land, and can read and study it as much as he desires. But what do we find in this free land of ours? The most deplorable ignorance of the Bible. And alongside of it the most dangerous misuse of the Bible. Thousands have time and attention for everything else, but none (literally none) for the eternal Word of God concerning their own soul's salvation. And other thousands do indeed take the Bible, but they use it as it never was meant to be used, to find support in it for their own preconceived religious *follies*; not to find Christ in it, Christ alone, and the salvation he has won for us. (Here is God's own Word, the great treasure house of heaven, and here is the key to unlock all its treasures for us. Some do not even go near; and others fail to use the key and do not really enter where the treasures lie. O the sadness of this lack of use, and of this misuse of the Holy Scriptures.)

Look at these Bereans. They had only the Old Test., while we have both the Old and the New. When St. Paul came among them preaching Christ's salvation, they did not argue with him (and set their own opinions against what he said;) they started to search the Bible to see what God said, and to build their whole faith and trust on that alone. Whatever opinions they may have had before, they put away completely in order to learn and rely on what God said, and on that alone. And when St. Paul preached Christ to them, Christ the Son and Savior of God, they made these things the key of their search in the Scriptures.) And at once their search was rewarded. One golden promise of God after another shone out before their eyes. They found Christ indeed, and they were overwhelmed with happiness and joy. Oh for a repetition of their search among men to-day! Oh for a finding like theirs, a finding of Christ unto faith and joy!

It is so easy to repeat the experience of the Bereans to-day, easier than ever, since the New Test. has been added to the Old. A little knowledge is enough to find the very words of Christ himself and take them into your heart: to discover all that Christ did for us, all that he would do now, and to fill our hearts with that. Why not take this Word, then, as the Bereans did? Why not put away all our own blind and foolish thoughts, and let Christ come to us as he really is, and God come to us and give us what he has for us in Christ? If you have thought wrong on any of these things, do you want to keep on in that wrong way? Do you want to be like a man who has taken the wrong road, and when one comes to set him right refuses to listen, and goes on

farther and farther on the wrong track until it is too late? Or do you want to base your soul's faith and hope of salvation in eternity upon what some man says to you? What if he does mean well enough by you? It would be bad enough if you had no one else to guide and help you. But here (is) God himself, (God's own Son, your divine Helper, God's own Spirit of truth and light, and these) come^s to you personally here in their Word, to tell you all that you need to know, (yea must know) to be safe now and in all eternity. (Away with every objection and plea!) Do as the Bereans did—search the Scriptures daily, find Christ for yourselves, and all the treasures of salvation for your souls. (This is what the Bereans did.)

11.

And not only this. They are a shining example to us in **how they did it.**

They went to the Bible with absolute sincerity. (One thing and only one thing) they wanted to know: "whether those things were so." (What God said, that and that alone they wanted to find.)—This honesty of purpose and sincerity of heart is what we must have when we search the Bible. (God himself and God's Bible must give it to us and increase it constantly. Away with every other purpose. Let this control you alone.) What does God say? In that is your salvation, and in that alone. And be assured that God always rewards such sincerity. "Seek and ye shall find!" is the promise that holds here too. ("He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.") Prov. 2, 7.

The Bereans went to the Bible to accept what the Bible said. This is the test of sincerity. Many people see what God says—it is so plain. But for some reason or other they do not like it. Some things sound impossible to them; other things seem unprogressive and not up-to-date; still other things go against men's natural inclinations and desires. They must lay aside their own opinions and conclusions on these things. They hate to do so, and secretly resolve not to do so. And so they set aside certain things in God's Word, and other things they change by their way of interpreting them. (They are like a man who has the bright light of day to walk by, walk safely by and without stumbling. But he is afraid he might actually walk thus, and so he blinds his own eyes, at least damages them so that he cannot see as he should.)⁶ There is only one way to read the Holy Scriptures aright, with the full determination (and purpose) to accept for our own souls what the Scriptures say. To read them otherwise is to read our own condemnation there. (If our thoughts are at variance with what the Scriptures say, so much the worse for us.

If our desires run in the opposite direction, (the sooner those desires are crushed) and the new desires that come from Christ are planted in their stead, the better for us. Take what God says and gives in his Word, it is life eternal in every part.

The Bereans went to the Bible in order to believe the Bible. That much they had learned in their Jewish church, and now when St. Paul came to them with the message of Jesus Christ, the one thing impressed upon them was the necessity of faith—(complete trust and confidence in God and his saving grace in Christ. How could they get this? Never by any effort of their own. But the Bible is full of the very (grace and) power of God which works this faith in us. It is like light that shines and drives out darkness; (it is like a flame that leaps up and touches us, and starts the fire in us;) it is like the voice of Jesus calling Lazarus out of his tomb alive from the dead. The Spirit of God is in his Word, and when you read the Bible, read it so that this Spirit may come in living contact with your spirit. This Word is more than an earthly Word, though written in earthly words so that you may be able to receive it. Too many of us (degrade the Word of God. They do it who think slightly of it, and they do it who) take it only into their minds and not into their hearts. When this Word grips your soul, do not draw away. When you feel the power in it, let that power hold and bless you. That is how to read the Bible and how to hear the true preaching of it. So faith is wrought by this living Word, and when wrought made stronger and more perfect by deeper reading. (You are next to God himself and all his heavenly grace in this Word of his, and when you realize that, as the men of Berea did, you will read the Bible as they did, of whom we are told: "many of them believed." Not all, alas, for some closed their hearts in Jewish pride and folly, as many do to-day.)

And the Bereans searched the Scriptures in order to obey what God said to them there. And they did obey. They had been Jews who hitherto had despised all Gentiles. But what do we hear now? Many of the Greek women came to believe in Jesus also, and of the men not a few. And these former Jews, now become believers in Christ Jesus, joined with these Gentiles, now also become believers, just as God's Word directed that they should. How shall we read our Bibles? With the same spirit of willing obedience. Not to evade, set aside, explain away, but to bow completely to God in everything. Blessed are they that hear the Word of God and do it! But woe to those who hear God's voice, and will not heed it! Obedience to God's Word is life, peace of conscience, and blessed reward of grace.

III.

We need the shining example of the men of Berea in what they did, in how they did it, and then also in **what they gained by doing it.**

This especially we need for our encouragement. Does it pay to read and follow the Bible? Look at Berea. Here were a lot of Jews and a town full of heathen people. When St. Paul was through with his work, what do we see? All those who had read and followed the Scriptures, a congregation of God's people—true children of God with faith and joy in their hearts. What a reward for searching the Scriptures aright!—There came other Jews from Thessalonica, who had done the opposite, refused to read and obey the Word. They came to Berea to oppose St. Paul and stop his work of preaching Christ. To which of these two classes would you rather belong—to the devout Bible readers, the Berean Christians, or to these hateful unbelieving Jews from Thessalonica? (But suppose these latter had remained quietly in Thessalonica, then what is your choice? Would you rather be a happy child of God as the Bereans, or without faith, without the obedience that God wants, as those Thessalonian Jews?) There is only one answer. Faith in Christ Jesus, pardon in his blood, peace and joy in his forgiveness, faithfulness to him, and the hope he gives us of heaven—these are such a tremendous reward that nothing can possibly come into comparison with them. And this reward we want to gain as the Bereans did.

But are there not losses, when one loyally follows God's Word? Here was St. Paul—he had to flee from Berea, and how often he was persecuted and even severely hurt. Here are the Berean Christians—they had the hatred of all those who remained Jews, and some of these were very fanatical. Yes, there are losses when you make God's Word your only guide. Though when a man loses his sin, his meanness, his former evil and dangerous companions, can you count that a loss? If I lose a disease, I certainly gain health; if I lose danger, I surely gain safety. Would that all men might suffer losses like this that are nothing but gains.—But Stephen lost his life in martyrdom for Christ; you know the story of St. Paul's persecutions, and they too ended with a martyr's death. And others were despoiled of their goods, driven from their homes, and in varying degrees suffered losses for faithfully adhering to the Word. To be sure, these are losses, some of them painful and terrible enough. But those who suffered them were the last to call them losses and lament over them. "We glory in tribulation," writes St. Paul. After being imprisoned St. Peter and St. John rejoiced "that they were counted worthy

to suffer shame for his name's sake." Losses indeed, and yet as such for Christ and his Word's sake nothing but gain.)

(To suffer any loss for faithfulness to God's Word is a true mark of such faithfulness. Do you want such a mark upon you, or do you want to be without it? Losses—why) the children of this world also suffer losses. God punishes them—do you want losses of that kind? There is hatred, malice, fighting, snarling, and viciousness of all kinds among the children of this world. (You know how they often knife each other.) Do you want such losses? It is not a question of escaping losses altogether—that cannot be done in this world of sin. It is a question of what kind of losses you are to bear: either such as mark you a child of God, a lover and servant of his blessed Word—or such as mark you a child of the world, far from God, disobedient to his Word. God grant that you may ever suffer the former losses only, no matter what they may be, and never, never the latter. Happy the man on whom God lays a burden for the sake of his Word and name—(that is glôry, honor, blessing indeed.) But cursed the man on whom the devil lays burdens; these are all the forerunners of the eternal loss that awaits those who do not escape from the devil unto God through Christ. Yes, the Bereans lost some things, but their gain for this life and for the life to come was unspeakably great. God help us to follow their shining example!

(It is bright and shining indeed, in what they did, in how they did it, and in what they gained by doing it. Shall we follow them? Let your whole life from this day forth be the answer.)

OUTLINES.

The text is brief and simple, its main features prominent at first glance: the nobleness of the Bereans in faithfully searching the Scriptures. Two ways of treating the text are readily noted, one which keeps close to the story as Luke records it and makes the application direct, another which takes the general thought of the text (the right use of the Holy Scriptures) and develops that in line with the trend of the text. Both are good and when well done effective. A sample of the former kind of treatment would be the following: The nobleness of the Bereans is what we need to-day: their searching the Scriptures—their readiness of mind—their whole-hearted faith—their unshaken loyalty.—For the other way of using the text the following may serve: Personal experience with the Bible: Do you go to the Bible?—Do you rely on the Bible?—Do you abide by the Bible?—Or we may take the thought of certainty from the text: The joyful certainty of a true Christian: It rests wholly on the Word of God—It consists

of real faith in the Word of God—It is intensified and strengthened by constantly going to the Word of God.—Use the Bible aright! Search it—with readiness of mind; believe it—with an honest heart; cling to it—against all opposition.

The Bereans and the Scriptures.

1. *What they thought of the Scriptures.*
 2. *What they did with the Scriptures.*
 3. *What they gained from the Scriptures.*
-

Search the Scriptures as the Bereans Did!

1. *Know what they say!*
 2. *Believe what they say!*
 3. *Adhere to what they say!*
-

Learn in Berea what the Bible is for!

1. *To preach.*—2. *To believe.*—3. *To apply.*—
4. *To spread.*
-

Go to the Bible as the Bereans Did!

1. *To get what you need.*
 2. *To test what you have gotten.*
 3. *To spread what you have tested.*
-

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts 24, 24-27.

The story of Felix, the unhappy Happy Man, the unfortunate Fortunate Man, is to serve us as a text on *contrition*, and with the same sort of contradiction — Felix who failed of contrition is to point us to contradiction. But let us remember that some of the negative examples in the Scripture are in a way stronger even than the positive. So here is the call of contrition from a man who himself disregarded that call. — Paul is in Cæsarea, held by the Governor Felix as a prisoner although innocent. Daechsel gives a fine analysis of the legal points involved. Felix could not accept the indictment of the Jewish leaders, because they had no witnesses of the crime they charged against Paul. Since a religious crime was charged, and the Roman law permitted the Jewish authorities to try crimes of this sort, Felix would have had to remand Paul to these authorities if a properly attested charge had been laid against him. So he deferred the case in order to secure the testimony of Lysias, the captain who had arrested Paul in Jerusalem. It is entirely probable that he secured this testimony, which substantiated the word of Paul; though Luke makes no report on this point. Felix, however, though he recognized Paul's innocence and made his imprisonment light, did not care to deal out the justice due in this case without some ample remuneration for himself — he wanted a bribe to do what the Roman law itself bound him to do. So Paul languished in prison for two whole years. The event recorded in our text took place shortly after the Jewish leaders tried to lodge their charge against Paul; the interval could not have been long.

24, 24. But after certain days, Felix came with Drusilla, his wife, which was a Jewess, and sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus.

Antonius Claudius **Felix** was the Roman procurator or governor of Judea, appointed by the emperor Claudius, whose freedman he was, in the year 53. His appointment was due in part to the influence of the high priest Jonathan, and Felix was maintained in his position by his own brother, Pallas, another freedman of Claudius and his favorite at the Roman court. The origin and general character of Felix are in full harmony with the few words in which the historian Tacitus sums him up: "In the practice of all kinds of lust and cruelty he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave." Again Tacitus writes that "by unseasonable remedies he only aggravated" the evils of Judea. This is the estimate of Tacitus of the "very worthy deeds done by Felix's providence," which according to the lying flatterer Tertullus gave the nation "great quietness," v. 2. Felix crushed the Jewish zealots under the name of "robbers," and crucified hundreds. He also pursued and drove away the Egyptian magician with whom Lysias too hastily identified Paul. When the high priest Jonathan, to whom Felix in part owed his elevation, expostulated with him on some of his practices, the governor employed sicarii, assassins, who murdered Jonathan in the very sanctuary of the Temple. His meanness is seen in his desire for bribe money, and it is reflected again in his trembling before Paul, but refusing to repent or even to release Paul in simple justice. A look at the woman called his "wife," **Drusilla**, is sufficient to justify the reference of Tacitus to "lust." Drusilla was a Herod, fair but loose, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I., and the sister of Herod Agrippa II. At first the wife of Azizus, king of Emesa, on his becoming a Jew, she allowed herself to be seduced by Felix through the Cyprian sorcerer Simon, and figured as his wife. We thus see that Paul

had a similar case before him as once outraged the godly feelings of John the Baptist. Drusilla and her son by Felix perished in an eruption of Vesuvius during the time of Titus. Felix was superseded by Festus, accused by the Jews of Cæsarea before the emperor, but escaped through the influence of his brother Pallas; we do not know how he ended. This brief picture will aid us in estimating aright what Luke records in our **text**.—The remark, thrown in by Luke, on Drusilla: **which was a Jewess**, serves to explain her presence on this occasion, although Luke does not say that this audience was altogether due to her desires. The Greek has: "his own woman," as a designation of her relation to Felix, which may be rendered **his wife**, without further mention of the nature of this relation. The first wife of Felix was also a Drusilla, a princess of Mauritania; and he had a third whose name we do not know.—It seems most natural to assume that the governor and his wife **came** to the praetorium of Herod **and sent for Paul** to be brought from the military quarters in this palace, where he was detained under military guard. We must remember that Paul was not put into the ordinary prison, but placed in the custody of the centurion of the praetorium, v. 23. We hear of no other personages present on this occasion; there were only the regular attendants and the custodians of the prisoner.—The historical aorist simply informs us that the pair mentioned **heard** Paul, Luke then describing the hearing. When he writes: heard him **concerning the faith in Christ Jesus**, we must assume that this subject was assigned to Paul by the governor himself. He was not averse to hearing directly what caused such a commotion among the Jews, since he knew them well, and Drusilla also was interested. Rieger makes a fine remark when he says that people like these often wish to hear the Gospel in order, if possible, to find in it some cooling bandage for the secret burning in their own conscience. These are strange situations indeed.

Governors, princes, and even kings, who would deem it far beneath them to attend a Christian service and there hear the "faith in Christ Jesus," are made to order its preaching themselves at the hands of prisoners in their custody. What Paul would not have dared to ask on his part, and what for any asking of his would never have been granted him, is offered him without his asking in the least. And there is nothing he would rather do than preach as here asked. It is, however, not safe to assume anything beyond the natural interest aroused by Paul in Felix and Drusilla as a motive for their action. He was a man of some fame at this time, and the cause for which he stood had made a great stir; moreover, his whole character and bearing could not but impress the governor from the start. Nor should we forget Paul's mention of the "alms" he had brought to his nation, v. 17, of which the governor seems to have taken mental note; cf. v. 26. There is no thought of Felix and Drusilla desiring to hear Paul because they in any way were drawn to Christ. Yet although the auditors offered so little encouragement to the preacher, he could not refuse to give them what they desired. The Gospel is for sinners, for all of them, and this peculiar occasion was God's way of bringing the Gospel unto these two great sinners.

25. And as he reasoned of righteousness, and temperance, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.

When I read these words, and picture Paul to myself when he prepared his address, and then when he stood in the presence of this man who held his fate in his hands, I wonder what I would have planned to say, and what I would actually have said, if I had been in the apostle's place. What a temptation to try to please the governor and his wife, to secure some personal advantage for self from such an opportunity, and thus by fair words at least to bribe the judge whose char-

acter was such as to respond to bribery! What a temptation also to servility, to crawling and cringing before the great of this earth, in order thus to flatter them and have them think well of us. Not so Paul. On the other hand, with bold and open sinners before him, people of impure lives and debased motives, what a temptation to the apostle to fly in the other direction, and to think he would serve the cause of Christ best by intemperate denunciation on his part in this audience! No, Paul keeps his balance perfectly. He measures up to the occasion in all its requirements. Not in one point does he cut down his message, and not in one point does he omit true wisdom. "As though he had forgotten himself, he used this occasion in the interest of his office, or rather of his Lord, and in the interest of those who desire to hear him. In the spirit of holy and unblamable love which seeketh not her own, he would like to help Felix and Drusilla, even if they should be displeased, even if they should become angry at him. His aim is not to treat the sick conscience of these people by means of an address which is like a bandage mollifying for the moment, but only furthering the damage and making it worse; no, he uses an address which like the lancet of the surgeon cuts and causes pain, yet heals the damage completely and forever." — Menken. — The present participle preceding the main verb in the aorist shows that Felix did not let Paul finish his discourse, and the second participle, an aorist, shows the reason: "since he had become terrified he answered," etc. Noesgen thinks Paul began his address with the three subjects stated by Luke, since he had to prepare the hearts of his hearers by means of the Law, before he could use the Gospel. Daechsel is surely more correct on this point. Felix and Drusilla wanted to hear about faith in Christ — that is what Paul undoubtedly gave them. Their wish was not left unfulfilled; nor were they sent away with nothing but the Law, without any Gospel. Paul preached in no such

mechanical fashion, first so many minutes Law, then so many minutes Gospel; nor is this what is meant when we are bidden to divide and distinguish most carefully between Law and Gospel. He undoubtedly preached Jesus Christ as the Savior of sinners, and thus in the most natural manner presented Law and Gospel as they belong together. But here is the point in Luke's brief narrative—it is, and it always will be, the Law which first grips the sinner. The preacher must preach both, and Law as Law, Gospel as Gospel, like a man handling two electrical currents, never getting them mixed, or mistaking one for the other. But the sinner never reacts except first to the Law and then to the Gospel. It is the nature of these two that the effect of the one rests on the effect of the other, and never vice versa. And thus it was that Paul preached the Law.—He did it by discussing in the proper connection **righteousness, and temperance, and the judgment to come**. How exactly this fit his hearers we need not say. **Righteousness** here is the divine requirement of the Law, as is shown by “temperance” following it. Felix was an unrighteous judge, who also loved bribes. The term, however, goes farther than this, including all the requirements of right as God makes them of us, and as our own conscience is bound also to second them.—**Temperance** is really “self-control,” and this in all respects, so that our desires and evil lusts do not run away with us. The Greek word has the idea of power or strength in it, by which we are to master ourselves. Tacitus, a heathen, mentions the lusts of this governor, and his “wife” at his side is testimony how far he gave way to them.—But let us observe that Paul here did not act as the judge of his judge and charge and condemn him for specific acts of his. If Paul had tried this he would have been gravely misunderstood as attempting to insult the governor to his face. He spoke as he did after the fashion of 2 Tim. 2, 19, etc.; 1 Cor. 6, 9, etc.; 2 Cor. 5, 10. It was enough to mention these sins

as Paul did leaving it to the Spirit of God and to the conscience of his hearers to apply them. We see that neither Felix nor Drusilla resent Paul's words, turn in anger against him, and charge him with insulting them or abusing his privilege. They themselves have asked him to speak to them on faith in Christ, and it is this doctrine which they hear. They do not feel Paul, they feel God in this doctrine. Let every preacher mark well how Paul handled the Law. When this is done so that the sinner thinks, and perhaps thinks rightly, that the preacher is trying to hit at him, something is wrong with the preacher and his preaching; and let us not blame the sinner for this effect. — Luke puts these three together: righteousness, temperance, **and the judgment to come**, and they belong together and must be preached so that the last of these three embraces the other two. Drusilla knew of that judgment from the Jewish religion, and both of Paul's hearers knew that the divine judgment must always be a condemnatory one against unrighteousness, etc. Paul used the positives here, not the negatives, "righteousness," not unrighteousness, etc. But "the judgment to come" makes plain what every sinful conscience must tell itself. Christ, of whom Felix wished to hear is the Judge to come. — **Felix was terrified**, "got terrified," as we may translate less elegantly; "trembled" (A. V.) is not in the text. Thus the Law reaches the conscience, the spot where God's work begins. This terror was the natural and proper effect of the Law. Strange indeed, and yet not strange at all: the judge here becomes terrified before his prisoner, the governor of a great province before a poor tent-maker, the man of mighty power before a gentle preacher of Christ. But no; Felix was frightened by a greater than he, by that Judge of whom he had not thought and was now made to think. — What does he do? One of two things is possible — to submit to the power of God that has taken hold, or to tear loose from it at all hazard. And Felix

did the latter. He breaks off the audience and forthwith dismisses Paul, though in a significantly polite way: **Go thy way for this time.** The present imperative is milder: "be thou going"; and τὸ νῦν ἔχον, the neuter participle with the article made an adverbial accusative: "as far as now is concerned." Yes, as Besser says: grace goes, judgment remains. Not so can the judgment to come be dismissed. Only a little sober thought would have shown Felix his terrible mistake. To silence the preacher is not to destroy the preaching; to lull the conscience is not to free it. Life carries the sinner on like a train speeding to the terrible ravine over which there is no bridge. Let him sleep in his Pullman if he will—when the hour arrives it will be too late to try escape. Perhaps this "now" was the last stop Felix's train made on that journey; God wanted to take him off—he would not, Matth. 23, 37. — **And when I have a convenient season** (the aorist is punctiliar), **I will call thee unto me.** He speaks as if he meant it (fut. indic.), but his word was a mere word. Not that he could not have done so, for Paul was in his keeping for two years, but we do not hear that he ever opened this subject again, or allowed Paul to do so. The "convenient season" was a polite plea and nothing more. When Felix went at last to meet his Judge above he found himself without excuse, and the Judge could condemn him out of his own mouth. So near was Felix to contrition, gladly God would have wrought it, following it at once by faith in Christ's blood; but Felix blocked the way.

26. He hoped withal that money would have been given him of Paul: wherefore also he sent for him the oftener and communed with him. 27. But when two years were fulfilled, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and desiring to gain favor with the Jews, Felix left Paul in bonds.

Paul had mentioned his bringing alms to his nation; this may have excited the cupidity of Felix. He

had given orders to permit his friends to minister unto him; this too seems to have been with a secret purpose on the part of Felix. Knowing how concerned his many Christian friends were about Paul Felix, misjudging them completely, thought they would surely bring Paul money with which to bribe the governor. But observe that this is the response of Felix to Paul's sermon on righteousness and judgment to come. The momentary effect is completely blown away. — We must note *διό, wherefore*. On this account alone, namely to give Paul a chance to bribe him he **communed with him**, i. e., had conversation with him. And the comparative **the oftener** means: oftener than he would otherwise have done. Daehsel seem to think that Felix conversed with Paul on these occasions also on the subject of Christ, but Luke's "wherefore" is strongly against this idea. There is no intimation to this effect in the text, and to carry it in on general principles, on deductions from what Paul would do, is to suppose what in the nature of the case is improbable, and what Luke would certainly have mentioned in some way if it had been a fact. So completely did Felix erase from his mind the image of Paul as a preacher of repentance that he looked at him as a man of his own type and kind, ready to use any means however reprehensible for his personal ends. In this state of mind, utterly blinded to right and wrong, he had the meanness to admit Paul to his presence and to make the intimation which Luke records, probably more openly as time went on. Was Paul disappointed? Paul knew too well that his work was God's work, and he only a tool in God's hands. *Sic thesaurum evangelii omisit infelix Felix.* — Bengel. — So two years passed with no change in Paul's case. Why the Jews made no efforts we do not know, their "unsleeping hate" had by no means forgotten the apostle. Finally the objections to Felix rose to such a height that they became effective in Rome. As the Greek has it: "he received as a successor Portius Festus," and only his brother's

influence saved him from graver consequences of his misdeeds, when the Jews of Cæsarea sent a deputation after him to lodge charges against him. Paul had brought him no profit, and so he was not concerned to do him justice. On the other hand he reckoned on some gain from the Jews if he did not free Paul; they would take note of the fact and count it in his favor. Why he did not hand Paul over to them and thus gain their favor more completely was due to the strictness of Roman law, which Felix had already strained severely by this dragging out of Paul's case. And as we see in the sequel Paul could have blocked such an attempt by an appeal to Cæsar, the relief he finally was compelled to seek. Felix left Paul **in bonds**. The perfect participle used here, of course, reaches to the present when Felix left Paul behind. The question is how far back does it reach? Does it cover the entire imprisonment (Meyer), or does it cover only the last days when Felix was about to leave (Noesgen)? In the latter case the more lenient treatment would have been changed to severer treatment, which when Festus took charge would mark Paul as a more dangerous man. The point cannot be determined, and to decide either way on the basis of the participle is doubtful; yet we have no other clue.—The story of Felix is grave with warning for us all.

SERMON.

used 1928

When we read this story of Felix and St. Paul we are liable to do it only in the ordinary way. Then we see only one prisoner in this narrative of St. Luke, namely the apostle Paul. He was blamed for a wrong he had never committed, and his own wicked Jewish countrymen tried to kill him in the very courts of the Temple at Jerusalem. Then the great Roman authority stepped in and took St. Paul in charge. He was brought to Cæsarea as a prisoner of the Roman governor who wanted to determine whether he was guilty of any crime. No evidence could be brought against the apostle, but instead of setting St. Paul at liberty as the Roman law required the governor kept him confined

in order to secure a bribe from the apostle for his release. So St. Paul was indeed a prisoner, a real prisoner, behind barred doors and a heavy guard of police.

And this is the only prisoner we usually see. For the other man in this biblical account, Felix, the governor, surely does not appear as a prisoner. He was at the head of the government in Judea, appointed to this powerful position by the Roman emperor himself. He had a great military force at his command; he lived in a grand palace in Cæsarea and many humble servants came and went at his command. Everybody treated him with deference and honor, for he held the welfare of this whole section of country in his hands. Mighty, honored, free—he does not in the least look as if he could be put into the prisoner class together with St. Paul.

And yet Felix was even more a prisoner than the holy apostle. The chains he wore were invisible, but only the stronger for that very reason. Felix was one of the thousands of prisoners in the terrible and deadly bondage of sin. Secret and open shameful sins lay like galling fetters upon his soul. Only a slight acquaintance with the man will show how true this is. He was a heathen who knew nothing but idols. He had lived in all kinds of sins and never even cared. He had abused his position as governor by wicked deeds of injustice, even as he was now treating St. Paul unjustly, trying to get him to offer a bribe for his release. The woman whom at this time he called his wife he had seduced from her lawful husband, so that he lived shamefully in open adultery. Beyond question Felix was a wretched prisoner.

Now the remarkable thing in this case is that these two prisoners were so thrown together by the hand of God that each could have released the other, and this is what makes their story of such vital interest to us all. Let us read it in this light—

The Story of the Two Prisoners in Cæsarea.

We will find that their story is intertwined, and that we must take up first **the one who wanted to set the other free**, and then **the one who refused to set the other free**.

I.

St. Paul wanted to set Felix free from his spiritual bondage.

When Felix found that St. Paul was a follower of Jesus Christ, of whom he had heard a great deal in this Jewish country, he took a notion to have St. Paul tell him fully concerning the faith in Christ, and this the more since the woman with whom he lived was a Jewess and also interested in Christ, whom so

many of her people called the Messiah. So Felix ordered St. Paul to appear before him and tell him about this faith in Jesus Christ.

It was a golden opportunity for the apostle. For this very purpose he had been sent to preach Christ and his salvation. For Christ is the great liberator and emancipator of souls — souls just like those of Felix and his sinful wife. He himself had proclaimed that God sent him into the world "to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised." Luke 4, 18. To effect this liberation Jesus had died on the cross, by his own blood and death purchasing for all the slaves of sin redemption, pardon, and release. And St. Paul was one of Christ's chosen servants to bring this deliverance to as many poor fettered sinners as possible. It was Christ's own providence that St. Paul received this opportunity to carry Christ's great salvation to the Roman governor himself. He rejoiced at the call that came to him to preach faith in Christ also to this man. St. Paul was a prisoner indeed, unjustly held by Felix, but never for a moment did this affect him. His one overpowering desire was to set Felix free, Felix outwardly free enough indeed, but held by the cruel bonds of sin, in a bondage a thousand times worse than that of St. Paul.

And so the day came when St. Paul was ushered into the presence of Felix, the governor, and of his wife Drusilla. There they were, the one prisoner before the other, the prisoner of Christ before the prisoner of sin, and this one prisoner burning with eagerness by the grace of Jesus Christ to set the other prisoner free.

There was only one way in which this could be done. If Christ himself had stood before Felix he would have had to use this one way alone. St. Paul showed Christ to Felix, him who was delivered for our offenses and raised for our justification; he showed him the blood of Jesus Christ, God's own Son, which cleanses us from all sin and sets us free now and forever. He opened wide the door of heavenly liberty for this prisoner of sin Felix, that he might see the blessed liberty now open to him. And then with hands of love he touched the hidden chains of sin which held Felix bound. He spoke of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come. Here were the awful chains. God demands that we do right — and Felix had done wrong in thousands of instances, and sometimes fearfully, openly wrong when he abused his power as governor. God demands temperance or self-control. And Felix had followed his base passions in thousands of instances, and was even then living in open adultery. And to show that God is in deadly earnest in his demands St. Paul pointed to the great judgment to come, when

God will bring every man, even the highest and mightiest of earth, to a final account. This was the bondage in which Felix lay, and St. Paul showed him that faith in Christ was nothing less than eternal deliverance from this bondage. All the sins of Felix were expiated by the blood of Christ, not one of them would stand against Felix in the judgment to come if he would humbly fall at the feet of Christ and accept his pardon and release. Thus did St. Paul, the prisoner of Christ, try to free Felix the prisoner of sin.

As you hear the story once more, mark well what it means for every one of us to-day. Once St. Paul himself lay in this bondage in which he now found Felix, and Christ had set him free. No sin is so great but what Christ has atoned for it. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Is. 2, 18. But in this deliverance of Christ we dare not hide any sin or hold it back from the touch of Christ's pardon and deliverance. Felix must bring his unrighteousness and his unchastity and vileness to Christ, and not cover it up, if it is all to be cleansed away. St. Paul was a true preacher of Christ—he offered no sham freedom in Christ to Felix. Woe to the preachers who are afraid to touch the real sins of their hearers, and yet talk of Christ to them. St. Paul did not cringe before Felix because he was wholly in the governor's power. He never thought of himself, but like every true physician, of his poor patient, and of that patient's real hurt, and the one great remedy that would heal him. That is the point for us. Do not ask or expect that some one sin or other in which you lie shall be treated as an exception. You may be rich and great like Felix, but sin is sin in you as in the most wretched beggar and outcast. And any sin that you withhold, or want the preacher of Christ to say nothing about, is only an unloosed bond or chain, which if it remains so, will surely drag you down to the eternal prison house of the devil. Away with this secret love of some sin or sinful connection! Even if of a hundred chains that hold me ninety-nine should be sundered, I am not free until the last is cut also. But with the chains of sin none are gone if all are not gone. You cannot pick or choose, and no preacher can do it for you. If he tries it, he only adds guilt and bondage to his own soul. And do you lead no preacher into temptation in this respect; it would be as dangerous and deadly for him as it would be for you. Say it and pray it with all sincerity:

"Secure I hide in thy cleft side
My failures *every one!*"

Felix listened to St. Paul. He had never heard anything like it before. He had not dreamed that "the faith in Christ" was such a personal thing. He had not thought that it would reach so deeply into a man's soul. He felt the power of Jesus Christ in every word that St. Paul said. He saw the open door of liberty from sin in Christ Jesus. And he saw the chains now that held him a prisoner where this other man, this apostle and preacher before him, was free. The great hour of grace had come for him. But when St. Paul laid his hand upon the bonds of Felix to free him, when Felix began to see his sins great and terrible in the sight of God and his judgment to come, when his conscience, dead and asleep so long, began to smite him, when he was inwardly shaken and frightened—he did what so many a prisoner of sin has done, he thrust the liberating hand of Christ's servant away. Felix interrupted St. Paul and said: "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee." This was the fatal turning point. Instead of crying like other sinners when their conscience is stirred: "What shall I do to be saved?" he put the preacher of Christ and deliverance in Christ off. Because contrition and sorrow are painful, he thrust the Word of Christ away. Because the wound and disease was deep and caused pain when the physician touched it to heal it truly, he drew it hastily away. He kept the wound, deceiving himself. So St. Paul was dismissed. He had done his noble work, and done it well—Christ commended him. It was not his fault that this prisoner of sin remained in his bonds. It was the guilt of Felix alone.

Note well what the story contains for us. The pardon and liberty of Christ Jesus is given us only through contrition and faith; and contrition, true sorrow of the heart for sin is the first real step toward saving faith. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Ps. 51, 17. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Prov. 28, 13. Remember the publican's cry: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Say it and pray it, then, with your whole heart:

"A broken heart, my God and King!
Is all the sacrifice I bring:
The God of grace will ne'er despise
A broken heart for sacrifice."

Let the folly of Felix warn you. When his own conscience smote him he hushed it. Some indeed get angry at Christ's servants as if these by stirring up their consciences did wrong. It is only another excuse which the devil offers them to keep them bound in their sins. But others say with Felix: Not now, not now

— wait— later! That too is a deception. There is never a better time than now. Christ and his grace are no lackeys to come when you think you are ready. And all they who will not repent when Christ calls find that the "convenient season" which they dream will come later, does not arrive until it is too late. When the judgment comes at last, when the devil pulls the chain to take his captive to the last prison, then it would be mighty convenient indeed to have Christ cut the chain, but then contrition and repentance can not be wrought. "Too late" is the last chapter in the story of many a captive of sin. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Heb. 3, 7 and 15.

Felix, the prisoner, was not released, though St. Paul, the prisoner, did all in his power to release him.

II.

Our story of the two prisoners in Cæsarea has another chapter. And now the roles of the prisoners are reversed: Felix refused to set St. Paul free.

This chapter too is highly significant. Not indeed so much on St. Paul's account. He was innocent of any crime, and Felix did him a miserable and shameful wrong in holding him a prisoner. It is for us to note how St. Paul bore this wrong with Christ's help, without the least resentment and in Christian patience. It was part of the cross Christ laid upon him. He took his long imprisonment as a dispensation from God. His will is best for us, even when we cannot see it. Let us learn this patience of St. Paul, the prisoner, and forgive in Christ's name all those who do us wrong.

A different significance attaches to the action of Felix in holding St. Paul in prison, when he knew that every requirement of the Roman law, of which he was the custodian, demanded this innocent prisoner's release. The conscience of Felix had thrown off completely the hand which stirred it for a moment. It was a conscience more seared and dead than ever. This new flagrant act of injustice on the part of Felix was his real and final answer to the love of Christ and St. Paul which had tried to set him free from his soul bondage. The man who would have liberated *him* Felix would not liberate. And this base act of his he aggravated by his money lust. He had heard St. Paul speak of bringing alms to his destitute fellow Christians in Judea from the churches in more favored lands. The hands of Felix itched for some of this money. He knew besides how dearly all the followers of Christ loved St. Paul; that love Felix tried to turn into money for himself. He insulted the high character of St. Paul by offering to release him from prison for a bribe. And when St. Paul de-

clined to stain his soul by consenting to any such unrighteousness Felix left him suffering in prison, left him even when Felix was recalled from his office as governor, again for a base motive, namely to placate the Jews whom he had grievously outraged. Once the conscience of Felix had trembled—now it trembled no more. Satan had fastened the old chains upon him more securely than ever. Declining to repent when Christ was brought to him he was hardened in sin and went on to his doom. This is what his refusing to release St. Paul means in regard to Felix himself. He hurt St. Paul in a way, he hurt himself a thousand times more.

And thus the warning of the example of this man is deepened for us. He kept all his old sins and guilt, and he added new. And adding them as he did, after facing Christ and hearing God's Word on righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, his condemnation now was the greater. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." Mighty are the wonders of grace, but stern and terrible are the wonders of justice. Sinners like Felix and Drusilla have eternal salvation brought unto them—so great is Christ's love and redemption. But when sinners scorn this grace they only help to rivet the chains more securely, they only add to the certainty of their doom.—Even the memory of his one time trembling seems to have vanished from Felix's mind. Boldly, brazenly this man lets his wickedness show forth even to St. Paul. A peculiar devilish power seems to come over men when they have been touched by Christ and yet harden themselves against him. They seem to want us to think they have never been so touched. Lying to themselves they want to lie also to us. What a warning when Christ bids us to repent! For this his Holy Word has set such examples before us. It is not only a question of liberty or bondage, the one or the other, but a question which starts with these two—either liberty, and this in ever growing measure, with ever growing joy, like the dawn growing to the perfect day; or bondage, and this getting worse and worse, until the devil's victim is ready for his final plunge.

The earthly end of Felix is hidden from our knowledge. You know the story of St. Paul. Vindicated and released by the great emperor himself to whom he appealed his case, St. Paul went on in his mission of bringing Christ's deliverance to the prisoners of sin. God, who bade St. Paul wait in patience as a prisoner, opened the door to him for further glorious work, until the hour came for his martyr death. Then he entered into the eternal liberty which Christ has prepared for all who yield their hearts to him.

To-day in this story of the two prisoners in Cæsarea Christ comes to us all. Pardon and salvation are in his hands. O let us fall at his feet in humble contrition! Cleanse us, O Lord,

from all our guilt! Not one hour let us put him off, not one sin let us hold fast. The more our own conscience condemns us, the more let us fly to him alone. For in Jesus Christ alone your conscience and mine find rest. He sets us free, and to be thus freed is liberty indeed.

OUTLINES.

The essential points in the text are two, what Luke reports concerning Paul's address, and what concerning Felix's reply. Both points center on contrition, at which Paul aimed, and to which Felix refused to be brought. We may accordingly preach on: Felix, and the necessity of true sorrow for sin: Only by such sorrow could Felix be turned from his sin—Only by such sorrow could Felix be brought to salvation.—A favorite point in the text is the word of Felix on the convenient season. The man who waits for a convenient season: He may recognize indeed the vanity of the world, but is still held by the lust of the world—He may be conscious indeed of the shame and bondage of sin, but is not ready to let loose from the attractions of sin—He may feel indeed some of the power of the Word, but refuses to let this power become effective in his soul.—Paul and Felix: the judicial power of the Word. 1) Paul stands before Felix: as the inferior before his superior; as the prisoner before the free man; as the accused before his judge. Nevertheless, all is reversed by the power of the divine Word, of which the apostle is a minister. 2) It is now Felix who stands before Paul: as one accused by God's Word and his own conscience before an incorruptible judge; as one bound by the cords of unrighteousness and the lust of the flesh, before the Lord's freeman; as the inferior, alarmed, and irresolute, before the mighty hero of God, who, even in bonds, says, both in word and in deed: "I can do all things in Christ which strengtheneth me." Ph. 4, 13. (Lechler and Chas. Gerok.)

Felix, One of Many Thousands.

1. *Who like to hear the Gospel for a change;*
2. *But when they feel its power in conscience,*
3. *They refuse to submit to its rebuke,*
4. *And thus fail of salvation.*

— Caspari.

Felix, and his Attitude toward the Gospel.

His attitude

1. *At first quite tolerant*—since it seems to do no harm.
2. *Even attentive*—since it seems to offer some interest.
3. *Then averse*—since it actually strikes his conscience.
4. *Finally antagonistic*—since it contradicts his shameful purpose.

—After Heydrenreich.

“When I have a Convenient Season.”

1. *An evasion.* Which means
 2. *A refusal.* Which means
 3. *Complete opposition.* And what this means need not be said.
-

“Go thy Way for this Time!”

1. *Cowardly.*—2. *Untrue.*—3. *Dangerous.*
-

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts 13, 38-43.

The entire address which Paul made in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia is of great interest. Luke aims to give us here an extended sample of Paul's synagogue preaching. The address is masterly in many ways. Paul and "his company," Barnabas and a few others, came from Cyprus and made their first stop for work in Antioch of Pisidia. They got into friendly touch with the Jews of the city, and on the Sabbath attended the regular worship at the synagogue. In a friendly way they were asked by the rulers of the synagogue for any word of exhortation they might have, v. 15. It was Paul who responded, addressing both Jews and proselytes. His theme is: Jesus is the promised Messiah. The elaboration shows four divisions: 1) Israel's history leads up to Jesus, the Messiah; 2) Israel's blind rulers helped to fulfill the prophecies concerning Jesus, the Messiah; 3) God fulfilled his promise by raising Jesus from the dead, revealing him as the Messiah; 4) In Jesus, the Messiah, alone is forgiveness and justification. Our text is the last portion of this address, in which Paul speaks of *justification*, and we have a statement on the immediate effect of the sermon.

13, 38. Be it known unto you therefore, brethren, that through this man is proclaimed, unto you remission of sins: 40. and by him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

As the connective **therefore** shows, Paul now draws his conclusion from the great deeds of God in Jesus for our salvation. He makes his Gospel appeal for faith in Jesus to all his hearers, bringing to bear upon them

in a direct and personal way all that lies in the risen and glorified Redeemer. We hear the voice of the commissioned herald delivering his saving message: **Be it known unto you.** We feel the note of authority in the announcement. The great objective reality is there, and men are called upon to recognize it, and thus to gain for themselves all that God has prepared and is offering to them.—Here too is the appeal of love in the address **brethren**, which is a brief repetition of the fuller form used in v. 16, and of the still more earnest and loving form in v. 26. Paul, of course, means Jews and proselytes combined, as in his previous lengthier forms.—**Through this man** ("this one," or "this person") is put emphatically forward. He has fully described whom he means, Jesus crucified and raised from the dead. He has shown that all God's saving promises were fulfilled in him. So it is true indeed, and all these people who had studied those promises and prophecies of God in the Old Test. so long, should be able to recognize it easily, that through this person (Jesus) **remission of sins** is proclaimed to them. Paul uses the same word as Peter in 2, 38 and 10, 43, ἀφεσις, the sending away of sins from the sinner. There is no word more attractive for the sinner in Scripture. To see the last of your sin and guilt, to see it all vanish like vapor in the hot sun of grace, as if it had never been, is certainly blessedness and joy to anyone who realizes what sin is. There is a passive sense in this word "remission" or forgiveness; it hints at him who remits or forgives, namely God. And this helps us understand better the preposition διὰ, the Mediator and medium God employs in this gracious act. It is only by way of Jesus that he can possibly come and remove our sins from us. And all of them are contained in the plural "sins," everything in us whereby we have missed the mark set for us in his holy law.—Paul says remission is **proclaimed** to us as extended to us through Jesus. In this passive we may see the human agent,

Paul and other preachers; but evidently only as Jesus said: "He that heareth you heareth me." God is behind his messengers and this proclamation is his. It is simplest and best in every way to understand Paul's statement to mean this: God remits all our sins through Jesus Christ. This includes Christ's reconciliation as Paul has described it in the previous part of his address, and resting on that and flowing from it what we call personal forgiveness or justification when men are brought to believe. — The coordinate statement repeats what Paul has just said, but so as to set the matter into a still clearer light for his hearers. The English is so stiff that it cannot follow the flexible order of words in the Greek, but literally reverses this order. The emphasis is first of all upon the modifier: **from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.** Of course, Paul's idea is not that by the Law some sins can not be removed, and that these are taken away through Jesus, cf. Rom. 8, 3. This would be a false and vicious limitation. Paul is speaking quite generally. He means all sins, just as he has mentioned the "remission of sins" in the previous clause. The underlying thought is that by the Law no man can in any way be justified before God. In the two passives. "ye could not be justified" we have God as the agent, and here as the eternal Judge. With nothing but the Law in his hands he could do only one thing — damn the sinner who transgressed that Law. — And here we meet for the first time from the lips of Paul the great word *δικαιοῦν* in the sense "declare just" or acquit. This forensic sense is constant and appears in the noun as well as in the adjective. For the adjective we have *zadakh* in the Hebrew, and for the verb *zadik*. In the Old Test. the word is used not only in a religious sense with God as the Judge, but also in social jurisprudence. In the New Test. the religious use of the word is the one which prevails. The judge declares that the requirements which must be made in accord with the norm of right

are duly met in the case before the court — this is the sense of "justify." As regards the sinner God declares in a judicial pronouncement that the sinner is free from all guilt, and just and righteous in his eyes. And this forensic sense is essential throughout. The term never means "to make just," but always "to pronounce just." It ought to go without saying that this acquittal cannot be arbitrary on the part of God, who is absolutely righteous in all his judgments. He cannot call the sinner full of sin and guilt clear and free from sin and guilt; he cannot call black white. And he never does. The solution is in the mediation of Christ: "through this man," mentioned by Paul to start with, and brought in more fully in his second statement. In the whole Law of Moses there is no mediation by which God is able to pronounce a man who has once sinned just and thus acquit him; by the Law God is bound to do the very opposite. And this is the point here urged by Paul. — But where the Law shut the door, Christ opens it: **by him every one that believeth is justified** from all things, etc. We must mark the close correlation between *ἐν νόμῳ* and *ἐν τούτῳ* (Jesus). The R. V. translates these prepositions as instrumental. This is not good, because of the disparity, the Law a requirement, Christ a person. It is by far best to leave "in" in its natural or ordinary sense, that of sphere, or of union. There is no justification for the sinner "in the Law," in connection with the Law, only "in Christ," in connection with him. — And Paul at once adds what the connection is, namely faith: **every one that believeth**. We must not combine: "believeth in him," for "in him" belongs to the verb: "is justified in him." Faith, confidence and trust in Christ and his atoning work, puts the sinner into living connection with the great Redeemer. This faith is wrought by the Gospel. And the moment it is wrought justification takes place. Christ's expiation removes the sinner's guilt completely, and so the righteous Judge eternal renders the verdict of acquittal, in fact must

render it unless he would become unrighteous himself by rejecting his own Son's all-sufficient merit. — In "every one that believeth" we have the universality of God's grace in Christ Jesus. No man, whoever he may be, Jew or Gentile, a sinner great or small as the world may think, will be condemned by God when he comes before his judgment seat with Christ's atoning merits. — Here, then, in Paul's first recorded missionary address we have a brief and condensed statement of his entire doctrine of justification by faith. Here is Romans in a nutshell. "The way of salvation: so slowly and with such difficulty prepared for us — slowly through the time of preparation in the old covenant; with difficulty through the bitter suffering and death of Jesus: and yet so short and so pleasant for us to travel — short, for all that we need is to embrace the cross of Jesus by faith; pleasant, for here we find forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation." — Gerok.

40. Beware therefore, lest that come upon you,
which is spoken in the prophets;

Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish;

For I work a work in your days,

**A work which ye shall in no wise believe, if one
declare it unto you.**

Paul closes his address by casting a sting into the consciences of his hearers. He aims to warn his hearers in advance against any inclination to unbelief, Israel's great danger. Very wisely he uses a citation from one of the prophets, to which his hearers would be the more ready to listen. **Therefore** means: with all this blessed salvation of God in Christ Jesus before you. **Beware** is the present imperative: continue to see to it, namely in what you think and say regarding this message. **Lest that come upon you which is spoken by the prophet** points at once to the perilous results of unbelief. The aorist subjunctive points to one act, or a comprehensive act, of divine judgment. And the com-

pound verb has the idea of a descending blow striking with might. The thing **spoken** in the prophets = the thing which has been spoken and thus stands for all time. The plural "prophets" refers to the prophetic portion of the Old Test. We may say, as some do, that all the prophets agree in what is here quoted from one of them, though it is enough to think of their writings as a whole. — The quotation is from Hab. 1, 5 and follows the LXX with slight changes. The prophet's words are not intended by Paul as a direct prophecy concerning his present hearers. Paul uses them here in warning only. He has in mind an analogy or resemblance. Unbelief in regard to Jesus would make his hearers like those whom Habakkuk warned. They would by unbelief put themselves into the same class with those despisers of old, and, of course, would share the same divine displeasure and judgment. The LXX translate as if their Hebrew text read *bogdim*, "ye despisers," instead of the Hebrew as we have it with *bagojim*, "ye among the heathen." The imperatives are all aorists and thus strong and peremptory. The God of might and majesty is speaking through his prophet. **Behold**, or: "see!" and as a result **wonder!** with astonishment and marvel; and as a result **perish**, or vanish away. The judgment descending upon them is the cause behind these verbs. Like a storm it shall rise, fill them with wonder and then, striking them, sweep them out of sight completely. — What this calamity is the prophet describes, bringing out most powerfully that it is wholly God's own work. **For I work a work in your days**, literally: "Because a work work I," etc., i. e., such a terrible work — and I, I myself, work it. The present tense, making the act vivid, puts it as if God were then and there in the very act of doing this thing. **A work which ye shall in no wise believe, if one declare it unto you** = one incredible to you if you were to hear of it in advance. You would not think it possible even. The negation in the relative clause is the very strongest with

subjunctives and future indicatives: "in no wise" would they believe it. And the verb "declare" means: if one shall tell it out to you in detail, expound it piece by piece. This very thing, however, the prophet did for those ancient despisers, describing how the Chaldeans would sweep down upon them and destroy them utterly — a type of what came upon the Jewish nation. It was literally true — not one unbelieving Jew thought it possible that such a calamity would descend upon his nation. Paul's word was more than a bold application of an ancient prophecy; it was application with real prophecy in it, and the effect of that divine judgment all the world can see to this day upon the outcast Jewish nation.

42. And as they went out, they besought that these words might be spoken to them the next sabbath. 43. Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Commentators debate whether Paul and Barnabas **went out** right after the address of the former, before the service was formally closed, they being merely guests, or whether they received the request to speak once more on the following sabbath, after the regular dismissal of the service. It is a small point, and yet one can hardly think that Paul and Barnabas left right after the address. The service was at an end anyway. There was no regulation for guests to leave earlier than the rest. The service was ended; then, when Paul and Barnabas were going out of the building, they were asked as indicated. Who asked them? The persons who had a right to, the rulers, last mentioned, cf. v. 15. They asked **that these words might be spoken unto them** again. That was very friendly indeed; only a decidedly favorable impression could bring out such a request, and one so immediate, at the close of this service. The imperfect tense is used for **besought**, which makes it either

descriptive, painting the scene before our eyes at the doors of the synagogue, or implies that Paul and Barnabas gave no definite promise. The former is preferable. — The R. V. rightly translates: **the next sabbath**. The word for "next" is used twice in the New Test., once for "meanwhile," once for "afterwards" (our passage). Robertson, 645, as well as Blass (Debrunner), 215, 3, report that the latter use is assured in the Greek of this period. So these people ask for another address on the following Sabbath, not during the days of the week, which also would clash with v. 44. — But this was not all. **When the synagogue broke up**, when the people began to leave in various directions for their homes, Paul and Barnabas were not left to go alone. **Many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes** showed how deeply they had been moved. They **followed**, or accompanied, these two messengers of Christ. And the two spoke further with these people, and in particular **urged them to continue in the grace of God**. The implication is they were in this grace, namely by believing Paul's message concerning Christ. This was the essential thing—to continue. Paul and Barnabas knew the situation well enough not to be over-sanguine because of this initial success of their work. What follows shows how correct their judgment was. These young believers would have their faith severely tried in a little while. The word for them was: Continue!

SERMON.

used 1926

Christ our Savior and all his apostles preached justification by faith, even as did the prophets of the Old Testament. Justification is the central doctrine of all the Scriptures, the heart and soul of the entire Christian religion. All believers are justified, all the saints in heaven now have been made what they are by justification, and at the last day the righteous at Christ's right hand will be there because they have continued in justification to the end.

No man is ever saved except he be justified by God. It is vital, then, for every one of us to know as much as possible about

God's great act of justification, and equally vital for us to have the glorious certainty from God's own Word that we too are justified by him. This knowledge and this certainty is offered us to-day. Hear God's own messenger speaking in our text: "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man," namely Jesus Christ, "is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses." Here is the whole blessed doctrine summed up in a few words.

It centers in the divine act which the Bible terms *justification*. The full meaning of this word we must grasp and hold. It is the treasure chest in which our salvation lies. The term is a legal word. It speaks of God as a great Judge before whose judgment bar we must all appear, in fact, we stand before it at this very moment. Justification is the climax of a trial before this heavenly Judge. It is your trial that is meant, and mine. Let us follow God's Word and hear what it says about

Your Case and My Case in the Court of Heaven.

I.

The first essential thing to note in our trial in the court of heaven is our *sins*, for St. Paul declares that through Christ is preached unto us the forgiveness of *sins*. That is how we come for trial at God's judgment bar—because you and I are sinners. If we had no sins there would be no trial at all for us. We would be God's children and heirs with full and free admission to heaven at any time. But now we are sinners, and heaven's door will not open to let us into its glory and joy. We are met by this great and mighty Judge, whose eyes are like flames of fire, who searches the heart and reins, and before whose vision nothing can possibly hide.

One of the most terrible mistakes which men make in regard to this Judge and their trial in his court is that they think they can hide or deny their sins before him. Nothing more hopeless or desperate has ever been tried. He knows all our sins better than we do ourselves. In fact, not one of them can ever escape him. The whole black and terrible record lies open before him this moment—every thought, word, and deed by which we have transgressed his holy commandments. Men may deny and cover up their sins here, and may in a fashion succeed; they will not succeed for one instant in the great court of Almighty God.

Another deadly mistake men make is that they persuade themselves, the great Judge in the heavenly court will close an eye and let their sins pass. They have heard something of his goodness

and love, but instead of finding out just what that love of his does, they drag it down to their own base level, and make this great, divine Judge an unjust Judge, who will let sin pass as if it were no sin, and a lying Judge, who when the Law condemns will set the Law aside and contradict his own Word spoken in that Law. Here is a mistake you and I must not make, now or ever. The incorruptible Judge of heaven and earth will surely condemn every man forthwith who counts on his being unjust and false to his own Law.

There is absolutely nothing left for your case and mine as we step into the court of heaven but to see all our sins there, and all of them exposed completely to view, with all their damnable guilt and wickedness. And there before that court we will see thousands of our sins which we have forgotten, some of which we never even noticed when we did them. They are all there. And when the great Judge calls your name and mine there is no escape. We can only plead guilty, absolutely and completely guilty. If we try to refuse, this plea of guilty will be forced from us; no man who ever lived has found a way to evade it, and none ever will.

And here is the first thing to know about your case and mine in the court of heaven—all our sins are there before God. And in this trial our case is **desperate when we look at our sins**. It is absolutely desperate, for there is nothing that we can interpose to withdraw even one sin from the eyes of this Judge. Let that settle itself once for all in your minds. If it does not, you will be lost, forever lost, in this trial. You and I are guilty, guilty a thousandfold, and we cannot deny or evade that guilt.

II.

But our text draws attention to something else in your case and mine as it lies before this heavenly court. We must take note of what are called our *good works*. St. Paul refers to them here in our text when he speaks of the things from which the Law cannot justify us. He does that because so many people, beginning with the Jews of old, bank on their good works for their trial before God. They imagine that by their doing certain things which the Law of God names they will be able to stand in God's court and escape the sentence of condemnation.

Some are very earnest in trying to live up to the Law of God for this very reason. Many of the Jews were of this kind. They fasted and prayed and observed their legal regulations with painful care. They would not think of doing the least labor on the Sabbath, or of withholding the tithe or tenth part from God of even the herbs they raised in their gardens. And all this they

did so scrupulously because they thought they could thereby stand in God's court. There are people like that to-day. They fast and pray and run to mass for the same reason. Their one effort is, to pile up good works to bring forth before the great Judge above. "Holiness," "holiness" is the cry of others, and some of them feel sure that they are totally sanctified and sin no more. And on that they count for their trial before God.

To be sure, others are not so zealous. They think a few good works will suffice. So they are satisfied with a fair measure of morality, a few moral rules of brotherly love, as in the secret orders, or the virtues of honesty, kindness, and helpfulness in ordinary life. Some add church attendance, church contributions, and the like. In a way they seek to measure up to the Law of God, and imagine that God will let them pass for that.

Here is a sad and wretched mistake against which we cannot be warned too earnestly. For let it be said at once—your case and mine is utterly lost in God's court if we intend to rest it on our good works. The great Judge has told us in advance that all our righteousnesses are *nothing but filthy rags*. Before these men who rely on their good works ever did a single one of them they sinned; in fact, every one of us is like King David in this respect, conceived and born in sin. And not one good work which you can do will wipe out one sin that you have done. Here is St. Paul in our text who solemnly assures us that the Law will never justify us before God. Sinful men have never succeeded in living up to it in any but a mere outward way, and mere outward obedience is an abomination to God, even men despise it when they see through it. In fact, God's own children, men like St. Paul and St. John, tell us that by the way of the Law and good works no flesh shall be saved, and they have learned to count all such righteousness as dung when it comes to God's court.

And this is the second thing you and I must know most thoroughly as regards our case in heaven. Whatever we may have or think we have of good works before God our case is **hopeless when we count on our good works**. Not one of them will stand God's examination; they are all full of flaws and faults, secret if not open. They are all nullified by our sins, not one of which our own good works can cover. In God's great court, though we could bring in wagon-loads of wonderful deeds of charity, churchliness, even sacrifice and suffering, all would be cast aside—and there we would stand helpless and lost before the great Judge.

III.

In that great court it is folly to deny our sins, and equal folly to trust in our good works. Our deliverance lies in a totally different direction. As far as anything in us is concerned we are lost before the trial ever begins. Our help must come from outside of us, from above, from God himself. And thank God this help is at hand. Our text points us to it, and does it twice over because it is so vital. "Through *this man*," says St. Paul, we have forgiveness of sins; "by *him*" we are justified. He is speaking of our Savior Jesus Christ. Our hope and help before the eternal Judge lies in him alone.

What does the apostle mean? We may well ask, for your case and mine in God's heavenly court is lost without Christ, but it is **completely changed when we bring in Christ**. God knew our case, desperate because of our sins, hopeless with our worthless good works. So he himself sent his own Son to make good our omissions by his own holy and perfect life, and to make good our guilt by his own suffering and death. God made him the propitiation and sacrifice for our sins; he laid on him the iniquity of us all. He made him and his blood our ransom; he made him our great Substitute, our Redeemer, our Mediator, our Savior. And this God did because your case and mine had to come up in his heavenly court. If we appeared there alone, there would be no help for us, absolutely none. God cannot deny his own righteousness and justice. Men may count it cheap and make him out to be like themselves—it is only one more of their fearful sins. But God is God, holy, righteous, and absolutely true.

But this is his love, his love as it really is, that he made a way of escape for us in his own Son Jesus Christ. That Son's righteousness is perfect, able to outbalance and cancel all our sin. God made him to be our Advocate in heaven, to enter his court at our side, to take our case into his hands, so that instead of God dealing with us sinners alone and with our sins and sinful good works alone, he might deal with us through his Son, and his Son's perfect righteousness and all-sufficient atonement. Thus and thus alone can our case be changed in God's court, completely changed and utterly reversed from what it would otherwise be. This is the infinite grace of our heavenly Judge. He is just and gracious at the same time. His grace upholds his eternal justice, and his eternal justice uses and maintains itself by his grace.

And this is the supreme thing for us to hold fast as we go to trial with our cases in the court of heaven. Never, never for one moment dare we go alone—then all is lost. Christ must go with us, then, and then indeed, our case is changed.

IV.

But how shall we take Christ along? This too is told us in our text, and, in fact, all through the Scriptures, for it is another of the all-important things we must know in regard to our case in the court of heaven. St. Paul clearly states how we are to take Christ with us for our trial: "By him all that *believe* are justified." And St. Luke tells us how earnestly he warned his hearers against unbelief. The whole Bible corroborates it: we are justified by faith alone at the judgment bar of God. He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.

And "believe" means that we must put our trust and confidence upon Christ and all that he has done for us, and in the judgment of God hold up to God nothing but Christ and his redemption to make him acquit us. That seems very little in one way, and it is; but in another way it is exceedingly much. Take Christ, his blood and cross; grasp him with your heart. You need not labor and strive and agonize to prepare something yourself to cover your sins and make them good before the great Judge above—only to find in the end that all your efforts are in vain. Christ has done all to change your case completely. His blood, writes St. John, cleanseth us from all sin. Embrace and hold him by faith and all is well.—But you must really do it, and that is why believing, which seems so little, is really so much. You must cast all other hopes and supposed helps aside, completely aside. None of them counts one particle with God. His Son alone counts with him, his Son's life and death lived and died for you. Take that and go with that alone into the court of heaven. It is the all-decisive thing. Your case—my case: it is **triumphantly certain when we come with faith**. God, the great Judge, has himself said so in his whole Word. This is the glad news, the Gospel, which he wants preached to all men. Believe it, trust Christ whom he sends you, and so come into his august presence. All will be well.

Not that your believing, your act of believing, is such a grand good work that it makes good all your past and present sins. To think this is to ruin faith itself, to make your own believing your Savior instead of God's Son. No; your faith counts so with God because of the great treasure which it holds—Christ and his life and death for you. Faith is nothing but the hand which holds the diamond; it is the diamond which has the value. Faith is like the purse full of gold coins; the value is all in the coins, the purse may be old and cheap. But you must have the hand, the

purse, else the great treasure will not be in your possession, else you will be without it.

Oh, that all poor sinners might learn this blessed secret as they go to trial before God! Away with these follies and schemes of our own, none of which will work with God, none of which will take away a single one of our sins. Believe in Jesus Christ and his atoning blood. So take your case into God's court, and triumphant certainty that God will indeed pardon you is yours.

V.

This act of the great Judge St. Paul sets before us in our text. It is the most glorious thing in all the Bible. God himself has it proclaimed again and again that we may be absolutely sure of it and live in this certainty and in the peace and joy it gives. The apostle uses two blessed words; the one is "forgiveness," and the other is, we "are justified." Both mean the one great and wonderful act of the heavenly Judge when for Christ's sake he acquits the believing sinner at his judgment bar.

Learn to see this act as it really is. There in the great court of heaven your case is called and mine. At once there stand revealed all our sins. They are piled high like a great mountain, and in the light of heaven they will look blacker and more hideous than ever they looked on earth. And our good works will be there, but alas, how will they look in the pure and perfect light of heaven? All stained and tarnished, broken and spoiled. They will be placed in a pile with our sins, because of the sins in the best of them. But behold, here is Christ at our side; his holy five wounds lay before the Judge Christ's perfect sacrifice for our sins, his holy life lived for us lays before the Judge Christ's perfect good works. And you and I, as the eyes of the great Judge turn to us, kneel at the feet of Christ and clasp him with the arms of faith—he is ours, he and all he has, and we are his. Then the verdict is rendered. It is the verdict of pardon and forgiveness, the verdict of justification and acquittal. We may put it into the blessed words which Jesus himself used: My son, my daughter, thy sins are forgiven—go in peace! O the blessedness of thus having our case settled in heaven! **It is gloriously won when we hear God's sentence of pardon.** For there is no sweeter word for you and me than the word "forgiven" from God's lips addressed to us, or the word "justified" when pronounced thus in our case.

Forgiven—do you know what it means? It means that for Christ's sake in whom we believe all our sins are sent away forever. That mountain of sin and guilt standing against us vanishes, like

vapor devoured by the strong heat of the sun. Those sins disappear, like a shadow when the light strikes it. They are gone as far as the east is from the west, and no man can possibly measure the distance. They are buried out of sight as if sunk instantaneously into the bottom of the ocean where it is deepest. O heavenly joy, thus to be forgiven!—But more than this. The sins are gone, completely and forever gone, but something is left. Christ is left, he stands in the place of our sins. All his perfect, holy life and heavenly obedience with not one flaw in it in the sight of God, stands there where our sins stood, and all this is ours. It is his free and gracious gift to us. And God himself counts it as ours. His own lips declare of you and me: You are just, for Christ's sake! This is what justification means—declared by God himself righteous and just because Christ and all his righteousness is ours by faith. O heavenly joy once more! All that is ours, so black and damnable, gone; all that is Christ's, so holy and perfect, left, and all this ours now and forever.

And this mighty sentence of God is true. Nothing can change it, because God has rendered it. If we know that the word of earthly judges is decisive, what of him who with one word called the world into being? The heavens may fall, but God's pardoning Word for you and me in Jesus Christ shall stand forever.—And his Word is just. When God's own Son pays our debt shall not God count the debt paid? When Christ brings more than enough for sins, shall God count it as less than enough?—But oh, his Word of pardon is all grace too, and not merely cold justice. For God himself gave us his Son, and sends us his Gospel to make that Son ours by faith, in order that when your case and mine comes before him at his judgment seat, he may be able to forgive and justify us. This grace and mercy of his shines out in his glorious act. It is the deepest fountain of our joy.

When St. Paul closed his great sermon on Christ and justification through Christ by faith in him, he warned his hearers on the one point which to this day needs to be impressed upon us. Beware of unbelief! And when the service was over at which St. Paul preached, and when many of his hearers talked with him about it, he again came back to this point. Continue in the grace of God—never for a moment let go your faith. Here is the vital thing in our case in the court of heaven. It is won if we believe, it is lost if we refuse to believe. And as long as we believe, God's blessed verdict stands. But if we cast our faith aside, and thus cast Christ aside, we ourselves reverse the verdict, and our case would thus be lost. Lord Jesus Christ, our great Redeemer, our one hope before God's judgment bar, help us by thy Word and Spirit, to believe now, to hold out in faith, so that by thee and

all thy saving work for us our sentence from God our Judge may be the blessed verdict of forgiveness and justification now and forever.

OUTLINES.

The text as it stands presents three parts—Paul's word on justification—his warning against unbelief—his admonition to continue in the grace of God. These three may, of course, be used as the main heads of the sermon giving them a suitable theme and formulating accordingly. But the real center of the text lies in the two words "forgiveness" and "justified," since for these the text has been chosen. Theme and division will then most likely operate with this center. A simple handling would give us something like this: The sinner's only hope before God: Christ—faith in Christ—pardon through faith in Christ.—Too few of the sermons on justification by faith hold fast the judicial imagery contained in the very term the Bible uses for this doctrine. More efforts should be made in this direction. For instance: Your soul before God's judgment seat: Lost, if it comes alone—pardoned if it comes with Christ.—How can the righteous Judge of all the earth justify the guilty sinner? He never does justify the guilty sinner—he can justify only the redeemed sinner—and he actually does justify only the believing sinner.

The Sinner's Only Hope before God.

1. *Christ's atonement.*
 2. *Faith in Christ's atonement.*
 3. *God's pardon through faith in Christ's atonement.*
-

How St. Paul Preached Justification by Faith in Antioch.

1. *He pointed to our sins.*
 2. *He held up Jesus Christ.*
 3. *He aimed at faith.*
 4. *He proclaimed God's pardon.*
 5. *He warned against unbelief.*
-

Guilty! or: Not Guilty!

What decides with the heavenly Judge?

1. *Not sin—but Christ's blood.*
2. *Not works—but faith.*

In God's Court.

1. *The Judge and his righteousness.*
 2. *Sin and its guilt.*
 3. *Faith and its plea.*
 4. *The verdict and its award.*
-

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts 6, 8-15.

Stephen is a shining example of faith, or we may say of *the power of faith* amid the strongest kind of opposition. As such we want him in this place in our sub-cycle on faith. There is no question about the greatness of this man's faith; but that is the very thing we need in our littleness of faith. God's Word and Spirit have not grown less in power and efficacy, they are able both to give us faith and to increase our faith in the most glorious way. — All that we know of Stephen is found in the Acts. He was chosen as one of the first seven deacons or administrators of the funds of the first church in Jerusalem, and thus undoubtedly met the requirements set by the apostles: "of good report, full of the Spirit and of wisdom." Under the new arrangement with deacons the church went on with increasing success, many priests even believing. But now the turning point is reached — persecution is on the way, and Stephen is to be the first victim.

6, 8. And Stephen, full of grace and power, wrought great wonders and signs among the people.

Stephen is really a Grecian name, and means *crown*, στέφανος. It is nothing but pious fancy to suppose that there was a prophecy in this name, pointing to the crown of martyrdom which awaited Stephen. This connection of the man's name and his glorious end does not go beyond a mere coincidence. It is an open question whether Stephen was a Hellenistic Jew originally or an Aramæan Jew. The name is not decisive, as Greek names are found among the latter class. Stephen's traditional name *Cheliel* is a mere translation into Syriac of his Grecian name, both meaning crown. The tenor

of Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrim has likewise been used to prove him a Hellenist, yet this too is inconclusive. The same thing should be said as to his work in the Hellenistic synagogues in Jerusalem. And for the simple reason that we find Saul too in these synagogues, who beyond question was an Aramæan Jew. Judaism in general was divided between these two great classes at this time. The Hellenistic Jews were those who employed the Greek language in their daily life, who accordingly used the Septuagint translation of the Old Test. in their religious work, who were open to many ideas of Greek culture and philosophy (for instance Philo), and whose great center of influence was Alexandria in Egypt. While scattered extensively through the countries where Greek was the regular medium of intercourse they were numerous and powerful in Jerusalem itself. The Aramæan Jews were called Hebrews, v. 1, and we have their type in Saul, a "Hebrew of the Hebrews." The language of these Jews was Aramaic; they used the Targums or Chaldee paraphrases in working with the Hebrew Scriptures; their homes were mostly in Palestine, Syria, and the country of the Tigris. Babylon and Jerusalem were their chief strongholds. They were less free, less open, often bigoted and hard in their old tradition. Whatever class Stephen had belonged to originally, he belonged to it no more after he came into possession of the Gospel. His whole being was merged into Christ. And this is the best thing we can say of the man — he is so strongly Christian now that we are unable to tell just what kind of a Jew he used to be. Would that every convert might thus merge his whole nature, or rather submerge it, into the new. — **Full of grace** writes: *Soli Deo gloria!* over the whole story of Stephen. All that we see in him is the work of God's grace in Christ Jesus. Grace is the gift of God's favor as it was bestowed upon Stephen in and by the Word and the Spirit. It is the same grace which we have to-day, only he was "full" of it, taking

all its rich abundance into his soul. Too many people are afraid they will get too much of God's grace, hence they use as little as possible of the Word, give the Spirit but little room in their hearts and lives, and become only small vessels or instruments of grace. — Grace is the fountain, **power** is the stream; or grace is the influx, power the efflux. It is "power" here not as a mere possession, but power in activity, doing what its nature called for. — And now we are bidden to see the things which Stephen's power, born of grace, **wrought**, namely first of all **great wonders and signs among the people**. The expression used by Luke places Stephen very high, cf. 5, 12; 2, 44. He ranks next to the apostles. The word for "wonders" is never used alone of miracles in the Scriptures, because heathen religions also boasted of wonders; the term "signs" is added with its deeper ethical meaning, pointing to the divine grace and power behind these miracles. But as regards these miracles a few things should be said to correct some of the false notions of commentators. Miracles were a direct gift of God. They were never wrought at the option of the human worker, but always only at the direct bidding of the Holy Spirit. The entire story of the Acts corroborates this. Peter and John saw the lame beggar many a day; not till that special day came did they heal him. Paul let the girl with a divining spirit cry after him a good while; not till the time of God came did he act. So Stephen. Some picture Stephen on his errands of mercy among the members of the church healing cases of physical illness. But *λαός* means the Jews as the covenant people, and we must think of the miracles accordingly. They were intended for the "people" in this sense, as signs and credentials of the Gospel. This gift of the Spirit was bestowed upon others besides the apostles. It was, of course, dependent upon the possession of the Holy Spirit, yet not so that every man full of the Spirit necessarily had this gift or even some other charisma. As long as the Spirit needed these seals

and signs he bestowed them, and in the measure and to the extent he needed them, not beyond. He does not bestow them now as in those olden days; he works now through the other gifts which also he bestowed so richly in the beginning, which Luke also and at far greater length describes as exercised by Stephen (our text and the whole of Acts 7), and which we see in vast abundance to-day. And these gifts are also the evidence of "grace and power."

9. But there arose certain of them that were of the synagogues called the synagogue of the Libertines, and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and Asia, disputing with Stephen. 10. And they were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake.

Besides the Temple there were synagogues of the Jews even in Jerusalem. These places of worship seem to have originated during the Babylonian exile, when the Jews were cut off from the Temple. After the return the synagogues were retained for the public reading and explaining of the Law, and in the larger cities there were several. The Talmud claims 480 for Jerusalem, which is extravagant. How many synagogues are meant here by Luke? The Greek gives answer: *τῶν τῶν . . . καὶ τῶν . . .*, which means two—one for the Libertines, Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and one for them of Cilicia and Asia (Minor).—**The Libertines** were Jews dragged by Pompey to Rome and later freed from slavery; of these many returned, while others settled in Rome and lived beyond the Tiber; their descendants were also called "freedmen." While this explanation cannot be fully substantiated, nothing stands against it, and it is accepted on all hands.—**The Cyrenians** were from Cyrene, the capital of Upper Libya in North Africa, the fourth part of whose inhabitants were Jews, cf. 2, 10.—**The Alexandrians** were from Alexandria in northern Egypt, two of the five divisions of which were inhabited by Jews; and Alexandria was the

great seat of Hellenistic or Jewish Greek learning. To judge from the Jews making up this synagogue it was certainly prominent and influential.—**Cilicia** is the province in the south-eastern corner of Asia Minor, with Tarsus as its main city, the home of Paul. While there is no mention of Paul till the stoning of Stephen is reported, we cannot but connect this man with the synagogue in Jerusalem in which his countrymen worshipped. Here Saul and Stephen must have met.—**Asia** stands for the entire west coast of Asia Minor, cf. 2, 9, and thus summarizes the remainder of the Jews in this synagogue.—Luke simply reports the facts that **certain of them**, no doubt men zealous for the Law like Saul, **arose** in these two synagogues, **disputing with Stephen**. The aorist tells the fact, and the present participle pictures the action in detail. As a Jew Stephen had been at home in these synagogues, and here too very likely his ability had made itself felt. Now as a Christian Stephen kept on in these synagogues, testifying now that Jesus was the Christ. But he met opposition, so that this testimony turned into disputes—Stephen against a number of opponents. This word “disputing” is unpleasant to some of our tender souls to-day, who cannot stand polemics, and think it unseemly for loyal followers of Jesus to argue against error in its various forms. The Scriptures commend disputing Stephen, even though he stirred up the most violent opposition, as faithful testimony sometimes will.—In these disputes Stephen was victorious. His opponents **were not able to withstand** him, they did not have the strength and the weapons to down him, although they tried hard enough. Nothing is said here of any miracles of Stephen, he used **wisdom**, namely his knowledge of the Old Test. as testifying in all kinds of ways of Jesus, and he used this knowledge in the most effective way. This defines somewhat the “power” mentioned in v. 8. Wisdom like that of Stephen is still the gift of the Spirit to his church, and it helps both to

build and extend it, and to hold and maintain in its integrity what has been built.— Luke mentions the wisdom first, for this was the weapon Stephen used, but then he adds **the Spirit** who furnished this wisdom and was the source of it. Here the Holy Spirit must be meant, and not the spirit of Stephen himself. The imperfect tense must be noted: **by which** (dat. of means) **he spake**, or talked, i. e., in all these disputes. His opponents were worsted; as in the case of Jesus, again and again they failed to find what to say in reply. Of course, the many auditors present could not but draw their own conclusions. While Luke does not say it, the efforts of Stephen must have drawn some of the listeners to faith in Jesus as the true Messiah. To let this thing go on, the opponents felt would not do; and so, since their arguments failed, they sought for other means to stop Stephen's work.

11. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God. 12. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and seized him, and brought him into the council, 13. and set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law: 14. for we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered to us. 15. And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

Where fair means fail, unbelief likes to employ foul means, condemning itself. Stephen's opponents **suborned men**, which means that they secretly instructed some of their tools to pervert statements of Stephen and to spread these false statements as widely as possible. Luke states what these slanderers were to say. They were to charge him with uttering **blasphemous words**, ill-omened, slanderous, and as such always referring to God, i. e., openly and shamelessly directed against God.

Here, however, Luke puts together **Moses and God**, the former God's greatest Old Test. prophet, so that he and God can be combined as one concept after a single preposition. What these words were Luke withholds for the present. The object was to influence public opinion and to stir up the ever ready fanaticism of the Jews against the doctrine of Stephen and again his person as a champion of that doctrine. — This object was abundantly attained. Luke gives us the story in detail. **They stirred up the people** in Jerusalem, and in addition **the elders and the scribes**, members of the Sanhedrim, most likely those who had already become fearful when so many priests began to believe. Here for the first time we find the people of the city combined with the Sanhedrists in their fight against Jesus. Besser would date a new epoch from this combination; but this is rating the thing too high. We do not read that now a general persecution broke out against the whole church, nor that the people all from this time forth became violently hostile. At first Stephen is the only victim, then Saul starts his persecution, but he alone seems to be its leading spirit. In the further developments the authorities take the lead as in the earlier outbreaks. — When the preparation was well under way the foes of Stephen struck their contemplated blow, thus revealing what their intentions had been from the start. They **came upon** Stephen, suddenly set upon him when they found him where they could get hold of him. They **seized him**, or rather dragged him along with them. **And brought him into the council** reads as if the Sanhedrim was in session and ready for this business. But Luke gives us only the main points briefly, and we ought not to draw too many conclusions from this brevity. There is a sudden pouncing upon the defenseless man, a hustling of him away, and finally a bringing of him before the highest Jewish tribunal for summary trial. He may well have been held awhile until the Council was ready. — It is certainly remarkable

how in this whole method of procedure, though all the hostile actors are Jews, the forms of legal procedure are retained, though all this legal machinery is most shamefully abused. The inner springs are all poisoned, while the outer forms are still kept intact, at least to a certain degree. Stephen is not assassinated secretly; his foes go to all this trouble to inflame public opinion and to enact a sort of trial before the Sanhedrim itself. They have **false witnesses** ready, apparently the tools used to spread the vicious advance reports, and now these are **set up**, and testify one after the other. — There is first the summary statement: **This man ceaseth not to speak words against this holy place, and the law.** The sense evidently is that all the preaching, teaching, and argumentation of Stephen was to this effect. "This holy place" is the very place where the Sanhedrim sat, some assembly room in the Temple area. — Now the specifications follow, introduced by the explanatory **for**. Certain statements of Stephen are quoted: **we have heard him say**, i. e., have heard him repeatedly and in various ways make these declarations. Then follows the one against the Temple: **that this Jesus of Nazareth** (thus referred to in a derogatory way) **shall destroy this place.** Here Stephen's own words are not given; this testimony offers only the sense which these men wanted to attribute to Stephen. The case is quite analogous to the charge brought against Jesus, also about destroying the Temple. In both cases there is no effort to understand what the person charged actually said, and what his words really mean, but only to use his words against him by making him say or imply what he never actually said or really implied. Luther makes the application to us to-day when we stand up for the true doctrine of the Gospel: "We ought on this account raise no high complaint against such unfair accusations. The devil knows no other way except to lie, and pervert, and interpret in the worst fashion what has been said well and properly. This we must

look for, and must wait until God comes and proves whether they have spoken truth, or whether they have lied. In the meanwhile we must content ourselves that together with beloved Stephen we have the testimony of our conscience that we are not trying to blaspheme God nor teach people wrongly and mislead them." — The second specification: **and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us**, refers to all the forms of the Jewish ceremonial worship. These were the supposedly "blasphemous" words against Moses. — In some way or other commentators are strongly inclined to figure out exactly in what the lie of these false witnesses consisted, and some of them even end by making Luke a liar, and others shave down the lie to moderate proportions. As far as we are concerned the lie is very plain when these false testimonies are held beside Stephen's full and elaborate statements in chapter seven. He takes up these charges in detail, refuting first that he blasphemed God, secondly that he blasphemed Moses and the Law, thirdly that he blasphemed the Temple. He did the very opposite, and this in the true sense of God's own Word. Nor was Stephen, any more than Jesus, condemned on this false testimony, but *because* he spoke the truth, Stephen in particular because he told his wicked accusers and judges the plain truth of God concerning themselves. — A remarkable statement now follows which usually brings out any latent rationalism in a commentator. After the depositions of the perjured witnesses all eyes turned upon Stephen: **And all that sat in the council, fastening their eyes on him, etc.** This, however, is more than the intense look of interest in a dramatic moment of the trial; the words are too strong for that. These intent eyes are riveted by what they see on Stephen's face; they **saw his face as it had been the face of an angel** — that is what makes them glue their eyes on Stephen's countenance. The aorist participle preceding the aorist main verb signifies merely that the action of looking

preceded the action of seeing. This is the nature of the case. Though it is equally fair to take the two actions as simultaneous, the one thus reacting on the other; and this too satisfies both aorists. Meyer makes the comparison to the face of an angel a legendary affair, but Luke's plain statement "as it had been," *ὡςεί*, settles that. Stephen's face is *like* that of an angel, Luke says. There was an exaltation, a heavenly joy, a holy light on his face and in his eyes, such as we naturally connect with the countenance of an angel. All the council saw it—of course, the others present also—and were struck thereby, but they who were proof against the angelic truth which Stephen uttered can hardly be expected to be moved by his angelic face. We must here recall the promise of Jesus to his followers that his Spirit would inspire them when they would be called before earthly judges. That inspiration was now undoubtedly upon Stephen, and to such a degree that the glory of the Spirit filling him shone from his features. Nor was this merely an effect in general; it had a very specific purpose. A hush fell upon the court, and all these haters of Jesus were held to hear Stephen's great defense until its climax was reached. The Spirit of God can do more than men are ready to admit who have the cheap and handy explanation of "legend" ready to explain away these manifestations of a higher power.

SERMON.

There are two ways of reading the shining examples of faith recorded for us in Holy Writ. One way is to read them with our own faith asleep. Then these examples of true faith loom up before us like lofty mountain peaks. We admire them indeed, but the flesh still in us whispers that such heights are surely unattainable for us. We lean back idly, supinely, telling ourselves in a discouraging way that there is no use for us to vie with these men of old. Have you ever read the Bible story of heroic faith in this way?

There is another way. It is to read these glorious accounts with the eyes of our own faith wide open. This clear mountain air of God's Word braces us. The clear light of its lofty heights makes us see things as they are. Our miserable flesh receives a severe setback. The prayer rises to our lips: Would to God that my faith were like that! We come away from such reading with new vigor in our spiritual system. Have you ever read the Bible story of heroic faith in this way?

Well, this is the way to read the story of Stephen, the only way. We ought to find in

Stephen a Tonic for our own Faith.

Let us try it with the help of God.

I.

There is first of all the note of **grace**. Stephen was full of faith and power because he was full of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

The secret of all true faith is God's grace. That means that all the spiritual power of faith is wholly the product of divine grace. Stephen was a man of faith because he took in all the grace that God offered him in his Word; and he grew to such power because he allowed God's grace through the Word to develop his faith in the fullest way. He took Jesus Christ into his heart, and gave his heart with all its thoughts, words, and deeds wholly into Christ's hands. And this he did in the simple way that he made the Word of God the element in which his soul lived. It was his meat and drink day by day, it was his joy and pleasure every hour. And that, not to know this Word alone, but to live upon it and to live in it. It was thus that Stephen became a mighty man of faith—God's grace made him such a man.

Here is the tonic we need for our own faith—grace, more grace, and still more grace, and this as it stands ready for us in the Word. Here we are dwarfs when we ought to be giants, because we do not eat the food that will make us grow strong and stalwart. Here we are weak and puny, stunted and starved, because we will not take the strength that is offered us. There is exactly as much grace for us to-day as there was for Stephen, and God is just as generous with this grace for you and me as he was with Stephen. No, the fault of our littleness of faith is not his, it is our own. And one great element of strength for us is to recognize that sufficiently that we may act upon it. Read the Bible, read it daily and devoutly. Take its promises into

your soul, and let them fill you completely with their joy and assurance. Above all look for Christ in the Word and make him your own. Let him be your joy and delight, your hope and help, your guide and stay, your support and strength. He is the very embodiment of God's grace. And every soul that feeds on him and his Word is bound to grow in strength. See the power to which Stephen grew. This glorious figure is put here to beckon you on, and he beckons you first of all to the grace of God.

II.

And this grace is coupled with **gifts**. As Stephen grew in grace and faith God gave him some of his choicest gifts, and they help to make Stephen such a man of power, a very tonic for us to behold.

Stephen was only an ordinary member in the church, and thus in his station far below the apostles. But when his faith began to show its power he was made a deacon in the church—that was his first gift, namely a new, hard duty and office. When he gave himself to that with all his might God gave him the gift, so abundant in the first church, of working miracles, even as the apostles were thus gifted. But the highest gift was that God opened opportunities for him in the synagogues of Jerusalem to testify for Christ and to win men for Christ by his ability to use the Word of God. In all these gifts he had a chance to exercise his faith to the fullest degree. As men saw it they marvelled—Stephen appeared great to them. And one shining feature of this greatness was his measure of God's gifts.

Here is the tonic that we need for our faith. God has gifts for us, just as he had for Stephen. Only let us not make the mistake to think that we ought to get the identical gifts Stephen had, and then become disappointed when we fail to receive them. All God's gifts are given "to profit withal," that means for the benefit of his church, not for your own personal ambition or aggrandizement. And his hands are as full of gifts to-day as they were in the days of Stephen. But many of them he cannot bestow for the simple reason that we do not want them at all, would not use them at all, or would abuse them, or because we are not fitted by our puny faith to own and exercise them. Remember all spiritual gifts are rooted in faith—that is the tree on which these branches grow. Take a little tree with a stem as thick as your thumb—can you put a branch on it as thick as your thigh? Well, God cannot grow mighty branches like that on little sapling trees—do not be disappointed when he does not try it.

But the moment faith grows gifts follow. Perhaps there is natural talent in you which if sanctified by faith would be a

mighty blessing in the church. Then there are talents that come with faith itself and its development, as in Stephen his power to speak for Christ in the synagogues. And finally God opens up unexpected doors for us when our faith gets ready for them, and ere we know it he is giving blessings through us to others, of which we at first never thought. But true faith is always satisfied with its gifts whatever they may be; it does not envy others, nor does it let its gifts lie unused, losing them thus, because they seem small and are not praised of men. Some of God's finest and greatest gifts look small to men, but if used aright bring great and eternal results for his kingdom. Grow in faith, and let God adorn you with his gifts, and praise him alone when he does it. Take this tonic from Stephen, for surely your faith needs it.

III.

With grace and gifts we find **wisdom** in Stephen. By that his faith shone out and wrought for God. As we see it a new stimulus ought to come into our spiritual system.

Wisdom is knowledge put to the right use, and in the believer it is knowledge drawn from the Word and used in accord with the Word. There is no mystery about it at all, for here is the open fountain of wisdom in the Word, and all who will may come and drink. And that is exactly what Stephen did—he drank, and drank deeply. Filled with true knowledge and the way to use it, he went among the Jews and began this use. Men marvelled at him, many were helped by him. We to-day have his words in the seventh chapter of the Acts, and they are still a tonic and uplift for us. Here we hear his faith confessing and speaking the words of eternal life, antagonizing unbelief and hardness of heart, at the same time glowing with forgiveness and love. It is the very tonic our faith needs.

The church is full of foolish people. One often marvels at their poor judgment in spiritual things, at their dangerous mistakes, at their false estimates. They keep talking as if they never read the holy words of divine wisdom. They do many things as if they did not even know what God has said on these matters. They try worldly ways, as if there were no spiritual ways, at least as if they had not heard of them. Perhaps they have heard, but their souls were full of foolish thoughts, and God's wisdom slipped off. There is no excuse for this lack of wisdom, this proneness to deception and self-deception. We need men like Stephen to wake us up.

Let us take the tonic of his example, it will make us sounder and healthier, stronger and more robust in our faith. A hundred questions are up before the church to-day, some of them of

God is being carried out now, for the Gospel of life and salvation resounds through the world, and every man who comes to Jesus is in no wise cast out.

Now in this great plan there shines at the very end of it the crowning promise of our blessed resurrection. Our salvation is not to be a partial thing, it is to be perfect and complete. The God who made us with body and soul has planned to save us soul and body. When death comes to us, separating soul and body, the soul cleansed by Christ's blood is to be lifted at once into the blessedness of heaven. The body shall not be lost. It shall turn again, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, but only to sleep thus till the great hour of God comes. Then his own Son is to call these mortal bodies back into life, clothe them with immortality, and take them also into the heavenly joys prepared for us. Christ himself tells us the great plan: "that of all that which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming," Jesus declares, "in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Then will the work of salvation be complete—body and soul reunited and restored to perfect holiness, made glorious like the body and soul of Jesus himself, dwelling thus with Jesus in heavenly blessedness forever.

What a wonderful plan! Every part of it divine. And not the least of it this crowning part, our resurrection.

As we contemplate it, how the foolish doubts of skepticism vanish! Shall not the great God who made heaven and earth out of nothing be able to remake and restore one of his many creatures. We who believe in creation cannot for a moment doubt the promise of the resurrection. Shall not the God who sent his own Son into our flesh and made him man, be able to do this other thing, call us back to life and clothe us with glory and blessedness? And again, shall not the God who raised up his own Son and glorified him for our salvation do for us too what he has promised, give us, both body and soul, by the resurrection at the last day to his Son who bought us with his blood? Take all these mighty things together, and the crowning promise in which they end will appear as what it really is—the fitting conclusion to it all. Of course, it is all incomprehensible; no human mind can fathom it. But this last part no more than any other part. All that we can do is to open our poor hearts and let the blessedness which God has prepared for us enter in and fill us with its light and joy.

supreme importance. The question of money, and how to raise it; the question of membership in the church, and what it requires; the question of unionism, and who are really our brethren; the question of confession, and what must be included therein; a thousand questions of what is right, and what is wrong, what a Christian may, and what he may not do. How shall we answer these questions? Shall we use our own natural wisdom? That is folly. Shall we look into the Bible a little, and mix our natural wisdom with this or that from Scripture? That surely will not answer. Shall we follow what supposedly great men have said, or now say? That too is never safe and wise. Do as Stephen did—get God's wisdom in all its abundance. Oh, what a blessing it would be to the whole church and thousands outside of the church! Let Stephen stimulate us to grow mighty in faith and God's wisdom.

IV.

In him grace, gifts, wisdom were augmented by zeal. All the faith he had he exercised to the fullest extent, and in the station God assigned to him. Look at the man, and let the tonic of his zealous faith stir you into stronger vitality.

Not by idling did he work wonders and signs, and not by sitting still, saying and doing nothing, did he stir up the enemies of Christ and reach a martyr's glorious crown. His faith burned like fire in him and made him zealous to build the church and serve his Lord. He did not make everything else the first duty in life, and faith and love the last. He put first things first, and so became the man of God he was, zealous for his cause. And do not forget, his wisdom was first, his zeal second, for there is often zeal in the church, but misguided, zeal without knowledge—like a horse drawing a wagon with the driver gone or asleep; the wagon generally upsets.

Idle faith is poor faith. It has too little red blood in it. It is like a consumptive, every little exertion overtaxes it. We need the tonic of Stephen, even those of us who have zeal in a measure. God's church is first of all a gift-shop, where we may come and buy for ourselves without money or price, and the only rule is that we shall have exactly as much as we really want, and are really willing to take. Would to God we were as greedy here as if we were turned loose in an earthly gift-shop. Then, however, God's church is like a work-shop, and one in which the work never ends. As we do it, it grows and grows and grows. It just naturally keeps ahead of our zeal. That seems to discourage some people. They ought to have more wisdom. For every bit of true work done in faith for God is a blessing, first a blessing for the worker, secondly a blessing for others. Do we want less work

then, or more? Surely, surely, more! And so zeal is like a plant that multiplies by layering. Every new layer grows a new plant, with new flowers and fruit, till the whole garden is full. Do we want less of this true zeal? less of these beautiful flowers and this fruit? See how much Stephen wrought in his short day of life for eternity. Let the stimulus of his zeal strengthen and stir you to do what you can in the short life-day still left to you.

V.

And now to grace, gifts, wisdom, and zeal **courage** is added, one of the very finest features of true faith, and one that must mark every genuine believer. This courageous faith of Stephen is the tonic to brace us in our cowardly, flabby age.

Stephen might have contented himself to stay at home with his faith, and to keep silent when he heard it attacked. Not he! He believed, and therefore he confessed. And where he could he pointed other men away from their false faith and dangerous ways to the one true faith and the way of life eternal. He had the wisdom of the Word and the gift of eloquence, and he used them both with no thought of fear or cowardice. Men stood against him, but he was unafraid. And this was indeed no child's play. These were men, some of them, who might prove very dangerous to Stephen, in fact did prove so, for they finally took his life. Stephen laid it down willingly—the first man to shed his blood for Jesus Christ. His name is imperishable in the annals of the kingdom. Stephen means crown. When his mother named him she may have thought of an earthly crown or honor for her little son; Christ gave him the glorious crown of martyrdom.

"O for a faith that will not shrink,
Though pressed by ev'ry woe,
That will not tremble on the brink
Of any earthly woe!"

We sing it, but do we really want a faith like this? Stephen's example is to serve as a tonic to make our faith courageous, unshrinking, unflinching indeed. Faith demands confession, and confession always means courage, especially when it meets opposition, as it ever must in this sinful world. Your employer wants you to do wrong? Will you be courageous and confess your Lord? Your friends and companions urge you to join in questionable ways? Are you courageous enough to say no? You meet all sorts of dangerous notions. Will you keep your mouth shut, or speak out like Stephen? But the threatening consequences? The mockery and derision, the opposition and hatred, the losses and hurts? Yes,

we are prone to look at these, and then we deny, at least by our silence. A little denial often seems a very wise and profitable thing. A surrender once in a while seems like a great gain and victory. That is how Satan ties our hands, and one denial leads so easily to another. Let Stephen help us. Put all the consequences in God's hands where they belong, and take every loss and pain as a cross from his hands, a badge of honor granted you from above for manliness of faith and the true courage of Christian valor. Leave the flowery beds of ease to those who feel safer there, but go and confess your faith, even if it cost your life. We are brothers of Stephen, and Christ is with us to uphold us in every trial of our courage.

VI.

And this is the last thing we draw to-day from Stephen's faith, this vision of divine **support**. When his great test came the Christ who had upheld him with his arm did not fail him. Let that support of his granted to Stephen serve as a tonic for your faith in any trial you may meet.

They dragged Stephen before the Jewish high court, brought lying witnesses against him with murderous intent, and made ready to take this noble believer's life. It all came upon Stephen suddenly, giving him no time at all to prepare. But what does the sacred record tell us? Our hearts glow with admiration as we read it. Christ was with his faithful follower—there he stood alone amid his implacable enemies. Downcast, trembling, begging for mercy? O no! Erect and joyful. And suddenly his face shone with a heavenly radiance. It looked like the face of an angel. All men saw it and stared at what they beheld. It was the wonderful divine support granted to Stephen in this supreme hour of his life. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior." Is. 43, 2-3. Christ kept the faith of his servant and made it shine out brighter than ever at the end.

Here is the tonic we need. God will not forsake us in our trials when our faith is brought to undergo them. In the supreme trial of Stephen he found such wondrous and unexpected support, do you suppose that in the lesser trials set for us he will fail to furnish us support? No; our faith and its victory is too precious in his sight. Only let us look for that support, and not seek for a broken staff of human help to lean upon. Let us cry in every trial to him, and his angel will come to strengthen us. While

Stephen's experience is singular and exceptional in the way God's support to him was made manifest to men, in another and more important way, in the fact of his having such all-sufficient support there is nothing singular at all about his case. All martyrs have experienced it; and where lighter trials than theirs came, the same Helper was always at hand. The Bible is full of promises to those who suffer for his name's sake, and these promises all, with every example we have, including glorious Stephen, are our tonic now to help us to greater strength of faith and to give us also the victory in the end.

Stephen, a tonic for our own faith—may we read his story aright so that there shine out from it grace, gifts, wisdom, zeal, courage, and support, and our own faith may grow in strength and joy until it too receives its eternal reward.

OUTLINES.

The figure of Stephen will always attract believers, since he is the first martyr. In our text, however, it is his faith which is to occupy us, and not his martyrdom as such. A simple outline will combine the main features of his faith: Stephen's faith a model for us: in its reliance on God's grace—in its adherence to God's grace—in its defense of God's grace. And it is well to remember that we should speak of Stephen's *faith*, and not simply pass that by and speak only of the fruits of his faith. All these fruits must be referred back to their source, which is faith.—The glory of Stephen's faith: it trusted—it testified—it endured. Or: a faith reliant—a faith diligent—a faith militant—a faith persevering—a faith triumphant.—Since faith like Stephen's is often set aside as exceptional, with the plea that we cannot hope to equal it, we may approach his example from this angle: How shall we use an example of great faith like Stephen's? We may contrast our faith with his in order to stir our faith up—and we may liken our faith to his in order to stimulate and increase our faith.

Stephen, a Man full of Faith and Power.

1. *In his successful labors.*
2. *In his severe trials.*
3. *In the heavenly light which shone upon him.*

—Lechler and Gerok.

The Glory of God's Grace in Stephen.

1. *In his faith.*
 2. *In his contention for the faith.*
 3. *In his suffering for the faith.*
 4. *In his final testimony for the faith.*
-

The Greatness of Stephen's Faith.

1. *Due to the grace of God.*
 2. *Revealed in his work for God.*
 3. *Crowned by his conflict for God.*
-

God's Use of Men of Faith and Power.

1. *In the sweet work of building his church.*
 2. *In the bitter work of contending for his church.*
-

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts 5, 1-11.

The falseness of Achan, John 7, 1, etc., and his severe penalty, when Israel first entered Canaan, are set as a warning for the entire Old Test. church. The falseness of Ananias and Sapphira, when the Christian church began in Jerusalem, and their severe penalty, are set as a warning for the entire New Test. church. Here is a warning example of *hypocritical faith*, sham faith, spurious inwardly, yet trying to make a fair show. — The first threat of danger for the young church in Jerusalem had passed, Peter and John had been released after detention by the Jewish authorities. The church went on in its successful course. Then came this attack of Satan from within the sacred circle — the hearts of these two disciples had become false. The connection with 5, 36-37 is evident. Barnabas had land, sold it, and brought the proceeds as an offering to lay at the apostles' feet. It was a true offering, a fruit of faith. Now come Ananias and Sapphira doing ostensibly the same thing, and yet with all the apparent sameness an utterly opposite thing, and judgment overtakes them.

5, 1. But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2. and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Luke simply reports the facts in the case before us, and they speak for themselves. **A certain man** is one now introduced for the first time, who had not become prominent before. And he is at once linked with **his wife**, for the two acted together in this matter. It was all planned in advance, and their sin was fully premeditated, not the weakness of a passing moment.

Their names are not withheld because of the gravity of the case. — They **sold a possession**, namely a piece of real estate, "land," as v. 3 shows. Luther translates *seine Gueter*, and in v. 3 *Acker*, as if this was all the property the two had. The matter cannot be determined, although Luther's assumption is quite probable. As far as the issue is concerned this point, however, makes no difference. The sin was the same whether the property sold was all the two had, or whether they still had other means. — **And kept back part of the price** is joined so closely to the statement about the sale that we cannot follow those commentators who think that the idea of keeping back part of the price arose after the sale was made and the money was in the hands of Ananias and his wife. This would place the right motive behind the sale, and would reduce the wrong motive in what followed to a sudden outbreak of cupidity. Some think the sight of so much money stirred up this cupidity, and made the two change their plans. But no such change is indicated. The whole plan was matured in advance, and Luke reports only the facts about its being put into execution. There is no sudden change of mind. • Something had gone wrong with the faith of Ananias and his wife before they ever thought of the sale and the secret retention of part of the price. Their young faith had not grown, but had declined, somewhat like that of Judas Iscariot. And so Satan ensnared their hearts, not with cupidity only, but with the worst form of hypocrisy. — Luke indicates the gravity of what Ananias did by emphasizing what his first statement already contains, namely: **his wife also being privy to it**, conscious of it together with her husband. This, of course, refers especially to the withholding of part of the price, the act in which the hypocrisy reached its climax, although the selling and withholding belong together, and Sapphira knew of both and consented to both. Here the wife encouraged her husband in an evil matter, a helpmeet to his own destruction. Many

a woman has done that, as also vice versa many a man. Faith had died in both alike. But the worst feature is that this acting conjointly makes the whole sin one fully planned and premeditated by both parties. It is a grave thing to go deliberately about doing evil, to have no hesitation about putting it into words, coming out openly with it, in order thus to carry it out conjointly. Each had to understand just what was intended, each had to approve of the wrong in so many words. Ananias and Sapphira made a compact together, they conspired to do evil. They held up the deed to each other, and neither shrank from its wickedness. If one of them had any scruples, the other helped to allay them. We do not know which of the two first conceived the nefarious plan; throughout the story both are represented as equally guilty. Perhaps neither of them had any scruples about the thing at any time. — And so Ananias **brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.** This completed the deed itself. We must imagine the congregation, or a good part of it, assembled in the usual way for worship. The apostles are present as the leaders to conduct the worship. Ananias has his bag of money with him, and when the time came to make the offerings he went forward before the whole church and deposited the bag. "At the apostles' feet" reads as if the hall had a platform on which the apostles were seated. To the eyes of those who looked it seemed as if here was a second Barnabas. Words of praise, at least thoughts of commendation, accompanied the act of Ananias. He thought, of course, that no person would be able to detect his deception. He never thought of God who was present in that assembly according to his special promise. And so the deed was done. — Daechsel thinks that Ananias was aiming at something higher than mere commendation for his liberality. He points to Barnabas, who was rising in the church to be one of its prophets and leaders, assuming that Barnabas brought all his property, 4, 37.

Daechsel supposes that Ananias aimed at a similar position for himself and thus copied as closely as possible, in outward appearance, the offering Barnabas had made. Thus a hypocrite would be trying to secure a position of leadership next to the apostles in the church. The trouble with this version of the motives of Ananias is that they find no support in the text. The prominence of Barnabas is a matter for itself, the outcome of his faith and gifts. The mere juxtaposition of Barnabas and Ananias in this section of the Acts carries no hint with it beyond the obvious contrast between the sincere faith and offering of the one and the lying faith and offering of the other.

3. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4. Whiles it remained, did it not remain thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thy power? How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

Ananias has just laid down the money, most likely adding a few words expressing his intention. No doubt, he expected Peter or one of the apostles to answer with words of acceptance and personal commendation. Then came the exposure of his fearful sin, like a bolt out of the clear sky. How did Peter know all that he says of Ananias? How could he look so fully and clearly into this man's heart? One answer is found in 1 Cor. 12, 10: "and to another discernings of spirits." In the case before us this gift was augmented to a very high degree. Peter had the revelation of the Holy Spirit himself concerning Ananias and his wife. How far did this revelation extend? Did it include the judgment to be brought upon Ananias? Peter announces the judgment of Sapphira, not that of Ananias, at least Luke does not report the latter. Little depends upon the answer. We are able to get it only by inference, and this is not like a direct statement of Scripture. It seems

plain that the Spirit's revelation to the apostle included also the judgment awaiting Ananias. Why should it stop short at this point? It is hard to find a reason. Sin and judgment belong together. Some think that the judgment pronounced on Sapphira was only a conclusion drawn by Peter from the penalty suffered by Ananias. But this is unsatisfactory — Peter speaking in part by revelation, in part from deductions of his own. But why did not Peter announce the judgment of Ananias just as he did that of his wife? We do not know. He spoke what the Spirit gave him to speak, and that is enough. It may be that Peter was not to announce the judgment in the first case in order to make it clearer to all who heard, that this judgment was wholly a divine act, not one of Peter, or one in which he was even a tool. With this clear in the first and most important instance, Peter could announce the Spirit's judgment in the second case, and not leave the slightest impression as though he were inflicting this penalty, or was an agent in inflicting it. — The questions of Peter are all unanswerable for Ananias. He has no excuse, he can state no reason, except acknowledge his guilt. So the sinner will always be dumb before God. Matth. 22, 12: "and he was speechless." If one should venture to speak, he will only be condemned out of his own mouth, Luke 19, 22 — **Why hath Satan filled thy heart?** takes the guilt of Ananias back to its real source, and implies that Ananias could and should have resisted Satan. Satan "filled" this man's heart, took complete control of it, but Ananias was willing for Satan to do it. "Thy heart" = the center of thy personality, including mind and will. When Ananias became a believer he had the power by the Spirit of God to resist and triumph over Satan. Instead, Ananias turned from God's Spirit to the evil spirit, and found delight in his suggestions. — **To lie to the Holy Ghost etc.** is a simple infinitive, followed by a second: **and to keep back part**

of the price of the land, and as the latter shows, not an infinitive of purpose (Meyer), but of result: "so that thou didst lie and keep back." The act is done, and this decides, not the first intention. The verb for "to lie" here has the accusative as in the classics: *den Heiligen Geist zu belügen*. All sins are directed against God, and all the sins of those who profess faith, against the Holy Ghost. With the sin of Ananias this is especially plain. Not only had he closed his heart to the Spirit, opening it to Satan, he had planned to carry his deed out as a mockery of the Spirit, as an imitation of a deed of faith wrought by the Spirit, and that in the very church of the Spirit, where the Spirit wrought, and before the very agents of the Spirit, his holy apostles. This was indeed lying to the Holy Ghost. Ananias is bringing his gift to God himself, and thus deals with God directly. — The second infinitive specifies in what the lie consisted — in bringing a part of the price and pretending it was the entire price. — The matter is made still plainer by the following questions: **Whiles it remained**, namely unsold, **did it not remain thine own?** i. e., nobody requiring thee to give it to the church. Note the imperfect tense: "remain thine all along"; also the accent on the pronoun "to thee," since this has the emphasis. This question is important in showing that every Christian in the first church was entirely free to keep whatever property he had. The lie of Ananias was altogether gratuitous, there was not the least excuse for it. The negative οὐχί at the head of the question shows that the answer must be affirmative: Of course Ananias could keep his land. — The question is extended, with the same answer implied: **and after it was sold, was it not in thy power?** Again the imperfect tense: it continued wholly at the disposition of Ananias — no apostle or anybody else making demands upon him. This means that Ananias could have kept the entire price for himself with no fault charged against him. Again, he could have brought any part he desired, large or small, stating that

he wished to contribute only so much, and again no fault would have been found. But instead of acting uprightly and honestly, Ananias had conceived and carried out a desperate lie against God's own Spirit, by pretending he brought the whole when he brought only a part.—**How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart?** τί (sc. ἐστίν) ὅτι = *cur?* why? why is it that? Literally: "Why didst thou put in thy heart this thing, this transaction?" Here the action of the will of Ananias is clearly brought out. To put a thing into one's heart is more than "to conceive" it; it is really in the heart when the will takes hold of it and acts on it. So also τὸ πρᾶγμα τοῦτο is not merely the idea, the plan, but the whole transaction as Ananias had carried it out.—Now follows the verdict, which, while Peter utters it, is really the verdict of God himself: **Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.** The sense is: Thy deed is to be considered not in reference to men, but only in reference to God. Ananias is mistaken when he thinks he is dealing with men; he is dealing directly with God himself. And Ananias could and should have known this. In a way this is true of every sin, especially every conscious sin, but it is most directly true of hypocrisy in matters of Christian faith, such as Ananias' false offering to God. Peter's word undoubtedly identifies God and the Holy Ghost. Meyer denies this, claiming that Ananias lied to *God* by belying his Spirit—separating the two. But this is virtually saying that the Spirit was ignorant of the fraud, as Bengel urges. God is not behind the Holy Ghost, as he is behind his apostles or church, so that what is done against them is mediately done against God; the Holy Ghost is God, and to sin against him is sinning against no less a person than the one he is. The old dogmaticians and church are right in seeing here the clearest kind of proof both for the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit.

5. And Ananias hearing these words fell down and gave up the ghost: and great fear came upon all that

heard it. 6. And the young men arose and wrapped him round, and they carried him out and buried him.

Not Peter, or the words of Peter, killed Ananias, but the judgment of God. Luke writes that in hearing these words, having fallen down, Ananias expired. The words were in his ears when he fell and then died. It is folly to seek a natural explanation, such as a stroke of paralysis, heart failure, and the like, superinduced by sudden fright at finding himself exposed. If there was anything of this kind we do not know it, and it would be remarkable indeed for two people to be thus affected alike, to say nothing of the direct announcement of death to Sapphira. — Why was Ananias granted no time for repentance? We have no business to inquire into the secret counsels of God, either in this or in any other case. God alone knows how and when to determine the hour of judgment. He is not accountable to us; his mercy and justice are beyond question; and our poor, limited brains could not understand all his judgments now, even if they were fully uncovered to our view. — Was Ananias lost? Gerhard answers: "Not to desire to know, where the best of all teachers wants us not to know, is a wholesome and faultless ignorance." As far as we are concerned the object of this judgment on Ananias is to inspire us with fear that we may guard ourselves against the machinations of the devil. — This was the effect on the first church: **and great fear came upon all that heard it**, literally: "hearing it," namely those present, the assembled church. The final participle is often read as if it referred to others who afterwards heard of this judgment of God, but Meyer is right, it simply means: *auf alle Zuhörer*; in v. 11 others are mentioned besides those present. This was the fear of God, due to his manifestation of judgment and power in so sudden a manner. This fear is holy awe for God's children and their spirit of adoption; it is terrifying dread for the flesh still in us. Cf. F. C. v. 1, on the third use of the Law. — The **young men**, really "younger

men," are not church-officers, as has been claimed, since there is nothing to indicate this in the text. The dead body had to be removed and buried, and it was fitting that the younger men should attend to this. Yet we must not think of youths or boys; they were men in the more active period of life. — They **arose** from their places in the assembly, most likely on the request of the apostles, **and wrapped him round** in order to take the body away and bury it. The last verb means: "draw together," and thus to wind in a shroud. So they probably drew the loose outer garment of Ananias tightly around his body. — **And they carried him out and buried him** means at once. While in oriental and in southern countries, especially when a body is not embalmed, burial takes place on the day of death, often very shortly after death, one may ask, why Sapphira was not called to her dead husband's side. The answer appears in the sequel. The same judgment awaited her. Only let us remember that in this whole story the chief actor is the Holy Spirit, not Peter or the church. He knew in advance all that Ananias would do, and all that his wife would do, and his own just judgment upon both.

7. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in.
8. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much. And she said: Yea, for so much.

Again Luke gives only the bare facts, where we would like to have more. Why had not both come together? Why just three hours? Some think that when Ananias remained away from home so long, his wife went to seek him; but there is no seeking in the text. Some think the matter was planned — Ananias was to go first, and receive the plaudits for his generosity, and then later on Sapphira would come in, and there would be a second congratulation. The three hours are taken by some as the interval between the regular Jewish hours of prayer, though this interval was six

hours, the morning sacrifice at nine, and the evening sacrifice at three. All that appears in Luke's account is that both husband and wife came in to the assembly in the usual fashion. Ananias brought the money forward and heard Peter's exposure of his sin. Sapphira must have been called forward to be questioned by Peter. Other details are left to us to supply if we think we must have them. Among them also this stretch of three hours — whether the service continued thus, or whether in connection with the worship there were other matters to occupy the apostles and a greater or smaller number of the believers. — Luke uses ἐγένετο, followed by καί and another verb, in an absolute way, ct. Luke 5, 12: "it came to pass and," etc. So διάστημα is not the subject, but an absolute nominative, R. 460, merely thrown in to mark the time. We have the sense, but not the Greek construction in the translation: **And it was about the space of three hours after.** — No news of what had transpired had reached Sapphira: **not knowing what was done**, literally: "the thing that had occurred." Why had no one hurried out to tell her? The answer has already been given — the Spirit was directing these affairs, not men, and wisely they left them to him. So she **came in**. Did she look for her husband? Probably there was no time or opportunity. — **Peter answered unto her** does not mean that she asked a question; the Greek word is used in a wide sense of any situation in response to which a statement is made. So here it is enough to think of Sapphira's coming in. Peter had waited for her appearance, and so addressed her now. — The question is quite significant: **Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much**, gave it out of hand, with the genitive of price. The question sounds as if the money were lying still just where Ananias had placed it, Peter now pointing to it. One would think the very question should have made the woman hesitate. Why did Peter ask so significantly? Had their plan gone wrong? Had something occurred? — But no,

Sapphira is not startled. She and her husband had made up their story together, and Satan, no doubt, did his part at this moment, as in the case of Judas when Jesus gave him final warning. So she boldly affirms: **Yea, for so much.** Here was loyalty, but of the wrong kind. By this lie she fully joined the guilt of her husband, and thus consented both to his and to her own judgment.

9. But Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and they shall carry thee out. 10. And she fell down immediately at his feet, and gave up the ghost: and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her by her husband. 11. And great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all that heard these things.

"How is it" as in v. 4. They had **agreed together**, intensifying their sin, as is shown above. Pain and sorrow are in Peter's words. — Instead of emphasizing the hypocrisy and lying, the apostle now points to the other element in this act: **to tempt the Spirit of the Lord**, i. e., Christ. So Israel had proved and tested the Spirit whether he would let their wickedness pass, Num. 14, 22; Ps. 95, 8-9. We need not say that Ananias and Sapphira meant this to be such a tempting, it was this nevertheless. Sinners are often not conscious of the enormity of their deeds, until the light of God falls upon them. Every hypocrisy, every imitation of faith and love, tempts the Spirit. It is a challenge to him — will he know, or can we deceive him by our cunning? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." — And now Peter announces the woman's judgment. The Greek **behold** is accented like an interjection and used as such. The footsteps of the returning young men were heard at the door as Peter spoke; there is another task as sad as the first. Peter says to Sapphira what shall be; he does nothing more. In his every word he was prompted by the Spirit, as he had been in the other case. As

stated above, Peter may have been restrained from announcing the death of Ananias in order to make it plain that this death was wholly due to the Spirit himself, and so in this second case he could make the announcement without danger of leaving a false impression — which is the most we can say. Sapphira learns of her husband's death in this tragic way, her own death following immediately, just like her husband's. — Did either of these persons commit the so-called sin against the Holy Ghost? This sin is connected with blasphemy according to the Scriptures, a feature absent in Ananias and Sapphira. Hence we cannot charge them with the sin named. As Sapphira was one with Ananias in sin and guilt, so also she is one with him in death and judgment. — She was dead when the young men came in, and they **found** her so, and she was buried **by her husband**. — Again Luke speaks about the **fear**, once more calling it **great**. The effect of these two deaths must have been tremendous. But this was not fear and dread of the apostles and any punitive power of theirs, but fear of God's Spirit, before whom the lies in our hearts lie open, and who is able to judge the sinner in the very midst of his sin. — This fear came upon **the whole church**, including also those who did not witness what occurred. And here we have the term "church," *ἐκκλησία*, for the first time, where Luke has had "those believing," "the brethren," etc. The term is from the verb "to call out," as when a herald calls an assembly of the citizens. It was used of the assembly of Israel, and then came to be the standard term for the New Testament congregation as a whole, or for any part of it in one locality. — This fear extended also beyond the church, to **all that heard these things**. And here the present participle has a different context, so that it signifies those outside the church in and about Jerusalem.

Why this severe judgment in the first church? To purify the church and to preserve it from inward corruption, which in the early stages of the church might

have undermined it completely. But this open judgment is a standing warning for all time. Most of God's judgments are secret. He always knows how to find the sinner when his day of grace is ended. Some of his judgments are open, meant for our warning, yet they do not in themselves differ from the secret judgments. Besides multitudes of miracles of grace this double miracle of judgment is placed that we may search our hearts and cling the more earnestly to grace.

SERMON.

Since its beginning the Christian church has been troubled with hypocrites. Judas Iscariot turned hypocrite, and in the first Christian congregation in Jerusalem two shameless hypocrites were exposed by the judgment of God, Ananias and Sapphira. It ought not to surprise us that there should be cases of hypocrisy still. In those first hypocrites God revealed to us the hand of Satan, whose work their hypocrisy was; the evil one is still busy, and he still delights in eating out the heart of true faith in some of Christ's followers, leaving them fair outside, but like a wormy nut, rotten and foul within. In fact, hypocrisy is one of Satan's real masterpieces; for "he abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him; when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it," John 8, 44.

It is necessary, then, for us to study the sin of hypocrisy quite closely, even as God also reveals the whole course of it in his Word for our special warning. The coin of true faith is so valuable for every one of us that we must know how to distinguish at first glance the counterfeit passed out by Satan, so that in the purse of our hearts no counterfeit may ever be found. In Ananias and Sapphira God sets before us in detail

The Natural History of Hypocrisy.

I.

The first thing that cannot be impressed upon us too deeply is that **hypocrisy is always inspired by Satan.**

It is his special masterpiece, and he takes the greatest delight in it. That is why St. Peter at once challenges Ananias with the question: "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart?" It is the same thing with the hypocrisy of Judas Iscariot; St. John tells us repeatedly that Satan filled his heart. The whole plan

of Ananias and his wife, not to follow in true faith and love the example of Barnabas and others in the congregation in Jerusalem in bringing their offerings to God, but merely to imitate their faith and love, and to lie about the amount in making the imitation, was a plan that could not possibly come from God. It was the very opposite of all that Ananias and Sapphira had heard preached unto them by the apostles. It was so directly opposite that the slightest reflection must have revealed it to their minds. They were going to appear among God's people, before God's apostles, in a service for God's honor—before God himself with a bare-faced lie concerning their gift to God, a lie in their whole attitude and action, and on their lips besides. The whole scheme had and could have but one instigator, him who is a liar from the beginning! For hypocrisy is lying, the very worst form of it—lying in religious things, lying in word and deed in regard to our faith and love, lying before men indeed, but really to God himself and into his very face. It mocks the Spirit of God. He works true faith and love, and the hypocrite comes with a sham faith and love, as if these were the Holy Spirit's work. It challenges or tempts the Holy Spirit. He discerns the very hearts of men, for in them he does his work, and the hypocrite secretly thinks the Holy Spirit cannot see what is in his heart, or if he does, cannot do anything about it. If you ask how human beings can be so wicked as to sin against what is most holy to God, the Holy Spirit's own work, going squarely against the Holy Spirit's own Word, and this right to the face of the Holy Spirit himself, there is only one answer—it is Satan's power in those who open their hearts to him. His marks are over every case of hypocrisy, from that of Judas and of Ananias and Sapphira on down to this day.

This terrible sin, so deadly in its final results, like so many other sins, begins in a small way. The Word and Spirit of God do not impress the heart as they should. Satan closes the ears more and more. What if God does say this and that—the hypocrite pretends to hear, feigns assent, but inwardly follows other thoughts. The start is made with insincerity regarding the Spirit's Word. The heart thinks lightly of that Word, and secretly sets it aside. Outwardly it bows to that Word, but inwardly no longer. And when this first hold of Satan's hand is not broken, he presses his advantage. More and more he fills the heart, gains room in the mind and will. He leaves the outer husk, but eats the kernel completely away. The hypocrite goes to church, bows his head in prayer, uses the words of faith and love, brings his gifts to the altar, but in his soul faith and love have died out. His religion has become a lie, and since it is a matter of religion, it is not like ordinary lies to men, it is a lie to God him-

self. From the first unchecked insincerity it grows like the secret spreading of poison, until hypocrisy is complete. The devil laughs as he sees the thing develop. As he likes to build a chapel of his own beside every true church of God, so he likes to fill God's own church with sham believers, imitation Christians, hypocrites instead of true saints.

Watch your hearts well, lest insincerity creep in. Let God's Word hold you and move you in every secret thought of your soul. In that Word is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth, true faith, true love. No hypocrisy can start where the heart clings earnestly and loyally to him. He is our protection and guard.

II. — *the first*

(In studying Ananias and Sapphira as they exhibit the natural history of hypocrisy,) we must learn thoroughly) that **hypocrisy is entirely without excuse.**

St. Peter brings this out very clearly when he deals with Ananias and Sapphira. Why should they do such a lying thing in the face of God? They could have kept all their property, and no one would have said one word to them in criticism. They could have come and offered in all sincerity a part of the price of their land, and again all would have been well. But no, they must bring part, and say it is the whole, and thus show that Satan ruled their hearts completely while they pretended that they were doing what the Holy Spirit said. — And not only this, these two agreed together in their hypocrisy. They planned and talked it over together. Neither of them cautioned and warned the other when they openly laid their plan before each other. They were utterly without excuse. It would have been a thousand times better, when they no longer wanted to follow God's Spirit, to turn openly away from him and leave the church. Instead they deliberately and wickedly chose the course of hypocrisy. No, they had no answer to St. Peter's questions. There was only one — their whole hypocrisy was without the shadow of) excuse.

It is always so. In the first place the whole Word of God warns us against this inward falsity. One thing all must know who in any way have heard this Word, that God sees our hearts with every motive and thought in them. How then can and dare we ever act as if he did not see our hearts?

And then as regards the single acts of hypocrisy, how utterly without excuse they are! Take the question of money and contributions to the church. Why not tell the truth? If you do not want to give, say it, and keep your own. If you do not want to give a certain amount, give less. Why say that you cannot give, when you know you can? Why cover your niggardliness

with a lie like this, when you know that the lie is Satan's worst work in your heart? Why pretend your gift is ^{greater} ~~greater~~ than it is, costs you more than it does, when you know it is false, and that this hypocrisy of yours is the devil's worst work in your soul? It is bad enough when our hearts are weak in regard to love, but it is the very poison of love and faith to add to our lack of love the devil's lie of hypocrisy. The moment God looks at it, every shadow of excuse disappears.

But money and giving are only one point in which the sin of hypocrisy displays itself; there are any number of other points. And they are all alike—the moment they are brought into the light, we see how inexcusable they are. Take the whole matter together. Why belong to the church at all, if your heart is not in it? Why say that you trust Christ's blood and righteousness, when your trust is on something else? Why mock love for Christ, when you really love sin and the world and its ways? Why hear the Word of God, as if you intended to believe and do it, when this is not your intention at all? Why promise to follow Christ, when you have determined to do no such thing? Why say that you are sorry for your sins, when you know it is false? Why take the Holy Sacrament, when your soul has no use for this heavenly food? In other words, why pile up for yourself a double damnation, when one is already more than enough? Why mock and tempt God on top of turning inwardly away from him? Why this utterly inexcusable sin, when you have already more sins than you can bear? This is what makes hypocrisy so bad, and when fully developed almost hopeless of cure. Of all sins it is the most uncalled for and the most abominable in its insult of God. It cheats, lies, and pretends in the very holiest things God has given us. No man has ever found an excuse, and no man ever will.

Hold these things up before your hearts. They will expose the devil's efforts and drive him away. They will help to make and keep you sincere in whatever measure of true faith and love you have.

III. *In the 3^d place we notice*

(The natural history of hypocrisy as we see it displayed in Ananias and Sapphira makes it quite evident) that **hypocrisy easily deceives men.**

How could any of those people present when Ananias brought in his gift have discovered that he was acting the hypocrite and lying to God? Even the apostles with their natural abilities could never have detected the lie in Ananias. For this is the very nature of hypocrisy—it takes advantage of men; it puts up such a close imitation of faith and Christian love that all or nearly all are deceived. Even when we feel there is something wrong, we

hesitate to say so, because we may not judge rightly, and it is no small thing to charge a fellow member with a sin like hypocrisy. But this is the very thing the hypocrite counts on. Ananias and Sapphira reckoned on it; they felt sure no person would find them out, could find them out.

But (let us mark it well,) this sort of cunning is (born) of the devil and not of God. And like some of the other devices of Satan, it seems to succeed, and succeed so well, that for this reason the hypocrite is the more tempted to go on in his deadly sin. He gets the credit for faith, piety, goodness, liberality and the like, and at the same time he satisfies his evil lust and desire. (The devil himself flatters him for being so shrewd.) His conscience, of course, must be put to sleep in some way or other, and nearly always is. Ananias and Sapphira felt sure their names would be placed beside that of Barnabas on the honor roll of the church. And this would surely have been done, as far as men were concerned, if God had not intervened. It is constantly done now, except where providence helps the church in some special way.

But for every one of us let this very success of hypocrisy in deceiving men warn us of the danger that lurks in it. This success is the devil's bait by which he catches the wise in their own conceit. For where the hypocrite succeeds so well, another is succeeding even better, and the hypocrite is aiding that other's success.

IV. *Let us mark it well, the hypocrite is deceived*

For the next point to mark in the natural history of hypocrisy as we see it in Ananias and Sapphira is this that **hypocrisy deceives worst of all the hypocrite himself.**

Suppose that God had not interfered when Ananias brought his gift, and when afterwards Sapphira came in. To be sure, the church would have been deceived; no one would have known that these two people were traitors to Christ and his cross, traitors to the Holy Spirit and his Word of grace. And these hypocrites would have been elated at their success. But that is only a part of the story, and not the most important one even. Ananias and Sapphira were themselves deceived, and this not in regard to others, which may be bad, but in regard to themselves, which is far worse. What if I think better of a man than he really is—that may not hurt me much. But if I think falsely of myself in a vital matter, that is the worst mistake I can make. Hypocrites always hurt the church, but they hurt themselves most; their deception is harmful for others, but it is deadly for themselves. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira the church was indeed disgraced by their hypocrisy, and the church was shocked when this hypocrisy came out, but Ananias and Sapphira were overwhelmed with the

judgment of God when the exposure came. Here is where they had succeeded in deceiving themselves far worse than ever they could have deceived the church.

The devil likes to put hypocrites into the church to harm the church as much as possible. When people suspect hypocrisy among the members, especially the more prominent ones, they often are quick to turn away from the church. That is a far greater pity for them than it is for the church. For while there are some hypocrites in the church, there are far more outside of it, where no Spirit of truth rules. And they who leave the church because of some hypocrite they think they have discovered, will in the end meet that very hypocrite, if he really is one, in another place, where all they who leave Christ openly and who leave him secretly by hypocrisy will be compelled to stay in each other's society. — But Satan's real aim is the hypocrite himself, and the deception he perpetrates on himself. The devil has slipped a noose around his neck, and the hypocrite smiles at others for not seeing it, but does not realize himself what that noose means. That smile will die on his face when the devil at last draws the noose tight. Let every man look well to his own soul, to see that all is true, honest, upright there in regard to Christ and his Spirit. And let Ananias and Sapphira warn us, that husbands and wives, and other relatives who are thrown intimately together, as well as friends and associates, who come in touch with each other, can render no better service than to keep each other true and sincere, and to uproot the least tendency to inward falseness and self-deception. Hollow words, pious cant, superficial promises, and all mere pretense of faith and love is the devil's sowing. Uproot it in your own self, and by God's help uproot it in others where you can.

V.

And now the last chapter in this natural history of hypocrisy. Ananias and Sapphira show us that **hypocrisy is bound to be exposed.**

(Hear the word of) Jesus, (and believe it once for all:) "Nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad." Luke 8, 17. (And again he says: "There is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops." Luke 12, 2-3) (You know well how this is) ^{wt} God sees and hears everything.

Ananias and Sapphira discovered it, (alas,) too late. ^{2. wse} God's Spirit revealed their whole hypocrisy to St. Peter at the very

moment when it came to a head. (It was revealed more completely than if both Ananias and his wife had stood up before the whole church and told it themselves.) In their case that exposure ushered in their judgment. Not Peter by any power or authority of his, but God's Spirit himself struck these two hypocrites dead with the hand of almighty power. Who shall say the judgment was not deserved? God knows how long to let men go on in their sin; when the hour comes he calls them to judgment.

What happened with Ananias and Sapphira is only an illustration of what all secret sins, and especially all hypocrisy, will meet in the end. There will be complete exposure. Not indeed always before men, as in this double case in Jerusalem. Sometimes God permits the hypocrite to carry his sin successfully to the very grave. Then his judgment is sure, as was that of Ananias and Sapphira. Before the judgment bar of God, and at the last great day, every secret sin and hypocrisy shall be fully exposed, (and all the world of men shall behold it in all its damnable-ness.) (It will be a thousand times worse than if the sinners themselves should now shout it aloud from the housetops or advertise it in all the papers of the country.) Sometimes the exposure comes already in this life more or less completely. Then it is a deed of God's grace, giving the sinner another chance to repent and amend before it is too late. It cuts deep to have any hypocritical thing in us exposed. Oh, may it crush us in repentance, if such a thing ever occurs with us. Christ's blood has atoned for all sins, also for any falseness that may lurk in us. Only let us apply that blood in time, sweep out the sin, rise to newness of life, and thus save our souls. And in all things let us make the prayer of the Psalmist ours: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Ps. 129, 23.

OUTLINES.

This is *not* a text on church discipline, although Langsdorff, and Lechler and Gerok attempt to use it as such. This text reveals God's judgment on hypocrisy, not the method in which the church is to deal with this sin. No preacher can speak like Peter from direct revelation, and God's judgment in the case of Ananias and Sapphira is set by him as a warning for all future time. This shows how the text must be used. Here is: What God thinks of Hypocrisy: He points us to the instigator of this sin—to its terrible character—to its final judgment.—The whole subject of hypocrisy is brought up by this double case; so we may ask: What about hypocrisy in the church? And our answer may run

thus: It is not due to the church, but to the enemy of the church—it exists not with the consent, but contrary to the warning of the church—it will not remain in the church, but will be eradicated from her.—Instead of broadening we may also narrow the subject: Hypocrisy in giving: It creeps in easily—it must be kept out wholly.

Ananias and Sapphira, an Illustration of the Entire Class of Hypocrites in the Church.

Here we see

1. *How they come to occur* (deception of Satan).
 2. *How they look* (A. and S. imitated Barnabas closely).
 3. *How they must be rated* (as highly dangerous to the church).
 4. *How they end* (judgment awaits them).
-

Ananias and Sapphira the Great New Test. Warning against Hypocrisy.

1. *The warning in its origin.*
 2. *The warning in its inexcusableness.*
 3. *The warning in its abominableness.*
 4. *The warning in its penalty.*
-

The Deceptive Sin of Hypocrisy.

1. *It does deceive men.*
 2. *It deceives the hypocrite worst of all.*
 3. *But it never deceives God for a moment.*
-

There is Nothing more Dangerous than Sham Christianity.

1. *Sham orthodoxy*—it substitutes a show of truth for the substance of truth.
 2. *Sham faith*—it substitutes obedience to Satan for obedience to Christ.
 3. *Sham piety*—it substitutes hypocrisy for holiness and good works.
 4. *Sham salvation*—it substitutes hell for heaven.
-

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts 18, 24-28.

Here is a text that ought to please both preacher and people. It introduces us to some of the most delightful people in the New Test. — Aquila and Priscilla; and it shows us one of the many services these two rendered the church — privately and quietly expounding the way of God more perfectly to Apollos. We here think of the text as an illustration that *faith must be fully instructed*. A timely subject indeed, when we see how thousands of Christians shift along with as little knowledge of divine truth as possible, and are wholly content to leave their children even with less.

18, 24. Now a certain Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by race, a learned man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the scriptures. 25. This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John: 26. and he began to speak boldly in the synagogue.

Noesgen's heading: "the conversion of Apollos," is to say the least misleading, and Noesgen's own exposition contradicts that heading. Paul had made a brief start of work in Ephesus, and had then left with the promise if possible to return, v. 19-21. It is during this interval that another man arrives at Ephesus. Luke writes **a certain Jew**, but what follows shows the term here refers to nationality, and is not meant of the Jewish religion as opposed to the Christian; he was not of Gentile extraction. His name was **Apollos**, an abbreviation of Appolonios. The addition, **an Alexandrian by race**, states that he was a native of this famous

Egyptian city, two of the five sections of which were inhabited by Jews. This was the seat of the Jewish Hellenistic learning; here the Septuagint had been translated; and the Jews, though acknowledging Jerusalem, had their own temple at Leontopolis. The birth and rearing of Apollos in Alexandria explains much of what Luke narrates of this man.—He was **a learned man**. The dispute is whether *λόγιος* means “learned,” or “eloquent” (margin). It may include the speaking, together with the substance, and here evidently it does, because what this man had learned is at once further described, and later on we hear of his eloquence in Corinth. He was gifted and well-trained dialectically. No doubt, this training was secured in the schools at Alexandria, famous for its Greek learning.—This man of ability and note **came to Ephesus** just at this time. We would like to know the details, but they matter very little, for whether they were of this or of that kind, this coming to Ephesus was providential. Of course, Paul was not there, and no Christian church had yet been established in this important center, but God had teachers ready for this illustrious pupil, teachers whom many people would have overlooked, they were so humble and unassuming.—As a man of Jewish nationality Apollos would, of course, know the Old Test. Scriptures, and trained as he was he knew them not only in their then modern Greek form, but also in the original Hebrew. But Luke informs us that **he was mighty in the scriptures**, he was versed in them so well that they constituted his strength, as this statement indicates, and this was a strength he could and did put into action. He could handle the Old Test. Scriptures effectively in public address and in debate. Luke puts this last in his description of the man, to emphasize it as the crowning point in his make-up. What follows shows us that Luke has in mind far more than rabbinical Jewish ability in the Old Test., for Apollos used his Bible to preach Jesus Christ as he had learned him.

— And this is the new thing we now learn about Apollos: **This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord.** The Greek states that he was a man with this qualification; the participle is predicative. The verb *κατηχεῖν*, from which we have the term Catechetics, signifies: to gain information by word of mouth (Reu. *Catechetics*), though Paul already has the more specific meaning: “to instruct orally in religion.” The adverbial accusative: “in regard to the way of the Lord” must refer to the Christian Way. The Hebrew *derek* is used extensively in this religious or ethical sense in the Old Test.; and the Jews afterwards called the entire Christian doctrine and practice *derek hanotsarim*, the way of the Christians. So “way” here is doctrine, faith, confession, and life, all combined. Some commentators think “Lord” here means *Yaveh*, but this is surely a mistake when Luke adds specifically that Apollos spake and taught “the things concerning Jesus,” and follows this up by his further instruction in “the way of God.” Most likely Apollos had found one or more disciples of the Baptist in Alexandria, who had come away from the Baptist before the work of Jesus had been completed. From these he had received his instruction regarding Jesus, which was correct as far as it went, but, of course, did not go far enough. But Apollos had eagerly accepted this teaching of the Baptist’s disciples, and began at once to promulgate it himself. — This Luke adds in a preliminary statement: **and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus.** The participle for “being fervent” = to boil or seethe. He glowed with enthusiasm and zeal, and this coupled with his gifts and training made him highly effective. The imperfect tenses in “spake and taught” deserve notice. He had all along made this his practice and continued doing this now, namely speaking with men privately as occasion offered, and teaching in public in the meetings at the synagogues where he happened to be. Nor did

his zeal carry him away; he taught **carefully**, or with exactitude, avoiding the speculations into which Alexandrine Jews like Philo and others might have led him, thus mixing truth with error. Why some think Apollos had gotten much from Philo is hard to see, when Luke purposely shuts this out with his adverb "carefully." — "The things concerning Jesus" are real facts concerning Jesus. They embrace what the Gospels record of the Baptist's testimony, which was by no means inconsiderable, and they may have included something more from the early work of Jesus himself, which those of the Baptist's disciples who did not attach themselves to Jesus, heard toward the end of the Baptist's career and afterwards. — But Luke marks this limitation in the equipment of Apollos by adding: **knowing only the baptism of John**. By "the baptism of John" the whole teaching and work of the Baptist is meant. The contrast is not that Apollos was ignorant of Christian baptism, but that his knowledge did not extend to the completion of the work of Jesus. Of course, this includes Christ's command to baptize all nations, and the events at Pentecost and later. But there is no call to press here John's baptism as *water* baptism as over against the baptism of Jesus, either the sacrament or Pentecost, as *Spirit* baptism. John's baptism had the Spirit — without that it would have been unable to offer remission of sins, which it did offer. Not only did Jesus himself continue John's baptism, John 3, 22-26, but afterwards ordered it for all men, not only as John's for the Jews only. And Christian baptism gives no more than John's, namely remission of sins. False contrasts are vicious and must be avoided. To know only John's baptism is not to know of the crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, Pentecost, etc., not to know of the Lord's Supper, the first church at Jerusalem, the mission of the apostles, etc. This is what Luke points us to in the limitations of Apollos. Nothing is said about the baptism of Apollos. But we are safe in this conclusion: if

he had not been baptized at all, or if, having received John's baptism, this was considered insufficient, Luke would have informed us that now in Ephesus, or a little later, Apollos was baptized. But there is no hint to this effect. So the facts must be that Apollos had received the baptism of John through some disciple of John, and this was all he needed, exactly as all of the apostles of Jesus had no other baptism than that of John. But how about the twelve people in the next chapter, who had also received John's baptism and yet were baptized a second time by Paul? These people did not even know there was a Holy Spirit, although John had taught mightily concerning him and his descent upon Jesus. These twelve, therefore, were baptized in a doubtful way, to say the least, and may have been baptized by a disciple of John who went astray from John's clear teaching. In their case Paul did exactly what we do now, if we follow the proper teaching: when it is doubtful whether a man is properly baptized, we take him ourselves and baptize him, to make sure of the case. With Apollos this was different — knowing the baptism of John he knew there was a Holy Spirit, and he knew what John had taught concerning him as well as concerning Jesus; and so, too, Apollos could give an intelligent and satisfactory account of his own baptism. And this sufficed; it would have been wrong to rebaptize such a man. — Fitted out, then, to this extent Apollos **began to speak boldly in the synagogue** at Ephesus. The light he had he gave. "Boldly" means openly and without reserve.

26. . . . But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more carefully.

Here we meet this attractive and interesting couple. Compare the author's sketch of Priscilla in *Biblische Frauenbilder*, p. 359, etc. We first hear of the two in Rome when Claudius expelled the Jews. They came on to Corinth, where Aquila set up his shop as a tent-

maker, and where Paul when he came there from Athens took employment at this his own trade. Since that time these two are faithful friends and helpers of Paul. In v. 18 we learn that they came on with him from Corinth to Ephesus, and remained here while Paul went on. In fact, they made this city their abode for some time. Repeatedly Paul mentions the two in his letters, 1 Cor. 16, 19; Rom. 16, 3-4: "Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles"; 2 Tim. 4, 19. We read of the church in their house, and quite significantly, as Luke does here, Paul twice puts the wife's name ahead of that of her husband—he who wrote that the husband is the head of the wife! This is ground sufficient to conclude that Priscilla, or Prisca, as Paul lovingly calls her, was the more gifted of the two, by nature and spiritually. Aquila seems to have been a gentle, quiet soul, and thus genuine and true in the faith. His wife, childless it seems, was indeed a faithful wife to him, never for all her superiority thrusting herself forward, yet stimulating her husband in every good deed. She is the beautiful opposite of Sapphira in this respect. God had provided in Ephesus for Apollos, even without Paul.—When these two, who faithfully attended the Ephesian synagogue during Paul's absence, **heard him**, namely Apollos, when he addressed the synagogue, they saw at once what he lacked. **They took him unto them**, lodged him perhaps like Paul, **and expounded unto him the way of God more carefully**, i. e., exactly. "They set it out for him," as the Greek puts it. "The way of God" is the Christian way or doctrine. Priscilla's name is first in this business, which must mean that in all propriety she took the lead in this teaching, being more able than her husband. Since this was private teaching it in no way conflicted with the apostolic injunction concerning the silence of women in the church. Humble people though they were they were not afraid of the learned and eloquent Apollos. They had

what he did not have and what he needed, and they gave it to him. And the very fine thing about Apollos is that with all his superior schooling and great ability he was ready to be taught by this humble pair, even by Priscilla a woman. What a lesson to many proud men of learning who would despise to learn of a Priscilla and Aquila! Here this humble, unassuming woman and her husband rendered the church of Christ a mighty service. They equipped Apollos for his future great career as a teacher in the church. And they did it so well, transferring to him all that Paul had taught them, that in all that we afterwards read of Apollos he watered what Paul had planted, keeping in full and loving unity with Paul. No false ambition led Apollos away.

27. And when he was minded to pass over into Achaia, the brethren encouraged him, and wrote to the disciples to receive him: and when he was come, he helped them much which had believed through grace:
28. for he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

This is Luke's final account of Apollos and his work. It agrees perfectly with what Paul writes to the Corinthians. How he came to be minded to go to Greece, namely Corinth, as Paul's letter shows, we are not told. It seems plain, however, that Aquila and Priscilla turned his thoughts in that direction, since they had just come from there. It may be, too, as Lechler thinks, that Apollos did not wish to appear in public in Ephesus again, where he had begun his work so imperfectly. — **The brethren encouraged him** to carry out his new plan. Meyer thinks, since the participle stands alone, the object cannot be Apollos, but must be the disciples at Corinth. But the Greek regularly omits a pronoun when it can be easily supplied from the foregoing. There were "brethren," then, in Ephesus, some who believed in Christ, due to Paul's brief labor, the work perhaps of Aquila and Priscilla, and possibly

Christians come to Ephesus from elsewhere. This encouragement meant on their part full acknowledgment of Apollos. — In addition they **wrote to the disciples to receive him**, the first letter of commendation of which we have word. In this letter Aquila and Priscilla, who knew the Corinthians well, must have vouched for Apollos. — So Apollos went to Corinth and was very successful there, applying all his new knowledge. **He helped them much which had believed through grace**, edifying and building them up in the faith, also defending them against opponents. Both of our English versions are at fault in translating as if “believed through grace” belonged together. Luke is not characterizing the believers in Corinth beyond calling them people who had come to believe; but he is characterizing the work of Apollos, and here the addition that he helped them “through grace” is very important. Not the great learning or eloquence of Apollos was the chief element in his work, but grace, God’s grace in Christ Jesus fully opened up to him by Aquila and Priscilla. It is the thing for every preacher to put into the notebook of his heart, both for him who has little learning and eloquence, that he may take heart the more, and for him who has much of both, lest he trust in these and not in grace, or divide his trust between the two. — The special way in which Apollos helped thus through grace is shown by the explanatory “for”: **for he powerfully confuted the Jews**. The adverb for “powerfully” is really “well-stretched,” “well-strung,” hence sinewy, nervous, used of men’s bodies. Like a wrestler he always threw his opponents easily. And this he did **publicly**, which implies discussions in public places, like the market. When the synagogues are meant these are always indicated. He maintained the Christian way, **shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ** foretold by them. The proof he brought no Jew could overthrow. Aquila and Priscilla had enabled him to make his previous Scripture knowledge count to the

fullest extent. So through Apollos these two sent a great blessing back to their friends in Corinth.

SERMON.

We need more Christian knowledge. In order to secure it we need more desire for Christian knowledge. We must dismiss any wrong ideas we may have concerning this knowledge, its attainment, and its use, and put in place of such ideas those which shine out everywhere in the Holy Scriptures. Jesus declares: "This is life eternal that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," and he means to know both thoroughly. St Paul prays that the Christians at Philippi "may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment"; and those at Colosse, that they "might be filled with the knowledge of his (God's) will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." St. Peter admonishes all his readers to add to their virtue knowledge. And so the Scriptures speak everywhere. In fact, one of the most significant names for Christ's followers is "disciples," pupils, learners, people bent on securing the highest and most blessed knowledge.

Look into our text, and see how all this is meant. Here is a humble tent-maker's home, his shop with rolls of canvas, bundles of rope, and the different tools for his trade. The man's name is Aquila. Beside him we see his wife, busy with her household affairs, while her husband plies his trade. Her name is Priscilla, a name which through her has become dear to all the church. They are in the city of Ephesus now, but just a short time ago they lived in Corinth and for a year and a half the apostle St. Paul lived with them and worked with Aquila at the tent-maker's trade. This will explain some of the things we find in the home of Aquila and Priscilla. For presently the door opens into Aquila's shop. No, this is not a customer of his come to order some work done. We see at a glance that the visitor is a distinguished looking man. He has passed through some of the best schools of his day, and his face and bearing show at once that he is a man of far more than ordinary ability. His name is Apollos, and he comes from the famous old city in Egypt, Alexandria. But see what takes place in this humble tent-maker's shop. All work is dropped at once by both Aquila and Priscilla, and when they have welcomed their guest they suddenly turn this little shop into a school, a school for the highest learning in the world. And more remarkable still, it is not Apollos, the man of great learning and ability, who acts as the teacher, but quite the reverse, Aquila and Priscilla are the teachers, and this learned Apollos is the pupil.

Here is a school where we too must enter, for there are some very needful things which here we may learn. Let us take our place, then beside Apollos

In the Little School of Aquila and Priscilla.

I.

Look first of all at the two teachers in this school, at the humble tent-maker Aquila, and at his noble wife Priscilla. These two are a lesson for us, and one that we all need very much. They teach us, by all that we see of them here, that **no man's humble station excuses him from being fully instructed in Christian knowledge.**

Only a humble tent-maker and his wife—that is all these two were. He had to work hard day by day to gain his daily bread for himself and his wife, and she had the care of the home. They are just like thousands of people to-day in our churches, who bear that most honorable of all titles, working people. They depended altogether on their daily earnings. Their only leisure was the one day of rest when work ceased and they went to the house of God. And yet this tent-maker and his wife never for a moment thought, that being people such as they were they could not be expected to know more than a few elementary things in the Christian religion. On the contrary, here we find them giving the fullest and completest instruction in the Christian faith to a man of education and refinement like Apollos. They were humble otherwise, but they were gloriously rich in Christian knowledge. This is the thing we all must learn from them. No matter how humble your station in life, no matter what your trade, work, or business may be, you have no excuse for thinking that you cannot be completely and thoroughly equipped with Christian knowledge. Put away that old Roman Catholic notion, as though this business of knowing the Bible well belongs to the clergy and not to you. That notion is the mother of the worst kind of ignorance. It has taken the Bible out of the hands and hearts of the Roman Catholic people, and it is doing the same thing among all those Protestants who in this vital point are just as Roman Catholic as ever. Only these are more inexcusable than any Roman Catholic can be, for you all have your Bibles, and are constantly urged to make the fullest use of them. How shall you ever answer for it if you do not? If this tent-maker and his wife could gain such a fund of the finest knowledge, it is folly for you to think or say that you cannot do the same, or need not do the same.

But there is more to say. Aquila and Priscilla started late

in this work of learning. About a year and a half ago they knew none of the things they were now teaching so excellently to their illustrious pupil Apollos. Within so short a time, and starting so late in life, with the handicap of their previous Jewish narrowness, they gained so rich and true a fund of Christian knowledge. What an admonition to us all, who have had the full light in Christ Jesus perhaps from our childhood on. How completely this cuts off any excuse which we may now offer. What an encouragement also to those in our midst who like Aquila and Priscilla came into the church in later years. A little time used faithfully and well, following the Spirit of Christ, will do for us just what it did for this tent-maker and his wife. All we need is the earnest desire for this heavenly knowledge; it is easy indeed to have that desire satisfied.

Another significant thing in this school at Ephesus, and one we must not pass by, is that Priscilla was not only one with her husband in learning the things of Christ, a true yoke-fellow and help-meet of his, but from every indication she outranked him in her attainments. When St. Luke here tells of how the two instructed Apollos he mentions Priscilla's name ahead of that of her husband. This is by no means accidental. In two other places in the Bible, when the great teacher of Aquila and Priscilla mentions their names in sending their greetings, he puts Priscilla's name first, and even uses the affectionate abbreviation of her name, Prisca. It is plain, then, that as in many a similar case the wife had a more gifted mind than the husband, quicker to learn the great truths of salvation, and abler to penetrate into their glorious depths. And this humble woman used and sanctified these her natural talents in devoting them with a pure heart to the precious truth of the Gospel. Both were equally earnest in their faith, but the wife outranked the husband in her ability. What a fine example for every Christian woman! In those days especially, when women as a class lived far more retired and restricted than now, when social customs put many obstacles into their way, this woman did not think of excusing herself from learning all that she possibly could of the glorious Christian faith. She said nothing about household cares, or other duties that called her. She did not think that because she was a woman she needed less of the divine knowledge, and could get along just as well with less. No; her heart burned with fervent desire, and she took all the wealth that St. Paul, their teacher, had to offer them. O for more women of this beautiful type in all our churches! God has gifted many of you, my sisters, highly. Put those gifts first of all, not upon earthly, fading, transient things, but first of all upon Christ and his heavenly Word. Let Prisca show you the way.

And indeed this woman had learned the Spirit of Christ well. There is no trace of her pushing herself forward unduly. There is no sign in her of this modern spirit in the world of women which sets aside the order both of nature and of grace in assigning to husband and wife their proper spheres, he the head of the family and she his help-meet in the Lord. This great and wholesome truth Priscilla had fully learned from St. Paul, who taught both that in the church of Christ there is "neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus," and at the same time that women should keep silence in the church, and should not teach publicly in the presence of the men. So ever in the church she kept the station divinely intended for her, but in the privacy of her home, when Apollos was to be taught, she used all the gifts God had given her, in the way acceptable to him. She resisted any temptation that might arise from her mental superiority over her husband, and so she shines on the pages of Holy Writ with a spiritual beauty which in its very humility and loving submission to God's order makes her an example to all Christian women for all time. Aquila indeed found a pearl when he came to love Priscilla and made her his own in wedlock. Blessed is every one of her sisters who lets the Lord crown her with knowledge and graces like those of Priscilla!

II.

But there is another person in this little school of Aquila and Priscilla, from whom we may learn a second great lesson, necessary especially in our day. Look at this man Apollos who came to be taught by Priscilla and Aquila, and let this impress you, as you study the man: **no man's great accomplishments put him beyond securing the fullest instruction in Christian knowledge.**

Apollos was a Jew, born and reared in the great city of Alexandria. We are surely right in thinking that he had enjoyed the finest schooling his native city afforded. For St. Luke tells us that he was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Old Testament Scriptures. He had studied not only the ordinary branches of advanced knowledge, but also theology at the feet of learned rabbis. In both he displayed exceptional ability. When he came to Ephesus he was at once permitted to make addresses in the prominent synagogue there. St. Paul had begun his work here, but he had been constrained to leave before a Christian congregation was formed. So Apollos was received with open arms. But when he came to Ephesus he was only partly instructed in the way of the Lord. What he knew of Jesus he preached with the greatest fervor and enthusiasm, but it was only the preliminary knowledge concerning the work of John the Baptist, which he had

learned from some disciple of the Baptist while in Alexandria. Aquila and Priscilla heard Apollos in the synagogue. At once they said to each other: If only this man knew the full story of Jesus Christ as St. Paul taught it to us! And then they invited Apollos to come to them in order that they might instruct him more perfectly concerning all that Jesus had actually done for our salvation.

And Apollos came. He, the man of fine schooling and illustrious abilities, comes to take instruction of a humble tent-maker. He, the admired speaker in the synagogue, is not too proud to learn of a tent-maker's wife. He does not think himself superior to these lowly Christian people, but is ready to lay all his high attainments at the feet of the cross. This is exactly what we need to-day. Our country is full of great schools, colleges and universities. And only too often they who attend them and graduate from them are filled with a false pride of worldly learning. They imbibe the spirit of unbelief, and give up the humble Christian faith they have had. They either disdain the truths of Scripture, or begin to pervert them to make them agree with science as they have learned it, science falsely so-called as the Scriptures term it. Think of them going like Apollos to a tent-maker's shop for the real wisdom? Their humble old church is too far behind the times for them. They have advanced—yes—in the wrong direction! Let Apollos and his godly humility and genuine wisdom drive out every notion of this kind from the heart of any young man or young woman who may have been touched by such folly. The pride of learning and ability is one of the snares by which the devil catches hearts; and the young are most easily caught in this way. Even a little learning is sometimes a dangerous thing in this respect. And the poison of false learning has often killed faith, or kept it out where it might have entered. The very thing every one of us needs, and needs in a special way when he climbs the educational ladder, is the fullest and most thorough instruction in Christian knowledge. Without that the more a man knows the worse will he go astray; but with the full knowledge of Christ and his Word the more you know, the more will you be able, with your purified and sanctified knowledge, to glorify your God.

Apollos was by no means ignorant of Christ when he went to the little school of Aquila and Priscilla; on the contrary, he knew the teaching of John the Baptist, and knew it well. Now he might have made a sad mistake—he might have stopped with that, and when Aquila and Priscilla pointed out to him his deficiency he might have allowed his pride to assert itself and might have refused to accept the full truth of Christ Jesus. Just because he was otherwise so superior in learning and ability, he

might the more easily have been tempted in this direction. This is the mistake of thousands to-day. There are churches upon churches in which the way of the Lord, as St. Luke here calls it, is taught imperfectly, to say the least. Some of them have only a small portion of the truth, and what they have may even be awry and spoiled by error. And we ourselves must constantly be reminded that these faulty and erroneous teachings are sadly inadequate, and none of us dare to think that they are right, or superior to the full truth of God as by his grace it is taught to us in our own church. Look at Apollos who put every other consideration aside and joyfully learned at the feet of Aquila and Priscilla. When the full truth came to him he recognized it for what it was and opened his heart and mind to it. You need all that you can possibly get of the saving knowledge of Christ. Your children need it in the same way. Whatever else they may know, they dare not fall short in this most vital knowledge of all. The grandest fund of mere human knowledge is no substitute for any ignorance regarding the things of Christ. And it is the same with all those who in the churches about us have been taught imperfectly and with all kinds of errors. If any such hear me to-day, let none of them make the mistake which Apollos avoided. Come and learn the full truth of Christ's precious Gospel! Let no consideration stop you. No matter how humble the teachers, how unpretentious the church, gold is gold, diamonds are diamonds, wherever you find them, and you must learn to recognize them when they are placed in your hands, and their heavenly wealth must be made your own. Only the devil is pleased when he sees you spurn these godly riches, for he alone wants you a spiritual pauper where God wants you a spiritual millionaire.

III.

And now let us combine these three, Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos, and learn one more great lesson in the little school of Apollos, namely that **the humblest as well as the most accomplished Christians can render the highest service to God and his church only by being fully instructed in Christian knowledge.**

Suppose that Aquila and Priscilla had neglected their opportunities when St. Paul lived with them a year and a half, what could they have done when Apollos afterwards came and St. Paul was away? That golden opportunity to serve God and his church in the highest way would have been lost for them. Suppose that Apollos, when he found Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus, had declined to learn in their little school, what could he have done afterwards with all his fervency and eloquence, knowing too little

to help build the church of Christ, and in constant danger of going astray with the little he knew? Another great blessing would have been lost, and lost when it was so sorely needed. But Aquila and Priscilla were ready when the opportunity came. They, humble as they were, gave one of the great teachers to the early church. And Apollos used his opportunity when it came, and so he became next to the apostles themselves one of the great preachers and leaders of the church. Our text tells us how he went with letters of recommendation from the little band of Christians in Ephesus, to the church at Corinth. There he worked with the highest kind of success. St. Luke writes: "He helped them much which believed, through grace." He publicly refuted the Jews. And St. Paul himself writes, that he planted in Corinth, but Apollos watered, he thus completing what the great apostle had done. Do you see the glory of it all? And it all starts in Aquila's little school. The blessedness of Christian knowledge goes out in golden streams to make many rich in Jesus Christ. Without this knowledge there would have been none of this blessing; with this knowledge all this blessing actually came.

It has always been so, and it always will be so in the Christian church. Close the gates of Christian knowledge, and you shut out thousands of God's choicest blessings, both for yourselves and for others. The tree that finds too little soil cannot grow and bring a harvest of fruit. But see what happens when God's blessed truth is sought, appropriated, and used. Here are parents like Aquila and Priscilla filling the hearts of their children with imperishable wealth. In all their lives these children find blessing and bring blessing to others. Among them some may be like Apollos, who become teachers and pastors in the church. Many a godly mother especially has thus left a priceless legacy to the church, and eternity alone can show how far this legacy has spread. In the manifold relations of life, when friend speaks with friend, one workman with another, one Christian brother or sister with another, what good may not be done when we know fully the grace of God, the preciousness of Christ's atoning blood, the wisdom of God's ways and judgments. See the good seed you can sow for eternity if you have the seed to sow. Think of the woeful ignorance in the world in spiritual things. Endless opportunities are yours, if equipped with Christian knowledge, to let your light shine and help others upward on the way to God.

Let no opportunity, then, escape you to know ever more thoroughly the truth of God in Christ Jesus. Hear the preaching of his Word, and never miss an opportunity for it. Use your Bibles, and may dust never accumulate upon them. Count that money well spent which you save from luxuries, pleasures, and

even from needs, if this must be, to place Christian books in your homes and to use them faithfully. Your church paper is a constant teacher, full of the finest instruction, fitted exactly to your needs; and the tuition he charges is less than that of any other. Your pastor, and any friends you may have like Aquila and Priscilla, may help you much too through grace and the knowledge they are able to impart. God fill us with wisdom and zeal that we may take for ourselves what he has so richly provided for us all.

Keep in mind the little school of Aquila and Priscilla, and let it inspire you to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ to the glory of his name.

OUTLINES.

The chief points in the text are two, namely the insufficient knowledge of Apollos, and the more perfect instruction given him by Aquila and Priscilla. We may handle the text accordingly: In the tent-maker's home at Ephesus: Here we find a man who knew much, and yet knew all too little—And we find others who knew little, yet knew altogether enough.—How God prepared a great blessing for his church through a humble tent-maker and his wife: He sent them St. Paul to teach them the way of the Lord—He sent them Apollos for them to teach him the way of the Lord—And so he finally sent out a new and mighty teacher to teach many others the way of the Lord.—We may also generalize the text, working its specific color into the elaboration: The blessedness of Christian knowledge: It delivers from ignorance—It protects against error—It builds up faith—It instructs others—It glorifies God.

Faith and the Great Treasure of Christian Knowledge.

1. *Faith counts Christian knowledge a great treasure, and is bent on acquiring it.*
 2. *Faith treats Christian knowledge as a great treasure, and diligently uses it.*
-

The Humble Tent-Maker's Christian School.

1. *The teachers.*—2. *The pupil.*—3. *The instruction.*—4. *The graduation (v. 27-28).*

Learn from Aquila and Priscilla the Value of Christian Knowledge.

1. *The value of having such knowledge.*
 2. *The value of employing such knowledge.*
-

Our Great Need of Christian Knowledge.

1. Many a man is satisfied to know only his trade, and little more, as if Aquila had been content with tent-making alone. 2. How many women care only for their home-work, as if Priscilla had cared only to cook and sweep. 3. Great men of learning are proud of their titles, as if Apollos had gloried in his school honors at Alexandria. 4. Vast numbers of Christians stop with a few bits of the Gospel, as if Apollos had cared nothing beyond what he knew of the doctrine of the Baptist. 5. Too few grow to full maturity in knowledge like Aquila and Priscilla. 6. And so all too few are able to serve God and his church like Aquila and Priscilla, and through them Apollos.

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts 9, 36-43.

In this text on Tabitha we are concerned less with the miracle which Peter wrought than with the faith of Tabitha and its fund of good works. Luke's brief account furnishes us the concrete example which we need in our sub-cycle on faith, showing how *faith is rich in good works*. — The period of persecution which is marked by Saul's relentless activity had scattered the Christian congregation, thus planting many new congregations in the cities of Judea and Samaria. Philip had worked in the towns along the coast of the Mediterranean, 8, 40. A number of things conspired at this time to give the churches, which thus had been planted in new localities, the rest they needed for their strengthening. Saul had been converted, and this ended active persecution at this time. Pilate and Caiaphas were both deposed, and Herod of Galilee was engaged in a war with Aretas. All this turned attention away from the Christians for several years, beginning with the year 36, and continuing to 41 or 42, cf. v. 35. It was most likely in the year 41 that Peter undertook a visitation journey from Jerusalem through the western coast land, and thus came to Lydda. Here our text sets in.

9, 36. Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.

Joppa, now called Jaffa (*japhah* = to shine), the port of Jerusalem, is one of the oldest cities in the world. It must have been through the work of Philip that a Christian congregation was established here. If he did not himself first bring the Gospel here, he at

least gathered the first believers together and won new converts to join them. Without further explanation we learn from the story about Tabitha that such a congregation existed in the city, though apparently its membership was not very large. — Equally without further explanation we are told of **a certain disciple named Tabitha**, which is the Aramaic *tzebiah*, a female gazelle, an emblem of grace and beauty, for which Luke himself gives his Greek readers the equivalent they knew, namely **Dorcas**, equally used as a girl's name. "And this Tabitha deserved her name more than many others, not perhaps as much for the beauty of her features or for the grace of her outward bearing, as for the beauty of her heart and for the grace of her loving, kindly disposition and merciful deeds. Most probably Tabitha lived by herself; she seems to have been an unmarried woman in mature years without any relatives of her own with whom she might have made her home and whom she might have served. But alone as she was she found no trouble in gathering an attractive circle about her, in which she found a place, yea, of which she became the admired center. She did not complain that the sweet duties and joys of a wife and mother were denied her, that she seemed to have been forsaken and left all alone, that her life seemed to be without any special object or real purpose, and that she was able to spend her strength and her time only upon small and trivial affairs. Quite the contrary; she was perfectly content in her station. She looked about with intelligent eyes and a heart filled with love, and soon found so many duties and pleasures awaiting her, such a glorious purpose and such a lovely goal for all her abilities and her time, that her life became exceedingly rich, and there blossomed up for her own heart and for all her surroundings the very richest of blessings." The author's *Bibl. Frauenbilder*, 318, etc. — **This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.** The second noun is added to specify and de-

scribe more exactly what the first contains. "Good works" is general and includes a great variety; and, no doubt, Tabitha wrought in a variety of ways. Yet one class of deeds stood out, namely her acts of charity, "almsdeeds," with which she generously aided the poor. Here is where she invested her money, her time, and her strength. There are no indications whatever that she served as a deaconess in the church, in fact, we do not know that any such arrangement was known so early in the church. Her work was entirely voluntary; but with the truest instinct she chose no work of doubtful propriety, with which to serve the Lord and his church, no work with a worldly flavor or touch to it, but one wholly in harmony with the doctrine and spirit of the Gospel. In every respect her works were *good* works, excellent, and beneficial, *merciful* deeds (for "almsdeeds" in Greek is a derivative from the word for "mercy"). H. Mueller writes: "Good works grow from faith, and are nothing but the very Word of God in its deed and fulfillment, which by faith has been implanted in us." The Word put into us by faith, comes out again in good works and deeds of mercy. — Tabitha was **full** of these deeds. She did them for others, and yet they remained hers every one. She herself was like a vessel filled up to the top with such deeds. This is emphasized by the addition: **which she did**, and the imperfect tense means: kept doing all along. These kindly deeds were her entire occupation. She never tired of them; they were no mere passing fad or fancy for her. She must have met her share of discouragement in what she did, but she overcame this and went on. How lovely all this activity of hers was, appeared when she died. "The sweet odor of the ointment filled the house, when the vessel, which had stood in a place aside, broke." — Besser.

37. And it came to pass in those days, that she fell sick, and died: and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper chamber. 38. And as Lydda was nigh

unto Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men unto him, intreating him, Delay not to come unto us.

Luke, as his custom is, narrates only the main facts. It was **in those days** when Peter was at Lydda that Tabitha **fell sick and died**; having fallen sick she died — this is the thing that came to pass (thus the Greek). We need not be told that this quietly points to the hand of divine providence. God had given much to the church at Joppa, and now he intended to give still more. It matters little about the character or virulence of the disease; the death was beyond question, and this is the chief point in Luke's account. So he adds that everything was made ready for the burial: having **washed** the dead body, as then already was customary, they laid it in an **upper chamber**. In ordinary houses there was but one room of this kind, hence no article is needed. It was a suitable place, for the upper chamber was used when one wanted to be alone. We do not know that the bodies of the dead were usually placed in this room. — At this point nearly all commentators read between the lines. Did Tabitha die before Peter was sent for? or did the brethren call him while she was sick, hoping that Peter would heal her? And if she was dead when they sent, did they want Peter only to comfort them with the Word, and honor the beloved dead? or did they hope in any way for what Peter, after he came, actually did? Luke emphasizes only that **Lydda was nigh unto Joppa**, which means that in a brief time Peter could be at hand, Lydda being only nine miles away. Then, too, we ought to notice the aorist participle, which the A. V. translates more correctly: "the disciples *had heard* that Peter was there," than the R. V.: **hearing etc.** The news that Peter was in Lydda had come to Joppa some time before Tabitha died. It is best to accept the first and most natural impression made by Luke's narrative, namely that the thought of sending for Peter did not come to these disciples till Tabitha was actually

dead. Then, as far as any hopes and expectations of these disciples go, we ought to say that in the first place they asked only for one thing, namely Peter's presence, and secondly, like proper disciples of Christ, they were content to leave everything to the Lord.—So they **sent two men** to Peter, **intreating** or urging him to hasten to Joppa: **Delay not to come on unto us**, using the regular aorist subjunctive with this negative command. We can easily infer why they begged for no delay; in that climate the dead are buried frequently on the very day they die. Peter could be in Joppa some six hours after Tabitha's death, thus the same day she died, if this was during the previous night or the early morning. If she died late in the day, Peter could be on hand early the next morning. If he had delayed, the body would, of course, have been buried in due order. Now this request, that without fail he might get to Joppa before the burial would have to be made, does carry with it something like an appeal and a silent, humble hope; that God's grace might use Peter to return Tabitha to the church at Joppa. Yet in feeling this out of the words we must remember, what also these disciples knew well, namely that none of the apostles could work miracles at will. Hence a request to Peter to work a miracle upon Tabitha would have been altogether out of place. In every case the Spirit of God made known to the apostles, and to others to whom he had given the gift of miracles, what he wanted done, and not till they had the Spirit's command, or we may say promise, did these workers of miracles act. What God would decide to do in the case of Tabitha none of the disciples knew, nor did Peter know at first. So in all that is connected with the sending there was only the thought of bowing to the will of God, while trusting in his boundless grace.

39. And Peter arose and went with them. And when he was come, they brought him into the upper chamber: and all the widows stood by him weeping, and

showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them.

Peter responded promptly. The Greek reads: "Him, having come to their side, they brought," etc. This sounds decidedly as if Peter was sent for on Tabitha's account, and not merely to administer comfort to the sorrowing disciples, to preach a funeral sermon, as we would say now. Yet even now no special request of any kind is made of Peter. But he is shown what the dead woman was to the church, and what a treasure the church had lost in her. And here incidentally we learn the nature of the "almsdeeds" with which Tabitha had enriched her life.—Her beneficiaries were all at hand; **all the widows stood by him weeping.** There is no need to qualify "all"; the congregation did not have so many poor widows that these could not all have been at hand. Their feelings gave way as they tried to show what Tabitha had been to them, they wept audibly, while shewing to Peter the **coats and garments** they wore, all of **which Dorcas made** for them while yet alive. "The coats" are the garments worn next to the body in those days, the Latin *tunica*, which we would call a frock. It was probably linen, with no sleeves, or only short sleeves, and reached to the feet, sometimes having a girdle. Woolen tunics were also used. The word translated "garments" always means any outer garment, which we would term cloak or mantle, the Latin *pallium*. It was worn over the frock, and was really an oblong piece of cloth thrown over the left shoulder, and fastened either over or under the right shoulder, and ample enough to come to the ground, perhaps even trailing behind. We might translate the two words, without leaving a false impression, with: dresses and robes.—**Which she made** is really: kept making, the imperfect tense of iterative or customary action. Her life was marked by this continuous work of hers.—**While she was with them** has a fine touch to it. Her body was still there, but Dorcas was not there, she was

now with the Lord. The English loses Luke's fine touch when he makes **Dorcas** the last word in the sentence and uses the Greek article — *die Dorkas*, as the German could imitate it, with its lingering hold of tender affection. "And their works do follow them," is here illustrated in a peculiar, touching manner. "Dorcas" is the name now used by Luke, partly because of his own Greek readers who would feel the meaning of this name — Gazelle; and partly, it seems, because even in Joppa the original Tabitha gave way at least in part to this Greek translation of the name. So Dorcas was a dress-maker, but instead of enriching herself by sewing only for money she enriched her soul by sewing for love. The garments she made for the poor she really made for the Lord, and she has found many successors, both with the needle itself, and in other ways. Some try to conclude that she herself was a widow because of her interest in widows, but this conclusion is only a guess. While Luke mentions only widows, we prefer to think that if some of these had little children Dorcas sewed also for such little half-orphans, although at a solemn time like this children would not be present. The effect upon Peter must have been deep. The garments which had passed through the loving hands now resting in death spoke more eloquently to him than the broken sobs of those who wore them.

40. But Peter put them all forth, and kneeled down, and prayed; and turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes; and when she saw Peter, she sat up. 41. And he gave her his hand, and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

What now occurred bears some resemblance to Christ's procedure in raising to life the daughter of Jairus, yet there are marked differences, such as the prayer of Peter, and his calling all the disciples in, nor did Peter retain as witnesses of the miracle any persons in the room. These differences are so vital that Peter's

miracle is no copy of Christ's. The resemblances are due to the nature of the case only. — **Peter put them all forth** means that he remained alone with the dead body in the upper room. Why this act? We have an answer in what Peter did: he **kneeled down, and prayed**, literally "having put his knees he prayed," i. e., put them down on the floor. He wanted to be alone, not merely with the dead body, but with God. The unspoken longing of the disciples for God to show his grace and power by restoring Dorcas to them, Peter did not feel constrained to dismiss as going too far. On the other hand, he made and could make no promises. His performing any miracle, to say nothing of one as great as this, rested not with him, but with the Spirit of God. When that Spirit bade him he acted, but never till then. Thus far there was no direct communication from the Spirit to Peter. He prays now for the Spirit to reveal his will, and he does it in the deepest humility, with the eye of God alone upon him. Nor do we hesitate to think that Peter asked the Spirit to fulfill the silent desire of the saints — a desire kept in godly bounds, not even venturing to put itself into words, to say nothing of clamoring aloud for satisfaction. It seemed indeed one of those pure and holy desires which God loves to satisfy. So Peter lays the whole case, and in connection with it the great cause to which this case belonged — no matter what God's will in regard to the dead might show itself to be — into the hands where it truly belonged. We are left to read between the lines what answer Peter received, since Luke records only the outer facts, God's Spirit bade Peter raise Dorcas to life. — When now, **turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise**, there was no question as to what would happen. Neither here nor anywhere else did the apostles merely make trial to see whether their power would work. It was really God's power, and it always worked when God gave them his Word. And so we never hear that in any case an apostle tried to work a miracle and

failed; nor are there any half effects. Peter naturally uses the Aramaic name Tabitha. He did not say: "In the name of Jesus, arise!" but he meant nothing else than this. It is not right to say that after his prayer Peter treated the body as no longer dead. Luke mentions the body as that to which Peter turned; yet he could not address the body merely, which would have been folly, but addressed the person. No spiritualistic notion dare creep in here, as if the spirit of Tabitha hovered near the body and heard Peter's command. Our gross, rationalizing notions of space and the like have no business here where not the voice and word of Peter is the power at work, but the promise and power of Almighty God in a manner utterly incomprehensible to us. God caused Tabitha to hear, and God caused the soul of Tabitha to return from its heavenly abode to its former tenement of clay. God connected all this with the word of Peter to the glory of his name.— Luke describes the outward side of what occurred. **And she opened her eyes**—the eyes but a moment ago broken and sealed in death. It is folly for Noesgen and others to talk of a gradual return of life, just because Luke states several actions. At the word of Peter Tabitha was instantaneously and completely restored. There were no steps or gradations about it. Life with its full tide was back in her body; the former disease which had wrought in her vital organs was gone; the incipient decay superinduced by death was wholly swept out. Tabitha was as one awaking from a deep sleep. And this is what Luke's words mean. The first thing a sleeper does in waking up is to open the eyes.— Now the next thing: **when she saw Peter, she sat up.** She was somewhat surprised at what her eyes saw, and this centered in the apostle standing at her side. Tabitha needed no help to sit up on the bier on which she lay. Her body was wrapped in strips of linen, in preparation for burial; yet even though swathed thus she was able to assume a sitting posture.— Peter might at this point

have opened the door and called the waiting disciples in, **but he gave her his hand, and raised her up.** So the body was wrapped without covering and tying down the hands and arms. The same thing seems to have been the case with Lazarus, who was able even of himself to stand up in his grave cloths and appear at the door of his tomb. With this slight assistance Tabitha stood erect at the side of her bier. It is all very natural and graphic. Tabitha had awakened to life.—Now the happy sequel: **and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.** The Christians are here called saints, using the substantivized adjective: "holy ones." They are holy indeed, cleansed from all sin through justification, and thus perfectly holy in the sight of God, and beginning to live holy lives in sanctification, and thus, while not perfectly holy, yet pleasing to God. "And widows" = in particular the widows. They too were saints, which Luke's language in no way denies, but in calling Peter bade the widows especially to come in. What a wonderful scene it must have been, when Peter thus presented Tabitha to the disciples—alive! It is easier to imagine than to describe. Peter was the only witness who saw her return to life, but all these others were now witnesses that she, whom but a moment before they had left lying dead, now stood before them completely and wondrously restored to life.

42. And it became known throughout Joppa: and many believed on the Lord. 43. And it came to pass, that he abode many days in Joppa with one Simon a tanner.

Luke turns to the chief interests—those of the church and its development. A wonderful deed like this naturally became known to the whole city, and it was God's intention that it should. We see the same thing in Lydda, v. 35. The result was that **many believed on the Lord**, the miracle aiding in showing them the power and grace of the Lord Jesus. Not the miracles as such work faith, but the miracles joined to the Word, as

seals of that Word, and thus as constituting part of the Word. They are such seals to this day, and hence when once affixed to the Word remain there, and need no repetition, and no new seals, as if these which the Lord deemed sufficient were not enough to-day. Luke likes ἐγένετο, **it came to pass**, which as he writes it is not a Hebraism, but a sacred way of stating notable facts, learned from the LXX. The way was open for Peter to gather a harvest in Joppa, and he stayed here many days to do it. Most remarkable of all, however, is the phrase: **with one Simon a tanner**. This man, a Christian now, lodged Peter, and Peter lived with him, although his trade, necessitating the handling of hides, made him ceremonially unclean. Peter is thus dropping the old Jewish regulations, and in chapter ten we read how God directed him to drop them still more thoroughly. Rieger takes a slap at the pope at this point: a tanner's house provided for St. Peter; for St. Peter's so-called successor a castle would hardly suffice. And that is true.

SERMON.

The name Tabitha, or as her Greek speaking friends preferred to call her, Dorcas, has been lifted to special prominence on the pages of Holy Writ. The Spirit of God bade St. Peter raise this woman to life after she had died, and thus her name has come to be recorded by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles for all future generations of the church to read. What was the purpose of God in thus distinguishing this humble member of the early church? It certainly was not because Dorcas was such an exceptional woman, different from all others, and superior to them in her faith or in her Christian works. God indeed glorified his grace and power in the miracle he wrought through St. Peter upon Dorcas. But this he did in every other miracle as well, and in this respect we may say that all the miracles are alike. Beside this general likeness there is, however, an individual distinction; each miracle has a specific message to us. And it is important for us to discover just what this message and specific purpose of God is. And so the question returns:

Why was the Humble Dressmaker Dorcas Raised from the Dead?

The answer is not difficult when we look, not at Dorcas alone, but also at ourselves for whom this sacred record of God's great deed upon Dorcas was written through the agency of God's Holy Spirit. Dorcas was raised to this prominence in Holy Writ,

**In order that her lowly example of fruitful faith
Might stand out by God's own act for the church of all
ages
As an example to stimulate us to a like fruitful faith.**

I.

In the little city of Joppa on the west coast of Palestine a Christian congregation was founded by the apostle Philip who worked in all this region. Among the members was this humble and unassuming woman Dorcas. She appears in the apostolic story without any family connection whatever, for when she came to die the only persons gathering about her were the members of the church—no relatives of any kind. Most likely she had remained single, and if she possessed relatives they lived elsewhere. But though she stood alone, with so many of the ordinary avenues of activity closed to her, when the Gospel came to her through the preaching of St. Philip, she made a beautiful place for herself in that little congregation in Joppa. A living faith glowed in her heart, one that found avenues of all kinds to put forth a blessed activity. She had faith like that which Luther has so finely described: it does not ask what is to be done, or wait till it is told to do this or that, but before anyone comes to tell, has already done all kinds of blessed and delightful works. Alone, and without a family, she made a family for herself through the one talent she possessed. She knew how to use the needle, she was a dressmaker, and began to make dresses and robes, such as were worn in those days, for the poor widows in the congregation. And this she did with such devotion, love, and zeal, that finally when she died, and when St. Peter was called to the side of her dead body, a circle of these poor widows, her beneficiaries, gathered around the apostle and showed him the dresses her loving hands had made for them, weeping with true affection when they told him of the loving friend and benefactor they had lost. And St. Luke writes about her for us to read, saying that she was a disciple, "full of good works and almsdeeds which she did."

These are the things God wants us to impress upon our minds. Dorcas was nothing but an ordinary member of the church, neither rich nor socially prominent in any way. She was only one

of the common people, of whom one of our greatest presidents has said that God surely loves them, for he made so many of them. Dorcas, in fact, was less favored than many others, for she stood all alone in life, and that was much harder in those days than it is in our own. She might have withdrawn to herself, and lived only for herself. But she did nothing of the kind. She had only one talent, as far as we know; but she never for a moment thought that this might serve her as an excuse—that because she was able to do so little she might as well leave this little too undone. No; in her restricted station, with her one little talent, she did so much, that the Holy Spirit made St. Luke write of her that she was “full of good works.” And these were not self-chosen works. They were true fruits of faith. The love of Christ shone in her heart and shone out from her life. Her one great desire was to serve him who had died to cleanse her soul from sin and make her a child and heir of God. In her gratitude for Christ she sought to do only what she knew would please him, and all else she put aside. The Old Test. is full of admonitions to help the widowed and the fatherless; and St. James writes for us in the New: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Dorcas saw her opportunity where God himself had pointed it out, and when she saw it she used it to the utmost. These are the features that make her example so precious to us all. She was faithful in that which is least. She had but one talent, but she did not lay it up in a napkin, to leave it unused, she made that one talent count as if it had been ten. Instead of complaining that she was not favored like others, instead of envying others more favored than herself, she praised God for what he had made her through Christ, and used all that she had to glorify his name.

II.

And now let us note that God himself has made this lowly example of fruitful faith stand out for the church of all ages.

He did it in his own way. Dorcas suddenly took sick and died. Those whom she had filled with love through her own love for them came and prepared her body for burial. Under ordinary circumstances that burial would have followed; one of God’s quiet, unassuming saints would have been laid to rest, and the memory of her kindly deeds of faith would have been a rich legacy for them, richer by far than the wealth of worldly people which they leave to their greedy and spendthrift heirs. Yet God took this case of Dorcas, one like thousands of others in love and faithful service, in order to show us all just what he thinks of such

fruitful faith and love. It was God's providence that Dorcas died when St. Peter was only nine miles away in the little town of Lydda. He might have had St. Peter come and relieve Dorcas of her fatal illness; even so we might have had her name in the Scriptures. But far more telling is this scene, when now St. Peter stands beside the dead body of Dorcas in the upper room in which her friends had laid her, and when all these weeping widows show to him the dresses Dorcas had made for them — mute, yet eloquent evidences of fruitful faith in Christ. What St. Peter saw and heard, God saw still more clearly, and God prized this as the true work of his Spirit. And so we see how through the apostle God himself in a most wonderful way put his divine approval upon such faith and love. St. Peter put them all out of the room, then knelt down and prayed that God might reveal to him his will. We know what that will was — to call Dorcas back to life by his almighty power. God made her a sign by this great miracle, a sign for all time to his church, that this example of fruitful faith, so lowly and unassuming in itself, might stand out before our eyes and proclaim to us what he thinks of Dorcas, and of all who by his grace become like unto her.

Beside the great examples of heroic faith God thus places this and other examples of lowly, humble faith and its precious fruit of love and good works. He needs heroic figures to stand out in battle with sin and unbelief, but he needs also gentle souls like Dorcas, who only had her needle, to help the needy and ease the affliction of the distressed, in the quiet places of the church. God bade none of the apostles call Stephen back to life when his enemies stoned him in their hate. St. James was killed by the sword, and he too was not raised from the dead. The glorious death of these martyrs speaks for itself. In their death they stand out so that we all can see them and let their example stir us to follow in their steps. But we might easily overlook faith like that of Dorcas, good works like those of a lone dressmaker in Joppa. Therefore God puts his own shining approval upon their deeds. We have heard of Aquila and Priscilla, and how in their lowly station they served the Lord. And now we are told of Dorcas, more humble and with less opportunity still, yet one of the stars in the early church, bright with the light of Christ, in order to stir the humblest among us to know that their faith is precious too in God's eyes, and that every deed of faith, wrought by them in true love, is not forgotten by him. Not that God must now distinguish every humble disciple of Jesus for his faithfulness in the same way, or give his divine approval by miraculous means. This is wholly for him to determine. He knew what his church needed, and this need he has fully satisfied. The chief thing for

you and me to know is what he thinks of fruitful faith like that of Dorcas. In the glorious miracle he wrought upon her learn to read what his grace and power will do at last for all those who follow the faith and good works of Dorcas.

III.

The great miracle wrought upon Dorcas is thus to impress upon us her example, in order to stimulate us to a like fruitful faith.

Our whole church testifies in the Augsburg Confession that "faith should bring forth good fruits, and that men ought to do the good works commanded of God, because it is his will, and not on any confidence of meriting justification before God by their works." This sums it all up, and blessed are we if we translate this confession of Gospel truth into reality in our own lives.

It is the very nature of true faith in Christ to bring forth good fruits or good works. Faith is like a tree planted by the rivers of water, the never failing streams of divine grace; it bringeth forth its fruit in due season, all manner of good works to the honor of God; and its leaf also shall not wither, for the life of faith constantly sends out new evidence of its presence. Only a dead faith is without good works, exactly like a dead tree without leaves or fruit. This great and precious doctrine is to be made alive for us by the example of Dorcas. See how her faith blossomed and bore fruit in the greatest abundance. Her very lowliness, and the restrictions of her life, call to us all, that even the humblest life of faith can be and should be rich with good works. Think not of the handicaps in your station, but think of the grace and love of Christ who shed his blood for you. When the malefactor at Christ's right side came to faith, though his hands and feet were nailed fast, he used his tongue in good works, confessing his sins and his faith, praying to Christ, rebuking the impenitent malefactor, and giving an example to all who were near. Away then with these excuses which act like a blight on faith. Let not the decay of a worldly life and a love for sinful things eat into the tree of your faith and make it cease to bear. "Herein," said Christ in the parable of the vine and the branches, "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." Jno. 15, 8. Who wants a tree that is sickly or infested with worms, or fruit that is gnarly and half rotten? But a beautiful tree, covered with bloom, and then loaded with perfect luscious fruit—what a delight to call it your own! Such a tree in a quiet little corner in Joppa was Dorcas; such trees let us become in whatever part of his garden God has planted us.

But the true beauty of all good works is that they must be such as God has commanded. The heart of them is the fear and love of God; as Jesus said: "Ye have done it unto me." The world calls many things good, merely because they are outwardly beneficial. But the believer knows that God always looks at the inner motive of every word and work. Hence no work is good in God's sight that is not done for his sake, according to his will and command. Even when men try to please God, but set aside his Word and command, their acts are evil in God's sight. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love," says Jesus, "even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." This is what makes the good works of Dorcas so beautiful, they glowed with love to Christ and were all in true obedience to his commands. She chose no worldly scheme to help the poor, like those who arrange charity dances and balls. She sought no money from Jew and Gentile to clothe the widows in the church. She humbly followed the Master's command. The fruit she bore was sound and sweet. May all your good works have the same flavor.

And added to all this Dorcas placed no trust in her good works or their abundance. St. Luke emphasizes that she was a "disciple" of Jesus, that means a true believer in his all-sufficient merits. After Jesus bought forgiveness and salvation for her by his blood and death, and gave this priceless gift to her through faith, she did not try to buy it herself by her own good works, or dishonor the gift Christ had bestowed upon her, by pretending to pay for it, or at least for part of it, by merits of her own. Thousands to-day are making all their supposed good works evil works in God's sight by trying to earn their salvation by them. Good works are delightful to God as fruits of faith, but abominable to him when offered as substitutes for faith. Good works are lovely in the sight of God as marks of our gratitude for Christ's gift of heaven to us, but they are insults to God when brought as payment of ours, in whole or in part, for entrance into heaven. And this we ought to realize the more since even our best works, though very fine in our sight, are imperfect and faulty in God's sight, needing Christ's blood to make them acceptable to him. But with a mind and heart like that of Dorcas we will never make the mistake of placing any trust in our works, but trusting alone in Christ's blood and righteousness we will lay our good works full of love and gratitude at the Savior's feet.

Thank God, then, for the example of Dorcas, and for having made this example so impressive by his miracle and by the pen of his inspired writer.

"Lord, may I ever keep in view
 The patterns thou hast giv'n,
 And ne'er forsake the blessed road
 That led them safe to heav'n."

OUTLINES.

When one glances at the outlines offered by Chas. Gerok in Lechler's commentary a warning against using allegory on this text will be seen to be necessary. It is an abuse of the simple, honest Scripture sense to make "Tabitha, arise!" a call to the "spirit of love and mercy" for it to arise, if not in men, then at any rate in women, and then to go on in this superficial allegorical strain. The same thing is true when Tabitha's arising is used to illustrate "the miracle of grace when a sinner is spiritually awakened." May God preserve the church from these supposedly spiritual efforts—they are distressing inflictions!—As the text stands in our series its theme should center in good works. If the miracle as such is made the pivot of the sermon the text should have a different place in the church year. But there is no reason why we may not dwell at length on the good works of Dorcas: The lovely example of Dorcas—her life so poor outwardly—so rich in faith and good works—so prominently set before us by God's miracle.—A dressmaker's wonderful legacy—what she left for her friends in Joppa—what she left through God's intervention for us all.—Dorcas is a fine example for the work of Inner Missions, or true Christian charity—and we need no allegorical legerdemain to bring this example out. Dorcas, one of the first workers in Inner Missions: She had the true spirit which must animate this work—She found the right way to perform this work—She proved a great blessing to the church in this work—She was granted a signal commendation from God, one intended to commend all this work.

Tabitha's Obituary:

An Example of how your Obituary ought to Read.

1. *It ought to have a section treating of your discipleship.*
 2. *It ought to have a section telling of your good works.*
 3. *It ought to have a section stating how God used you in furthering his church.*
-

Woman's Highest Beauty.

1. *The beauty of faith.*—2. *The beauty of good works and almsdeeds.*

A Little History of Dorcas, the Dressmaker.

1. *Her heart was filled with faith.*
2. *Her eyes were open to the need about her.*
3. *Her hands were diligent in works of love.*
4. *Her work was highly appreciated by the church.*
5. *Her whole life was signally approved by God.*

Dorcas in the Work of Inner Missions.

1. *The Lord equipped her in a gracious way.*
 2. *The Lord wrought through her in a beneficent way.*
 3. *The Lord distinguished her in an exceptional way.*
-

THE NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

John 7, 10-18.

This text deals with the experimental side of faith. It deals with *the subjective assurance of faith*, when the believer by believing and in the act of believing learns what faith really is and what it brings. This, of course, never is and never can be apart from the Word. It is an assurance or certainty which rests in "the teaching" or Word as divine, but rests there only by way of faith, or through the act of believing. It is on this latter point that Jesus here lays the emphasis. While the Word of God is divine, and therefore absolutely sure and certain in itself, even if all men should count it false, for you and me the blessedness of this certainty arrives when we come to faith and thus by our own experience discover what the Word is and what it contains. — The open conflict between Jesus and the Jews has begun, v. 1. Jesus has been working in the outlying districts of Galilee for something like six months. The Feast of Tabernacles is now at hand, and the brethren of Jesus, namely James, Juda, Joses, and Simon, Mark 6, 3, urge him to make a grand Messianic entry into Jerusalem, display all his powers, and thus gain the Jews generally as his adherents. This Jesus declines to do, pointing out that all his work is divinely directed. In due time, and in his own way, he would eventually make his royal entry into Jerusalem, and it would lead him to an exaltation different from the one these brethren of his wished for. So he let them go alone to the festival.

7, 10. But when his brethren were gone up unto the feast, then went he also up, not publicly, but as it were in secret.

In v. 8 Jesus said to his brethren: "I go not up unto this feast." The insertion into this sentence: "I go not up *yet* unto this feast," is only an effort to remove an apparent contradiction, as though Jesus at first said he would not go, and then after all did go. But the insertion misunderstands the refusal of Jesus to go to the feast. He refuses to go in the way his brethren propose, v. 4, in the grand Messianic style they would like to see. Not that he will not eventually go to Jerusalem as the King of Zion — that will come in due time, and not in a gross fleshly way, but in a thoroughly spiritual manner. What Jesus declines, then, is not, to go to this Feast of Tabernacles at all, as even Zahn misunderstands, but to go in the way and for the purpose suggested by the brethren; Jesus' Messianic display would be made at the following Passover Feast — then his time would be fulfilled indeed. Jesus, accordingly, waits till his brethren are gone, then some time later he also goes. He did not change his mind, as Zahn dares to assert. And there is no difference or contradiction to harmonize. All we need is to understand what he actually said to his brethren. The evangelist notes very carefully, and in fullest harmony with that refusal to the brethren, that when now Jesus did go to the feast he went **not publicly, but as it were in secret**. The thing is very plain in the Greek. The brethren urged him: *φανερώσον σεαυτόν*, show thyself publicly; Jesus went up *οὐ φανερώς*, not publicly, but the reverse. So he kept his word. Yet he did not go secretly or "in secret"; notice the qualification "*as it were* in secret." This is easy to understand. All the pilgrims to the feast would try to go so as to be there for the opening. When Jesus went the roads were clear of these crowds; only a few stragglers were on hand, delayed for some reason or other. Thus Jesus had no difficulty in going quietly, "as it were in secret."

11. The Jews therefore sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he? 12. And there was much mur-

muring among the multitudes concerning him: some said, He is a good man; others said, Not so, but he leadeth the multitude astray. 13. Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.

Now the situation in Jerusalem is described. **Therefore**, *οὖν*, means: since Jesus had not as yet appeared at the feast. John writes that **the Jews sought him**, and a glance at v. 13 shows that the Jewish authorities are meant who wanted to get hold of Jesus, v. 1. John distinguishes clearly between "the Jews," these hostile leaders of the nation, and "the multitudes," v. 12, the crowds of pilgrims from afar, many of whom were very favorably inclined toward Jesus. The Jews had searchers out inquiring diligently: **Where is he?** But, of course, no one knew or could tell during the early part of the feast. — Now **among the multitudes**, while Jesus was still absent **there was much murmuring**, namely quiet and subdued talk, **concerning him**. There was a decided difference of opinion, as John reports, yet the authorities had not as yet rendered an open verdict in regard to Jesus, so neither side cared to come out too openly with its sentiments. — Some **said**, or rather kept asserting (note the imperfect tense), **He is a good man**, = a sincere and true person (using only the masculine adjective for "good"). They ascribed no wrong motive to Jesus, and no doubt remembered his many beneficent miracles. They, of course, cannot be counted as believers in Jesus, but they were evidently his friends. — But there were **others**, who just as confidently kept asserting: **Not so, but** (= on the contrary) **he leadeth the multitude astray**, he misleads, deceives, *verführt*. Evidently they think that Jesus is not really what he claims to be, and in this way deceives the populace. They do not think he is the Messiah, to say nothing of his being the Son of God. They reject also any evidence resting on his miracles. — Why all this discussion about Jesus was conducted quietly John tells us: the people were thoroughly cowed by the Sanhedrim, especially

those favorably inclined toward Jesus, who must have constituted the great majority. **For fear of the Jews** = for fear of the Sanhedrim, or Jewish leaders. So half of the feast passed by. Nobody knew where Jesus was, or whether he was coming at all; yet he was the great topic of conversation, and no doubt everybody was anxious to see him, looking for his possible coming at any time.

14. But when it was now the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. 15. The Jews therefore marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? 16. Jesus therefore answered them, and said, My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. 17. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak from myself. 18. He that speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.

In a quiet way Jesus came to Jerusalem, and just as quietly entered the city when the festival was half over. Then all at once he went up into the Temple, and began teaching there — John has the inchoative imperfect. We are not told with what subject he began, or what he was saying when he was first interrupted. The thing thrown at him at first has no connection with anything he was teaching at the time; it is altogether a general denial of his proper qualification to teach at all. This first interruption is followed by others, so that the discourse of Jesus is broken up into sections. He first justifies his teaching, v. 15-24; he then proves his divine origin, v. 25-29; and he finally warns his hearers of his departure, v. 30-36. — The first objectors are **the Jews**, whom we have already characterized; observe how they are distinguished from the citizens of Jerusalem in v. 25, and how both of these classes are distinguished from "the multitude," the visiting pilgrims, in v. 31. — John reports that the hostile

leaders, representatives of the Sanhedrim, **marvelled**, when now all at once, right in the Temple precincts Jesus was discovered by them teaching the people. They were among the crowds that gathered before Jesus, mostly pilgrims, but also citizens of the capital. This marvelling must not be understood as surprise at the ability of Jesus. It includes no admission whatever of any real proficiency on his part — quite the contrary. The verb “to marvel” is used here as in v. 22 and in 5, 28 = marvel connected with offense and hostility. These Jews act astonished at Jesus that he should presume to teach in public; they pretend that this is an outrage, a pretense on the part of Jesus, an arrogating to himself what does not properly belong to him: **How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?** How can this man presume to know the Scriptures, never having had any rabbinical training? The question is, of course, addressed not to Jesus, but to the people generally assembled about him. It intends to charge against Jesus that he lacks all proper qualification for what he is pretending to do. Zahn is again badly mistaken when he reads this question of the Jewish leaders as if it admitted that Jesus, though without rabbinical training, was *ein schriftkundiger Volkslehrer*, a popular teacher versed in Scripture; *ein wirksamer Haggadist*, *ein genialer Autodidakt*, a self-taught genius. These hostile leaders were the last men in the world to admit anything like that right in front of the people. Mark how in chapter nine they consistently refuse to acknowledge even the fact of the miracle in the healing of the blind man, although the man with his restored sight stood right before them. No, this question is a slur to discredit Jesus completely before the public. Goebel has it correctly, they mean to insinuate that he is *ein unbefugter Pfuscher*, an arrogant quack, offering his own spurious and self-invented wisdom in place of the only reliable, attested, and authoritatively approved learning of the rabbis. Arrogantly, haughtily, like people whose

feelings have been outraged, the Jews threw out this base question, which is at the same time an assertion. The term "letters" here = *litteras*, namely scientific education as the Jews understand it, their sterile, casuistic rabbinical study of the Old Test. They were certainly correct in claiming that Jesus had never followed this sort of study. Nor had Jesus ever pretended to anything of the kind. — Without hesitation Jesus meets this wicked charge; and he too does not direct his words to these Jews in particular, but to all who are gathered before him and have heard what is charged. These wise Jews, Jesus implies in his answer, have certainly heard aright — the entire doctrine of Jesus is totally different from the arid refinements and empty distinctions of the rabbis, and it is plain to any man who has ears to hear, that Jesus has never "learned" from such teachers — nobody needs to tell the people this. **My teaching is not mine**, Jesus declares; he means his teaching in general, this doctrine peculiar to him. The adjective is stronger than the possessive pronoun would have been. That is the wonderful thing about the doctrine Jesus taught, it was not his own at all, as if he, like some human philosopher, had made it up himself, had discovered it by thought of his own human brain. — On the contrary, ἀλλά; not mine, **but his that sent me**. It is altogether the doctrine, message, wisdom of Jesus' Sender. Jesus is only the mouth-piece, the spokesman of that Sender. In rejecting and trying to discredit this teaching of Jesus these Jews are dealing by no means with Jesus alone, but with the great Sender of Jesus, with God himself. It is no wonder that God's great doctrine should be totally different from the speculations of the rabbis. If that is any discredit to the doctrine Jesus accepts the discredit — but woe to those who offer this discredit! Look what they betray concerning themselves. They have never "learned" in God's school, at the feet of the great teachers and prophets God had sent them in the Old Test. Scriptures. If they

had, they would at once have recognized this doctrine of Jesus for what it really was; but now they do not know it, but blindly slander it, and try to turn others from it.

As far as recognizing and acknowledging the doctrine of Jesus is concerned, there is no difficulty about it at all. The thing to do is to apply the right touchstone. It is useless merely to reason and argue about it intellectually, if for no other reason because man is by nature spiritually blind and cannot even know the things of God as what they are, since they are spiritually discerned. Jesus is far from submitting his doctrine to the decision of blind human reason, which indeed constantly endeavors to usurp the authority of a judge in things spiritual. No; the right touchstone is a living experience with the doctrine of Jesus. Such an experience will at once make plain and convince us inwardly that his doctrine is of God. **If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know etc.,** and, of course, he alone—for this is the only way. The conditional sentence is one of expectancy. It implies that there will be men who will act in the way indicated, and it assures us that these shall indeed know the true character of Jesus' teaching. We must note the combination of the subjective and the objective idea in "*willeth to do his will*," the Greek placing the verb and noun close together. God's will was revealed to the Jews already in the Old Test., and Jesus brought this will anew to the Jews. The sum of this will was faith in the saving promises of God: "This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on him whom he hath sent." John 6, 29. Before the coming of Jesus this faith was to hold to the promises, after his coming this faith was to hold to the fulfillment of those promises. To will to do God's will, then, is simply for us to believe. God's will is that we shall believe, our willing to do his will is our actual believing. The entire thought of Jesus would be perverted, if we should take it that God's will means

the Law and our doing the Law; and correspondingly that our willing to do his will is a setting out on our part to meet the requirements of that Law. The doctrine of Jesus centers not in the Law, but in the Gospel. Again, we would pervert the thought of Jesus if we conceived his meaning to be that we now are to do God's will of ourselves. Nothing is farther from the Scriptures than the idea that God commands us to believe, and that we then obey by believing. Man's will as it is by nature cannot possibly resolve of itself to do God's will, i. e., to believe. So far is God from expecting this that ever in the very revelation of his saving will his own divine will comes with efficacious power upon our will to set it free and to move it to accept his will, i. e., to believe. This efficacy of his will our will may indeed resist obdurately and persistently, but always without excuse and thus with the most damnable guilt. When Jesus spoke of our willing to do God's will he meant that willing which God himself works in us through his Word and Spirit. — This willing (believing) is the touch-stone: **he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.** The knowledge here meant cannot be gained by intellectual processes alone; it is a knowledge which can be gained only by letting God's will move our will. When God's will sets our will free then, and then alone, will we know his will as what it really is. There are various analogies in the natural life. Many things are known only by a corresponding experience. A man who never heard a sound in his life cannot know the beauty of music; but if he is made to hear, then all in an instant a new and wonderful world will be open to him. A man born blind can have no conception of color; open his eyes and he will know the delight of color. So with this willing. Now the doctrine or "teaching" of Jesus does nothing but present the divine will. And to recognize that doctrine as indeed divine necessarily involves a willing to do what that doctrine contains. The moment

this willing is effected the true nature and the blessed character of the doctrine will be apprehended. And there is no other way to reach that wonderful knowledge. If your will is moved by God's will as this will reaches out and takes hold of your will; if it is moved away from sin toward Christ and the salvation he brings; if thus moved it finds the shackles of sin gone, a new, heavenly power filling it and working in it: then you will know indeed that the doctrine which brought this heavenly will to you is "of God," and that in uttering it Jesus did not "speak from himself," some doctrine he had thought out apart from God, and you will prize every word he said as truly divine. — But as far as Jesus and his "teaching" are concerned there is even a more general criterion: **He that speaketh from himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh the glory of him that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.** For the Jews it was axiomatic that all genuine religious teaching emanated ultimately from God, and that therefore every genuine religious teacher must teach as commissioned, authorized, and sent of God. Whoever, therefore, as a religious teacher presented anything emanating from himself instead of from God, could do so only by arrogating to himself the glory and honor that belong to God — "seeketh his own glory." What this very evident and undeniable statement is intended for we see at once when Jesus adds the opposite of it: he who seeks (not his own glory by offering his own supposed wisdom, but) the glory of him that sent him (as a teacher, by teaching only what he is commissioned to teach — this being God), he, *αὐτός* (only he, and none other), is true (*ἀληθής*, *verax*, namely as a teacher, not false), and no unrighteousness (wrong, unfaithfulness to his commission and duty as a teacher) is in him (in the exercise of his office of teaching). The application is evident and easy. First as to Jesus: he sought only the "glory" of God, cf. 5, 19; 7, 16. Sincere and upright people could have no difficulty on that point.

To insinuate, because he had not been educated in the rabbinical fashion, that he was a spurious teacher, was an utterly false slander. Its worst feature, however, was the substitution of a false test for religious teachers. This slander put in place of God and his glory the authority and praise of the rabbis. Jesus insists on the true criterion. The moment this is applied there will be no question as to the divinity of his teaching. — But a true principle like this works in more than one direction. How about these Jewish leaders and their religious teaching as now urged in opposition to Jesus? They were notorious seekers after their own "glory" and honor. They opposed Jesus for the very reason that they feared to lose their own position of honor and power among their nation. Even Pilate knew, later on, that "for envy" they had delivered him, Matth. 27, 18. It was easy to see that as teachers they were not "true" and void of "unrighteousness." And this was the inner reason for their hostility to Jesus, this was what blinded them to the divinity of his doctrine, so that even when its divine power touched them they willed only to cast it utterly from them. Here again we touch the will as the real domain in which the battle is fought; and in what follows we see how Jesus continued his attack upon this central citadel.

SERMON. *used 1928.*

The world around us is full of utterly false certainty, of complete uncertainty, and of all shades and degrees of doubt concerning things religious. One does not need to go far to find men firmly believing the most outrageous and preposterous things in religion, and staking their souls on what they believe — when it is perfectly plain that what they believe is wholly imaginary and without reality. Besides these with a false certainty there is a host completely uncertain; ask them, and they are not sure, and many of them think nobody really can be sure. They have come to the conviction that religion is a mere matter of opinion, and one opinion is about as good as another, especially if it tends to make people kind and brotherly toward each other. A third class includes many church members — they say and confess indeed with

the church that they believe in Jesus Christ, but they are not really sure about their faith, they have all kinds of doubts, and are easily disturbed and upset. Many of them, when put to the test, fail utterly and fall away from their faith.

Now into this world full of false certainty, uncertainty, and tangles of doubt we are placed. In a way our position is by no means easy or devoid of danger. If left to ourselves we certainly would become the devil's prey. Even if we held to some convictions as certain and sure, like so many others we might be wholly wrong, wretchedly deceived. And if we had no such solid convictions we would most likely be like the unsteady waves of the sea, or like the unstable sands of the sea-shore. But thank God, we are not left alone, to depend upon our own poor wisdom and foolish devices. God has come to us, and by his grace has opened to us

The Way to Real Spiritual Certainty.

In our text Jesus meets us to lead us upon this way, to give us this blessed certainty. Let us yield our hearts to him, that this divine certainty may be ours.

I.

The way to real spiritual certainty, as Jesus opens it to us, rests altogether on the mighty fact that **there are divine realities** of infinite and blessed importance to our souls.

When it comes to real spiritual certainty, mere thoughts, ideas, convictions on our part will not answer. I may think there is a bridge across the gulf. I may in my own mind be so sure of it that when I come to the brink of that gulf I actually step out, thinking my feet will be supported by that bridge. But there is no bridge, and so I plunge down into the abyss. This is the error of thousands. They have nothing but a sham spiritual certainty! They have made a certainty for themselves, or have let other men make it for them. It seems very real while it lasts, but the moment it is put to the test it vanishes like vapor. There is no reality behind it. The kind of God they thought existed, never existed at all—he was merely a picture of their imagination. The way of salvation they thought so sure and safe, was only a mirage in the clouds. There never was such a way except in their own heads. Can you think of anything more terrible than to find out at the end of life, when it is all too late, that your God is no God at all—just nothing? and your way of salvation no way at all—just nothing also? How the devil must laugh when he sees the faces of the fools he thus deludes, at the moment when their fatal discovery is made!

There is a reverse to all this, equally terrible, and equally fatal. It is when men are so certain that the God revealed in the Scriptures is no God at all. They are sure either that there is no God, like the fool of whom the Psalmist writes, or they are sure that God is totally different from this revelation in the Scriptures. So also with the Savior Jesus Christ, with his doctrine, and his way of salvation. They are thoroughly convinced that all these are nothing but dreams, myths, fables, legends, either without any reality at all, or totally different from what the Scriptures record. You see at once what this means. When now life is over, when at the moment of death the great curtain of eternity lifts, what will they say when there they see God, Christ, all the realities Christ told them about, and the one glorious way of salvation he made for them and us all—and they despised all these realities as mere fables, they were so sure that these realities could be nothing but just fables. One of these scoffers has well said: If after all the Christians are right, we are certainly out!

The first and fundamental point, then, as regards real spiritual certainty is this, that there are divine realities on which to rest our certainty. If we fail to discover these realities, or if we cast them aside as unrealities, anything and everything else which we may put in their place will only make our doom certain. Build up a thousand dreams of your own, make them as fair and glorious as you please, they are nothing but dreams. They delude, they cannot save. We pity the insane man who in the asylum thinks himself a king, or a millionaire, when he is nothing but a beggar who has lost his mind. His attendants may humor him for the moment, but this does not change the reality. But a thousand times more pitiful are the sane men and women who go on through life with the same kind of hallucinations regarding God, Christ, and eternal salvation, with thousands encouraging them in their vain imaginations, till the day of grace is past and the fatal hour of reckoning comes. God deliver us from such folly. Away with all self-made notions! There are divine realities, more real than the earth we tread, the sky we see, the air we breathe, the food we eat. For all these earthly things will pass away at last. But God and the real things of God abide forever. And these we must find, really find, or we are lost.

Take warning then from the men in our text. Here are the wicked Jews who are certain Jesus is not the Savior. See how they mock him, saying that all his teaching is nothing, because he did not learn it from their rabbis. Did they stop to think that their rabbis perhaps were wrong? and that the teaching of Jesus, just because it was totally different from that of their rabbis, was the divine reality? And here are the Jewish people, talking among themselves; some of them admitting that Jesus was at least a

good man, others entirely certain that he was a deceiver. How wide of the mark they all are, even the best of them; groping in the dark, with no divine reality to hold to. And last of all we see here the brethren of Jesus, his own relatives, who thought he ought to follow a different course entirely, if he were really the Messiah or Savior of God. They thought that at once he ought to show himself as a wonderful king in Jerusalem at the great Jewish festival, work his mightiest miracles there in the capital, and get all men to acclaim him as king. That was their dream of a Savior—a poor, wretched dream indeed! Every one of these people put his own foolish ideas in place of the divine reality. As long as they did that they were lost. (The day would come when they would wake up, and then too late see the true reality, realize that all their dreams were dreams only, and so go down in terror and dismay. Make no mistake like that. (No thoughts or notions of yours will help you when the eternal realities of God finally assert themselves and blow all such notions and dreams away. Real spiritual certainty rests on the true realities alone. And resting there it will stand unshaken and triumphant forever.

II.

The way to real spiritual certainty, as Jesus reveals it to us and leads us upon it, takes us first of all to the divine realities, on which alone true certainty can rest. But how shall we find them? how shall we get hold of them in order to be sure of them? Our text gives answer: **they must be brought to us.**

Here is another fatal mistake which men make; many of them think that their own ability is enough to enable them to find out all they need to know about God and the way of salvation. This is the presumption they love to go on, and invariably it leads them astray. Not only do they set up their own wisdom in regard to life, death, and eternity, but setting that up they cast aside all that God tries to bring them when they find that it does not agree with this wisdom of theirs. Instead of humbling themselves before God, they rise up proudly before him. He must say what *they* think, or they will not listen. He must do as *they* think he should, or else they scorn what he does. They are like the foolish patient who wants to dictate to the physician how he must cure the disease or heal the wounds, and when the physician attempts to follow the true course which would bring help they throw his remedies aside and use their own which are no remedies at all. In fact, as far as the soul is concerned, the thing is far worse. For we are all spiritually blind by nature. We cannot even see where our disease really is, and what our hurts really are. In

our blindness we do not even know what we need to help us, to say nothing of ourselves applying any remedy. The one and only hope for us is that God in his mercy come to us, like the good Samaritan, and bring his help to us. What a pity when men refuse to do this—when they prescribe for God instead of letting him prescribe for them, and then in their blindness feel sure that they, and they alone are right.

Thank God that he follows a different course. All through the Scriptures we see that he comes to us, bringing the great saving realities of his love and help to us. He spoke to men by his own revelation, he sent them his holy prophets, and last of all his own Son. See him here in our text, as he came to Jerusalem with his heavenly teaching so different from the useless doctrine of their rabbis. And when the Jews found fault with that teaching, he never swerved from it for a moment, for in it alone was help for men. And now through the Scriptures he brings this blessed teaching to us, telling us still: "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." He is not like the men of learning who have studied out something themselves, which they think is good for us, or which they offer because they are proud of it as their own production. No; the divine realities alone will help us—what God really wills concerning us, what he has really planned for our salvation. This, and this alone, we must have. And because of ourselves we cannot get it, God brings it to us himself. Here it is in his blessed Word.

It ought to go without much saying that what God thus brings to us through his Son is totally different from anything which men of themselves think. Has not God said: "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"? Is. 55, 9. Blind reason constantly thinks it needs only a little moral help in order to rise at last to heaven; but God tells us that it takes nothing less than the blood and death of his own Son to free us from sin and make us fit for heaven. And so in his Word he reveals to us all the wonders of his grace, showing us how he himself through his Son and Spirit has worked and still works to save our souls. What a mistake to set up our own thoughts against all this, and to top it off by pretending our own thoughts are more certain than those of God. Such wisdom and certainty are bound to prove utterly false. Learn then the only true way to certainty in things of the soul. God must teach us, and we must humbly bow to him and learn of him. The more we put our own blind wisdom aside, the more can true knowledge and real spiritual certainty enter our hearts through his Word. When the Jews followed their own thoughts they brought destruction upon themselves. The greater such perverted, baseless certainty

is, the surer will be its overthrow at last. But they who sit at Jesus' feet shall find indeed what real spiritual certainty is, and the stronger it grows in them the happier will they be in consequence.

III.

The way to real spiritual certainty is the way of the divine realities which God himself must bring to us. But when he does bring them **we must come into living touch and actual experience with them.** Thus will real certainty be attained.

When the Jews mocked at Jesus because of his doctrine, trying to discredit it and him at the same time, Jesus told them and all his hearers plainly how his doctrine must be tested in order that we may be certain indeed that it is of God, and not some uncertain notion of man. This word of his counts for us to-day, for the test of certainty concerning the divine realities and the doctrine which brings them to us is forever the same. The great mistake of men is that they merely reason and argue about these realities and their doctrine. Then some think this, and others think that, just as the Jews in our text had various notions about Jesus, and just as the world to-day is full of them—every one a grand mistake. Blind men may stand around an object and argue all day what its form, color, qualities, and uses are, they get nowhere, even if they think they do. It is so with the great truth which is set before us in Jesus and by Jesus. All the arguments of men about him are blind judgments of the blind. One thing alone will lead to true certainty, and Jesus himself tells us what it is—try this doctrine of his. It is not intended for the brain, but for the soul. Put it into your soul, and you will find that it does what it says, far more than you ever thought. "If any man will do his will," Jesus declares, "he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself," that is some foolish wisdom of men.

Let us understand well what Jesus means. What is God's will concerning us? and what does it mean to do his will? His will is by no means that as we are we shall try to come up to his commandments, attempting to fulfill them. Not a man of us could succeed. We would all fail miserably, and God would have to reject us all in his righteous judgment. This will that Jesus names is the good and gracious will of God. "This is the will of him that sent me," Jesus says, "that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6, 40. To will the will of God, then, is by his grace to believe in Jesus Christ as God sets him before us in his Word. To will God's will is to take his Savior, to accept his salvation, to let him apply it to our hearts.

Then, not by reasoning and arguing about Jesus, but by our own living experience with him will we come to know him, and that means to know his teaching or doctrine. The moment we yield to the grace of God and let him make Jesus our own by faith, that moment our eyes will begin to open, we will see what no man without God's grace in his soul, without such faith in his soul can possibly see. Thus, and thus alone, the full reality of God's salvation will become to us what it is, namely a blessed reality. In other words real spiritual certainty will thus be ours.

There are indeed some things, and Christ's salvation is the greatest among them, which we can know, really know, and thus be sure of, only by our own personal experience of them. Savages in tropical countries laugh incredulously when you tell them that water can be as hard as rock; they cannot think such a thing possible, until they actually see and feel the water that is frozen to ice. That simple personal experience gives them a new certainty. A man born stone deaf has no conception of sound, even though you tell him a thousand times about its wonders. If God by a miracle opens his ears, a whole new world is revealed to him — he now knows with a certainty he never thought possible just what sound is, the singing of birds, the human voice, and all the harmonies of music. It is similarly with real spiritual certainty, only that it deals with higher realities in a higher world. It is not a certainty of the senses merely, of the eye or of the ear, but of the soul itself.

Here is conscience, shaking your soul with secret terrors. You try to hush it, but it breaks out again and again. There is only one real help against the accusations and fears of conscience. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin; there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. Christ's pardon gives us what all the millions of earth could not buy, true peace and rest for the stricken conscience. When once you have tasted that, then you will know, and know with a blessed inward certainty, that this doctrine of Jesus and of the pardon in his blood is indeed just what he says it is. And the more you press that doctrine to your soul, the more its certainty will fill and strengthen you.

Take the doctrine of the new life which Jesus creates in us by his Spirit. It sounds like folly to men of unbelief. But let him implant that life in you, and you will know with certainty that it is real and blessed indeed. He who feels the power of Christ in his soul, enabling him to trample sin under foot, to resist the devil and make him flee; he who feels the promptings of God's Spirit to do in holy love what God wants him to do — he, I say, will know indeed that there is such a divine life. And the more

he lives that life and enjoys what it brings, the more will he smile at those who think that life is nothing but a delusion.

Especially when we pass into the dark shadows of life, into its dangers and terrors, this heavenly certainty regarding Christ and his promises and help comes out for our souls as a blessed possession. To know that we are not alone, that Christ is with us as he has said, that he will never leave us nor forsake us, to find that he does hear our prayers, and that they bring us a mighty comfort from above—this experience has helped many a wavering soul. With the great Rock of Ages to support him he passes safely through the flood, and his soul is filled with the divine certainty which Jesus works through faith. It is voiced in the beautiful lines:

"I know, whom I believe in,
I know what firm abides,
When all around me fading
Away like vapor glides.
I know what lasts forever,
When all things shake and fall,
When wit the wise forsaketh,
And craft doth craft forestall."

The one way to attain this certainty is the will to do God's will, the will which means living faith and trust in Jesus Christ, an actual and blessed experience with the divine realities which center in him.

IV.

When by his grace Jesus has wrought this faith in us, **then will we be certain indeed.**

Heavenly treasures will be ours, and we will enjoy them day by day. They are pardon from God, peace in God, a new and living hope, a strong and abiding comfort, strength and help to live a new life. All these will be ours through Christ. All of them will be wrought in us by the power of his Word. All the golden promises of God in Christ will no longer be to us mere beautiful pictures, but we will be in the midst of these promises, their heavenly fulfillment actually begun in our souls and going on in ever richer fulfillment day by day. No uncertainty will threaten our future; ours will be the divine assurance, sealed and made our own through Christ, that joys eternal await us just beyond the shadow line of death. We will sing like David: "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. . . . And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

This is the highest kind of certainty possible for our souls.

God himself is behind it, the heavenly gift of his own Son who lived and died for us, and a thousand promises of his all sealed with the blood and death of Jesus. What if the glories of heaven are still hidden from our vision—God's promises are not hidden, on them we can feast our eyes. What if unbelief mocks at us—it has nothing to offer but cold, empty denials, and the fading joys of earth which we know cannot reach beyond the grave. Shall we trade our blessed joys for these dead leaves? Shall we drop the pearls of God's promises for such a handful of dead ashes? That were folly indeed. No; let us hold to this real spiritual certainty, made ours by the living experience of faith, and sing with ever increasing joy and satisfaction:

"Faith is sure, where sight is blind:
While lost sense may nowhere find
Hope, to stay a sinking soul
When the billows o'er it roll,
Faith directs its saving quest
To the cross, and there finds rest:

Faith, in childlike trust, is wise:
Trusting him who never lies;
By whose grace the weak grow strong,
Change their sighing into song,
Praise be thine, O Lord of might!
Faith shall end in glorious sight."

OUTLINES.

The heart of the text is the 17th verse, which answers the question: How can I know that the doctrine of Jesus is really from God? The answer is plain: Not by listening to what men say of his doctrine (v. 10-15)—but by doing with this doctrine what Jesus says.—Jesus shows us the way to real spiritual knowledge: this is not a theoretical way—this is simply the experimental way.—Different classes of men are brought before us in our text. Their attitude toward Jesus is wrong. Some are hostile, others are more or less undecided, while Jesus points to a full and satisfying decision. A theme following out this thought would be: What about Jesus and his doctrine? Are you (1) against him? Then you are fighting against God.—Are you (2) undecided? God help you.—Are you (3) entirely for him? Then thank God. (Langsdorff.)—In any sermon which deals with the human will doing the will of God the preacher must hold fast the bondage of the natural will, as this is fully confessed in F. C. II.

The Blessed Certainty of Faith.

1. *It takes the teaching of Jesus.*
 2. *And does with that teaching just what Jesus says.*
 3. *And thus it learns in the surest way what that teaching is and what it brings.*
-

Can I Really be Certain in regard to the Doctrine of Christ?

1. *No—if I listen to men.*
 2. *Yes—if I do what Jesus says.*
-

Faith as a Living Experience.

1. *Faith is indeed an experience—*
 2. *An experience filled with certainty—*
 3. *An experience with such certainty as to triumph over all opposition.*
-

The Divine Certainty of Faith.

1. *It rests on the Word.*
 2. *It comes by faith.*
 3. *It brings joy and victory.*
-

THE TENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts 13, 44-49.

In the old gospel pericopes the Tenth Sunday after Trinity deals with the obduracy of the people of Jerusalem. The same subject is presented by the Eisenach gospel text for this Sunday. We here follow this lead, using not Jerusalem but Antioch in Pisidia, where the Jews generally were at first inclined to believe, but when they saw the Gentiles flocking to the Gospel turned against it in bitter hostility. It is a plain case of *obduracy*, of wilful self-hardening, successfully blocking the work of the Holy Ghost. Our text is a continuation of the one for the Fourth Sunday after Trinity, where all the necessary introductory matter is given. Paul had preached with good effect on the Sabbath day, and had been asked to speak again on the following Sabbath. As if he had anticipated what actually came to pass, he had closed his first address with an earnest word of warning from the prophet Isaiah. We are told how the Gentile proselytes were deeply impressed, some of them following Paul and Barnabas after the services. So the next Sabbath came.

13, 44. And the next sabbath almost the whole city was gathered together to hear the word of God. 45. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul, and blasphemed.

It would be wrong to suppose that Paul and Barnabas worked so diligently among the Gentiles during the week, that when the Sabbath came the Gentile population was all astir. We may be sure that Paul kept to his program, to work with the Jews first, and only after that with the Gentiles. This that **almost the**

whole city was gathered together was due to the proselytes who had heard Paul on the previous Sabbath, and who very likely talked with him during the week. They spread the good news far and wide. What must have taken hold of them especially was the doctrine that they could be justified and saved by faith alone, without taking upon themselves the whole Jewish ceremonial system. This report of the proselytes attracted the Gentiles generally. Luke does not say that almost the whole city was gathered together at the synagogue, but this was evidently the place of the gathering. We are left to picture the scene as best we can. Perhaps the crowd was so great that many of the people could not get into the building. We may be sure, however, that the clash with the Jews recorded by Paul took place in the synagogue, where Paul too was present with Barnabas. It is doubtful, though, whether he was permitted to make a set address as on the previous Sabbath and as he had been formally requested to do also on this Sabbath. — The multitude was assembled **to hear the word of God**, i. e., as Paul had been asked to preach it. It surely must have been an impressive sight. Too often men gather in crowds for other purposes, especially people like these Gentiles. The Jews might well have recalled Is. 60, 4: "Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee." What a missionary opportunity, brought about by God himself! But here again we see that the Jews had not received into their hearts the Spirit of God who came to them through the Old Testament. Their whole action shows that a different spirit slumbered in their hearts and was now turned to activity. — **But when the Jews saw the multitudes**, or, noting the aorist participle: after seeing them, and thus as a result of seeing them, **they were filled with jealousy**. This is the zeal without knowledge, of which Paul writes Rom. 10, 2. Besser thinks that they would have been satisfied and delighted, if Paul

had insisted on the Gentiles assuming the whole burden of the Law, but they considered it godless that there should be only one answer to the question: "What must I do to be saved?" namely one for Jews and Gentiles alike: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." But to hear that the Jews with all their legal observances were to be put into one general class with the Gentiles, awakened their jealousy. The word for "jealousy" is ζῆλος, our English zeal—to be earnestly concerned about something. We are left to the context to specify more closely the nature of this zeal. It may here well be envy, seeing that so many were attracted to these strangers, who had never been attracted by the local synagogue. But this alone is not enough; the root of this zeal lies deeper. It is grounded in the doctrine Paul preached. The Jews could not submit to have the Gentiles placed on a par with them. To see so many heathen people eager to accept Paul's new doctrine turned the Jews against it. Their zeal flamed up to hold fast all the old Jewish teaching and practice against this new Gospel of Paul. In this sense they were filled with jealousy.—Luke uses the descriptive imperfect in saying that they **contradicted the things which were spoken by Paul**. This was done, then, by repeated statements, apparently in the synagogue. The present participle: "things which were spoken by Paul," means things spoken at the time. There must have been an altercation. Most likely when Paul began to speak he was quickly interrupted, and this continued for a time. The scene may have reminded Paul of Stephen in the two synagogues in Jerusalem, when Paul himself helped to contradict that noble witness of Jesus.—How bitter and violent the contradiction was we see from the addition: **and blasphemed**, which the Greek, however, puts into a participle: "blaspheming"—the whole contradiction was filled with blasphemous expressions. The word means to speak evil of, to rail, and is used here, as generally, of speaking against God

or holy things. It is easy to conceive how the doctrine of Jesus, especially his death by crucifixion, afforded these inflamed Jews a target for their railing and blasphemy. They did not care how shameful their words were. The Gentiles who were present must have been astonished at what they heard. Yet Paul kept his temper as a true witness of Jesus, and did not resort to similar words against his opponents. The break had come, and he calmly accepted it; it did not disconcert him for a moment.

46. And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. 47. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying,

**I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles,
That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the utter-
most part of the earth.**

In verse 45 it is Paul who speaks and receives contradiction, but now both Paul and Barnabas speak. The aorist participle is at times simultaneous with the main verb, as this is evidently the case here. The present participle would convey the idea that their bold speaking continued for some time, but here all that is meant is one positive statement. They made it by speaking without reserve, openly, and in the directest and plainest manner, and having made it so they were done. In all likelihood Paul spoke first and then Barnabas followed with a statement to the same effect. — The statement thus made is given by Luke in detail. **It was necessary that the word of God should be first spoken to you,** and the Greek has "to you" forward for emphasis. In God's economy of grace the Jews had a favored position, and Paul held to that in all his work, Rom. 1, 17. Even under the present provocation Paul and Barnabas once more acknowledge this order of God.

It should have touched the Jews deeply and corrected their perverted zeal, making them grateful to God for this unmerited preference. Note that "the Word" is God's; it belongs to him and comes from him, and so these Jews are really dealing, not with Paul and Barnabas, but with God. Yet this Word of God is "spoken," namely by human messengers, here by Paul and Barnabas. All they do, however, is to speak or utter the Word, that is all. And Paul and Barnabas had done that. It is the one business of all preachers of Christ. Those Jews in Antioch were, therefore, without excuse—God had done all that he could do for them.—And so they are told: **Seeing ye thrust it from you,** they lose it by their own fault. We must mark well that the Word is always brought to the sinner by God. The Word comes uncalled, and begins to shed its light, grace, and saving power upon the sinner. And coming so, it will go on with its work until this is completed. It takes a special and persistent effort to thrust this Word away and get rid of it and its power completely. Paul thus also uses the present tense: "ye are thrusting away." On the previous Sabbath the Jews had not done that. Though they had not at once believed the Word that day, they had asked to hear it again. That much of an impression the first coming of the Word had made. But now they have changed—they want to get rid of this Word by all means. They have nothing for it now but contradiction; they even throw blasphemous railings against it. They thus prevent the Holy Ghost from working upon their souls.—They are told plainly also what this action of theirs means: **and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life.** This is Paul's interpretation of the action of the Jews. They, of course, in a way, namely formally, wanted eternal life, yet now, when it was actually brought to them to be made their own, they would not have it. Paul speaks of them as though they were judges, sitting in judgment on themselves. As such they hand down

this verdict on themselves, that they are unworthy of receiving eternal life. This means: not as all men are by nature unworthy, but as sinners who by their own act make it impossible to bestow eternal life upon them. Passing this verdict on themselves, when God and his messengers do their utmost to prevent them from thus condemning themselves to hell, they have no one to blame but themselves when this verdict of theirs is carried out. Note again how Paul uses the present tense, *κρίνετε*, which is durative. As long as they judge so and adhere to this judgment, so long they debar themselves from eternal life. It is not the action of a moment, hasty perhaps and ill-considered, but an action that abides. Their verdict is one that they are determined shall stand for good and all.—And now Paul and Barnabas draw the necessary conclusion as far as their work is concerned: **lo, we turn to the Gentiles.** That is all that is left for them to do. To work with these obdurate Jews any longer would be to make them only the more obdurate. The Gentiles are not doing what these Jews are doing; they are not thrusting the Word away, nor by such action judging themselves unworthy of eternal life. While also lost in sin and full of resistance due to their sin, the Word can still be spoken to them, exert its saving power on them, and thus it is hoped, eventually bring them to faith and eternal life. The difference thus brought about is due to the coming of the Word. While it came with the identical saving power to these Jews and Gentiles, the result was not the same. It became a savor of death to some, and a savor of life to others. The former, however, only because there arose in the hearts of the Jews the most inexcusable obduracy; the latter as wholly the divinely intended and normal result of the saving power operative in the Word. First the Jews in their wicked obduracy thrust the Word from them, then, and not till then, does Paul turn from them, i. e., does the Word itself turn from them. This is the judg-

ment of God. Always it is man who hardens himself, and then as a just judgment of God he is given over to hardening by God.—Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles, because this was the will of God. It lay in God's gracious plan: first the Jews, but secondly the Gentiles. And this means that even if the Jews had believed, the Gentiles would after them have received the Gospel. Now, of course, with the Jews obdurate, the Gospel is forthwith turned over to the Gentiles. To show that Paul and his helper were not acting arbitrarily, but obeying God's own command, they declare: **For so hath the Lord commanded us**, and then they adduce the command. This, however, is a prophecy which refers to Christ, Is. 49, 6. But what is said by "the Lord" or Jehovah of Christ is something which involves the office and work of Christ's messengers. And thus through Christ it pertains to Paul and Barnabas and their work of preaching Christ.—Jehovah had said of his great Servant, the Messiah: **I have set thee for a light of the Gentiles**, or as the Hebrew has it: "as a Gentile-Light," namely not only to bring back the restored of Israel, but to enlighten also the Gentiles. The perfect tense, "I have set thee," means that once so set he is to continue in this capacity. And the term "light" refers to the saving light of the Gospel, which is to penetrate the heathen darkness.—What is meant is more fully described by the addition: **That thou shouldest be for salvation unto the uttermost part of the earth**. The infinitive with *τοῦ* denotes purpose: "to be," "in order that thou mayest be." This purpose idea lies also in the phrase: "for salvation," and here we have the term which explains "light," namely the Messianic deliverance from sin and transfer into the safety of God. The emphasis is on the last phrase: "unto the uttermost part of the earth." The personal work of Jesus during his earthly life was all among the lost sheep of the house of Israel. His reaching out to give light and salvation to the Gentiles to the ends of the earth was to

be through the work of the Gospel. This divine purpose concerning Jesus was thus a plain directive for his Gospel heralds, even as he himself also had given them this order, Acts 1, 8. For the Jews, however, Paul quotes Isaiah, since they professed to hold to the Old Test. It is impossible to understand Isaiah's words as meant of the Jewish nation, namely that the Jews as a nation were to be the light of the Gentiles, though Besser thinks this possible. The reason for this impossibility is that the Servant of Jehovah is to restore first the tribes of Jacob and the preserved of Israel, and then also enlighten and save the Gentiles. The prophecy thus refers to one restorer for both, namely to Christ. — So Paul and Barnabas left the synagogue. But the obduracy of the Jews described by Luke does not necessarily mean that none of the Jews in Antioch believed. V. 43 leads us to think that some, although perhaps only a few, believed.

48. And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. 49. And the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region.

What made the Gentiles glad was God's promise to them, and the apostles' declaration that the Gospel as they preached it was not to be altered because of the Jews, but to be left as it was, giving to the Gentiles salvation without the Jewish legal system. This is made plain by saying that the Gentiles **glorified the word of God**, i. e., as Paul had quoted it from the Old Test. and as he had preached it from the beginning. The tenses are the imperfect, here it seems descriptive of the feelings and utterances of the Gentiles. To glorify the Word is to praise it, to accept and honor it. And this is what the Gentiles in Antioch did. — And yet Luke does not mean that now the entire Gentile population of Antioch turned to faith. Here too there was a sifting — only certain ones "came to faith" (this the sense of the aorist). Luke says: **as many as were ordained**

to eternal life. Calvin reads this statement in the sense of a *decretum absolutum*. Calov very properly objects that the participle used is not *προτεταγμένοι*, *fore-ordained*, but only *τεταγμένοι*, *ordained*. The idea of eternity is not in the words of Luke, and they who think they see it there import it. A survey of the many interpretations which this brief word of Luke has suffered may be found in Lechler's commentary (Lange). These interpretations range all the way from the absolute foreordination of Calvin to the free self-ordination of man ("inwardly disposed by his own inclinations"). A good discussion of the points involved and of a variety of expositions is found in Stelhörn's *Schriftbeweis*, p. 443, etc. The form of the verb may be either middle or passive. The action in either case refers to the *τάξις* of the Word, i. e., the order of the means of grace and their proper use. When this is held fast then it makes very little difference whether we stress the passive idea, that as many as were brought into this order by God were saved, or stop with the middle idea, that as many as placed themselves in this order (not, of course, by their own reason or strength, but by the efficacious power of God in the Word) were saved. A passive middle rendering is also possible: as many as let themselves be ordained or set in order for eternal life. We must cut off any absolute or mysterious eternal decree on the one hand, and on the other every idea of man's own self-determination. God by his *τάξις* leads, draws, works, effects. Those who obdurately resist break away from this *τάξις* and its saving operation, as did the Jews in Antioch. Some of the Gentiles did the same thing, but with others God succeeded. "Unto eternal life," or "for eternal life," designates the goal. Luke, of course, is here summarizing Paul's work among the Gentiles. We do not know how many days it lasted; we are told only that this sifting took place.—In the following statement, that **the word of the Lord was spread abroad throughout all the region**, we have the

imperfect tense. This shows the spreading as it progressed from day to day beyond the city itself. What of the outcome, or the end of this spreading (literally: "was being carried through the whole region")? That is told us in the following verses. The Jews finally succeeded in stopping the work; Paul and Barnabas were cast out and shook the dust of their feet off against these wicked opponents. It is the final chapter of obduracy, closing itself completely and with the most open hostility against the Gospel. "So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Heb. 3, 19. "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation," v. 15.

SERMON.

In the sermons of the past Sundays we have heard one great call after another to faith. God himself came to us with his grace, with his gift of salvation in Christ Jesus, with his promises of heaven and eternal glory, and in his gracious coming a power was exerted upon our hearts to draw us unto him, to lift us out of our sins, to fill us with faith and trust, and thus to make us God's children and heirs of salvation. Again and again we were also shown examples of true faith. We saw how men did believe and receive all God's blessings for time and for eternity. Our text continues in this line. Here too we see how in the city of Antioch in Asia Minor, when St. Paul preached there the grace of God in Christ Jesus, many of the Gentile people were glad, received the Word by faith, and entered the door of salvation. But as in some of the previous texts we are here shown also those who after all refused to believe and continued in unbelief. The same grace and help came to them as to the rest, but they would not have it. The chief unbelievers set before us in our text are the Jews of Antioch. All through the story of the New Testament, beginning with Jesus' own personal work, and continuing through the work of the apostles we constantly meet this unbelief of the Jews. It has persisted to this day. Jesus himself foretold that the generation of the Jews would not disappear till the end of time. They would stand out in the entire history of the world since the days of Christ as the most fearful example of unbelief, and warning for all of us that none of us may become like them.

We certainly need this warning, for men are ever inclined to reject Christ in unbelief. God's call to faith and to continu-

ance in faith must be reenforced by his warning against unbelief. Too often we fail to see what unbelief really is; the enormity and terribleness of it is felt too little. It is for this reason that the Scriptures hold up the Jews before us in warning. In them we are to see that of all the guilt which sinful men incur in the world none is greater, none more deadly than that of unbelief. Mark well, then, what God has to say concerning

The Greatest Guilt in the World, as Exemplified in the Jews.

- I. It is the outcome of the greatest crime.
- II. Its own outcome is the greatest judgment.

I.

The greatest guilt in the world—can it be that unbelief produces this guilt? Thousands of unbelievers will deny it most emphatically, and I fear that many a believer may feel that the statement is too strong. But unbelief dare not be judged by its own blindness, nor by the imperfect sight of some who believe. God alone is the true judge, and his verdict is recorded in his Holy Word. And there indeed we learn that in God's sight the guilt of unbelief is that of the greatest crime, and thus beyond question the greatest guilt in the world. And once that is duly impressed upon us, our hearts will shrink from all unbelief. We will no longer tamper with it in any form. Our one confession and prayer will be: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!"

The world is full of guilt of all kinds, and much of it to our minds is black and terrible enough. We think of theft and murder, and the whole long line of what are called crimes. These sometimes rise to enormous proportions, as when through one man's wickedness thousands are robbed or plunged into cruel torture and death. If we had been with St. Paul at Antioch and had asked those Jews assembled in the synagogue what the greatest guilt in the world is, we very likely would have heard the same kind of an answer so many, and even Christians to-day, would give—they would have pointed us to flagrant and dastardly deeds of criminals who set at naught the laws of God and man. Now there is no question as to the greatness of the guilt thus incurred. But think a moment. The Law of God is the expression of his holy will. It is so written in men's hearts that their own consciences, at least to a large extent, second that Law and cry out against the open crimes which trample upon that Law. It is terrible guilt to go against God and his Law and set him and his holy will at open defiance. But when all is said, and the full

measure of this guilt is taken, we will find that there is still greater guilt in the world—this that we see exemplified in the Jews, and in so many around us to-day who repeat the guilt of the Jews. It is the guilt of unbelief.

Why is this so great? Unbelief deals with something higher than the holy will of God. When St. Paul came to the Jews in Antioch he brought something higher than the Law of God which the Jews already had. He brought the message of God's love, of his good and gracious will for our salvation. This is far higher than God's holy will, because in his gracious and saving will God gave his only begotten Son Jesus Christ to work out this saving will of his. Not in the Law, but in the Gospel God offered his Son for us. Not to the Law, but to the Gospel God attached the priceless blood of his own Son. If God revealed his holy will in the Law and its commandments, in the Gospel he laid open his very heart to us, and all the love, grace, and mercy that is in this heart. In the Law he makes demands upon us, and because he is our God and Maker we are under obligation to honor those demands by perfect obedience, and we incur terrible guilt when we rebel against these demands and transgress them openly in sin and crime. But in the Gospel God makes no demands, he comes to us with the highest and most precious gift of his love, he comes to give us the blood of his own Son to cleanse and save us forever. St Paul was the bearer of this heavenly gift to the Jews at Antioch. In fact, he declared to the Jews that God's love toward them was so great that to them first of all men the Word of God with its heavenly gift should be spoken. And this same Word is now spoken to us by similar messengers sent of God. To go counter to this Word is more serious, more wicked, more damnable than to rebel against any or all the commandments which God has given.

And here the enormity of the guilt of unbelief rises before our eyes. What did the Jews in Antioch do when they set themselves against the Gospel of God? They opposed God not only in a general way, they opposed what is highest and most blessed in God. They scorned his love and grace. They cast down and trampled upon what is dearest of all to God, namely the blood of his own Son. Think of the sacrifice which God made in his Son's death for these Jews and for all the sinners in the whole world, utterly unworthy of such sacrifice. Yet God gave his own Son in order to save and deliver them from their sin and guilt. To free these unworthy sinners he heaped their sins upon his innocent Son, and made him die that they might escape. And now, having done this, and bringing all this love of his, this precious, saving blood of his Son by his Gospel herald to these

miserable sinners, what do they do? They cast it from them. Our text says the Jews at Antioch contradicted and blasphemed the Gospel of Christ which St. Paul preached to save them. That was their crime. Its name is unbelief. It shows itself sometimes in an open and coarse way, as in these Jews, sometimes without such open and violent antagonism. But always at bottom it is the same. It is man's crime against God's love, against God's Son and his blood, against God's Word and Spirit bringing this blood to us. Measure the crime aright—it is so great because it sins against the greatest thing in all heaven and earth, against the very blood of God's Son, and the salvation so dearly bought by this blood for us all. As great as is our salvation, namely the highest gift of heaven; as great as is the love which prepared our salvation, namely the highest thing in God himself; as great as is the price of our salvation, namely the blood and death of God's own Son; as great as is the Gospel, having all these highest treasures in it and bringing them to us, who deserve them in no way whatever—so great is the crime which rejects these gifts of God, treats them like lies and follies, fights against them, and tramples upon them. And so great is the ensuing guilt—indeed the greatest guilt in the world.

And this guilt is even increased when we note what unbelief in its desperate wickedness involves for others. Jesus said it of the Pharisees, and we see it again here in Antioch among the Jews who opposed St. Paul. It is the same to-day wherever unbelief arises and shows itself. Jesus said, the Pharisees would not enter the kingdom of God themselves through his ministration, and in addition they tried to keep other sinners from entering. This is the other side of the terrible crime of unbelief. The Jews at Antioch, when they rejected Christ, contradicting and blaspheming against the Gospel of St. Paul, thereby did all that was in their power to rob also the souls of the Gentiles in that city of Christ and salvation. Measure this part of the guilt of unbelief aright. What a crime to rob a man of his property, to filch a woman's honor from her, to take a man's life in cold blood. But to destroy a man's soul by snatching Christ's blood away from it, and by filling that soul also with unbelief—there is no greater crime than this, and therefore no greater guilt in the world. Jesus says, it were better for a man to have a mill-stone hung about his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea, than to offend and lead into unbelief and damnation the soul of one of his little ones. And this unspeakable guilt, the guilt against other men's souls, must be added to the guilt against God's love and his Son's blood, when weighing unbelief.

Do you see now why God's Word is full of warning against

unbelief? If, then, you have ever thought of unbelief as a light thing, by all means revise your estimate of it. If ever thoughts of unbelief or doubt have entered your heart, see now what they involve and crush them out by God's grace and Word as the worst poison of the devil. There is no greater guilt than this, because unbelief is the greatest crime possible in this world.

II.

And just as the greatest of all guilt is the outcome of this greatest of all crimes, so also its own outcome is the greatest of all the judgments of God.

All other sins, however great and terrible they may be, are after all only part and parcel of the sin of man which God saw dragging our race down to perdition, and for which in his boundless grace he provided full and complete atonement in his Son's blood. Look at the sinful woman in Simon's house. She was an outcast among men, and yet when she came and knelt in sorrow at Jesus' feet, he did not cast her off—he pardoned all her guilt. Look at the malefactor on the cross. He had committed crimes so great that not only the law of the land condemned him to the most ignominious death on the cross, but he himself confessed that he and his fellow malefactor were receiving the due reward of their deeds. But when he turned in repentance to Jesus and asked to be remembered in his kingdom, Jesus forgave him all his sins and promised to meet him in paradise. It is so with men's sins generally. There is pardon for all of them the moment men repent. In fact, in view of these very sins God sent his Son and made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

But what of unbelief? Our text tells us. When the Jews in Antioch, with all their past sins upon them, spurned the Gospel of God's pardon in Christ Jesus, the holy apostle had to announce to them: "Seeing you put the Word of God from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." Understand well what these words of Paul mean. There is something peculiar about unbelief. All other sins still leave the door of God's pardon open, but when men settle down in unbelief, their very unbelief shuts this door of pardon for them. When men have had the Gospel and its blessed pardon, but have determined to put it from them, casting it aside as something they do not want, then there is nothing left for God but to take his precious Gospel away, and leave such men to their self-imposed judgment and damnation. So St. Paul ceased preaching Christ to the Jews at Antioch; he preached only to the Gentiles who still left open the hope of winning them for salvation. No doubt the

Jews mocked at Paul for thus going to the Gentiles in Antioch. They were now more than ever averse to this Gospel which would bring people like the Gentiles into the church of God. In this they are like unbelievers generally who deride the Gospel when it turns from them at last to seek out poor sinners who will receive it by faith. All such unbelievers, however, fail to see what we must see clearly and learn well to-day, namely that the worst judgment and penalty which can possibly come upon a man is this that God abandons him to his fate, takes Christ, Christ's pardon and blood away, and carries it to others, leaving them in their sins and unbelief, damned and lost as they are.

So fearful is this greatest of all judgments of God upon living men that we must view it carefully in order to draw no wrong conclusions. Note, then, that it is the nature of unbelief to put away from the sinner's soul his only means of escape. God prepares for man an hour of grace when he makes a strong and effective effort to bring him to repentance and faith. It is the accepted time, the day of salvation, 2 Cor. 6, 2. God so guides the lost sinner and the course of the Gospel that the two meet, and meet in such a way as to enable the Gospel with its heavenly power to reach down into the sinner's heart. Then saving faith ought to be the outcome. But if in that precious day of salvation man hardens his heart in unbelief against the Gospel, thrusting it and all its saving power away from his soul, the grace of God and all his saving guidance is brought to naught. Then, in the words of our text, man himself judges himself unworthy of his salvation. By casting away his own salvation intended for him by God he adjudges himself worthy only of damnation. There is nothing more terrible that any man can do.

Thank God, however, that his grace and patience are so great that he on his part never acts hastily. In thousands of cases, instead of at once accepting man's wicked judgment on himself when casting God's Gospel aside, and making that the final judgment of man's damnation, God tries again and again. Jesus has pictured this patience to us in the parable of the unfruitful fig tree. He digs about it and dungs it, to see if after all his grace will succeed. All this patience, this waiting, this renewed effort is God's super-abounding grace. Not one bit of it has man deserved when he turns against the Gospel in unbelief. It is God's praise and glory that so often when man begins in unbelief God's grace in Christ Jesus after all triumphs over that beginning unbelief. This too we see among the Jews down to the present day. Though as a people they are hardened in unbelief, here and there some after all are won for Christ and salvation. Praise God for every case of this kind! And the same thing we see among those who are

not Jews. At first some spurn the Gospel and refuse to believe it. If God left them at once they would be irrevocably lost. But his grace returns, and in many a case it triumphs in the end, implanting faith in the heart after all.—O the mercy of God whose patience is so great! When we see it among men, how at times even in the eleventh hour it brings them to Christ and the heavenly goal, let us adore it and glorify his name.

But be not deceived; God is not mocked. His Gospel is no shoe-rag for any man to kick aside, and think that God, because he is so kind and patient, must return to him. The blood of Christ is no cheap thing, because God offers it to sinners without money or price. Let no man dream that he can mistreat that blood and make God offer it to him anew. There comes a time when even the patience of God is at an end. In the city of Antioch the Jewish synagogue was left bare of the Gospel—God took it away. It rests in the secret counsel and judgment of God when he will abandon those who start in unbelief, by drawing his Gospel away from them. No man is able to pry into these mysterious judgments. But woe to him whom God's grace is thus compelled to abandon. It is the greatest of his judgments; for with grace and the Gospel withdrawn man's soul is forever doomed.

Whenever, then, man says no to God in unbelief, let him realize that God too may accept that no. What a fearful risk and danger! Is there any one among us who would for a moment dare to incur it? Oh, then, let us ever keep our hearts open for the Word of his grace. Only thus, by constant faith and submission to him, can we be safe and have the comfort of his salvation.

Finally, let us realize too what it means when in our waywardness, in our many sins and faults, God's Word, instead of abandoning us, comes to rebuke us, to correct us, to smite us, to turn us if possible into a better course. Let no man among us resent this work of God upon his heart. For as long as God follows us with his Word, so long he has not turned away from us, although on our part we may often have turned away from him. With this thought to help us, let us gladly bow before God in repentance and kneel in faith at the foot of the cross. Blessed are they who by God's grace cut loose from all unbelief and yield themselves wholly and constantly to him and his Word in humble faith.

The greatest guilt in the world is that of unbelief, because it is the outcome of the greatest crime, insulting the blood of God's own Son, and because its own outcome is the greatest judgment, casting away salvation and itself choosing damnation. Once unbelief is fixed and established in a man his doom is sealed. He

who makes God turn from him with his grace in Christ is surely lost forever, and lost where he might have been saved. May God impress these mighty truths upon our souls, in order that we may turn in utter dread from all forms of unbelief, diligently hold to his Word and grace, prize our faith above every treasure, and pray to him that he may keep and augment it, until the heavenly goal is reached at last.

OUTLINES.

While this text deals chiefly with unbelief and obduracy it also contains an example of faith, for the Gentiles at Antioch were glad to hear the Gospel, and many came to faith. So we may preach on: The division caused by the Gospel: Some through guilt of their own turn against the Gospel—Some through the grace of God are won for the Gospel—To which class do you mean to belong?—If we center our attention on the unbelief and hardness of heart manifested by the Jews of Antioch, we may use Paul's summary of what unbelief really does: The Jews at Antioch show us why unbelief is so fatal: It is because unbelief puts the Gospel from itself—It is because unbelief judges itself unworthy of everlasting life—It is because unbelief makes God withdraw the Gospel.—Again we may ask: Whose fault is it when men refuse to believe? We have an answer when we look at the Gospel—We have a fuller answer when we look at those who do not believe—We have the complete answer when finally we look also at those who do believe.—A point of interest is found in the last half of v. 48: Am I ordained unto eternal life? I surely am not, if I reject God's order of salvation in the Gospel, as did so many of the Jews in Antioch.—I surely am, if I accept God's order of salvation in the Gospel, as did so many of the Gentiles in Antioch.

The Word of God the Door to Eternal Life.

1. *Opened for all alike.*
 2. *Barred only by obduracy.*
 3. *Entered through divine grace.*
-

The Tragic Story of the Hardening of the Heart, Repeated in the Jews at Antioch.

1. *The first chapter—God graciously brings the Gospel of salvation to lost sinners.*

2. *The second chapter—men wickedly close their hearts and ears against the Gospel.*
 3. *The third chapter—God is compelled to withdraw his Gospel and leave the hardened sinners to their fate.*
 4. *The fourth chapter—God always finds others in whom his Gospel succeeds with its blessed work.*
-

The Grace of God in the Word.

1. *It is all-sufficient—as all those attest who are brought to faith.*
 2. *It is not irresistible—as all those attest who harden themselves in unbelief.*
-

What the Gospel did at Antioch.

1. *The Jews refused to hear the Gospel—and it left them.*
 2. *The Gentiles rejoiced to hear the Gospel—and it blessed them.*
-

THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Matth. 18, 1-5.

The second sub-cycle of the after-Trinity texts embraces nine Sundays, and in our series deals with the characteristic features of the life of faith. After concentrating our attention, as we have done in the first sub-cycle, on faith itself and all that pertains to faith directly, we now take a brief view of the life marked by faith, studying some of its salient features. The first is that of *childlikeness*, presented in Matth. 18, 1-5. Every true believer in all his life and attitude toward God and his Word is like a child. He clings to his Father, he relies without question on his Word, he follows him alone.—A second characteristic of the life of faith is genuine *sincerity*. The true believer lives with the consciousness that God's eyes are ever upon his very soul and inmost thoughts, Matth. 6, 1-8.—The life of faith involves *separation*, and that means division and contention, the opposite of peace and harmony, Luke 12, 49-57. The Gospel always causes a disturbance on earth, and in that disturbance all true Gospel believers are involved.—This naturally connects with *the hostility of the world* which Jesus describes at length in John 15, 17-27. This is by no means a mild sort of thing, but of the same nature as that which slew Jesus.—In marked contrast to this hatred on the part of the world is the *love* of Christ's followers, which reaches out even to their enemies, Matth. 5, 43-48.—Yet with all that Christians may do in obedience to their Master they ever recognize their *unworthiness* as after all nothing but unprofitable servants, without any merit of their own, Luke 17, 7-10.—Luke 13, 10-17 illustrates the *liberty* of Christ's followers in showing that they

are not bound by man-made regulations. — The parable of the talents brings out the Christian mark of faithfulness in using God's gifts with all devotion and diligence in his service, Matth. 25, 14-30. — This sub-cycle closes with the fine text Acts 21, 8-14, presenting Paul's *submission to the Lord's will*. The entire series is rich and varied, and brings to view the inner spirit which must animate all who follow Christ, and which must grow in them day by day.

With this general outline before us we turn to study Christ's instruction on *childlikeness*, which is surely a mark of all true disciples of Christ.

18, 1. In that hour came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

Jesus has returned to Capernaum for the last time, Matth. 17, 24; Mark 9, 33. On his arrival there were some things that needed attention, like the payment of the tax, 17, 24, etc. These were soon disposed of, and Jesus was free to take up the matter which his disciples had discussed only among themselves on the way hither. Mark informs us that Jesus "was in the house," which Wohlenberg thinks must be the house of Peter, assuming also that a permanent room in this house was set aside for Jesus. But Jesus had moved his mother to Capernaum at the beginning of his ministry, and he most likely made his home with her when he was in the city. Mark refers to a definite and well-known house, for he uses the article. This house, where Jesus regularly staid when in Capernaum, was the scene of what follows. **In that hour** points to the time shortly after Jesus' arrival at his place of abode when the matter of the tax had been disposed of. That the interval was not long is indicated by Mark who tells us that Jesus himself asked what his disciples had been discussing "in the way," i. e., on the road to Capernaum. — When Matthew writes: **came the disciples unto Jesus**, he merely wishes to say that now the whole company was assembled at the house where Jesus stayed. That

is all. It would be incorrect to assume that the disciples came in order to ask Jesus regarding the greatest in the kingdom. This we learn from Mark, who informs us that it was Jesus who broached the subject, and that when he did so the disciples "held their peace," evidently feeling that their discussion had contained something more or less improper. Mark does not report that finally one or the other of the disciples told Jesus what they had talked about; he simply assumes this by telling us how Jesus now answered. But Matthew writes **saying**, which means that the disciples, in reply to Jesus, after first holding back, finally spoke out. There is a hint of this also in the way Matthew reports the question of the disciples. He inserts the little word **then**: **Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?** This subject, discussed on the way, is now mentioned at Jesus' request, but so as now to be laid before him for an answer. The Greek uses the comparative: Who is greater? as if the implication is that all the Twelve would be great, yet some greater than the rest. The singular does not mean to refer only to one, but is meant in a general sense, of any one as over against any others; so that for one or the other reason several might be ranked above the others. The question has the present tense, but the modifier "in the kingdom of heaven" refers to the future, namely to the Messianic kingdom which in the expectation of the disciples was now about to be established with earthly grandeur by Jesus as the great Messianic King. There was some occasion for the question concerning the relative position of the disciples in this approaching kingdom. Jesus himself had distinguished three of his disciples in a peculiar way. Just recently they were called upon to witness the Lord's transfiguration. Often enough, too, Peter had taken the lead, as in speaking for all the Twelve. Even now, since coming to Capernaum, Peter had been ordered to catch the fish which would have the stater in its mouth, and with this money to pay the

tax. Besser writes: "Did a few of them perhaps feel aggrieved to find themselves the lesser ones beside the three great ones, and had Peter in particular, since he had just been drawn into the heavenly King's presence (Matth. 17, 7), made these lesser ones feel his greatness? Or had Peter felt himself insulted by them, because they had charged him with pride? Did Andrew perhaps urge his greater age? Did the former disciples of the Baptist urge their godly past; or those who had given up more than the rest, those sacrifices of theirs? Did Judas Iscariot perhaps talk about his administrative ability? Who knows how the ego of each put itself forward?" It is easy to see the danger that lurked in this question about rank and greatness. It might easily lead to a rupture among the Twelve, dividing them through envy, jealousy, pride, hatred. Jesus nipped anything of this kind in the bud.

2. And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, 3. and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Mark states that Jesus sat down and then called the Twelve around him; he also gives an opening statement from Jesus before the little child is called to him. So we must imagine the Lord seating himself in a formal way, his whole manner showing that he intended to clear up once for all the question of precedence and greatness in his kingdom. Matthew at once centers our attention upon the symbolic or illustrative act of Jesus. With Jesus seated we may take it that the Twelve when formally called to him at this moment also sat about Jesus in the usual oriental fashion. Now Jesus **called to him a little child**, the Greek using the diminutive, which is always in the neuter. It is most natural to think that this was a little child belonging to the house where Jesus dwelt when in Capernaum, a little child that knew Jesus, and thus came trustingly at his call. There is no call here to assume anything marvelous or

extraordinary as regards the child. — Matthew writes only that Jesus **set him in the midst of them**, placed him there. The verb is general, and the English "set" must not make us think that the child at first was made to sit down. So also the English "him" is only the translation of the neuter pronoun in Greek, leaving the sex undetermined through the whole story. The child thus stood before all these men, and Jesus by placing it there drew their attention to it. Now Mark adds a beautiful touch by stating that Jesus took the child in his arms. He lifted it to his breast as he sat before the disciples. As readily and willingly as the child had come at his call, so now it came to his arms and laid its head upon his bosom or shoulder. Here was a *demonstratio ad oculos*, one to impress itself indelibly upon the minds of the disciples. — Thus holding the child the Lord speaks: **Verily I say unto you etc.**, solemnly sealing his words with his customary formula of verity and divine authority. What he now tells them is truth beyond question, and he puts his own personal authority behind it. May they all who sit about him, and may we with them, heed these words of his, as the little child heeded Jesus when he called, and may we be happy in heeding them, as the little child happily rested in his arms. — **Except ye turn**, is the first condition. The verb is the second passive aorist, which is also used in the sense of the middle: turn yourselves. We need not say that this turning is one not accomplished by ourselves, by our own power and ability, but after the manner indicated in Jer. 31, 18: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the Lord my God." The aorist is punctiliar, signifying one definite act of turning. Our passage is usually combined with John 3, 3, which speaks of a new birth, thus reading the turning in our passage as signifying what is called conversion. Some try to secure a narrower meaning, namely: turn from your present ways of rivalry and seeking after outward greatness. The old combination with John 3, 3 gives the true thought

of Jesus, as the conclusion of the sentence shows, which speaks of the entrance into the kingdom of heaven. The requisite for this is not a certain degree of sanctification or holiness in the narrower sense, but the conversion of the heart, turning it inwardly through grace in living trust to Jesus.—Only Jesus defines, in the connection now presented, what this conversion always includes: **and become as little children.** Besser interprets by pointing to the little child: "It came at the call of Jesus' kindly voice, just because it was a child, without any conscious gratification at its own tractableness. In all simplicity it allowed this kind man to do with it what he pleased, just because it was a child, without thinking: What an excellent child I am, that I am thus set before these men! It allowed Jesus to take it in his arms and caress it, feeling itself indeed a beloved child, but knowing nothing of its loveliness. Well, this child on the arms of Jesus furnishes the disciples an illustration of what excellence is in the kingdom of heaven." And then he sketches the childlikeness involved in true conversion: "To permit oneself to be called, led, loved, without pride and without doubt, in simple trust, that is childlikeness, even as this is the nature of children, who possess nothing, but need everything; who are able to do nothing, but receive everything; to earn nothing, but receive everything as a gift, thus must all become by conversion who desire to enter the kingdom of heaven." Humble trustfulness is a good summary of what Jesus means, this translated into the spiritual realm, into our relation to Jesus. A king's child readily plays with a beggar's child, and neither feels above the other, or beneath the other. We raise our children up, God raises his children down.—Unless the condition Jesus lays down is fulfilled, he says, **ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.** From the high places in the kingdom for which the disciples had begun to strive with carnal thoughts, Jesus takes them back to the very portal of that kingdom. Note

the negative οὐ μὴ with the volitive subjunctive, one of the strong ways of negating future action: "ye shall in no wise enter." The volitional idea is in the speaker, it is his will that is expressed. Cf. Robertson, 933 on Matth. 5, 20. In our passage the thought is that if one cannot even enter the kingdom without becoming as a little child, he, of course, cannot remain in that kingdom when he is not as a little child. This points the disciples to the danger they were courting in losing their childlikeness through contention for place and position in the kingdom, striving with each other, and envying each other.

4. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.

Luther: "Oh, do not think to be great, but to be little. Becoming great will come of itself, if you have become little." The fundamental requirement for entering the kingdom holds all through the kingdom and controls our position in it. Therefore the connective οὖν, "accordingly." The simple future: **Whosoever shall humble himself**, is not intended to repeat the original act of turning and becoming as a child, but following this describes the conduct of one who has thus entered in true childlikeness. He goes on now in the course begun; his bearing shows itself step by step as one which makes no claims, sets up no demands, but bows ever more lowly and humbly to the Lord's directions, happy and content in doing that.—**As this little child** furnishes the disciples with a living illustration. The child in Jesus' arms looked up to him, depended on him, was content with what he did for it. This was its humility, lowliness. It claimed nothing, came with no merits of its own, boasted of no achievements. To be more and more like such a child in all our Christian life is true spiritual greatness. Only let us be warned. Pope Gregory the Great called himself *servus servorum*; he

did it in order to be the greatest, in a mechanical fashion, and by a kind of shrewd calculation, making himself humble in order thus to get the greatness after all. Any speculation and figuring like this shows that the *ταπεινότης* or humility is not genuine. He who tries to make his humbleness a stepping stone to greatness, will not succeed. This greatness in the kingdom is not bought by efforts at being or seeming humble. True humility does not even think of greatness. Its very delight and satisfaction is being nothing. And so it does not even think of a reward for its humility. Its humility is its own reward.—And of such a person Jesus says: **the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven**, i. e., greater than others. There is a paradox in it all: the least is the greatest; he who thinks of no such things as claims shall have all that others claim and by claiming cannot get. But the paradox solves itself easily. Only an empty vessel can God fill with his gifts. And the emptier we are of anything due to ourselves, the more can God pour into these vessels his eternal riches and glories. It is hard for our minds, trained to worldly ways of thinking of greatness, to grasp this thought of Jesus, and harder still to make it fully and completely the principle of our lives. But the grace of God helps us, and by his grace we shall indeed succeed.—When Jesus now adds: **And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me**, he is, of course, not thinking of physical children, but of disciples who have become as children. When now one of Christ's disciples becomes thus humble, how shall the rest treat him? Shall they abuse his humility by lifting themselves above him? No, let them recognize the spirit of Christ in their humble brethren, and receive them in his name. "One such little child" shows that Jesus counts each one singly, and holds each one precious. This descriptive term includes all who learn true childlikeness of Jesus, beginning with actual children in the church of Jesus, taking in all its lowly mem-

bers, the poor, the less gifted and prominent, many of whom succeed admirably in this essential of childlikeness, and any others besides, no matter what their talents and positions may be. Jesus here spreads his protecting hand over them all; let no man abuse or take advantage of these precious members of his flock. — To receive such a childlike Christian **in my name** is to make Christ's name, i. e., his Word and revelation, the basis of our act. It is to treat them as true and valued followers of Jesus, with all love and kindness, keeping Jesus himself and what he has said ever before our eyes. "In my name" thus points to the right motive. There is a mark of true childlikeness — our part in thus receiving other childlike followers of Jesus. It is like one humble child playing with another. "See there, the Lord Jesus with a child in his lap! Become as this child, and he receives you; stoop as he does in true love to such a child, and you receive him. — Christ is received by us when we receive those in whom he dwells. When we think of their needs and supply them; when we remember their interests, and meet them with loving solicitude; when we prize the work Jesus has done in them, and seek in every way to further it; when we take them for our example, and thank Christ that he thus aids us through others — then we receive him. And who of us would not receive Christ and do all we could for him, if he knocked at our door? Let us recognize his coming in his true, lowly followers. So shall we receive him indeed.

Indeed

N

Humility, Sermon 1-11-
The must become like

SERMON.

Our text tells us something of the last visit which Jesus paid to Capernaum, where he established his mother and thus made his home during the three years of his public ministry. His disciples gathered about him in the house where he made his stay. On the road, when together they had travelled to Capernaum, the disciples had discussed what to them seemed a very important question. It was — who of them should be the greatest

in the kingdom which they expected Jesus was about to establish. In spite of all that Jesus had taught them they thought only of a grand outward and earthly kingdom, and Jesus as the most exalted and glorious earthly king. Each of the disciples, accordingly, was eager to have as high a place as possible in this kingdom, to be as great a lord and prince as he could in this coming realm. Very likely in their discussions with each other each disciple emphasized his special claims to be ranked above some at least of the others. They were careful, however, to say nothing about this matter to Jesus himself; it seems, after all, they were a little ashamed of this rivalry of theirs. But what happens now when they are all together with the Lord in the house at Capernaum? Jesus knows all about their dispute; he makes them tell what they have been talking about; he does it in order to settle this question for them once for all—to settle it also for all future time for all of his followers. And he does it in his own striking and effective way, so that none of us may ever forget the answer he makes.

In the house where Jesus stayed there were little children; and now when the disciples needed to be taught who is the greatest in the spiritual kingdom of Jesus, he called one of these little children to him, set this little child into the midst of the disciples, and then took the child in his arms—there was the answer the disciples needed—there is the answer we all need. It is right there in

The Little Child in Jesus' Arms.

I.

Look at this child in Jesus' arms. It is **an illustration** of what you and I and every follower of Jesus must be in his kingdom.

What a wonderful picture—this little child in the arms of Jesus! What does it illustrate about us and our relation to Jesus and his kingdom?

Hear what Jesus says about this little child and us. "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." The disciples had disputed about the high places in the kingdom; Jesus tells them that none of them would even get into the kingdom unless they became as the little child in his arms. For every one who enters his kingdom and really gets into his kingdom does it only by becoming just like this little child. That child is a true picture of every follower of Jesus. We can sum it all up in one word. Christ's followers are all childlike.

Look what the little one did, when Jesus called. It came

to him. Look what it did when he spread his arms to take it. It let him lift it to his breast. There it nestled quiet and content, happy to be held by this loving friend. So is every true believer.

Childlike trust and childlike humility are the marks of true faith. A little child is wholly dependent. It cannot care for itself; another must care for it. It needs the love that will call it, take it up, and give to it what it ought to have. It sets up no claims and requirements of its own—how can it? It is able to earn nothing, to bring no deeds or great works for which it ought to be paid. It has nothing but its needs, and could never satisfy these itself. Love must take it, tenderly embrace it, care and provide for it, give it all that it ought to have. And on that love every little child casts itself without question, and is happy and content to receive it in sufficient measure. That is childlikeness, and that is the mark of true faith wherever faith is found.

Have you thought of your soul after the manner pictured by this little child in Jesus' arms? Do you realize that your soul is wholly dependent just like a little child? What could you do for your soul, if left to yourself? As little as a tiny child could do for itself, if it were abandoned. It would perish, and so would you. And dependent means that one far greater, wiser, mightier than you must open his arms to you, stoop down to you, and with his mighty love embrace your soul and give it what it needs, just as Jesus pictured it in taking up the little child. You know what this love of his is. You see its outstretched arms on the cross, when Jesus died to wipe out your sins with his blood. You hear his loving voice in the Gospel: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." You feel its power when this love absolves you from all your sins, assures you that you are God's child, comforts you with the sweetest promises, and guides and keeps you amid temptations and dangers. What does all this ask of you? Only this that you take it all just as a little child takes the love showered upon it. It is all so simple and easy, if only we will learn what Jesus shows us here. Give up all your own thought, effort, striving, claims, and demands. Sink into the Savior's arms, pillow your head on his bosom. Be nothing but a little trustful, humble child, and Jesus' arms will close about you—you will be his indeed, and thus truly in his kingdom.

But notice that the Savior adds another word in showing us what the child in his arms illustrates about us and his kingdom. "Whoso therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." Only by becoming childlike can we enter Christ's kingdom, and then by growing in childlikeness will we become greater and greater in his kingdom.

That little child in Jesus' arms never thought of itself at all when Jesus picked it up. It did not boast of being such a

lovely, deserving, excellent, worthy child. It looked only at Jesus, his loving eyes and face, and regarded only his voice and manner so assuring and kind. On its part it was just a little child, and nothing more. It did not even try to be more, it let Jesus be more. That was its humility as a child. And in that it is an illustration for us.

In Christ's kingdom those are the greatest who are most like this little child in Jesus' arms. We grow in spiritual greatness as we grow in childlike humility. The less we trust ourselves, and the more we trust him; the less we boast of ourselves, and the more we glory in his gifts; the less we think of what we deserve, and the more we rejoice in what the Lord deserves from us—the greater will we be in his kingdom. And that means greater in this sense—not that men will call us great, or that we will appear grand and important, but that the Lord will think more of us, because thus we are more and more as he wants us to be. Behind this thought of the Lord, however, and his estimate of greatness in his kingdom, lies this secret that we must all learn more and more. The humbler we are before the Lord, the more we realize our utter helplessness and nothingness, the more is he able to bestow of his grace and gifts upon us. If you are a vessel already half full, how much can he put in? Only half as much as he could, if you came to him a vessel empty altogether. The less we have of our own, and the more we have from him, the richer, higher, greater, and the more blessed are we in his sight. The little child in Jesus' arms illustrates it. Its complete and lovely humility made it so lovely in the eyes of all who beheld it. That child is to be our pattern. Christ's Spirit wants to make us like it, and thus raise us as high as possible in his kingdom.

II.

But just as this little child in Jesus' arms is an illustration for us, so also it stands as a **warning** for us.

Remember the disciples and their foolish dispute about being the greatest in their Lord's kingdom. They were in danger of losing thereby not only all greatness in Christ's kingdom, but the very kingdom itself. Think for a moment what eventually must have happened, if St. Peter for instance had claimed preeminence because on various occasions he had stood up and spoken for all the rest, and the Lord had addressed him too as the spokesman of the rest. Or if John and James had claimed preeminence because they forsook more property and a greater business and income here in Galilee than any of the rest of the Twelve; or if they had claimed greater consideration because they were among the first to follow the call of John the Baptist, and then again

first in following the call of Jesus. Or if Judas Iscariot had put forth his claims of being such an excellent administrator, since the Lord himself had made him treasurer of their little company. Beyond question when the disciples argued about greatness in the coming kingdom of Christ, each one found something in himself for which he thought he ought to have special recognition, and when the claims of the one were held against those of another there was danger of quarreling and envy, of actual strife and division. No wonder that Jesus treated this dispute among his disciples as a serious matter, gathered them all about him, and then placed before them the warning pictured in the little child in his arms.

We, the later disciples of Christ, are often enough thrown into the same kind of danger as the original Twelve, when we begin to think of our own high qualities, our work, our gifts, our sacrifices, etc., for the Lord and his church. And this danger increases when we are actually honored in the church by the Lord and our brethren. It is as when Peter thought himself great when Jesus honored him; or Peter, James, and John, when on several occasions the Lord selected them to witness what the rest were not called to witness. Again we are likely to fall into this danger, either of being very little in Christ's kingdom, or of falling out of it entirely, when men refuse to honor us as we think we ought to be honored—when our names are put last instead of first, when others are chosen for office and work, and we are left out, when others are praised, and no one mentions our merits and good deeds. How easy then to feel aggrieved, just as it is easy to feel puffed up when we are praised and honored.

Look at that little child in Jesus' arms, and together with the twelve disciples take to heart the warning which is set before us by this child.

It was nothing but Jesus' love which so distinguished that child. It made no boast or claim of any kind, it simply let Jesus' arms enfold it. It was proud not of anything it did or had done for him, but of what he was now doing for it. It did not exalt itself in the least, it let Jesus alone exalt it.

Read the warning here set before us. He that exalteth himself shall be abased, but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. We are great in the church of Christ, not for what we are and have, but for what Christ gives us, does for us, makes of us. Now the moment we begin to reckon up what we are and have done, and thus try to set ourselves up above others, we lose what Christ would give us and the honor he would bestow upon us. Thus in the very effort of making ourselves great we become small and inferior. Grasping at the shadow of our own excellence, we drop and let go the gifts of Jesus. We are like the fool who changes

the gold which is given him for the cheap brass which he is able to secure. And remember that all our work, gifts, sufferings, and any other merits in the church of Christ all have their value only through Jesus himself, especially through the humility with which we lay these deeds at his feet. If we make a boast of these things we spoil them completely, Christ cannot accept them, and if we keep on in this boast and look down upon others in thus boasting we sink far beneath them, and may, in fact, sink so far that we drop out of Christ's kingdom altogether.

What a revelation there will be at the last day! Many who thought themselves high in the church, who pushed themselves forward, and made others bow to them, who had their names first on every occasion and all other names placed behind theirs, will then discover that their pride only deceived them. They lost the humility of faith which makes truly great with Christ; they threw away the childlikeness which looks only to Jesus and his gifts and love, while others whom they despised will be put into the front rank by Christ, because they never dreamed that what they did was great, and gloried only in what the Savior did for them. Little unassuming children are pushed aside in this world, but in the church of Christ and at the last great judgment those who are most like little unassuming children shall be highest. "Whosoever, therefore," says Jesus, "shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." It is the warning our pride needs, that we may reach the greatness of true humility which alone counts in the Savior's eyes.

III.

There is one thing more in this beautiful picture of the child in Jesus' arms. There is instruction and warning, and coupled with these there is an **encouragement**, one meant for all who are truly childlike in following Jesus.

There is something symbolic in the action of Jesus calling the little child to him, placing it in the midst of the disciples as a picture of true greatness in his kingdom, finally, as St. Mark adds, taking the little child up in his arms and holding it to his bosom. You see at once that Jesus could do these things only with a little child. As you place the picture before you there must come involuntarily to your mind the wish: Oh, that I could have been that child! And that is exactly what Jesus wants you to desire. You can indeed become this child, and even in a higher sense than the picture shows with that special child there in the house at Capernaum. For that was only a natural child and no more, and Jesus used it only as an illustration. But you can become a true spiritual child, in fact reverse the process we see in nature,

growing back more and more into real childhood, and remaining permanently in that blessed spiritual state. By the grace and help of Jesus you can learn more and more that you are utterly helpless, wholly dependent on him; that all you are able to produce is nothing, that you must take wholly from him; that apart from him you will surely be lost, but folded in his grace you will be saved indeed. And so you will do, just what Jesus bids you here, lay your soul like a little child into his mighty Savior arms. Those arms are held out to you now. He calls to you encouragingly: Come! Yes, we will come—each one in simple childlike trust, to be his forever and live in his love.

It is true indeed, it hurts our pride to be told that we must come thus as nothing but little children. We like to feel proud of our strength, our achievements, our standing among men. But thank God, that Christ has not set the mark at such high attainment for us. There are always those who feel their littleness and want. And then, for so many who for a time are strong and great among men there comes at last the hour when their strength fades, their greatness no longer seems grand. Poor, helpless, suffering they lie perhaps upon a sick-bed. One thing only is left. Thank God that his Son has provided it! Like a little child they can lay themselves in Jesus' arms. Away with everything else, it is utterly vain. Jesus alone is our hope and help, all our treasures and blessings rest in him. And here is his encouragement for for you and me—this child which he took into his loving arms, thus pointing out to us what he will do for us if we become like this child in relying wholly on him.

It would be excellent if in the church of Jesus all its members would recognize that true greatness consists of spiritual childlikeness. But there is much of the old spirit left which once made the disciples dispute among themselves as to who should be counted the greatest of their number. So Jesus was constrained to say: "Whoso shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me." He is not speaking merely of natural children, but of any and all, young or old, who are as he would have them, humble and unassuming like children. He is extending a protecting hand over them. Just because they are so childlike others might treat them slightly, neglect and scorn them for this very childlikeness. Let us know, then, that in such hearts Jesus dwells; they are dear to him as his very own. Blessed are they who receive them. That means that we consider them, help them, think highly of them, and never do anything to hurt or harm them. Christ's dearest treasures in our congregation are the humblest believers. Some of them are our own little children who have learned to love the Savior, and the others are the older ones, on up to the most aged, who in their minds and hearts cling to

Jesus in humble, childlike love and trust. He who serves them serves Jesus himself. But to do it as we should we ourselves must not only appreciate what they are in childlikeness, but must ourselves become like them. Men may not count this as anything high, but the Lord has told us what he thinks, and blessed are we, if we let his Word govern us. In his kingdom all are children. May our joy be to be nothing else.

Remember, then, the little child which Jesus called and set before his disciples and took into his loving arms. Apply the instruction, the warning, and the encouragement he thus offers us, that we may drop all our own foolish thoughts of greatness, and grow great spiritually by growing in grace and thus becoming childlike in simple trust and humbleness. That child in Jesus' arms is our pattern, and Jesus himself is our aid in translating that pattern into a blessed and happy reality.

OUTLINES.

There are several angles from which to approach the text and reach its contents in the sermon. One is the thought of greatness mentioned in verses 1 and 4, and we may take the question of the disciples as our theme: Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? We have then, first, the strange answer of Jesus to this question; and secondly, the plain reason for the answer. — A second angle is the thought of childlikeness. We may use the word of Jesus: Become as little children! It is impossible when we follow our own hearts — It is easy when we let Jesus convert us — It is blessed when we realize all that is involved. — A third angle appears in an analysis of what Jesus means by childlikeness on our part: True Christian childlikeness: trustfulness — receptiveness — humbleness. Or more concretely: The childlike heart which every follower of Jesus must have: We get it by conversion — It is molded more and more by grace — Its marks are trust and humility — Its possession bestows the highest blessings. — Still another form of treatment results when we combine the idea of greatness and littleness: The greater we try to make ourselves, the littler we are in Jesus' eyes — The littler we let Jesus make us, the greater will we be in his sight.

Become as Little Children!

Let Jesus make you as trustful — as receptive — as humble.

God's Children are all Childlike.

1. *God makes them so.*
 2. *They delight to be so.*
-

Who is the Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?

1. *Not those who strive to be great.*
 2. *But those who became little.*
 3. *And whom God thereby makes great.*
-

Christ's Kingdom a Kingdom of Children.

1. *He makes us children when we enter his kingdom.*
 2. *After we enter we become children still more in this kingdom.*
 3. *The more we become children the greater are we in this kingdom.*
 4. *And the greater we are as children the higher are our honors and blessings in this kingdom.*
-

THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Matth. 6, 1-8.

One of the notable marks of true faith and Christian life is genuine *sincerity*. The opposite of this is hypocrisy, formalism, outward display to catch the eyes of men, superficiality, and mere outward performance of all kinds of work. They all ring hollow, because they are hollow. We have had a text on hypocrisy, for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, and our present text is not to be a repetition of that text or its subject. A glance shows that it is much wider than the one on Ananias and Sapphira, taking in the entire religious life of Christ's followers, and it also has a more positive note. — In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus has described the true righteousness which he must require of all his followers, by contrasting it with the false and perverted exposition of the Law on the part of the Jewish rabbis. In the sixth chapter he continues this theme, by contrasting the true righteousness with the false piety and sham godliness of the Pharisees. As the rabbis were the chief teachers of the Jews, so the Pharisees were their chief saints, at least they posed as such. The name Pharisees is not used, but the designation "hypocrites" in v. 2 and 5 is unmistakable in its reference. As Jesus had singled out a number of divine commandments which the scribes misinterpreted in producing their false righteousness, so he does with the forms of piety in which they exercised their false righteousness. There are three, almsgiving, prayer, and fasting. Our text contents itself with the first two of these, omitting from the latter the Lord's Prayer with the two closing statements at the end of it.

6, 1. Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven.

This is the opening statement in the new section of the Sermon. We must read **righteousness** not "alms," as the textus receptus has it, and thus also the A. V. Zahn points out that the Hebrew *tsedaqah*, as well as the Aramaic form, "righteousness," was used in pre-Christian times in the sense of mercy, kindness toward the poor, and thus alms, as appears also in the LXX and other translations. It was easy, then, to read *δικαιοσύνη* in our passage in the sense of *ἐλεημοσύνη*, or alms, especially since "doing righteousness" is spoken of and almsgiving follows in the next verse. But the expression "to do righteousness" embraces the entire range of good works. And Jesus distinguishes: **do your righteousness**, that which properly marks the disciples of Jesus, and which he must require of them. Moreover, in this phrase the righteousness is conceived as itself being done, or as consisting in things done—of course, including thought, word, and deed. It is not that the righteousness is a quality in us, and that we then act in accordance with that quality; it is rather that we produce this righteousness by our doing. This is very properly called the acquired righteousness as distinguished from the imputed righteousness. It is the outgrowth of faith—faith working itself out in our life.—Now in regard to this entire righteousness and its realization in our life Jesus bids us **take heed**, namely pay close attention, concern ourselves, exercise thought and diligence in regard to the matter. Here the infinitive follows with a negative: **that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them?** This is the point to give heed to, that such a thing may not occur. In 5, 16 Jesus bids us let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works. How that is meant the addition brings out: "and glorify your Father which is in heaven." What Jesus warns against

in our text is evident, namely doing our good works so that men may see us and glorify us, instead of God. This is made plain in v. 2 and 5 and 16: "that they may have glory of men" — "that they may be seen of men." Our good works have a purpose as regards men; they are to point men to God, whose grace and Spirit manifest themselves in us and our lives. Never are we to hide all our good works, and act before men as if the Spirit of God were not controlling us. But there is great danger in letting our light shine, namely that we forget the true purpose of our good works, the glorification of God, and put in place of that glorification of ourselves. This is what the purpose clause, "to be seen of them" signifies. Here *πρὸς τὸ* with the infinitive states the purpose. The verb itself is used of beholding or viewing a spectacle; and the dative, as with some passives, is used for the agent. The emphasis is on this purpose infinitive. It may flatter us to be seen of men and hear their comment on our good works. Under this stimulus we may do wonderful and great things, giving men a real spectacle to gaze upon. But if our purpose is only self-advertisement, self-glorification, the whole thing is ruined spiritually. — Aside from what else may be said about it, this false purpose defeats itself: **else ye have no reward with your Father which is in heaven.** The formula *εἰ δὲ μὴ* is stereotype, although one may supply: "but if ye do not take heed," etc. The implication is, that true works of righteousness do receive a reward at the hands of the Father. The phrase: "with your Father," points to a reward laid up at the Father's side to be given us in due time. This is altogether a reward of grace, yet as such promised us and fully assured. Yet how simple this matter is: he who performed his good work to be seen of men has in this seeing of theirs the reward he is after. His own purpose in his good works is thus fulfilled. Works done as a display before men are, of course, not done for God, not done for him to see, for

he loves sincerity, honesty, truth, real devotion. Why then should he reward such works? He certainly cannot and will not do so. Chrysostom writes: "Christ here warns us against prowling wild beasts, against serpents which crawl into hidden places and cause destruction, unless one is on his guard and wards them off with holy caution." Augustine calls the love of honor among men the deadly bane of true piety; other vices help to bring forth evil works, but this vice goes after good works to destroy them."

2. When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory among men. Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.

Now the Lord exemplifies by mentioning one line of good works; he thus draws the matter out, as **therefore** shows. He uses the condition of expectancy, painting the action vividly in the future. The present subjunctive points to the course of action in doing alms at any time. "As the hypocrites do" also has the present tense, which Robertson calls a case of the gnomic present, used of action at any time. The negative prohibition: "sound not the trumpet before thee," has the regular aorist subjunctive, in the sense: do not start to sound. Note the force of *ὑπό* in *ὑποκριταί*, giving us the idea of an actor under a mask. So also the preposition in the verb for "have received": the hypocrites have as if were their money down, as soon as their trumpet has sounded, Robertson 866. They have back what they gave; and the aoristic present together with the perfective use of *ἀπό* makes it very vivid.—The Lord expects us to give **alms**; the implication is that we will do this as a regular thing. Nor dare we think that all public giving is here characterized as wrong, quite the contrary. What is condemned is this that we trumpet the matter abroad and make a show and display of it to secure men's applause in any way. All efforts to

prove that the Pharisees actually did **sound a trumpet** to call the poor together, or to assemble a crowd to witness their almsgiving, have failed. This trumpeting is figurative, as also the phrase **in the synagogues** indicates, though **in the streets**, i. e., narrow streets, might go with actual trumpet blowing. But there is no figure about the synagogues and the streets; the hypocritical Pharisees did make these public places the scene of their display before men. They liked to do alms where their deeds would be well advertised, and they, no doubt, found fitting means to accomplish this. — Their purpose is stated: **that they may have glory of men**, literally: “be glorified by men.” And this is the chief point for us to note. Even secretly no such purpose and desire dare creep into our hearts. Luther writes: “But who believes that such vices and faults are so common in the world, and most of all with the best people, and how few there are of those who without such seeking of worldly honor or favor do good works? Yea, the world will never attain to this that it may learn what it is to give alms in the right way; for we are all so expert that when people do not begin to praise us, or to show us honor, thanks, and favor we would every one soon draw the hand back. This you can readily see when you try your best to coax people unto good works by saying that this pleases God and all the angels exceedingly, and he will reward it an hundredfold, and yet no one is ready to respond. Moreover, you have this proof, that such saints soon grow angry and draw back, if they experience ingratitude and disregard. Therefore, no one can do a good work except a Christian; for if he does it as a man, he does not do it for God’s sake, but for the sake of his own honor and reward, or, if he should talk about God’s honor, it is nothing but the stench of lying.” — Christ puts the seal of divine verity and of his own divine authority on what he says of this kind of giving: **Verily I say unto you.** And the truth is this: **they have received their**

reward. As a rule these hypocrites secure what they are after; and securing that they are certainly paid in the very coin they want. Having desired nothing higher how shall they obtain it? There is a great deal of this falseness in the giving of Christians who often use the church papers as their trumpet, and are not ready to give except their names be published together with their gifts. Often there is nothing but the silent understanding on their part that this be done. But God sees their hearts, and they have their reward.

3. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: 4. that thine alms may be in secret; and that thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

Besser states that in the Temple there was a place for bashful benefactors to place their alms, to be distributed to the bashful poor, and the place was named "Silence." What Jesus here requires of us in giving is quite plain; it is the *ἀπλότης* of Rom. 12, 8; 2 Cor. 8, 2, the model for which is God himself, James 1, 5; yet commentators are puzzled by what Jesus says of the left hand not knowing what the right hand does. Of the various interpretations Zahn's is best. The right hand and the left are actual hands. It is the right hand which usually does the giving. So the left hand is used as the seat of consciousness, since the act itself and man's consciousness and thought regarding the act are to be placed over against each other. The thought expressed, therefore, is this that in giving we are simply to give, and not to think of the excellence of our act, its merit and credit. The left is not to know what the right does = our act is to be done without our afterwards thinking of it at all as a meritorious deed. Secondly, this unconsciousness of the left hand points to the opportunities for giving; for while the right is busy in giving, the left, finding another need to supply, and unconscious of what the right is doing, at once proceeds also on its part to give. Only the emphasis is not

on the great liberality of thus giving with both hands, but on the utter absence of looking for praise among men. The aorist imperative: **let not thy left hand know**, means: let it not find out. — That the emphasis in this entire instruction is on the absence of any seeking of praise from men, is brought out by the purpose clause: **that thine alms may be in secret**. Wuttke's remarks are helpful, that the secrecy here demanded is not in conflict with 5, 16, but the Lord here puts a limitation upon us in letting our light shine before men. Our effort to make our light shine dare not resolve itself into making a display of our virtues. We are to do good, but not that our doing good may be seen of men. Christian holiness dare not seek to shine before men, else it will at once turn into sham holiness. And sham holiness is found not only where virtue is itself only a sham, a pretense, without reality, but also where the reality of such holiness is sought merely in order to make a show of it, thus reducing it to a means for satisfying unworthy and sinful desires. To do alms in secret is in many cases a bestowal of help literally in secret, with only God as a witness. But in many cases alms cannot be bestowed, gifts cannot be made, without somebody knowing of our act. The recipients of our benefactions necessarily known in many instances; or those who administer the benefactions of the church, such as the pastors, the officers, the treasurer, etc. The requirement of Jesus is met when in our giving we think only of him and his commendation, and put away all desire for praise among men. Luther says of this way of giving: "Thus I do not see it, though other people may see it." — The result of such giving is then shown: **and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee**. Zahn urges that we read: "and thy Father which seeth it shall recompense thee in secret." While the thought thus expressed is in a way attractive, the text as it reads surely means to connect "seeth in secret," and not "shall recompense in secret." To get the latter

sense without fail the phrase "in secret" ought to be last in the sentence. No; when one does alms in secret he does them because he is satisfied to have God see them, and God is the only one who sees in secret. It is a true mark of any good work that it be done for God or for Christ, and this is markedly the case when the work is done so that really God alone can see it, namely in secret.—The textus receptus has: "shall recompense thee *openly*," but this phrase, ἐν τῷ φανερόῳ, must be cancelled. The idea connected with it is that God's recompense will be made in public at the last great day. But this is only partially true. God's gracious recompense is made already in this life, and that in many ways, some of them hidden and secret, others more or less open. The term **recompense** covers the whole matter adequately. In this verb we have once more the preposition ἀπό, and in the same sense as we had it in the verb "have received." The future tense is in the nature of a promise, namely one emanating wholly from God's rich and abounding grace. We ought to do what he bids us, without any reward or recompense; his generosity is so great that he will not let such service pass without rewarding it in his own noble way. Even a cup of water shall not be given in his name without his remembering it. Only here too we need the caution that we must not seek to make a mercenary trade with God by giving alms in secret to him, in order to get much more from him in return, either in secret or openly.

5. And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward.

The **and** parallels the exercise of prayer with that of almsgiving, the need of others which we may be able to relieve with our own need which God is to relieve. The condition is again that of vivid expectancy, and the

present subjunctive of action customary and repeated. For us there is no question about the necessity of prayer. And again we are put in contrast to the Pharisees: **ye shall not be as the hypocrites**, only now the volitive future tense is used, as in regular commands, making the prohibition strong. — The reason why we are not to be like the hypocrites is set forth concretely, by showing just how they act, and just what result they attain. **For they love etc.**, they delight in this mode of praying; their hypocrisy goes together naturally with this mode of procedure, namely **to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets**. The emphasis is not on the standing, for this was a regular attitude in Jewish prayer, but on the places which these men chose for their purpose. They were as public as possible, the synagogues where many worshippers came together and naturally would see the hypocrites praying ostentatiously, and even the street corners when men from various directions could behold the act of praying. The thing was done as if it occurred accidentally, as if the devout Pharisee was surprised by the arrival of the set hour for prayer while passing along the street; only they arranged the matter so that they would thus be caught at a street corner, and this where some of the more important streets crossed, for the word for "streets" really signifies "broad streets," streets therefore much frequented. The intended impression upon the beholders was that the individual concerned was so conscientious that, caught in this manner, he would not think of letting the hour pass, but at once, right on the street corner, caring not who saw him, assumed the attitude of prayer with face turned to Jerusalem or the Temple. The thing must have been transparent enough, but the hypocrisy of the Pharisees was not ashamed to go to this length. — And Jesus states their purpose as beyond question; the thing was done: **that they may be seen of men**, literally "that they may appear unto men," i. e., as devout worshippers. But this

inner attitude and purpose is the decisive thing, as with them, so with all men who pray. Only worldly superficiality will let the outward act pass as of full value, without looking at the inner motive and purpose. Wuttke remarks: "The higher the moral value of a conviction or a mode of action, the more eagerly it is imitated. And it is an honor for such values when for their sakes sinners try to imitate them, and an honor for the general spirit of a nation when immoral and irreligious men feel constrained to imitate morality and godliness; and nothing is more mistaken than to think lightly of the Christian religion because men try by hypocrisy to imitate it. The more developed and earnest the moral and religious spirit of a people is, the more the immoral and irreligious feel the need of hypocrisy. Where sinners feel no occasion for hypocritical action things are bad with the spirit of the nation; and not the people in whose midst hypocrisy is practiced is to be commiserated. Gold is imitated most of all, because it is the most precious metal." Then as regards true piety, this is always connected with a certain reticence, a love for retirement, and shrinking from publicity and advertisement. The full-blown rose loses its petals, and is gone; let your heart be a rose half open, its chalice turned toward the sun, but its heart still hidden. Because prayer is so beneficial to us the devil takes special delight in spoiling it, and he certainly succeeds with all hypocrites. — As with ostentatious almsgiving, hypocritical worshippers attain nothing but their own miserable purpose: **Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward**, they are receipted in full, as the compound verb expresses it. Men do see them, many praise them — thus the matter is ended. As far as God is concerned such prayers are not for him, nor is it the soul that prays. "How should God not be absent from such prayers, when we ourselves are not present with them?"

6. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine

inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

Note the emphatic: **but thou**, put forward, since Jesus assumes that none of his hearers desires to be classed among these hypocrites. **When thou prayest** assumes that each one intends to pray. When now Jesus directs: **enter into thine inner chamber**, he certainly does not intend to countermand public prayer and worship. He had himself called the Temple the house of prayer; he took part in the worship at the synagogue where public prayer was made; the disciples saw and heard him pray; in fact, a special promise is attached where two or three gather in his name, and where several agree what they shall ask of God in prayer. The injunction of Jesus here is directed against hypocritical prayer, praying with an eye to men that they may see us and remark on our piety. This will be cut off quite completely when we shut out men altogether, and develop our prayer life in secret. The word for "inner chamber" is used for any store-room which can be locked; then also for a room where one may retire. It is not identical with the 'so-called "upper room" in ordinary Jewish dwellings, although the upper room might often have served for the purpose of solitary prayer. — The Savior details the matter: **and having shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret**. The aorists point to a single case, using this as an example. The middle aorist imperative is distinguished from the active aorist infinitive by the accent alone. The action here described is one of complete retirement to privacy. The door is shut in the sense of locked, or at least to avoid intrusion. The worshipper is alone, except for God. The word for "to pray," here as in the previous statements, is the one which is regularly used of prayer to God alone; it has the connotation of worship, while petitions, requests, etc., may also be addressed to men. The emphasis is on the final clause: "to your Father

which is *in secret*," although the Greek has only: "to your Father in secret." There is a correspondence between the one praying thus in secret, and the Father who is also in secret. The phrase means that the Father is present where men are shut out; utterly alone, we are yet with him. True praying must start thus in secret, since in its very nature prayer is communion between the individual soul and God, and an attitude of prayer and any words of prayer intended not for God, but only to impress men, is the worst possible perversion and prostitution of prayer. Hence to shut out men and all extraneous influences is an aid to prayer. He who has learned to pray thus in secret will know too how to commune with God when other worshippers join with him in prayer. And so his praying in secret will aid him when it comes to his participating in public prayer and worship. There will, of course, remain in the secret as well as in the public prayer of true worshippers incidental weaknesses and faults, but their prayers will be genuine after all, sincere and acceptable to God.—This Jesus states in words identical with those he used of proper almsgiving: **and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.** Here again we construe together "which seeth in secret," and we note once more that the modifier "openly" is not in the correct text. Jesus is not speaking about the Father's answer to prayer; he here merely says that prayer thus made to God is acceptable to him as a good work, as part of our righteousness as his children, and he will most graciously reward us for such work. As regards the Father's answer to such prayer this is really implied, since this is a true child's prayer to God as the Father. It is thus offered in true faith, on the basis of his mercy in Christ Jesus. If it be objected that Jesus was speaking to Jews, let it be observed that Jews were taught the mercy of God in the promised Messiah, and that this Messiah was now at hand revealing himself. But the entire matter of the Father's an-

swer to prayer is rather implied than expressly stated in this word of Jesus. The Father's recompense to sincere, believing prayer, even only considering it a good work, will surely be also that he answers such prayer.

7. And in praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles do: for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking. 8. Be not therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

There is still doubt in regard to the derivation, and hence the exact meaning, of *βατταλογεῖν*: **use not vain repetitions**. The term does not mean to stammer, though some have taken it in this sense, modifying it to mean repetitions like those of one who stammers. Compare the elaborate note of Zahn, 269, etc. The best that can be said is that the word means to speak in an idle, useless, empty, superfluous manner, so that our translation: "use vain repetitions" is quite exact. The aorist imperative means to cut all such praying off once for all. — **As the Gentiles do** is intended as a reference not merely to the Gentiles, but to the Jewish mode of praying which on its part was not above the mode used by the Gentiles. Of the latter it is said that they tried to tire out their gods by ceaseless praying. Vain repetitions after the Gentile manner are repetitions of prayer formulas spoken without thought, merely recited for so long a time. We have the same thing in the counted beads of the Roman Catholics, who insist on so many repetitions, and have the beads of the rosary to keep the count exactly. Such were also various Jewish formulas repeated either so often or for so long a time. It is heathen folly to measure prayer by the yard. Only Gentiles, and those who have no higher conceptions of prayer than the Gentiles, **think that they shall be heard for their much speaking**. We cannot make *πολυλογία* altogether identical with *βατταλογία*, although vain repetitions will always consist of much speaking;

yet much speaking, while it tends to empty and vain repetitions, is not necessarily only such speaking. The thing Jesus wishes to impress upon us is that mere length of prayer, whether the words be empty, thoughtless formulas, or free utterances strung out so as to make many words, is of absolutely no value. This condemns the long, rambling prayers which are still so prevalent in some churches, and are considered a mark of true spirituality. — **Be not therefore like unto them,** is the Lord's command, and he uses the peremptory aorist. The wrong examples of others ought to serve as warnings for us. But there is another consideration, and that is God himself: **for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.** To talk and act as if in praying we had to inform him of everything, and that if we omitted some detail of information he would be left in ignorance, is to lower God and thus insult him. Here his omniscience must be remembered. He knows our needs fully even before we begin our prayers. An error can also be made in the other direction, namely that since God knows all our needs and is ready to help us, prayer is not needed at all, or that at most its effect is on ourselves, giving us a comfortable and contented feeling. Prayer is more than auto-suggestion with a mere psychological effect. It secures our heavenly Father's response. Ye have not, because ye ask not, or because ye ask amiss, James 4, 2, is surely true. Not to pray is to reject both the commands and the promises of God, and to throw aside the means God has himself given us for securing the many blessings we need, and securing them so that they are truly blessings and benefactions for us. Jesus now proceeds to illustrate his meaning and to amplify his instructions, by furnishing the disciples a form of prayer which they may use in praying as he desires.

SERMON.

The text just read to you deals with the practical side of the Christian religion. The man who falls at the feet of Jesus, confessing his sins, and embracing the forgiveness in Jesus' blood, will be a new man. With his sins pardoned he will be a child of God. And that means that henceforth he will live a new life. He will put away his old careless, worldly, self-centered ways, and by God's help will do the things pleasing to him. In a thousand practical, (tangible, obvious) ways he will show that his soul belongs to Christ and that the Spirit of Christ rules it.

2. There are certain well marked lines of action in which this newness of life shows itself. The Savior names two of them in our text, and uses them in his admonition and warning. One of them is almsgiving, (and giving in the Lord's work in general:) the other is prayer and worship in general.³ So self-evident is it that every true Christian will both give and pray that the Lord takes these two marks of the Christian life for granted in our text. No man rightly bears the Christian name who closes his heart and hand against his fellow men, and who will not bow in prayer and worship to God and the Savior Jesus Christ.

But right here there lurks a great danger. We know how jewels, because they are so precious, are often imitated. It is the same with the precious things of the Christian life. They are constantly imitated, and every one of us needs to be warned lest we too resort to such imitation.⁴ One mighty truth is used by the Lord in his warning against all shams in our religious life. It is so effective that once we get hold of it properly it will fortify us forever against all falseness, and will fill us with genuine honesty and sincerity in all that we say and do in the exercise of our faith. What is this truth, so effective and helpful in making us true and upright in doing his will? The Lord states it twice in our text. It is this that

Our Father Seeth in Secret.

5. Beyond question, our Father, whose children we are by faith in Christ Jesus, seeth in secret, and nothing whatever is hidden from his sight. But it is one thing merely to admit this obvious truth, and another so to put it into our hearts that we will be completely controlled by it in our lives. The latter Jesus would do in our text.

I.

When Jesus speaks of our Father seeing in secret he shows first of all regarding our heavenly Father that **he penetrates every sham.**

One of the strangest things in religion, including even the Christian religion, is this that men pass off all kinds of shams and hollow imitations, as if they could easily deceive God, when but a little thought will show that such a thing is absolutely impossible. How can men delude themselves in such a childish fashion? One answer is because they are able thus to deceive other men.)

Look at the men Jesus sketches in our text. They are the Pharisees, a class of Jews in Jesus' days claiming superior holiness and faithfulness in observing the divine commandments.) God had commanded to give alms and remember the poor. Now these Pharisees did that, and did it regularly, giving abundantly. But how did they do it? They made a grand display of it. They advertised their liberality and charity. They gathered the poor together in the streets, and handed out their alms where everybody would be sure to see the thing. They did the same in the synagogues. Before all the worshippers they would lay down their handsome gifts, letting all men see how generous they were. Jesus lays bare their real purpose—"that they may have glory of men."—They did the same thing when they prayed. The old Jews had three regular hours for prayer, at nine in the morning, at noon, and at three o'clock in the afternoon. These Pharisees made a point of it never to miss these hours of prayer. They were sure to be in the synagogues praying at the appointed hour, where men were bound to see their devotions. Or they arranged it to have the hour of prayer overtake them at the corner of some busy street. (Right there on the street corner, where men were sure to see them, from different directions,) they stopped in their tracks, turned their faces in the direction of the Temple, and recited their prescribed prayer formulas. Again Jesus defines their purpose: "that they may be seen of men."

Well, you will say, nobody does anything like that to-day. Would that your statement were true. Of course, the Pharisees as such are gone, but there are all kinds of new Pharisees taking their places. Tell me, are there no charity gifts made now in order to gain the praise of men? And the gifts for church purposes of all kinds—are none of them made to gain human applause?) Let me tell you, the old sin of imitation charity, of sham offerings to God still persists. Many a gift is made merely that it may be seen of men, and many a gift is as large as it is simply in order to gain the praise of men.—And it is no better with the holy act of prayer and worship, including even the attendance at the holy Supper of our Lord. Not all who attend our services come here because their hearts are moving them to honor God. There are always some who come because they want to be seen of men. Men come often enough simply for business reasons,

women to display their finery, young people because of their attraction for each other. They go through the forms of worship, but their thoughts are bent on other things entirely foreign to worship. Among them are those who love the praise of men for their faithfulness and piety. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Jer. 17, 9.

Now it is true, men are easily deceived by such sham religious practices, even men in the Christian church. The Pharisees of old were esteemed by the Jews who really considered them men of God and looked up to them in every way.) Men who give liberally to all kinds of worthy causes, though from purely selfish motives, who help to build and keep churches and missions, though merely to gain reputation and praise, are often highly honored. Churches and institutions are named after them, their names are mentioned in public and printed in the papers as the great benefactors of the church. Who of us can see into their hearts or judge their motives aright? Even when we have our suspicions about them we are afraid lest we wrong them, seeing that we cannot look into their hearts.—It is the same with all the acts of worship. We are unable to judge the hearts who stand or kneel with us in prayer, who sit with us in the church pews attending the worship, who accompany us to the Lord's table.—The worst of it, however, is that we detect at least some of this falseness and dishonesty in our own religious acts. We are all susceptible to the praise of men and like to glory in what we do for the Lord. Not all of our gifts are pure and disinterested, nor all of our prayer and worship an expression of true inner devotion and godliness. Some of it is mere form, some of it just habit, some of it a desire to be well thought of and well spoken of. Look into your hearts, and see whether these things are not true. Jesus gives us some gross and open examples here, in order to make his warning very plain; but he surely includes all the lesser examples as well. A poisonous plant does not need to be fullgrown in order to be poisonous; and even a little serpent is already a serpent.

But now apply the truth which Jesus sets before us: Our Father seeth in secret. All this sham in religious things lies fully exposed before his eyes. He sees every man's most secret thoughts and purpose in every religious act he performs. (Even when we are ashamed to acknowledge our own falseness to ourselves, it lies bare and naked before him.—He sees that in such shams we really declare: Lord, I care nothing whatever for thee; I care only for myself and for what men may say! He hears the voice of our falseness crying: I can mock God with my shams, and he can do nothing about it, and I can fool men and get what

I want from them! Yes, our Father seeth in secret, and this is what he sees when men come before him with their shams.)

9 And his infallible vision determines his infallible judgment. Hear the solemn verily of Jesus: "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (And again he repeats this judgment: "Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." Whoever does a single religious thing to have praise of men, by getting that praise is paid in full. That praise, since he sought it, is his receipt. Jesus means to say: Let him take what he wanted to get, and be gone! Does God owe you anything when what you do is not honestly, sincerely for him? I should say not! And though you carried your falseness that far, and tried to make a false claim even upon God, as you did upon men, God penetrates the falseness and will repudiate it as well as you who make it, utterly.)

11 Think of the thing in the right light. We all need to be reminded of the all-seeing eyes of our Father in heaven. Remember the words of Moses: "Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." And those of Jeremiah: "Mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes." And then add in repentance and sorrow the earnest prayer of David: "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults."

II.

12 But thank God, he who seeth in secret, thus warning us to put away every sham, of him it is equally true that he discerns all sincere devotion.

The Savior's great purpose is to stimulate and strengthen our sincerity in all the exercises of our faith. It is for this reason that he points out to us how such sincerity may be greatly increased, enabling us to put away all falseness in our devotion to him. What is this way? It is this that we place ourselves again and again into a position where we are wholly apart from men and deal as it were with God alone. This is bound to make us more sincere and honest, and being thus aided, even in those cases where afterwards men must of necessity see us, we will yet keep before our eyes that after all we are not dealing even then with men, but really always with God alone.

13 Jesus bids us to practice giving in secret. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret." If we can hide the actions of one hand from the other hand, the good deed so done will certainly be done in secret. Only the all-seeing eyes of God will see a deed so done; and thus it will be done only and wholly for him. This is the exercise we need to help us in deepening our sincerity toward God.—It is

the same with prayer. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." This exercise shuts out all considerations of men. The quiet room, the door locked behind us, will give us the consciousness that we are really alone with God. Every sincere child of God will feel the need of doing exactly what the Savior here says. In this complete privacy what is really in our hearts will come out. If it be true faith, a real love, genuine dependence on God and Christ, a real desire in our souls to honor and worship him, such private contact with God will call it out and intensify it.—In addition we will learn to think of God and to speak to God as we really should. We will cast aside, as the Savior bids us, all vain repetitions, as though God would hear us for our much speaking. We will realize that he who seeth in secret knows what things we have need of better than we do our own selves. We will thus learn what intensity of prayer is, which is better than length of prayer. We will discover the secret of true prayer, which is to lay ourselves in the Father's arms with true sincerity and trust, leaving it to him to give us what we need.—Nor will we think afterwards of talking to others about our secret giving and secret communing with God. It will be too sacred for us to expose in any way, if it is really sincere. ¹⁵ And as with these two good works so with many others. Our inward sincerity, our real inward connection with God through Christ, will induce us again and again to get away utterly from men and any disturbing influences, dealing directly with God alone who seeth in secret.

What the Savior's real intention is in giving us these directions we see when we remember his other injunctions. In this very Sermon on the Mount he bids us let our light shine among men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven. He himself has placed us among men, our brethren in the faith and the people of the world. He himself tells us to confess him before men. All this shows that in our present text he does not mean that we shall serve and honor God only in secret, and never in public. That would be a foolish perversion of his words. "What he desires and commands is this, that we cultivate secret communion with God in such a way that our public acts of honor and devotion to God may be equally sincere and devoid of all sham, as will be our secret intercourse with him. By the genuineness of the secret deed we will be able to gauge and test the genuineness of the public. Coming frequently under the all-seeing eyes of our Father in secret and there feeling those eyes from heaven resting upon us, we will realize that in public, in every good work we do where men see it and may comment on it, those same all-seeing eyes are upon us. And so we will do in the face of men whatever we do in a religious way

as though it is done really to God alone, to meet and secure his approval, altogether irrespective of what men may think or say.

And now to encourage us mightily in this sincerity of faith and good works hear the Savior's promise. He repeats it twice, for it is so weighty and important: "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee." What a glorious promise! Have we deserved such remembrance of God, such a reward at his hands? Why, every one of us must confess that it is only our just due toward God to serve him with honesty and sincerity of heart. What can our good works be as regards God but a poor, inadequate thanks for what he has done for us when for Christ's sake he forgave us our sins and made us his children and heirs? Jesus himself says: "When ye shall have done all those things, which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which is our duty to do." Luke 17, 10.—But here see the greatness of God's mercy towards us that though we have deserved nothing with our good works and sincere service he will nevertheless add a reward on his part. Do you ask what that reward may be? We can put it all into one glorious word—he will give us his blessing. And that will be precious to us in a thousand ways. We will meet and feel his blessing in our daily lives in the earthly things that concern us; we will meet it richly in all our spiritual life, in the comfort, strength, and hope that flow to us from his Word. And finally, the greatest and most glorious part of this reward—he who seeth in secret will at the last day reveal all that we have done with sincere and honest hearts in his service. Then, when publicity will have no further temptation for us, our Father himself will make public declaration before men and angels, and in heaven we shall taste the fullest measure of his love.

What fools are men who sell their sincerity toward God for the cheap price of human praise. But to walk with a true heart under the all-seeing eyes of God, both in private and in public, this is true and abiding satisfaction.

"Go, labor on; 'tis not for naught;
Thine earthly loss is heavenly gain;
Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
The Master praises—what are men?

"Go, labor on; enough, while here,
If he shall praise thee, if he deign
Thy willing heart to mark and cheer:
No toil for him shall be in vain."

Our Father seeth in secret. Blessed are they who by his grace put away every sham, and let him fill their hearts with true faith and sincere devotion.

OUTLINES.

It will not do to divide this text in a mechanical fashion, making the first part of the sermon deal with almsgiving, and the second with prayer. Far better is an analysis of the thought, even one as simple as this, that we take out firstly what Jesus warns us against, and secondly what he bids us do. So we may ask: How shall we do our righteousness? Like the hypocrites, before men? Or, like true children of God, before our Father which seeth in secret? Another analysis will give us three parts: Our Father seeth in secret: He penetrates every sham—He discerns all true sincerity—He rewards both according to what he sees.

The idea of secrecy may be taken out, since Jesus makes so much of it in this text: We need to meet God in secret: in order to make us more sincere—and in order to make us put away all shams. We, of course, may also take the other side: Religious display: it gains the empty praise of men—it loses the approval and reward of our Father.—Another point is that of the reward: What reward do you seek in serving God? The praise of men?—Or the commendation of your Father which seeth in secret?

Take Heed how ye do your Righteousness!

1. *They who seek the praise of men have their reward.*
2. *They who seek the honor of God shall also receive their reward.*

Shams in the Christian Life.

1. *Jesus describes them.*
2. *Jesus warns against them.*
3. *Jesus shows us how to get rid of them.*
4. *Jesus promises us the Father's reward, if we do get rid of them.*

Enter into thy Closet, and Shut thy Door!

1. *That you may meet God, and forget men.*
2. *That then you may meet men, and not forget God.*

Your Sincerity with your Heavenly Father.

1. *Test is with the Father who seeth in secret.*
 2. *Use it to honor to your Father before men.*
 3. *Prize it, for the Father's reward is sure.*
-

THE THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 12, 49-57.

Christ in a certain sense signifies *separation*. So does faith in him; the confession of his name and doctrine. This is the burden of our text, and highly necessary for us to apprehend rightly. The separation due to Christ and his doctrine is by no means popular. There is a painful element in it which makes some of Christ's followers shrink from it and avoid it. Others, attracted by Christ, fail to apprehend that accepting him they must separate from what is hostile to him, and so they try to unite what in reality cannot be united. Still others are so opposed to the separative idea involved in Christ and the truth of Christ that they boldly attempt to change both, in order to eliminate this separative principle; the result is a monstrous perversion. But Christ is separate, and always will be; and so are those who turn to him and become truly his. This involves them in a conflict; they frankly acknowledge it, manfully maintain it, patiently endure its blows, joyfully garner in its fruits.

Jesus has answered the question of Peter whether the parable of the watching servants applied also to the Twelve; Peter learned that it did, in fact, it applied to them in a special way, since much would be required of them to whom so much was being given. But there is another side to the matter. These watching servants, true and loyal to their Master, will find themselves involved in conflict. All will not be smooth and quiet during the time they wait for their Lord's return. This conflict, involving them most deeply, is due to their Lord himself. In fact, his first coming was for the very purpose of causing it. So Jesus describes it for his dis-

ciples. We to-day find ourselves in the very midst of it.

12, 49. I came to cast fire upon the earth: and what will I, if it be already kindled? 50. But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

There is a marked abruptness in the way this section begins. Daechsel thinks this passage was not spoken in connection with the foregoing; but if not, why this abruptness, without an explanatory word? The foregoing answer to Peter gives us some explanation, namely the needed connection in the thought. And then the nature of what Jesus now adds, involving his approaching passion, and thus moving his own heart deeply, shows us that this abruptness is justified. It is due to the feeling with which these statements are made. **I came** refers to the entire mission of Christ, viewing it all in one; naturally, however, Jesus has in mind that he is still in the midst of this mission of his, and its severest part is still before him. — The purpose of his mission is **to cast fire upon the earth**. The two aorists, main verb and infinitive, give us the picture of one coming with a firebrand and throwing it upon something that will burn and cause a conflagration. So — looking at the mission of Jesus as now long complete — he came and hurled a firebrand on the earth. The result was a conflagration that has never subsided; it burns on, and there are constantly renewed hot outbreaks of burning. The question has been debated, what is meant by this fire. Zahn wants no answer given, since not an object but an action is pictured by the fire; and he then describes this 'action (thus defining the fire) as that of a flash of lightning from heaven, or a torch, causing a destructive conflagration, which men then try to check and extinguish. This leaves the matter somewhat indefinite to say the least, especially when Zahn adds that the words used by Jesus give him the impression, that this fire comes from heaven at

Jesus' command or in answer to his prayer. As far as this point is concerned, the infinitive regularly takes its subject from the main verb when no other subject is indicated. So here: "I came to cast," means that Jesus does the casting, i. e., with his own hand. Keil is more specific. He understands this fire to be the spiritual potency which dissolves and destroys everything transient, perishable, contrary to God, purifying the world, and leaving only what has real substance; and he too wants the "fire" to be left in this general significance. Why this indefiniteness is necessary, or this wide and general significance is hard to see, when Jesus speaks even of kindling the fire, and names the supreme act on his part necessary to this kindling. The fire must be defined as the cross of Christ—this has set the world ablaze, this has started strife and contention. Or we may say the fire is the Gospel of the cross, since the cross of Christ comes to the world by the Gospel. In his further discussion, when he opposes Hofmann's idea that the casting of the fire is the establishment of the church, Keil mentions the fact that the Gospel sets the world afire, and thus finally comes nearer to the true solution. Yet even so he does not point out what it is in the Gospel that acts as a fire, and thus as a disturbing power in the world—this is the offense of the cross. Other solutions offered are that the fire is the Holy Ghost, or the purifying power of the Word, or the testing fire of persecution, or the spiritual disturbance caused by Christ, or the dissension viewed as a fire. The real fire is nothing but the cross itself, as the Gospel carries it into the world. Of this it is true that Christ cast it into the world. He came for this, the supreme purpose of his coming. Once cast it burns on, for it is impossible that Christ should die and men not hear of it, Christ himself attended to that; we may say it is part of his casting. But Keil's notion that only the transient and unstable things in the world are to be consumed must be rejected, since the whole

world lieth in wickedness, and there are no stable elements in it. Here we must observe that the figure of the fire is only a partial picture of the cross and its effect among men. To get a full view we must add that the cross itself, in another way, creates something stable in this wholly unstable world, namely true faith and spiritual life. Just as Jesus himself points us to the cross as the fire in referring to his passion and death in v. 50, so he points us to the other side of the power of the cross, to its work of leading men to faith and life, in 51-53, where we see the division among men, some for Christ by faith, some against him in unbelief. **Upon the earth** means among men generally, and takes in the whole course of the preaching of the cross to the ends of the earth. — The American Committee gives us the best translation of *τί θέλω κτλ*, in the marginal rendering: "How I would that it were already kindled; for: **What will I, if etc.** tries to stay too close to the Greek idiom. We have *τί* in the adverbial or interjectional sense, like our English "how," and *θέλω* = I desire, which is stronger than the more usual *ἠθέλον* or *ἐβουλόμην* = "I would." Jesus means that he actually does desire this that the fire be **already kindled**. We gather, then, that as yet it is not kindled (*ἀνάπτω*). The climax, the vital point of his coming or mission is not yet reached, for this is the cross. Yet we must not divide what belongs together, namely the whole life and work of Christ; all of it, from the very start, tending towards Calvary, and even all that followed flowing from Calvary. The cross is the pinnacle of the whole mountain. — In the plainest way Jesus says this: **But I have a baptism to be baptized with.** He "has" this baptism in the sense that it is set for him, and thus obligatory for him. Commentators are happily agreed that this "baptism" is Christ's passion and death. Repeatedly Jesus views his suffering and death as a baptism. Lange answers the question, how Jesus came to use the figure of baptism, by pointing to his bap-

tism in the Jordan by John, calling this a prophecy of his passion, one well understood by Jesus. The relation of Jesus' baptism by John to the baptism of his passion is beyond question. In the baptism with water Jesus placed himself alongside of sinners, not because he was also a sinner and belonged to their class, but because he came to help them by bearing and taking away the burden they could not bear; and this he did on Calvary. But it is problematical if for this reason Jesus called his passion a *βάπτισμα*. The term could be applied to his passion even if he had not been baptized in Jordan. There is a general resemblance between the water coming upon Jesus and the sufferings that came upon him, and this suffices for the figure. Only we must not let Baptistic notions pervert the resemblance. Jesus never said: "I have an *immersion* to be *immersed* with," cf. Mark 10, 38; Matth. 20, 22-23. The old church fathers rightly call this the baptism of blood. And at once we see, Jesus was not totally immersed in blood, only stained with it. So also, if we look at the divine wrath; this was poured out upon him. The blows, stripes, shame, etc., were laid upon him; he was not submerged in them. Our sins too were only laid on him. The figure of baptism is spoiled when we think of the sufferings of Jesus in general, in which as in a deep flood he was submerged; for whatever imagery we use in *βάπτισμα* must hold at the same time for the verb *βαπτισθῆναι*, and so that *βάπτισμα* will remain the means, and so also that the passive voice will be preserved in the verb. Here immersion again finds the water too deep. Aspersions, affusions, pouring, and the like are in the words, but no immersion. — A deep wave of feeling sweeps over Jesus as he thinks of his coming blood baptism: **and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!** Jesus is not speaking of an inner desire or longing on his part for this coming baptism (Bengel, Godet), but of his being distressed, troubled, constrained, oppressed by the ap-

proach of it — wishing it were finished and at an end. He is thinking of the severity of it. But while this “straitens” him, pressing him from both sides, there is no hesitation on his part of submitting to that baptism. The great purpose of his life he will accomplish without fail.

51. Think ye that I am come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: 52. for there shall be from henceforth five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. 53. They shall be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against her mother; mother in law against her daughter in law, and daughter in law against her mother in law.

This section illustrates in a striking and at the same time concrete way how the fire will burn on earth, i. e., the offense of the cross will cause disturbance and division among men, invading even the closest family relation, where blood ties and marriage ties otherwise hold men together and prevent separation. Jesus uses the dramatic form of question and answer. **Think ye etc.** Now in a way he did come **to give peace in the earth** (infinitive of purpose), and he is the great Prince of peace, and of his kingdom of peace there shall be no end. The church of Christ is a haven of peace; “Peace be with you!” is the Savior’s greeting; “grace and peace” that of the apostles. But as far as the world is concerned, which will not have this man to reign over it, there will be no peace, but strife and division. **I am come** is literally: “I did come.” — The Greek **Nay** is emphatic in form; and ἀλλ’ ἤ = “but rather”; or “but only.” Yet in stating the opposite Jesus does not say “war” or “contention,” but **division**. He has in mind what peace really is where it reigns, namely unity, harmony, all going the same way. The opposite of this is division. There are now two parts, and they are different and opposed, going in opposite directions. And to cause this Jesus came. Only let us note that this is

a summary statement of the case. If Jesus had not come, all men would have been at one in their sin, curse, damnation. Jesus came really to turn them all in the opposite direction, and he brought the power of the cross which is all-sufficient for this purpose. But now when this power begins to operate there are always many who violently, perversely, wickedly, obdurately resist it. And so the cross causes division.—It is remarkable how many questions commentators in general pass by without even as much as a word, though they may write two volumes on one brief Gospel. Why does Jesus say **five in one house?** why not three or some other number? Daechsel, one of the few to attempt to answer, reads “five” as a symbolical number = relative completeness. The trouble is that the idea thus put forth is useless in this place. We prefer to take the five here in a natural sense, since Jesus specifies exactly who each of the five is. He takes as his example the smallest ordinary family, one with only one son and one daughter in it. And he takes a family after the Jewish and oriental fashion, in which the son would bring his wife into the house. The daughter, if married, would leave and go to her husband’s home. Here she is still at home, unmarried. In this circle of five we have one of each kind in a closer Jewish family: father, mother, son, daughter, daughter-in-law. To add any others would be to go beyond the narrower circle. Any little children, making the father a grandfather, are not mentioned, since they would still be immature. That the number happens to be an odd one is not a vital point.—It is the same with the division, literally “having been divided,” and thus remaining so for the present: **three against two, and two against three.** The object evidently is to show as complete a division as possible. Yet it would be hazardous to conclude at once that the three younger people constitute the one party, and the two older ones the other party. We are not told which side the father

takes when he is opposed to the son, and the son to him; likewise with the mother and the daughter, and again with the daughter-in-law. The matter of the sides which each person espouses is left undetermined. Meyer, it seems, takes it that the daughter also is married, and so secures what he calls "three hostile pairs." Yet the text throughout contains the idea of only two parties, the one against the other, and the five persons in v. 53 correspond too exactly to the "five" in v. 52, for us to assume a sixth person in v. 53. So we stop with the fact that the most intimate ties of blood and marriage are not proof against the divisive power of the cross. Experience has amply corroborated the picture here used by Jesus as an example.

54. And he said to the multitudes also, When ye see a cloud rising in the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it cometh to pass. 55. And when ye see a south wind blowing, ye say, There will be a scorching heat; and it cometh to pass. 56. Ye hypocrites, ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven; but how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time? 57. And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

Homiletically it makes little difference whether we take it that this section is a continuation of the previous discourse, or a separate account added here by Luke for internal reasons. There is an evident break, as is indicated by the preamble: **And he said to the multitudes also.** We have nothing, however, to assure us that these are the same multitudes as those mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. The word "and" is evidently meant to connect what is said now with what precedes. And this must suffice for us. In Matth. 16, 2, etc., Jesus also mentions weather signs, and in general much like he does it in our present text. Yet the difference is marked. There he answered the Pharisees, here he addressed the multitudes, without being asked. There the points are fair and foul weather, here we

have rain and heat. It is only fair to conclude that these two references to the weather in Palestine are independent of each other, as also there is no reason to think that Jesus should not have spoken of the weather indications more than once in his discourses. Luke connects what Jesus tells his disciples concerning the division and disturbance he has come to bring into the world, with what he tells the multitudes of their blindness to the signs of the times in which they are living. In earthly things they use due intelligence, why are they so obtuse in spiritual things?—**When ye see a cloud rising in the west**, speaks of this as a common occurrence. The word for “west” means “setting,” or “going down,” and is usually as here in the plural. With the sea to the west of Palestine, this was usually the direction from which the rains came.—So the Jews at once drew the conclusion: **There cometh a shower**, i. e., a downpour, a thunder-storm. They were right: **and so it cometh to pass**. Experience had taught the inhabitants of Palestine that heavy clouds and a wind from the west meant a storm, and they directed their affairs accordingly.—A second sign is added: **And when ye see a south wind blowing** from the hot desert lands of the country south of Palestine. “Ye see” is supplied from the preceding statement; the wind is seen, of course, by the objects which bend before its blowing.—The significance of such a wind was also recognized at once: **There will be a scorching heat**, or rather a “hot wind.” And Jesus says of this, as of the other: **and it cometh to pass**. The conclusion was justified, and men were right in drawing it.—In any application we make to the weather indications in our own localities we, of course, must take into account the natural conditions which come into play. Our usual rains may come from a different direction, and so our heat waves, or our cold blasts. Each locality has its own common weather signs, and men have always been careful to note them. In fact, our American weather

bureau has extended this prognostication of the weather considerably, predicting rains, storms, heat, and cold for the country in all its parts. As regards this reference of Jesus to the weather let us observe also that the weather is beyond human control, it just "cometh to pass." A higher power directs it entirely. Unbelief calls this nature, and perhaps even capitalizes the word — Nature; or it speaks of natural laws, though no man has as yet figured them out. Christians see the hand of providence in the weather. But this superiority of the weather to man makes the comparison which Jesus here introduces the more appropriate. Men keenly watch the skies for weather signs, and indeed are able to read them quite well when these signs appear plainly. But why do they stop with the weather, and with these weather signs, which after all affect only the superficial side of our lives? — The answer is in the designation which Jesus applies to his hearers: **Ye hypocrites!** The word here used, in the Attic Greek, means an actor, hence a dissembler, feigner, and thus hypocrite. How Jesus applies this designation here his own explanation makes clear: **ye know how to interpret the face of the earth and the heaven**, i. e., how to apply the proper tests to it; **but how is it that ye know not how to interpret this time?** i. e., to test it out in a similar way by close and intelligent scrutiny? The verb δοκιμάζειν signifies to test or assay metals, hence to prove, to examine. The hypocrisy of the people is not in their inability to judge the signs of the times, while they were able enough to judge the signs of the weather; on the contrary, their ability is implied by Jesus. What Jesus scores in these people is their unwillingness to interpret the times. Every means for making this interpretation was given them, and they followed Jesus, as they had gone to the Baptist, heard his teaching, saw his miracles, observed his person, and yet, after all this, knew not how to judge the times. This was a guilty ignorance, a deliberate refusal to do what every right considera-

tion called on them to do. The sun was shining, but they kept their eyes shut, and asked where the light was, or whether there really was light. There was a falseness in their hearts, a pretense that condemned itself. If they had applied themselves to the manifestations of grace and judgment in their times, as they did to the ordinary weather phenomena, they would have acted honestly and sincerely. They used an unequal balance; they practiced double-dealing. And since there is here a lesser and a greater, the weather being far less than Christ and the things pertaining to him, their hypocrisy was the greater. They recognized the coming of the refreshing showers out of the west, yet pretended they could not recognize the vivifying grace and gifts of God in Jesus. They recognized likewise the blasting effects of the southern simoon, even before these effects came to pass, but they shut their eyes to the presaged judgments of God in the rejection their nation was according the greatest manifestation of grace God had ever bestowed upon them. Jesus reveals here that he saw through them completely.—Not only do these people refuse with inner falseness of heart to estimate aright the signs of the times in which they live, they also refuse to decide for themselves the right thing: **And why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right**, or rather: decide the right thing, namely to do it. The emphasis is on the phrase: “even of yourselves.” The implied contrast is not: apart from the signs of the times; for Jesus means the contrary: to judge the right thing in connection with these signs. So also “of yourselves” does not mean: from your circumstances, your own ability; for again Jesus is thinking of what God through him is doing for these people. “Of yourselves” is in contrast to others, in particular the wicked Pharisees, apart from them and their coaching or instruction. God was giving them the clear truth so that under its influence and power they of themselves could have decided the right thing to do,

namely to believe in his grace and flee from the wrath to come, since the heavens of their time were full of the signs of both. But they acted as if they could not understand these signs, and thus they would not decide on the right thing; they remained as they were, unsoftened by grace, and thus guilty when the impending judgment would descend upon them like a burning blast. The words of Jesus to the multitudes were sharp indeed, but they still contained a call to grace, if only these people would hear at last.

SERMON.

wed 1913

One of the remarkable features of the Christian religion is that the introduction of it into this sinful world brought strife, contention, division, and separation. This thing started the moment Christ began his saving work among men. No sooner did he assume his holy office than the devil assailed him with a terrific threefold temptation. And at once this conflict was precipitated among men. Some began to follow Christ and cling to him in faith, but others opposed him and his followers, and day by day the conflict grew in intensity. In three short years we see how far the division went—Christ hung upon the cross, a few faithful souls huddled together in fear and dismay at the foot of his cross, and the jeering foes of Christ flattering themselves that they had overthrown him and rid themselves of him by his death. But the contest went on. Christ arose from the dead and sent his Gospel out into the world. The heralds of the Gospel drew many to Christ, but others opposed them, even imprisoned them and put them to death. For 1900 years the battle has raged. We are in the midst of it now. The Savior's words are still true: "I am come to send fire on the earth. Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division. For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three."

This last statement may serve to summarize for us what we all must know and keep in mind concerning the divisive force of Christ and the Gospel he brings; ever and ever there shall be

Three against Two, and Two against Three.

I.

There is no escape from it—it **has to be**.

Really this division which arrays three against two, and two against three is the most natural thing in the world. The moment we look at it aright we will cease to be offended or perplexed by this division and the strife it involves; we will expect it and take it as a matter of course.

Think how the division is caused. The whole world lay in sin. Everybody sinned and thought nothing of it. Of course, in sinning and living on in sin one clashed against the other, one struck, wounded, trampled on the other. There was division and strife of that kind—and a terrible amount of it. And yet all were one in sinning. A deadly harmony enfolded all, they were all united and joined in one bond of wickedness, guilt, and damnation.—Then, however, there came into the world the great heavenly Savior from sin. Sinless himself he gave himself as a sacrifice for our sins, in order that we might be cleansed from sin and live in fellowship with him in a new life totally different from the old life of sin. Jesus tells us of this great saving act of his: "I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" It is his blood baptism on Calvary, when he died for our sins. So severe was this baptism of death for our sins that the prospect of it made the heart of Jesus quail and tremble. But he never wavered, he accomplished our redemption by actually giving himself in death for us on the cross.—But see now what a change was wrought in the world. Now there was a new force come to do battle with the old one. On the one side was sin and all who loved sin and meant to go on in sin—and on the other side now was the Savior from sin, fighting to free us from sin, and drawing men unto him to a new life of victory over sin. A tremendous division was caused: some on the one side with Christ—others on the other side against him. If he had not come, this division would never have occurred; but now that he did come, this division had to be, and has to be down to this very day—three against two and two against three.

In a way one might think that when the Savior from sin came to this world of sinners there would be no division. Is not sin a terrible, deadly, damnable thing? It surely is. Well, then, should we not expect that all men would be only too glad to find a Savior great and mighty enough to free them from this damnable power of sin? Should we not conclude that all these poor sinners with one accord would run to this blessed Savior, and thus, as they were one in their sin, now would be one in their deliverance from sin? Put away all such expectations! The ter-

rible reality is that in spite of all the Savior does for men some prefer the curse and damnation of sin to his blessed deliverance from sin. To all their past sins and guilt they add this most fearful new guilt—they fight against their Savior, they trample upon his salvation. And so, in spite of all that one might expect, this division ensues: some on the one side, some on the other; three against two, and two against three.

Look at it from another angle. Christ and his salvation is brought to us by the Gospel. This Gospel is full of his saving power, taking hold of the souls of men in order to free and deliver them. But instead of submitting to this blessed power of the Gospel, letting it work its salvation upon them, the world is full of people who oppose it. Some do it at once, others after they have experienced some of its power. They are offended at the Gospel, and so start to fight against it. This is what Jesus means when he says, he has come "to send fire on the earth." This fire is the offense of the Gospel when men refuse to yield to its saving help. The Gospel tells the truth about us, and men love the lies of the devil more than truth, and so try to silence the Gospel with their lies. They attempt to put it out like a fire, and yet it keeps on burning. And as they fight the Gospel, so they oppose those who are won by the Gospel. This is the division: three against two, and two against three; some for the Gospel, and some against it.

And even this is not all. The division goes still farther. The Gospel is a great complex of truth. It is composed of many doctrines or individual truths, all one great organism, and every part full of divine light, help, and power. Look at your Bibles, there are many books, many chapters, truth upon truth like a glorious temple of God. Here again sin shows its evil influence. Instead of accepting and using the Gospel in all its parts for their salvation, men begin to find fault with at least some of its parts. They want to tear the Gospel apart, to take out this or that, and to set aside the other; to change whole sections of it, and thus to alter the whole of it. With their miserable ignorance they want to correct the wisdom of God; with their blind and desperate delusion they want to improve on the truth of God. The result is still more division. You see it in the multiplication of different churches on earth. Some of them are in no sense churches, for they empty out the very heart of the Gospel, its cardinal truths, and put in their place their own perversions. Others change one part or several parts, and refuse to submit to these. So one division follows another in a hopeless tangle. And yet the grace of God always wins some to believe the whole Gospel or counsel of God for our salvation. Christ has his true church, and always will have it—the church which believes the Gospel, the whole

Gospel, and nothing but the Gospel. But this church is compelled to stand alone with Christ. Not only the mass of unbelievers, but also the host of false and perverted believers oppose the true church. There is constant conflict and battle. It began in the days of the apostles, when some men opposed one divine truth or another; and it continues to this day—three against two, and two against three.

But the sum of it all is this: Christ, his Gospel, all the truths of his Gospel are here, and are bound to stay here. But, sin, unbelief, and error of all kinds, some great, some less, rise against Christ and his Gospel. This causes the division. The guilt for it is always on unbelief, on error, on disobedience to Christ and his Word. As long as this persists, so long the division is here. We may deplore it, but we must reckon with it. With sin and its damnable working in the world the division has to be.

II.

It has to be; but in another view of it we may say:
thank God that it is!

What a terrible thing it would have been, if Christ, foreseeing that so many would oppose him altogether, and so many more would oppose his saving Gospel at least in part, had determined not to come to us at all, not to endure for us the baptism of his blood, not to send his Gospel into our midst? Think of that, and you will take another view of all this division caused by Christ and the Gospel.

Christ knew that there was only one hope for us poor sinners, namely his own work of salvation. And he knew likewise that there was only one way of realizing this hope in you and me, namely by giving us the full truth of his saving Gospel. And so in his heavenly grace he went into death for us, and by that same grace brought all the salvation won by his death to us in his Word. He knew the reception all this would meet, how he and all his priceless gifts would be abused all through the centuries, and how countless errors would strike against his Word. And yet in the face of it all he went on with his work and plan for our salvation. If you had been in the Savior's place, you might have become disgusted and enraged at all this perversity of men. But the Savior's love was superior to it all. He looked not at those who would oppose and pervert, but at those who would joyfully, thankfully believe. Yes, there would be three against two, and two against three, but some would be his true followers, as such opposing the others, and as such opposed by them. At these he looked, and his love went on with its work. When we think of this shall we not do even as he did? He looked

at us who believe and bow to his every word; shall we not look likewise at him and at his blessed Word, this heavenly treasure of ours? What if it did cause all this conflict and division—thank God that it has! Better a thousand times that this conflict came, than that the whole world should perish in sin.

And this is the way to face all this division, to endure the pain it may bring us, and to go on in spite of it holding fast what we have in Christ and his Word. It is no joy to be opposed even by those who are strangers to us. It is worse still when the opposition develops between us and those bound to us by natural ties. But even here, Christ says, in many an instance the strife will develop—three against two, two against three. That may mean father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against mother; mother-in-law against daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. Here we must learn that Christ and every part of his saving truth is more precious to us than any earthly tie could possibly be. Christ and his doctrines is more than any father, mother, son, daughter, or other relative. If for faithfulness to Christ's Word any of these or all of these should turn against us, let them do so. Jesus has well said: 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. His love and salvation make up a thousandfold for any loss or pain we may suffer by this division breaking into our family ties. Better to lose all earthly loves than the love of God and his Son, our Savior.

But let us beware lest these earthly loves and friendships tugging at our hearts turn us at least in part away from full loyalty and love of Christ. The danger is that by some sort of compromise we seek after all to press two to our bosom who are opposed, embracing Christ and his truth with one arm, and with the other those who are not true to him. This is the folly of unionism and unionistic combinations. To win and hold men it would yield at least some truth of Christ, using foolish arguments and dangerous pleas.—Instead of this let us remember that the more we prove faithful to Christ and his truth, the more will we be doing in love for those near and dear to us and yet divided from us by unbelief or error. We, with our hearts wholly given to Christ, are to be the means, if possible, to win them after all to a like faithfulness to Christ. Many a glorious victory has thus been won. But if we strengthen unbelief or error by ourselves yielding to it from earthly love and affection, or other motives centering in men, we ourselves will cause the greatest harm to those whom we think we are loving, and we will reward him who loved us above all human love, with the most shameful ingratitude and baseness,

And so again we sum it all up—when we look to Christ and his salvation, which are behind this division of three against two, and two against three, we put complaint aside, and utter a fervent thank God.

III.

But stop a moment. In all that we have said we have taken it for granted that in this division of three against one, and one against three we are on the right side, in fact wholly on the right side. But this is a thing we dare not merely assume—we must be wholly sure of it. The division has to be—thank God that it is—but then ask most carefully: **Where do we stand?**

A division as vital as the one caused by Christ and his Gospel admits of no compromise or neutrality on our part. With the mighty fact of the division before us, with its real significance constantly revealed to us by Christ, he must say to us also if we hesitate or act as if we were uncertain: "Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" It is all-important that we should judge the right thing—in other words, take our stand on the right side in this opposition of three against two, and two against three.

When Jesus spoke of this to the multitudes that were following him he used a striking illustration namely two of the great weather signs in the country of Palestine. On the west this country borders on the great Mediterranean Sea. If then great clouds bank up in the west that means the coming of a cooling, refreshing shower. Everybody knew it well and prepared for it. But the southern borders of Palestine adjoin a great, hot, sandy desert territory. And that means that when a steady wind from the south sets in, there will be a simoon, a burning heat wave, like those that occur in Kansas and Nebraska, where in a few hours with such a hot wind all the beautiful cornfields are literally burned up and destroyed. The people of Palestine in Jesus' days knew this weather sign as well as they knew the other! Jesus says to them: "Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth." They were experts at that, and governed themselves accordingly.

But why did they stop at this? It was only the weather, and this affected only the earthly side of their lives. Had they no eyes to see the signs of God concerning their souls? no minds to judge the right thing concerning the great spiritual realities God at this time was sending them? Here God was pouring out upon them the most refreshing rains of his grace. John the Baptist had come to them preaching the baptism of repentance—and yet thousands and thousands would not understand what this

meant, would not repent. Then came Jesus himself, God's own Son, the Messiah. What wondrous words of grace he spoke, what astounding miracles of grace he wrought, and his very presence was the greatest miracle of all. They looked at him, they marvelled at his deeds, they listened to his words, but that was all—thousands and thousands of them went no farther. They acted as if they could not understand what was going on, what God was doing for their souls. They knew what the clouds in the west meant, but would not know what all this grace of God meant.—And in the same way they were blind to the results of the unbelief and wickedness which was setting in among their nation. That meant that in a little while the fiery wind of God's wrath and judgment would strike them, blasting their land and nation with just punishment for spurning God's grace. Had they no eyes to see, no minds to comprehend? When they knew so well what the hot south wind meant for their country, why did they not know what the hotter blasts of God's wrath must mean when they persisted in scorning his grace? "Ye hypocrites," Christ exclaims, "ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" Refusing to stand with Christ and his saving Gospel of grace, too late they would be overwhelmed by the blast of God's wrath.

In the same way the great question comes to us: Where do we stand? See the great division which Jesus and his Gospel are still causing among the men of our time—three against two, and two against three. It is Christ, his grace, his Word, his salvation at work in our day. He is gathering about him all that believe his Word and accept its saving truth. It is like a shower of grace, refreshing, vivifying, uplifting—coming without our doing, from on high. Shall we disregard it? Shall we think we have other more important things to attend to? Shall we murmur perhaps that the saving grace and truth of Christ is causing so much disturbance on earth? Then let us know that all this indifference and hostility to Christ, all this objection to him and his doctrine in whole or in part, are only so many signs of the coming judgments of God. Shall they descend upon us too? Look well where you stand. It makes a tremendous difference whether you listen to men's follies and their deceptive reasoning, or whether you abide in all simplicity with Christ and his Word. There is and ever will be a tremendous division. But it will not be only of three against two, and two against three, but of grace on the one side and of judgment on the other. Therefore be sure where you stand.

The division is here, grace is at work in a world of sin; thank God for this division, that grace is indeed saving many from

sin. And by this very grace our stand shall ever be on the side of grace, of the Word of Grace, and of Christ, the blessed King of grace.

OUTLINES.

When we remember that the "fire" signifies the offensive power of the cross, divisions like the following found in Langsdorff and Ostersee (Schaff and Starbuck) will be rejected without question: "The fire which Christ kindles on earth: A fire which warms what is cold; Purifies what is impure; Consumes what is evil." Any theme turning on the word "fire" must show in the division: that Christ and the Gospel are bound to offend many—how Christ and the Gospel operate in causing this offense—and what our attitude toward Christ and the Gospel must be when this offense is wrought.—A point of cleavage appears in what Christ says of division: The divisive power of the Gospel: It opposes sin and error—It wins men away from sin and error—It calls on every one of us to fight sin and error in ourselves and in others.—Another angle of approach lies in the closing verses of the text: The great separation which is going on in the world: The separating power, Christ and the Gospel—the separating work, some are drawn to Christ, others oppose him—the final separation wrought by this power and work, the triumph of grace and the culmination of judgment.

Christ Came, not to Bring Peace on Earth, but Division.

That is 1) *Inevitable*—2) *Deeply painful*—3) *Highly significant*.

The Strife which Christ Brought on Earth.

1. *A strife better than any false peace.*
 2. *Because true peace comes out of this strife.*
-

The Discord which Christ Brought on Earth.

1. *At first it perplexes us, for Christ and the Gospel are really full of grace and peace.*
2. *On second thought this is entirely as it should be, for Christ and his Gospel are contrary to sin and error.*
3. *Moreover, our only hope is in this discord, for only by drawing us into it can Christ and his Gospel save us.*

The Fire Christ Kindled on Earth.

1. *It burns in the Gospel.*
 2. *Men vainly seek to put it out.*
 3. *We must judge it aright.*
-

God's Weather Signs.

1. *The refreshing showers of grace.*
 2. *The hot blasts of judgment.*
-

THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

John 15, 17-27.

This text forms a companion to the preceding one. The separation caused by Christ and the Gospel always produces antagonism on the part of the world. All true believers must reckon with this and must gauge it aright. We need to be reminded constantly of *the hostility of the world*, because we are always inclined to think we can live at peace with the world, and only too often arrange our lives so as to placate and pacify the world, forgetting that if the world is satisfied with us Christ certainly cannot be, and on the other hand, if Christ is really pleased with us the world is bound to be displeased and stirred to hatred.

When Christ was leaving his disciples he revealed most fully to them what they had to expect from the world being his servants and followers. Sent out into the world to bring much fruit for Christ in preaching and living the Gospel they would have to endure what Christ himself endured.

15, 17. These things I command you, that ye may love one another.

This verse is the conclusion of the paragraph which deals with the relation of Christ's disciples to the loving Lord who chose them for his own. Nevertheless, we have taken it into our text on the relation of Christ's disciples to the world. As far as the world is concerned Christ's disciples ought to stand together, one in the faith, and joined by the bonds of love growing from that faith. Love of each other will make the hatred of the world easier to bear, and in a manner will compensate for it. **These things** include all the hortatory parts of the paragraph beginning with v. 12, for which,

of course, all the other statements serve as support. And when the Lord says to these his chosen disciples: **I command you**, we understand that he means Gospel commands, filled with grace and power to bring forth fulfillment. — **That ye may love one another** is not a purpose clause, but the substance of the command itself. Even the R. V. with its "may love" holds fast the idea of purpose, whereas the *iva* clause here is simply sub-final, equal to an infinitive, or a *ṛt* clause, Robertson 991, etc. All the older commentaries must be corrected accordingly. Note the present tense in "love," which means: love continuously; also the verb *āyanān*, which signifies intelligent, purposeful, comprehending love. This is the love that is to bind us together, though many be faulty and weak, and other disparities place some above and others below. And so, bound together by love we are to face the world.

18. If the world hateth you, ye know that it hath hated me before it hated you. 19. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

The fact of the world's hatred, and the first reason for this hatred is here stated. Jesus uses the condition of reality when he says: **If the world hateth you**, the idea being that it does so hate. The conditional form carries the thought with it: if you experience the hatred of the world, as indeed you will — then the disciples of Jesus are not to think this painful experience strange, but rather a thing to be expected. The entire context shows that "world" here signifies all those opposed to Christ, and the verb "hate" includes both the animus of the world toward the disciples and its manifestation in word and deed. — Both of our English versions translate the indicative: **ye know**, while commentators prefer the imperative: "know." The decision must be made from the context alone, including the general tone, and this favors the imperative. Jesus bids the disciples to keep

in mind how the world treated him; this will make it seem less strange to them that they should be treated in like manner. It is true indeed, and after the death of Jesus the disciples would realize it to the fullest extent, that the world **hath hated me before you**. The perfect tense is used of completed durative action in the past. "Me before you" separates the two, placing one against the other, and yet implies a connection between the two, one which Jesus presently sets forth. — **If ye were of the world, the world would love its own**, is the condition of unreality in regular form, using the imperfect in both verbs, the apodosis with *ἂν*. To be "of the world" means to have a nature and character derived from it, thus to be inwardly one with it, just what "its own" conveys. Naturally the world would "love" its own, namely anything belonging to it. Only here we have *φιλέω*, not *ἀγαπᾶν*, and rightly, for the idea to be expressed is not that of high, intelligent, purposeful love, but mere liking, affection, natural passion. — But now the disciples of Jesus are **not of the world**, and this changes everything. How they have come to be "not of the world" Jesus explains: **I chose you out of the world**. They have become foreign to the world, in fact opposed to it, as the contrast "of the world" and "out of the world" or "from out the world" implies. But their separation from the world is wholly due to Jesus himself, the disciples have no credit in the matter. By a past definite act Jesus "chose" them, and the middle voice signifies that he chose them for himself. The context has no indication that *ἐξελέξαμην* here means an act in eternity; this choice was made in time, namely when Jesus separated the disciples from the world and made them his own, by means of his efficacious grace. — This reason for the hatred of the world is made emphatic by the demonstrative phrase: "on this account," **therefore**. It is Jesus himself who thus, in a way, brings the world's hatred upon his disciples. Because he separates them from the world, **therefore the world**

hateth you, with a steady, unchanging antipathy. It extends its hatred of Christ to all those whom he chooses for himself. And this too is in that hatred, or we may say back of it, that the world feels we really originally belonged to it, and have been snatched away from it, have turned traitors to the world — this raises its ire.

20. Remember the word that I said unto you, A servant is not greater than his lord. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also. 21. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

The present tense of **remember** must be noted; they are to bear this in mind not now only, in order to understand the words of Jesus, but always, when they experience the world's hate. Jesus quotes his own words from 13, 16, and Matthew 10, 24, and in the sense of the latter passage: **A servant is not greater than his lord**, namely a bondservant, one bound to his master, or owned by him. The reverse is true, and the negative statement strengthens this positive meaning. In the term *δοῦλος* we have a reflex of what Jesus means when he says he "chose" the disciples as his own. They have not of their own free choice attached themselves to him, but, as with masters generally, Jesus attached them to himself. Yet to be his bondservant is a thousand times higher than to be our own masters. But being his servants the disciples cannot possibly hope to have a better fate than that of their lord. By belonging to him they are bound to share his lot in this wicked and hostile world, and must never expect anything else. — What Jesus has in mind by stating this general principle concerning servants and masters he at once states, in the form of two conditional sentences, both implying reality. **If they persecuted me**, means that they did. The plural subject unfolds what lies in the collective noun "world." The pronoun "me" is emphatic, *me*, the lord. The world will treat the disciples in the same

way: **they will also persecute you.** Jesus uses a verb which applies equally to both himself and the disciples, one embracing ill-will and mean treatment of all kinds, following and hounding a person with that. — Because this first conditional sentence admits a direct positive parallel in respect to the disciples, commentators incline to read the second sentence in the same way: **if they kept my word** — and they did in part. Meyer and Keil think it would be irony if Jesus meant that they did *not* keep his word, and both declare that the solemnity of the moment shuts out irony here. But why assume irony? The fact is plain that the world did not keep Jesus' word, for the subjects in both conditional sentences are the same. There is no indication that in the first sentence a majority of the world is meant, and in the second a minority. Nor is there any need of qualifying by noting that some people in the world did keep Jesus' word, and some thus would keep the word of the disciples. "If they kept my word," like the other if clause, has the general force of a question: Did they keep my word? The disciples know what unbelief Jesus met, and that where he had every right to expect faith. "To keep" the word means literally to guard it, hence to observe, obey, do it; only the doing here is in the Gospel sense: to believe and trust it. Instead of that they disregarded his word, cast it off, opposed and contradicted it. And the disciples would meet the same unbelief: **they will keep yours also**, namely in the same negative way. — These are the facts concerning the hatred of the world — its hatred will show itself in persecution, and back of that will lie unbelief. But again Jesus goes back of these facts and unveils the inner reason for this persecution and unbelief, for he wants the disciples to see through it completely. Their coming experience and Jesus' past experience are not mere parallels, just as in the first place Jesus and the disciples are not mere fellows or associates of equal standing. He chose them, not they him; he is the lord,

they only bondservants of his. So here once more: **But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake.** The *ἀλλά* at the head of this sentence implies a negative in the preceding sentence, which justifies our explanation: *on the contrary*, they will *not* keep your word, even as they did *not* keep mine, but all these things, etc. In "all these things" Jesus summarizes what lies implied in the previous statements concerning his own persecution and the rejection of his word as typical of what the disciples would meet likewise. The emphasis is on the phrase: "on account of my name," and the term "name," as so often, denotes the revelation of Jesus. By his name he comes to men. *he and all that he is and has for them*; and so we believe in his name, confess his name, pray in his name, and, as we are now told, suffer for his name's sake. Of course, we would not suffer "on account of his name," if we were not in vital connection with that name, in a connection apparent also to the world. The implication is that by word and deed we confess Jesus' name. And this is the thing the world resents in us. So not on our own account will the world hate us, but only on account of Jesus. The more it sees of him in us, the more it turns against us. And this furnishes a hint how some disciples manage to evade the hatred of the world — they are not as true to Jesus' name as they should be; they sometimes leave that name at home, fail to confess it before men, let men abuse it without their taking its part, and in general forget to honor and uphold it. — But back of this aversion to Jesus and all that reveals him to men lies something else. Why will the world persecute us for his name's sake? Jesus answers: **because they know not him that sent me.** Here again he mentions his great Sender, the Father. The aorist participle is made a substantive, and the tense refers to the past act of the Father in sending his Son as our Savior. The world indeed talks of God, and may even, like the Unitarians and others, use the term Father; but

this God and Father of theirs is a figment of their brain, an idol of their own invention, cf. 8, 19 and 38 and 42, etc. There is only one God, the Triune God, and only one Father, he who sent the Son. So he alone knows the Father who knows the Son. The god of the world is so different from the true God that because of their god the world fights against the true God, rejects his Son, and persecutes those who confess that Son. This is the real inner reason for the world's hatred; and all the disciples of Jesus must see the distinction which he here brings out.

22. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. 23. He that hateth me hateth my Father also. 24. If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. 25. But *this cometh to pass*, that the word may be fulfilled, They hated me without a cause.

Here Jesus exposes the full guilt of the world's hatred. He uses the condition of unreality, past unreality in the protasis, and present unreality in the apodosis. **If I had not come and spoken unto them**, means that he did come and speak, and this now lies completed in the past—the speaking was finished for the world. Jesus refers to his Messianic coming, and his speaking embraces all the utterances he made to the world. If this had not occurred, then **they had not had sin**, which, in translating, changes the apodosis into the past, whereas it really refers to the present: “they would not have sin” (now). The form *ἔχουσιν* is the imperfect with the ending *ουσιν* instead of *ουσιν*; and model *ἔστω* is omitted, as is so often the case in these conditional constructions. The context makes it plain that the sin meant is not sin in general, but the sin of wilful, obdurate unbelief now resting upon all who had definitely rejected Christ. The coming of Jesus (or his Gospel) to men is always a mighty serious thing; it means either faith or un-

belief. — **But now they have no excuse for their sin,** does not imply that otherwise they would have had an excuse for their sin, for the simple reason, already stated, that they would have no sin in this respect at all. Jesus, having already implied that his haters have this terrible sin of unbelief now resting upon them because of his coming to them, adds that at the same time his coming has cut off for them any plea or excuse for this sin. The only thing they could possibly think of offering now is some excuse, plea, *Ausrede*, and even this is cut off, for Jesus did his work so perfectly that only inexcusable obduracy of heart could reject him. So all-sufficient was his grace that every man who saw and heard him should have believed. On the day of judgment these wicked unbelievers will be like the guest at the king's son's wedding — dumb: "and he was speechless." Instead of obtaining forgiveness of all their sins through Jesus, they only added this most inexcusable and thus most damnable of all sins to such as they already had, namely wicked unbelief. — And this consists in hatred. Only now Jesus individualizes, pointing out that this sin and its guilt is personal. He uses the singular: **He that hateth me,** the substantivized present participle stating what is a fixed characteristic. Such a man **hateth my Father also.** The thing is never that a man might hate Jesus alone; any hatred of Jesus includes hatred of the Father. These two are one; moreover, we know the Father only in and through Jesus, 1, 18; 14, 7; and the whole work of Jesus was to show us the Father. — In v. 24 Jesus amplifies and strengthens what he has said in v. 22. His words alone should have created faith, but he added also the works. The form of the sentence is just like that in v. 22: **If I had not done among them the works which none other did.** — but he had done these very works. Their absolutely exceptional character is here emphasized, since they were intended to lift Jesus above all the prophets the Jews had ever had. And this char-

acter of Jesus' miracles was fully recognized by the Jews. Their leaders dreaded the effect of these works upon the people, and for this very reason wanted him out of the way. The science of lying rationalism which denies the miracles of Jesus had not been invented in those days; this self-condemned wisdom is a product of our later times. For the miracles of Jesus once wrought and recorded by inspiration now stand for all time, and their original effect goes on undiminished through the ages. — Again the conclusion: **they had not had sin**, i. e., would not be having sin — in the same sense as before. — But how is it now? **But now they both have seen and hated both me and my Father.** There are two "both . . . and," and the two objects belong to each of the two verbs. The perfect tenses include a present effect; the seeing is one which has left its effect so that it goes on indefinitely, and the hating begun in the past goes on in its activity and effect in the same way. In the works, as in the words, Jesus revealed himself fully as the Son of God and Messiah, and thereby revealed also the Father who gave him these works to do. Neither of them would the Jews accept, both of them they hated and cast from them. And this brings out the full measure of their guilt. — In the following sentence our versions supply after the elliptical *ἀλλά: τοῦτο γέγονεν*, "this cometh (hath come) to pass." A better filling in would be: *μεμισήκασιν*: "but they have hated, that the **word may be fulfilled**" etc. Jesus refers to Ps. 35, 19 or 69, 4. There are two ways, not merely one, in which the fulfillment of Old Test. words took place. In the one case there is direct prophecy of a coming event, and the words as originally uttered and written were meant of that future event. The fulfillment then occurred when this foretold event occurred. But there are statements in the Old Test. not in themselves intended as direct prophecies of future events; yet in the New Test. there occurred events which were of the same kind, parallels we may call them, and the holy

writers recognized them as such. This is the case here. Jesus applies to himself what David uttered concerning himself. The words that fit David in his suffering, fit Jesus even more perfectly. They would, of course, fit any righteous man suffering wrongfully, and might thus rightly be applied to him; since Jesus is absolutely righteous, the application to him is the most appropriate of all. "Fulfilled" here is in the sense, that now once more these words of David have found a case which they fit perfectly. The *ἵνα* which signifies purpose should cause no trouble. The divine intention did not cause the hate of the Jews against Jesus; this intention was that all the works of Jesus should be of such a character that those who hated him should have no shadow of excuse for doing so. Every impartial judge would have to corroborate the words of Jesus appropriated from David: **They have hated me without a cause.** The LXX has *δωρεάν*, for the Hebrew *chinnam*, which is *immerito*, in an unmerited manner, not *gratis*. This statement is said to be recorded **in their law**, the term "law" here, as in 8, 17, designating the entire Old Test. There lies in this reference to "their law" the thought that the Jews should have been warned by what their own Law contained regarding such hatred, but they read their own Law with blind eyes. To hate thus without a cause carries its own verdict with it. And that verdict is still pronounced by all those upon themselves who to-day hate Jesus and spurn him, when they have every reason in the world for loving and adoring him.

26. But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, *even* the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me: 27. and ye also bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.

The hatred of the world, however strong and vicious it may be, will not bring the work of Christ, in which his disciples are to be the agents to a stand-

still. Though the visible presence of Christ will be removed, the disciples will have an effective and efficient substitute. The disciples have already heard of his coming, 14, 16-18 and 26, hence Jesus does not need to explain here. He simply mentions the coming of the Holy Spirit, though he adds who this Spirit is, and how he will come, and then states his work. **But when the Comforter is come**, literally: "shall come" — the aorist pointing to one act of coming —, brings again the significant designation παράκλητος, Paraclete, one called to one's aid. The word does not occur frequently in literature, but seems to have been freely used in speech, since the Jews had it in transliteration both in Hebrew and Aramaic, and Jesus must have employed it in this form. It is a verbal adjective, formed from the passive, not the active form of the verb. This passive sense is altogether lost in our translation **Comforter**, which our English versions have adopted from Luther's translation *Troester*. It is the best we can do, though the original meaning must be held fast: He who is called to our side. His coming occurred on Pentecost. But this must never be understood as the first and only coming of the Spirit among men. He wrought all through the Old Testament, also in and through the Baptist, and in and with Jesus. Did not Jesus breathe upon his disciples and give them the Holy Ghost before the day of Pentecost? The coming at Pentecost was one to reach out to all the world; hence the signs, especially the many languages. On Pentecost the Spirit, restrained heretofore since Jesus' work was not yet done, was poured out completely — the flood-gates opened wide. Heretofore he could offer only promises, and these to the chosen people; now he could dispense all the treasures outright, and this to all men. — Jesus says very significantly: **whom I will send unto you from the Father**. This "I" is authoritative and mighty. "Will send," with its future tense, refers to the coming act at Pentecost. This sending is like that of Jesus himself, it is his

missio, a sending for a mighty purpose and work. It goes beyond us how some commentators can read a subordination of Jesus to the Father, in the phrase that Jesus will send the Spirit "from the Father." Jesus himself was going *to* the Father, and most naturally he would thus send the Spirit *from* the Father. And as far as subordination is concerned, the human nature of Jesus always was subordinate; everything is given to it. But this dare not be extended to the divine nature of Jesus, for this is equal with the Father: — The Spirit thus to be sent is called **the Spirit of truth**. This describes his character: he belongs to truth, and truth is thus his possession and the object of his activity. Jesus himself describes this truth for us in John 16, 13-15: he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; he shall receive of mine, and shall glorify me. This truth consists of all the saving realities of God and Christ; these are joined to the Spirit, and are to be had only through him. — A second relative clause follows: **which proceedeth from the Father**. It is not very creditable for commentators like Luthardt, Zahn, Keil, Meyer, Daehsel, and others, to tell us, this statement of Jesus concerning the Spirit refers only to his procession *in time* from the Father. It is presuming a good deal when we are told by Hofmann, Weiss, etc., that the present tense: "proceedeth," receives its modification from the previous future tense: "I will send." To shut out any such notion Jesus separated the two relative clauses by the apposition: "even the Spirit of truth." This modification is bogus — an invention pure and simple to get rid of a vital difficulty in the assumed interpretation. No: "I will send" plainly refers to the coming Pentecostal event; but "which proceedeth" does *not* refer to that event. Godet is right: this would be a lame tautology, and Jesus is never guilty of this sort of thing. Quite the contrary; as we have behind the incarnation of Jesus his eternal generation by the Father, so here we

have behind the mission or sending of the Spirit the Spirit's eternal procession from the Father. There is a mighty climax in the three statements here concerning the Spirit: Jesus sends him—and he is the Spirit of truth—and he proceeds from the Father. This reveals fully the greatness of the Paraclete who would stand beside the disciples in their battle with the hating world. Only Luthardt is miserably wrong when he tells us that the procession of the Spirit from the Father (which he admits, though not as stated in our passage) is an act long past. And Godet is wrong when he stresses the present tense "proceedeth," and declares that this procession is even now in progress. All such notions of past and present carry the idea of time into the idea of eternity. But eternity is the very opposite of time, the utter absence of time, it is timelessness. We, of course, like to think of eternity in terms of time, making it a sort of endless time. But this is due to our little finite brain which really cannot conceive eternity or timelessness at all. So we must constantly tell ourselves that our few fathoms of brain cannot possibly reach to the bottom of this vast ocean deep. Human language had to use the present tense in "proceedeth," for this was all it could do; this tense, however, is what the grammarians properly call the timeless present; it is meant to express something above and beyond all conception of time. So absolutely removed is this present tense from any modification put upon it by the preceding future tense. Hence all the blame put by Zahn, etc., upon the old fathers for finding here the doctrine of the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father falls back upon Zahn's own head; those fathers were right, and these newer men fail to measure up to them in spite of all their learning. Besser has the correct interpretation: "Even as the Lord Jesus is the true revelator of the mysteries of God because as the only begotten Son he has his sole abiding in the Father's bosom (1, 18), so the Holy Spirit is the

trustworthy witness of heavenly things, because he proceeds from the Father." As the ray is like the sun, and the stream like its source, so the Spirit is one with the Father, of the same essence, because he proceeds from him. That this procession is not from the Father alone, but when fully revealed also from the Son, we see from Rom. 8, 9; Phil. 1, 19; 2 Cor. 3, 17; Gal. 4, 6; Rev. 22, 1; etc., where the Spirit is called in various ways the Spirit of Christ (Philippi, *Glaubenslehre*, 2, 222). What the procession of the Spirit really signifies no man knows. God revealed this much concerning the inner relation of his persons because in the work of salvation we have to know that each of these persons is wholly divine, and yet each distinct and in a peculiar wonderful relation to the other. — **He shall testify of me** describes the Spirit's work. There is no limitation as to means or as to extent. The whole revelation of Christ in the world since the day of Pentecost is here summed up into one statement — all that the Spirit did by inspiration, by the inspired Word, in and through the apostles, in and through the church, all of it is meant. And the thought is of testimony going out to the world. So Christ's work would be carried forward by one as mighty as he himself, one by the side of the disciples through the ages, as once Jesus was by the side of the Twelve. — Yet: **ye also bear witness**. The *εἰ* adds a new feature; cf. Acts 2, 4 with Acts 1, 8 and 4; Acts 4, 8 and 31. The verb here is not an imperative, which would not fit the appended causal clause. The sense is: ye also are witnesses, now already. And he mentions the special qualification of the Twelve: **because ye have been with me from the beginning**. The Spirit, then, will not relieve the disciples of being witnesses. They too are witnesses; Jesus has prepared them in a special way during all these three years, namely to give them what they could have obtained in no other way, actual sight and hearing of all that Jesus did and said. As such witnesses the Spirit would use them in the fullest

measure, glorifying Jesus through all the ages and carrying out the work of Jesus despite all the hostility this would arouse.

SERMON.

True Christians ought to be loved, admired, praised, and emulated by all men. But nothing of the kind takes place. They are disliked, spoken of derisively, discriminated and combined against, made to suffer and persecuted in various ways.

But you may say: I am a Christian, and I have not found myself discriminated against in this fashion. That may indeed be true. But remember, there are two kinds of Christians, such as are Christians through and through, who always speak out for Christ, who live Christ, who constantly work for Christ—and such as are Christians only part way, who know how to keep still about Christ, who take care not to offend people by being true to Christ, who find no trouble in accommodating themselves to the world quite contrary to Christ. The question is: Which kind of a Christian are you? The world has no special objection to the latter kind, but it has no use whatever for the former, and never will have.

Jesus himself tells us so in our text, and he certainly ought to know. He wants us to learn once for all that

It is Impossible for a Christian to Go Through the World Unscathed.

I.

It is impossible, in the first place, **because of Christ himself.**

Think for a moment who he is and what he has done in regard to the world, and you will see at once that all those who are true followers of Christ must be obnoxious to the world.

The whole world lay in sin. Then came the holy Son of God in the form of man to free the world from its sin. He came to the world as the Savior from sin. In the very nature of the case he could not condone the sin in which the world lies and which it loves; he could not excuse it, or let it pass, or count it a small and insignificant thing. He had to show up all its terribleness and damnable-ness, in order to make men realize what sin is, and to draw their souls unto the salvation he had brought. But the moment he began to do this he met the opposition of the world which loves sin and is determined not to give its sin up. Men

contradicted the Word which the Savior spoke; they refused to be impressed aright by the wonderful works he wrought. Their one thought was to get rid of this Christ, and when no other means offered they used the worst they could find, lies, false accusations, and the most cruel murder. The world had no use for the kind of Christ Jesus was. It was willing to have a Christ indeed, but one who would not attempt to free it from its sins. It might have left Jesus alone, and not crucified him, if he had left the world alone. But when he went right into the world, directing his Word and works right against the world, the world blazed up in anger and hatred. It rejected Jesus, it carried him to the cross.

Now Jesus is the same to this day, only now he no longer walks among men, but works in the world through us whom he has saved from the world. But the situation as regards Christ is the same. The words he once spoke in the world in order to cut it loose from its sins still ring forth from the lips of his followers, who by word and deed carry the Gospel to the world. So also the deeds Jesus wrought to save the world, his miracles, and especially his great deeds of salvation, his death, resurrection, and glorification—when now his followers hold them up to the world, in order to turn the world from its sin, the world sees them anew and feels their saving effect. And the result, as far as the world is concerned which is determined to hold fast its sin, is the same. Jesus says: "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." If Jesus could not escape the hatred of the world, when he brought his saving Word and work to the world, how can we hope to escape it, when we do the same thing with the same Word and work of Jesus? Are we greater than Jesus? Will the world respect us more than it did him? Is it possible for us to succeed better than Jesus did?

1. There is only one way in which any of us can escape the hostility of the world—and alas, many have tried it! If you alter Jesus sufficiently, the world will not hate you, and will let you pass through it unscathed.² Jesus condemns all sin; but if you will (change that, and let sin pass, and) say that Jesus did not mean to condemn it as he did, then the world will be satisfied with you.
3. If you will join with the world in many of its sinful ways and associations, and simply ignore Jesus and what he said, the world will again (find you agreeable and) show you its love and favor.
4. — Jesus taught that his blood alone cleanses us from sin, and that we are saved by grace through faith in his blood.⁵ If you, however, will set that aside, the world will not show you its animosity. Speak and act as if any man who looks good to the

world is sure to be saved, as if a little morality, charity, and philanthropy suffices for salvation, and you may even be applauded by the world. ⁶For this is the kind of Christ and Gospel it dearly loves. ⁷Jesus said that he chose his disciples out of the world, separated them from the world, making them different from the world. ⁸But if you will ignore that separation, and by word and deed fellowship the world, the world will like you, and may even praise you as the right kind of a Christian. ⁹This is how one can go through the world unscathed. ¹⁰There are entire churches which follow a course like this. ¹¹Just change Jesus sufficiently, and the world is satisfied.

But can we do a thing of this kind? Is not Jesus the same yesterday, to-day, and forever? Has he not said that heaven and earth would pass away, but his Word would not pass away? Ah, here is where it ought to be pain to us, that holding fast to the unchanged Jesus we cannot and must not hope to go unscathed through the world. All our salvation is bound up with Jesus. Do we want to jeopardize that? Not for one instant. Then let us bear the cross of the world's hate. It goes with Jesus and his salvation.

II.

It is impossible for a Christian to go through the world unscathed because of Christ himself. In the second place, however, **because of the world.**

What does Jesus mean by "the world" in our text? It is easy to see when he tells us what the world does. He tells us the world hates him. And that means, after he has shown the world all he came to do for it. The world, then, includes all men who have seen the saving power and grace of Jesus, and yet have turned wickedly against it all, preferring their own sin and all that is connected therewith. Think of it: here on the one hand is sin and damnation, and on the other is Jesus and salvation, and in the latter there is a heavenly saving power all-sufficient to cut men loose from sin and to lift them up to Jesus. But in spite of all this saving power men determine to remain as they are. What new and fearful guilt is this by which, when they might be saved, they simply will not be saved? Jesus describes it: "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin"—namely this final, damning sin of unbelief; "but now they have no cloak for their sin. . . . If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin"—and Jesus means all those wonderful works of grace which showed him to be without question God's own Son and the true Savior from heaven whom all men ought at once to accept; "but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father.

But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled, that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause." Jesus is speaking especially of the Jews, but it is equally true of all who reject him that they do it, and can do it, only without a real cause. Those who belong to the world have every reason to thank God for sending them Jesus and salvation; they have every reason for yielding themselves to the grace of Jesus and accepting the priceless salvation he brings them. In wickedly refusing to do this, they stand self-condemned. And their condemnation comes out fully and clearly in hating Christ and venting this hatred upon Christ's followers.

C With the world thus opposed to Christ, with this opposition as the great mark of the world and of all who belong to the world, can we hope to live and work in the midst of these men and yet escape their opposition and the hate from which it springs? It is simply impossible. Sooner would fire mingle with water than that the world should love what it hates. The very things which we find so lovable and adorable in Christ are the things which the world cannot tolerate. It makes no difference that the world ought to love them too, and that it has no real cause whatever for hating them—it hates them none the less. Now come before this world with the Christ it will not have, make him the sole hope and support of your life, let the world know it and feel it day by day—what result are you going to have? Jesus tells you: "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." It is inevitable that we should not go unscathed through the world. If you know indeed what the world is you will not expect such a thing.

Only if the world would not be what Jesus says it is, and what we ourselves can see daily that it is, could we escape this its hatred. And there are always people who doubt the Word of Jesus, and who are blind to the real nature of the world. They thus set out to go through the world unscathed, and in their way they actually succeed. They are the people who think the world is not as bad as Jesus says. They see it placard its sins all along our streets; they read its hideous record of sin in the daily papers; they meet in a thousand ways and in a thousand places its wild and preposterous notions about God, religion, and salvation—yet they fail to realize what all this means. They will not understand that this is the world which has had Jesus and his Gospel all these years, and that this is its answer to him. And so they praise the world—and that is what the world likes; they accommodate themselves to the world—and that is what the world appreciates: and even its extravagant and superficial religious ideas are allowed to go unchallenged—and that suits the world especially. People who look at the world like that, and treat it accordingly,

are entirely unobjectionable to the world; it finds little or no fault with them. Alas, that they should bear the Christian name, and pretend that they are following Christ in thinking and acting thus in regard to the world. They may go unscathed through the world—what will Christ say to them at last?—But if we refuse to join in this false view of the world, if we truly follow Christ in his judgment of the world, then we will learn indeed that the world is just what Christ has said of it: as it hated him, so it will hate us; we will not pass through the world unscathed.

III.

- A As this is impossible because of Christ himself, and because of the world and what it really is, so again it is impossible **because of ourselves as true followers of Christ.**

Jesus says of his disciples: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." This statement of Jesus is true of all his followers. We no longer belong to the world. Jesus (has cut our hearts loose from the world, and drawn them in faith and trust to himself. He) has chosen us out of the world by making us children of God through faith in him; by giving us a new life full of love toward him. And the world is only too quick to recognize that. It sees and feels that we are different from the children of the world. It also feels that all this faith and new life in us is really a condemnation of its evil and perverted ways. And the world resents this. It has no use for us and the things for which we stand. And the more we assert our faith and show forth the new life we have from Christ, the more it comes out with its resentment.

Sometimes Christians persuade themselves that this is over-drawing the picture. Is it really as bad as Jesus says? A thousand instances prove it day by day. A worldly employer expects you to lie and cheat for him. Refuse to do it, and see what he will say to you. Here is a position you would like to have; it is intimated to you that in order to get it or to hold it you must join some secret order. Decline to do that, and see who gets that position. Here is a man who curses and damns in your presence, Object to this abuse of your Savior's holy name, and very likely that profanity will be turned against you. Here is a young man or young woman who want to keep themselves pure and unspotted from the world. Are they admired and praised for that? Quite the contrary—they are derided and mocked, and all kinds of spite is vented upon them. Let any one of us talk on religion with worldly people, and tell those people the real truth as Jesus has taught us. Often we will not even be heard, but shown the

door; and in many a case we will meet ridicule and scorn, either quite open or only slightly veiled. No, the world has not changed a bit from what Jesus said of it; it likes his true followers about as well as it liked him. (When it meets what is in them it shows its hate, and will not let them go unscathed. Do not expect it.) Jesus has said: "All these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me." Really it is an honor for us to be treated thus by the world. It shows that we indeed belong to Christ. (If we suffer anything for his sake, happy are we, for Christ will mark it and give us his most gracious reward.)

C. There is only one way in which you and I can escape this ill-will of the world, namely by hiding our Christianity, or by lowering it till it no longer displeases the world. Alas, there are many who are ready to do this sort of thing. I have seen Christian young people, and older people too for that matter, in worldly company, and by looking at how they acted and what they did you could never have discovered that they were different from their worldly companions. Some treat their Christianity like their hymn-books. (They lay them up after church till they need them again when they decide to go to church once more. So they lay their Christianity up, and take it along only when they go to church. Perhaps it is even worse than that.) They have no hymn-book of their own, they use one handed to them at church, leaving it there when through. So they leave their Christianity at the church, and do not take it as much as out of the pews. Well, that kind of Christians need fear nothing from the world. As long as you hide your faith in Christ, or deny it in silence or by worldly acts whenever it is challenged, the world is well satisfied. But can you do this kind of thing? are you satisfied to do it? You know what Christ has said of those who deny him before men. No true followers of his will thus try to please the world. (He knows he cannot go unscathed when he meets the world.) He is satisfied to have it so. Better a thousand times to be true to Christ and to suffer for his name's sake, than to please the world and thus escape its hate.

IV.

A. Jesus points out one more reason why the Christian cannot go through the world unscathed. It is **because of the work Christ has assigned to us as his followers.**

He has indeed chosen us out of the world, but he still leaves us in the world. It is his will that though inwardly separated from the world we are placed right in the midst of the world, and this in spite of its hostility against him and us. Why is this? Because of the work he has assigned to us. He tells us in our

text: "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness." (When he said this to his apostles he added:) "because ye have been with me from the beginning." The apostles were the first great witnesses for Christ in the world. They had a special task to perform in establishing and spreading the Christian church in the beginning. But they were joined by all those who believed the Gospel which they preached. We too have thus joined them. And so the work of bearing witness for Christ in the world has come to be our work also.

B

Christ now works in the world through those who believe in him. He gives them his Holy Spirit. This is the Spirit of truth, who fills our hearts with the saving truth of the Gospel. All that you know about Christ and his salvation is from this Spirit sent to you by Christ; and all the Christian faith, life, and power that is in you is the gift of Christ's Spirit. He is your Comforter, your support and helper, in this world full of wickedness in which you are called to live and testify for Christ. He proceeds from the Father, and is thus true God, equal with the Father and the Son. And he uses you as his instruments in proclaiming Christ in the world. Thus the Holy Spirit testifies of Christ by making us his true witness bearers. He joins us together as a church, so that the Gospel is preached in our midst for all men to hear. He moves us to send this preaching out in all directions as far as we can in mission work. He unites us in the bond of love, even as Jesus says: "These things I command you, that ye love one another." Supporting each other, and holding to each other in love, the Holy Spirit also moves us individually, in whatever station of life we may be placed, to show men by word and deed that we belong to Christ, and that in him alone is there salvation for us and for them.—This is our great duty in the world. For in the world there are always people who may yet be won for Christ. While some turn obdurately against him, there are others who are conquered and won by his heavenly grace. It is our task to bring them that grace and to show them that grace in our own living example. And so we are in the world, though not of the world.

C

It is easy to see how this very work assigned to us by Christ drives the world, namely those who are determined not to receive Christ, to turn against us in hate. They oppose us, not only because we have turned from them, but also because we are trying to turn others away from them. The Spirit that is in us is against the spirit that is in them, and the result is opposition from them. It is exactly like a war, only the world uses the foulest of weapons for its vicious ends, while we use nothing but Christ and

his Spirit of truth. Is it any wonder, then, that we do not succeed in getting through the world unscathed? If we could leave the world alone, lock ourselves in, hide ourselves away from the world, then we might hope to escape unhurt and without scars. But now this is impossible. Every true Christian is stirred by the Holy Spirit to testify of Christ. He does it gladly and courageously. What if the world hates him for it? He takes it as a matter of course, happy if the testimony he is able to bear helps to win more souls away from the world, for Christ.

P. Perhaps someone will again think that this our work in the world can be done so as to avoid arousing the opposition of the world. There is a way in which to escape this opposition—cease testifying for Christ, or change your testimony from what the Spirit of truth would have you make it. This is exactly what many try to do. They call themselves progressive and modern, and imagine their Christianity is up-to-date. Instead of preaching Christ's blood and righteousness, they preach nothing but the fine example of Christ. The world has no special objection to that. Instead of preaching the full truth of Christ and his Gospel, they select what they think men will like, and add of their own what their wisdom dictates. Many are attracted by this false testimony, especially when they are told that this is the real testimony Christ wants us to hear and to bear to-day. And so they accept it, and make their lives illustrations of it. They think they are doing the work of Christ while they remain popular with the world, or at least a good part of it. Alas, they are only deceiving themselves and others. Christ has warned us, crying woe upon us when all men speak well of us. He has told us that though we do many wonderful works in this way by using his name contrary to his Word and Spirit, he will disown us at last: "And then I will profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matth. 7, 22-23. — Shall we disregard these warnings? No; let us be true to our calling in this wicked world. Let the Spirit of Christ make us true witnesses for him, and aid us in turning as many as possible to the full truth in Christ, which alone is able to save them and us. That will bring us much opposition. It did it for Christ; it will do it for us. Let us bear it all, only so the Spirit of truth keeps us true now and to the end. We will not remain unscathed, but our scars will bring us Christ's commendation, and that is sweeter than all the praises of the world.

L It is indeed impossible for a true Christian to go unscathed through the world. Let us never think of making this impossible thing possible. We must bear the hatred of the world because of Christ, because of the world, because of ourselves, and

because of our work in the world. Blessed are they who bear it as Christ bids them, bear it) with the help of his Spirit, and let his love comfort, strengthen, and rejoice their hearts. For any hurt we now suffer at the hands of the world for Christ's sake his love will more than make amends.

OUTLINES.

The general subject of this text is quite plain, and we have a number of thoughts which unfold this subject. Two important portions of the text lie slightly to one side, namely the injunction that we love one another, and the closing statements on the witness-bearing of the Comforter and on that of the disciples; but these too pertain to our position in the world where the world's hatred is our lot. A simple method of handling the text will then be to treat it as a description of: Our position in a hostile world. It is a blessed position—for Christ has chosen us out of the world, and bound us to himself and to each other. It is a trying position—for the world hates us for Christ's sake, and makes us feel this hatred. It is a glorious position—for Christ makes us his witnesses to the world, and sends us the Comforter as our support.—Or we may use the summary: In the world, yet not of the world: that marks our position—that points to our trials—that outlines our work—that indicates our support.—We may also take up the general question which constantly clamors for an answer: Why has the world no use for the true Christian? The answer may be formulated in various ways from what Jesus tells us. One reason is that the Christian no longer belongs to the world; and another, that the Christian is trying to change the world. Or we may point first to Christ and the Father, to whom we are joined by faith; secondly, to the words and deeds of Christ, which have drawn us away from the world and joined us to him and his Father; and finally, to the great purpose of Christ, which uses us as his witnesses in the world in order to join as many others as possible, like us, to him and his Father.

How does the Christian Bear the Hatred of the World?

1. *Without surprise, for this hatred is to be expected.*
2. *Without shame, for this hatred is a mark of true discipleship.*
3. *Without scorning, for this hatred is meant to test our faith.*
4. *Without retaliation, for this hatred is to exercise our love.*

— Gerok.

Christians are Unpopular People.

1. *Do not let that surprise you.*
 2. *Do not let that disturb you.*
 3. *Do not let that change you.*
 4. *Do not let that discourage you.*
-

Remember the Word that I Said unto You:**"The Servant is not Greater than his Lord."**

1. *As servants of Christ we share his character, and therefore also the treatment he received.*
 2. *As servants of Christ we share his labors, and therefore also the reward he received.*
-

**"When the World is Cold
Let us to Thee Hold!"**

1. *Thus to bear the world's hate.*
 2. *Thus to do thy will and work.*
-

THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Matthew 5, 43-48.

There is a marked contrast between this text and the one which precedes it. In the world we constantly meet hate, but on our part there must be nothing but *love*, even toward our worst *enemies*. This love, born of the love of Jesus Christ for us, and kept alive by his love, is one of the shining marks of the Christian life. May it never grow dim in any of us!—The Lord is expounding the Law to his disciples, in the hearing of the multitude. He takes up definite commands of the Law, states the false interpretation given by the rabbis and Pharisees, and then places the true exposition over against the false. He now reaches the climax in this elucidation of the Law, namely the summary of the whole second table, the commandment of love to our neighbor. He begins as in the previous sections:

5, 43. Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

The aorist states a past fact: "ye did hear." The English idiom uses the perfect tense: **Ye have heard.** Where the disciples heard what is now stated, and from whom, is well understood. Beginning with v. 21 Jesus repeats in a significant way that his disciples formerly heard the teaching which is now shown them to be a grave perversion, instead of a true exposition of the Law. They heard it in the synagogues, from the rabbis and scribes, and from the Pharisees who as guardians of the Law aimed both to teach and exemplify completely what the Law demanded.—**That it was said** avoids mention of the persons concerned, by using the passive voice of the verb. This, however, is no proof

for the notion that false teachers are not to be named in our sermons and teachings of the truth. In v. 20 Jesus names "the scribes and Pharisees," but he lets this suffice for what follows. The disciples knew exactly by whom was said what Jesus now states.—The Lord gives a brief and compact statement of the rabbinical teaching on this final and supreme point of the Law concerning love. There is first of all on their part an imperfect statement of the Law's injunction. Instead of quoting Leviticus 19, 18 properly: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," the rabbis omitted the last words, and used only: **Thou shalt love thy neighbor.** Compare how this commandment is given in full in Matt. 19, 19; 22, 39; Mk. 12, 31; Rom. 13, 9; Gal. 5, 14; Jam. 2, 8, and is so given even by the scribes in Mk. 12, 33; Luke 10, 27. This omission in the usual rabbinical teaching, however, was by no means an innocent abbreviation. For the original command was not intended to state *whom* we are to love, so that we might raise the question, who this neighbor is, Luke 10, 29, as the scribes constantly did. That command was intended to state *what* we are to do, namely love, and *how* or to what degree we are to love, namely just as we love ourselves. The contrast in the original commandment was not on persons, but on actions: we are to love, "not hate thy brother in thine heart," Lev. 19, 17; not wrong him, v. 19, nor stand against his blood, v. 16. By their omission the rabbis shifted the emphasis in the commandment. They gained an opportunity to ask who our neighbor is, in order thus to limit the idea of "neighbor," and to specify who is not our neighbor, whom therefore we need not love, whom we may freely hate. That this limitation was not intended by the Law is plain enough when we see how the Law included in its commands all the members of the Jewish nation, down to the lowest and humblest, and how even the strangers were put under the same protection as

were the native Israelites. Ex. 12, 43-49: "One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you." The question regarding the enemies of Jehovah who are to be treated as such, does not come in here, cf. Ps. 139, 21. Jehovah's enemies and our personal enemies are not to be confounded and falsely identified, nor conclusions drawn from the former to the latter. — How badly the rabbis perverted the commandment of love is seen in the corollary they drew and added as an exposition: **and hate thine enemy**. Of course, the rabbis did not say that these words were written in the Law itself, but they drew this conclusion as expressing in fact what the Law meant and permitted. Zahn very finely points out how utterly false this conclusion was. The command to love our enemies is by no means a later development in contrast to an earlier more imperfect morality in Judaism, but an integral part of the original Law itself. This is evident from Lev. 19, 18, where the commandment to love is ushered in by the prohibition against taking vengeance and bearing any grudge "against the children of thy people." It surely is evident that the thought of vengeance and grudge could be only against one who has injured us, and that means an enemy of ours. If instead of bearing grudge and taking vengeance we are told to love our neighbor as ourselves, we have here exactly what Jesus commands us, namely love toward our enemies. So the fact is that love toward our enemies is not at all a new commandment given us by Jesus, an advancement on the old Jewish commandment, but simply the old original commandment itself in its original meaning and intention. The deduction: "and hate thine enemy," is nothing but a gross perversion of the Law and the prophets, which had to be branded as such.

44. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; 45. that ye may

be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.

As in the previous sections so also here Jesus opposes this false conception of the Law's requirement in the directest and most emphatic way. **But I say unto you** emphasizes the "I," but not in the least as over against Moses and the Old Test., cf. v. 17, but as over against the scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus uses the voice of authority which belongs to him as the Son of God and Lord of the Law.—What he says now is nothing but the real meaning of the Law as originally given to Israel. In restating the true meaning of the Law Jesus retains the form of command: **Love your enemies.** The present imperative signifies durative action: Love them constantly. And "enemies" here are personal enemies, such as on their part hurt and harm us because they hate us. They are thus on their part flagrantly transgressing the Law. But their doing so is not to induce us to follow their evil example, or to provoke us to a like wicked course, by avenging ourselves, and returning evil for evil; compare the Leviticus passage. Our enemies will have a fearful account to render to God; we are to be preserved from having such an account to meet. In spite of all enmity we are to go on in love. But the word for love, ἀγαπᾶν, deserves careful attention. It signifies something altogether higher than φιλεῖν, the love of mere affection and pleasant personal association. This kind of love would be impossible with an enemy; he would not associate with us, or allow us to show him affection, like our friends. Nor would we be able to like our enemies, even as we read nowhere that Jesus liked the wicked Jews. The verb ἀγαπᾶν expresses the love of intelligence, comprehension, purpose. It sees indeed all the hatefulness and wickedness of the enemy, feels his stabs and blows, may even have to do something to ward them off, but in spite of all this there is only one aim

and desire in the heart, namely to do good to this enemy, to help and benefit him, and if possible to free him from his enmity and sin. Mere affection is often blind, but even so it thinks it sees something attractive in the one loved and is thus drawn to him; the higher love, which the Law requires, the *ἀγάπη* as distinguished from the *φιλία*, may see nothing attractive at all in the one so loved, nor is this love called out by anything thus attractive, its inner motive is simply to bestow benefits upon the one loved, to do him good, to promote his highest and best interests. I cannot like a filthy, vicious beggar and make him my personal friend; I cannot like a low, mean criminal, who may have robbed me and threatened my life; I cannot like a false, lying, slanderous fellow who perhaps has vilified me again and again—but I can, by the grace of Jesus Christ, love them all, desire and work to do them all manner of good, especially also if possible seek to change their evil ways. This is how we are to love our enemies. —The A. V. follows the less critical texts which add two clauses: “bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.” This augmentation of the text is from Luke 6, 27-28, only the clauses are reversed. Homiletically this addition may be accepted without question, especially since it constitutes a portion of the inspired record, also because we here have part of the Lord’s own elucidation on what he means by loving our enemies. If we add the fourth clause, which Matthew’s text actually has: “pray for them that persecute you,” we have the whole of love, as Meyer calls it: the mind, the word, the deed, the intercession. And Bengel tells us the third is included in the first, and the second in the fourth. Note how the force of enmity is brought out in the participle: “those who are cursing you,” i. e., calling down evil upon you. Though they are doing this most wicked thing, and while they are doing it, we, in this higher love, are to “keep on blessing them,” which is the force of the present tense. And

the same contrast is in the second clause: to those hating us and going on in that hate, showing it by all kinds of evil treatment, we are to keep on doing good, to treat them well in every way. As their animus, namely hatred, marks their conduct, so our conduct, namely doing good, is to mark our animus. A secret chiasm thus lies in the thought. — The correct text of Matthew, however, has only two commands, the one requiring love (of course, with all its manifestation), and the second: **and pray for them that persecute you.** The best exposition of this commandment is furnished by Jesus himself when he prayed for the men who were bringing him to crucifixion. Both the imperative and the substantivized participle are in the present tense and thus durative. Our enemies may go on in their persecutions, we are to go on in our intercessions. To pray in behalf of some one is to ask God's grace for him, and here it will be his grace in order that our enemies may come to see their sin and wrong, may repent of it, and obtain God's pardon. Only the ἀγάπη which Jesus would put into our hearts is able to produce such prayer, full of the highest and best consideration, and animated by the highest and best purpose. — How love like this is ever to come into our hearts and govern them completely is not told us here. There is a hint of it, however, in the added purpose clause: **that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven.** As sons of God we will be reborn, made inwardly new, and so we will be able indeed to love our enemies. Jesus is speaking to his disciples as sons of God, made such by his grace. So this purpose clause does not mean that by loving their enemies the disciples will become and be made God's sons — a thought entirely foreign to the Scriptures. Showing the love which Jesus demands his disciples will be sons of God in the sense of proving themselves as such. The emphasis is on the verb, which is put forward; and the aorist with its punctiliar meaning refers to the establishing of the fact. The thing

will be a settled matter when this love is in evidence. Meyer thinks the purpose clause refers to our becoming sons of the Father in the future glorious Messianic kingdom. He operates with this notion also in other parts of our chapter. All subjunctives are indeed future, and all purpose clauses refer to what is future; but there is no intimation here of a sonship so far in the future, nor of our love bringing us this sonship. We are sons of God now already by faith, and the commandments of Jesus all urge us to exercise, and thus to prove and manifest our sonship. The designation "your Father which is in heaven" brings out the full idea of our sonship. So great is our Father whose sons we are, and such is his character, namely heavenly, far different from all that is merely earthly. And we are related to him as sons. His grace has put us sinners into this wonderful and blessed relation, through the great Son himself who came here to make us sons. What a motive, then, for us to love as he bids us through his Son, and thus to show indeed that we are sons!—Sons must be like their father, and therefore Jesus adds the point in which we must be like our heavenly Father: **for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good.** It is "his" sun, for he made it, and he controls it; but he lets it rise on "the evil," the wicked or actively evil, as well as on "the good," who by good and proper deeds show their goodness. He does not reserve the sunlight only for the latter, but grants it also to the former who certainly as enemies of God have deserved no such kindness. So we are to love our enemies like our friends—love in the sense indicated above; and this will show us to be true sons of our Father.—So also the parallel manifestation: **and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.** Sun and rain go together, for both are needed for our fields and crops. The underlying thought is that of granting support for our earthly life. Here, however, the just are mentioned first and the unjust second, making a chiasm

with the evil and the good in the former clause, which emphasizes that God treats both alike. The just are those who come up to the divine norm of right, the unjust clash with it. Yet the goodness of our Father is extended to both alike, and in this is our pattern for loving also our enemies. But in contemplating this action of our Father as we have it before our eyes constantly, let us remember that it is the outcome of his purposeful *ἀγάπη*: "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" Rom. 2, 4. There is no indifference on the part of God as regards the just and the unjust, quite the contrary. He has his loving purpose in this treatment of his enemies, and as his sons we are to act in harmony with this purpose by exercising a similar love. This disposes of Meyer's insinuation that Jesus here uses only a popular mode of instruction, one that really does not stand the test, since by the same acts of nature God also destroys both the evil and the good. When the goodness and forbearance of God reach their limit he does indeed send his judgment on the wicked. This, however, cannot be brought in here, since in his judgments God acts as God, supreme over us all. As regards the good, when they are also hurt or killed by some act of nature, the case is the same, God in his providence supreme over all sends us what his counsel and will has determined; but for the good this is always in love, not in anger. But these dealings of God are a matter apart, and thus in no way weaken or call in question the love of God which we now see so generously and with such blessed purpose bestowed on all men alike.

46. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47. And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye

therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

This is an *argumentum e contrario* addressed to the disciples as sons of their heavenly Father and thus as people who are more and stand higher than all who are not such sons. If they now refuse to show the love God asks of them, if they love only those who love them, they will thereby place themselves back on the old level of open sinners and heathen people. They cannot possibly do this and remain sons of the heavenly Father. **If ye love them that love you** vividly pictures this limitation of love as it might actually be tried by someone. Moreover, it takes up the very principle which the rabbis stood for in perverting Lev. 19, 18, and shows what this principle really amounts to. It is on so low a level that even notorious sinners like the publicans act in accord with it. Hence the question: **what reward have ye?** The word "reward" is used here in a wide sense, not as pay for our love, but as recognition on the part of God. Can he in any way recognize such love? Then he would have to recognize and own also the act of every publican: **do not even the publicans the same?** The publicans bought up the taxes in the different sections of the country, paid the Roman authorities the stipulated amounts, and then collected from the people, always, of course, so as to make the transaction highly profitable to themselves, often with greed and extortion. Both for thus aiding the Roman usurper and for oppressing the people the publicans were despised, and were considered notorious sinners. Yet as such they loved those who loved them. Here *ἀγαπᾶν* is used once more, in the sense of love which calculates with a purpose. This, then, is what the teaching of the rabbis furnished; in such a shameful way they perverted the Law of God.—A second case is mentioned, which is more than a mere parallel, though it illustrates the same point: **And if ye salute your**

brethren only, namely those of your own nation, "the children of thy people," Lev. 19, 18. In the first example Jesus confined himself to the members of the Jewish nation, now, however, he goes beyond these limits. It was bad enough to show how the rabbis taught a morality no whit higher than that of the most degraded and faithless Jew. The fact was, however, that the morality thus taught was lower still. It drew a sharp line between Jews and Gentiles, despising the *gojim* as utterly godless and wholly unworthy of Jewish consideration. That Lev. 19, 18 should in any way include also the Gentiles the rabbis could not bring themselves to believe. So Jew saluted Jew as brother with due regard, but looked down in his heart at all Gentiles as dogs. The word for "salute" is more than Luther's *freundlich tun*; it signifies to welcome, to greet affectionately or bid farewell in the same way, to embrace. This, of course, was a plain mark of love. — But if thus restricted to Jews only, **what do ye more?** in what do ye exceed any others? How low a principle is here used the question brings out: **do not even the Gentiles the same?** the very Gentiles whom you affect to despise? It is beyond question that they also greeted affectionately those of their own nation. And so the teaching of the rabbis is exposed as no higher than heathen morality. Can children of God be satisfied with that? Can God be satisfied to have his children follow no higher law than that? V. 45 has already given the answer, for, as Zahn puts it, God's sun shone over Rome and Athens as well as over Jerusalem, and his rain fell on Gentile lands as well as on Jewish lands. — From what has been clearly set forth Jesus now draws the conclusion: **Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.** Starke writes: "The little word 'as' shows that we are to make God our model in all his perfections, and follow him in spirit and in truth; not, however, that complete equality is demanded. For God's attributes are infinite, while our virtues are finite,

and compared with God's a mere shadow." The future tense "ye shall be" is imperative, as in so many legal formulas. In the Greek *ὑμεῖς* is emphatic: "you on your part," and thus implies a contrast with the rabbis who taught nothing but the morality of the publicans and Gentiles. They mutilated and perverted the Law, and tried to subtract as much as possible from its commands, haggling with God about how little they might render unto him. Thus there was nothing perfect whatever about their obedience, it consisted of useless outward scraps. The disciples of Jesus are to be totally different, namely **perfect**, in the sense of complete, fully formed and developed. The word is used of sacrificial animals, which were to be without damage or flaw. Luther expounds: "after the example of the heavenly Father who does not piece and divide." And Meyer adds that here the modality of our love is set forth, not the degree. But with all these allowances for the context and the sense of the Greek *τέλειος*, there is little if any real difference between perfection, or flawlessness as we usually understand it, and perfection in the sense of wholeness and completeness, as the word is here used. Nor is anything gained by referring to the love here demanded towards our enemies, for this love is the crown of our obedience. He who is perfect in this is perfect in all else besides. So degree and modality flow into each other; a love *sine vitiiis* and a love whole and not mere fragments, is quite the same love. Who is able, with the flesh still clinging to him, to render it? We must simply confess that the Law demands more than we are able to render, that we are all sinners when it comes to judge us, and that we need Christ's pardon day by day. But having confessed this, the Spirit of God will indeed urge us to strive with all our might after this perfection: **as your heavenly Father is perfect**. And his grace will be effectual in us so that we shall indeed become daily more like him whose sons we are in Christ Jesus.

SERMON.

The world is full of hate, and the worst form of that hate appears in the world's treatment of Christ and of those who follow him. We have heard how we must bear that hate, and not let it turn us away from Christ. But there is more to be said. We must answer this hate with love. And since our own brethren are sometimes overcome by the spirit of the world and allow themselves like the world to give way to hate, we must answer their hate too with the same love. Jesus sums it all up for us in the old commandment of God: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Only he brings out most clearly for us what this old commandment really means as regards all those who in any way hate us. He puts it in this form: "Love your enemies."

Now the danger is that we will look at this word of Jesus as a mere ideal, one quite unattainable for us, in this sinful world. The old interpretation which the rabbis of the Jews gave to God's commandment will sound far more reasonable to us, namely love your friends, and hate your enemies. Especially will this be the case when we actually have some mean enemy to harass and hurt us. A feeling of hate, and a desire to retaliate, will very likely try to arise in our hearts, and in our blindness we may even think we are fully justified in thus answering hate with hate. What we need is to look at the inwardness of this commandment of Christ. This is exactly what our text enables us to do. Here the Lord himself gives us

The Key to the Commandment: "Love your Enemies."

What is this key?

The goodness of our heavenly Father.

The love of Jesus, our Savior.

Our relation to the Father as his children in Jesus, our Savior.

Take this key, and there will be no difficulty for you in this blessed commandment: "Love your enemies."

I.

Think of *the goodness of your heavenly Father*, and at once you will realize how there could be no other commandment from him to us than this that we love our enemies.

In a beautiful way Jesus brings this goodness of our heavenly Father to mind for us. All of us are constantly dependent upon it, and this to such an extent that we could not exist if he were

to withhold it. Only two proofs of it does Jesus mention, but they are enough—we see at once who this our heavenly Father is. Here are the proofs: “He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Have you ever thought of it—every morning the sun rises anew for us to give us the light and the warmth we need; and from time to time the rains come to water the earth, and in combination with the sun and with the elements to furnish us our daily bread. This sun Jesus calls “his sun,” God’s sun—what if he should withhold its shining for a month or a year? Come with no superficial scientific talk, as though God could not do such a thing. He who made the sun and all the heavenly bodies and set them in their courses, he can do with any and all of them exactly as he thinks best. So with the rain—suppose he should withhold that for a year or for several years. The fact is that at times God has so withheld the rain, just to remind us in our pride and ignorance that the great forces of nature are in his hands. And as Jesus here mentions the sun and the rain, so he might have gone on and mentioned many other gifts and blessings which God pours out upon us with a lavish hand. Here is the earth that bears us all, the air we all breathe alike, the whole world of plants and animals given for man’s use, hundreds of the forces of nature which we are able to put to our service for our comfort and enjoyment, the fire that cooks our food, the electric current which furnishes us light and power, the endless number of materials that our hands work up into useful things, to say nothing of the beauties and attractions with which God has decked out this wonderful world of his—all these from his hands, and all for us the creatures he has made.

But the point is that these gifts of our heavenly Father are dispensed with infinite goodness on his part. He showers them with a free hand upon the evil and the good alike, upon the just and the unjust in the same generous way. Who are the evil, who are the unjust? They are his enemies. Perhaps they mock at God and deny his very existence; at least they refuse to honor him, to heed his will, to appreciate what they receive at his hands, and to thank him for his gifts. And when we say they are enemies of God that means far more than when we speak of our enemies. If one whom we befriend turns against us in hate, or if a child after receiving countless gifts of love turns against its father and mother in wicked abuse, that is as nothing to the act of evil men who turn against the very God that made them and to this day continues to pour out his priceless gifts upon them. And yet this is the spectacle Jesus here holds up before our eyes—God’s sun keeps on shining for the wicked, God’s balmy rains nourish the fields of the ungodly and help to give them bread.

Think not that God is blind, and does not see the wickedness and godlessness of those upon whom his gifts descend, or that God is obliged to send down these gifts. Take the true view—it is his unbounded goodness alone that you see in these manifestations day by day. Or better still, recognize fully and completely for once, that God loves even his enemies. This is the kind of God he is. Nor is his goodness only this that he delights to send even upon his enemies temporal blessings. Behind all these marvelous temporal gifts there is his grace and mercy for the souls of his enemies. St. Paul tells us, by this goodness in temporal things our heavenly Father would lead us all to repentance, to acknowledge our sins, to trust his grace, and thus to receive beside the temporal all his eternal blessings. All this God does for his enemies.

And now we are ready to see something of the inwardness of our heavenly Father's commandment when he bids us love our enemies. Could he who treats his enemies with infinite goodness and love give us any other commandment? Could he, loving his enemies as he does, say that we need not love our enemies?—and this when any enmity against him is a thousand times worse than any enmity against us could ever be? No, my friends, our heavenly Father could never so contradict himself. The sun in the heavens would cry out against him, if he did; and the rains would lament that the goodness which sent them had turned into hate. When God bids us love our enemies, his very heart opens to us in that commandment—it is his own love for them which calls for our love toward them. And since he loves us, even as he loves them, it is his love for us too which calls for our love toward them. Do we want this love to cease? Do we want any of his love to stop when we forget our love toward him? Then change this commandment of love toward our enemies. But no, you will not want it changed so. You want the sun to shine on, and the rains to fall in due season, and all the other gifts to come as you need them. Then thank God that he is goodness and love; open wide your heart to take his goodness and love in; and filled with gratitude and love toward him look with new eyes and a new heart at this commandment to love your enemies.

God's goodness is the key to it. Unlocked with that key what a blessed commandment it is! Oh that our hearts might rise up as they should to delight in it and to obey it!

II.

The thought of our heavenly Father's goodness takes us only part way into this commandment of love for our enemies; add *the love of Jesus, our Savior*, and you will penetrate to the very heart of it.

The striking thing in our text is not merely that here we have this commandment of love for our enemies, but that it is Jesus himself, our heavenly Savior, who sets this commandment before us. Do you not see how these two belong together in the most wonderful way? He who loved his enemies so that he came to save them from their sins, and to give his very life for them in order thus to serve them, he it is who stands here in our text and takes up the great commandment of love from God's holy Law and shows us how God meant it to include love on our part for our enemies.

Beyond question this is a different thing than when the old Jewish rabbis took up God's commandment and tried to tell the people what God meant by it. What did they know about God when they never knew even the significance of his sun shining on the evil and the good, nor the meaning of the rain falling on the fields of the just and the unjust? They never understood the goodness of God toward his enemies, how then could they understand this commandment? No wonder they cut the very heart out of it and made it mean only that we are to love our friends, and hate our enemies. And they never saw that such a perversion of God's commandment of love made it no more than the miserable principle which even the greediest and most wicked publican in their midst followed, and which even the blindest and most idolatrous heathen exercised in his life. Those miserable tax-collectors among the Jews, whom they themselves condemned as renegades and traitors to their nation, certainly did this much that they loved those who still loved them. And the veriest heathen, who had no knowledge whatever of the true God and his love, certainly did this much that he saluted his own brethren who saluted him. But that is what the Jewish rabbis made of God's commandment when they tried to explain it without knowing the love of God which sent his own Son to die for us all while yet we were far from God and enemies of his. No wonder Jesus rose up against them and all their miserable teaching, and with all his divine authority declared: "But I say unto you," this is what the God of love means: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

And now when we hear these blessed words let us remember from whose lips they fell. They are the summary of the love which filled the heart and life of Jesus himself when he was in the midst of his work of saving us. He loved his enemies, for he died for the very men who condemned him to death and nailed him to the cross. He blessed them that cursed him, for his whole life and death was a benediction on those who reviled and mocked him. He did good to them that hated him, yea, the very greatest

good, for he purchased salvation for them by his own death. He prayed for them which despitefully used him and persecuted him, for on the cross itself when the nails were put through his hands and feet, he prayed that God might forgive them, for they knew not what they did. And when we think of all this let us remember that this wonderful, saving love of Jesus Christ went out thus, not only to the sinners who directly brought him to his death, but in the same way to us all in our sins. And every one of our sins the Bible itself calls enmity against God. We were born in this enmity, and but for the love of Jesus would be in it completely to-day. Alas, there is enough of it clinging to us still. Without him and his love, without him and his intercession, we would all be irrevocably lost. Take all this together and use it as the key for this commandment coming from Jesus' lips: "Love your enemies." What a revelation as thus its inwardness is unlocked for us:

Yes, there had to be such a commandment, because there is such a Savior. Thank God that he loved his enemies thus, even us also, and loves us with the same love still. It is this love of his which makes us understand his commandment; it is the Key which shows us all of God's heart and all of our Savior's heart in it. This great, saving love we enjoy, we who were enemies of God, we whose sin is still against him. How shall we ever thank him enough? But with this love resting upon us, we know indeed that from it there must be born in our own hearts a similar love—we indeed must learn of Jesus to love also our enemies.

III.

The key to the great commandment of love to our enemies is our heavenly Father's own goodness and our Savior's own saving love toward his enemies. But both of these include us, and that in the directest and most effectual way, through *our relation to the Father as his children in Jesus, our Savior*. Thus the key is complete. The great commandment is carried right into our own hearts, and we are glad and happy to have it there.

The Savior is speaking to his disciples when he here opens up to them the inwardness of the commandment to love their enemies. He is not calling on the children of this world to do such a thing. They would not understand him, nor would they in the least be able to obey such a commandment. All they know is to love their friends and to hate their enemies. But to his disciples he is able to say: "Love your enemies," for he is able to add in their case: "that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." Christ's disciples are indeed children of God. His saving love has entered their hearts, and that love has put

a new life and a new power into their hearts. They now see all the goodness of God showered down upon them, though they deserve none of it, and their hearts rise up in gratitude toward God for it all. But most of all their hearts dwell upon the saving love of God in Christ which actually delivered them from their sins and made them children of God and heirs of salvation, and this supreme gift again without their deserving it in the least; and more than ever their hearts are lifted up in gratitude to God for such love of his. When thus they hear the commandment: "Love your enemies," they think ever of what God has done for them, enemies of his though they were. Under the power of the love that came thus to them, the thought of hate vanishes from their hearts, and instead there begins to arise true love in their hearts for any enemies they may have.

How can it be otherwise? Can we rejoice in the love of God which we have in no way deserved, and yet harbor in our hearts hate toward our fellow men? One or the other must go—God's love in us must drive out the hate, or the hate will drive out God's love. When his love wins us and makes us his children it thereby makes us like our Father. That is the nature of all true children—they are like their Father. And most of all is this true of children like we are, with Christ and the love of Christ put into our very hearts by our Father. His love will be our love, and so hate will die, and love will triumph.

But is not this saying too much of us? Is there not much enmity still left in us? Are there no quarrels among us, or with those outside the church? Are there never any feelings of malice and spite, and words and deeds that come from anger and ill-will? Alas, this is true! The flesh still clings to us, and it constantly tries to make us let go of the love of God and Christ, and to drag us away from our connection with God and his children. But for this very reason the Lord comes to us here with a commandment. That commandment condemns every bit of hatred still left in us through the flesh. That commandment would drive us to daily repentance when we fall short of the love that should move and control us completely. Therefore too we are not told only to love our enemies and to show that love aright, but also: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Nothing less is our goal. True children must be altogether like their Father.—But here is our comfort, that the God who loved us while we were wholly his enemies, and by his love has made us his children in Christ Jesus, now does not abandon us when the old faults still cling to us, but in the same patient love works in us to overcome those faults, and thus finally to make us perfect even as he is perfect. So he sends us his Word, lets his own Son set it before us; so he shows us his love and lets us feel its sweet-

ness and strength day by day. Thereby he makes us repent of the evil that is still in us, pardons the guilt of it, and at the same time stirs up and strengthens the love that he has implanted within us, to make it rule our lives more and more completely.

Again we must say that we cannot thank him enough, both for thus having made us his children, and for now working to make us more and more what we ought to be as such children of his. That his blessed purposes may be realized let us keep before us the commandment to love our enemies, but always use the key to reach the true inwardness of this blessed word, namely the goodness of our heavenly Father as we taste it day by day, the love of Jesus, our Savior, as it comforts and blesses us without end, and our relation to the Father as his dear children through Jesus, our Savior, children made daily more like unto him.

"Love your enemies!" By the goodness of God, through the love of Christ, as the children of God—we will!

OUTLINES.

There are four points by any one of which we may pick up the entire text. The most obvious is the command to love our enemies; another is the reference to us as the children of our heavenly Father; a third is the sunshine and the rain, these significant illustrations of how God treats his enemies; and the fourth is the command to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. — Picking up the text at the point first indicated we may discuss: How Jesus teaches us the commandment to love our enemies: He puts it squarely against the perversions of the Jewish rabbis — He connects it with the goodness of our heavenly Father — He shows that it must be a mark of the children of this Father. — A theme derived from the second point might be: Since we are children of our Father in heaven, how far must our love reach? We cannot let it reach only as far as that of publicans and Gentiles — Our Father shows us how far it must reach — And the Savior who made us children of this Father helps us to make our love reach as far as it should. — Starting from the third point we may think of: How Jesus wants us to look at the sunshine and the rain: As an illustration of how God loves his enemies — As an admonition how we are to love our enemies. — Finally: Our Savior's command: Be ye therefore perfect! 1) As the children of God's love. 2) Through the love bestowed upon us as such children. 3) In the love which alone befits such children.

"Love Your Enemies!"

A command

1. *Which Christ gives.*
2. *Which Christ fulfills.*
3. *Which Christ helps us fulfill.*

— Friedrich.

Can we Love our Enemies?

1. *Some think we cannot do it.*
2. *God shows us how he does it.*
3. *Christ points out how we may indeed do it.*
4. *There is great blessing in doing it.*

"Love your Enemies!"**A Commandment which Divides the World.**

1. *Who is on the one side?* Those who do not even know our Father in heaven—those who reject our Father's love—those who pervert his commandment of love. (The Gentiles—the publicans—the rabbis.)
2. *Who is on the other side?* Our heavenly Father with his goodness towards his enemies—our Savior with his redemptive love toward his enemies—we as the children of God with our humble love toward our enemies.

A New Way to Look at the Sunshine and the Rain.

- 1) *The love that sends them—see it;*
- 2) *Yield to it;*
- 3) *Learn to obey it.*

THE SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 17, 7-10.

The Christian life is marked throughout by the feeling of *unworthiness*. Our constant confession is: "without any merit or worthiness in me." This mark of our Christian life is so vital and important that we may well devote a special sermon to it, the more since men's hearts are always inclined toward work-righteousness. The progress of thought from the previous texts is obvious. In the last text we had the commandment of love; in the one before that the cross which the world's hate lays upon us. When now we bear that cross and show that love we are still unprofitable servants, at best doing only what is our duty to do. —

17, 7. But who is there among you, having a servant plowing or keeping sheep, that will say unto him, when he is come in from the field, Come straightway and sit down to meat; 8. and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterwards thou shalt eat and drink?

Luke has been at no pains to mark the connection for us at the various points of division, and this has divided the commentators badly; so that some profess to see no connection at all between our text and what precedes, and others, connections of various kinds. For homiletical purposes the question concerning the connection is not really vital, although it is always worth while, and sometimes of essential value, to have the connection fully cleared up. Our translators indicate that they do see a connection of our parable with verses 5-6, for they translate $\delta\epsilon$ as an adversative: **but**. This

means that what follows in v. 7 is in contrast to what precedes. Now the particle $\delta\epsilon$ really does nothing more than add something to what precedes, but always something of a different sort. It depends on the subject-matter whether we translate simply by "and," or by "now," or as here by our rather strong adversative "but." The prayer of the disciples for an increase of faith is surely to be heard. In fact, Jesus intimates that they shall accomplish great things for him in his work. This, however, leads him to caution them against a wrong estimate of such deeds of faith on their part. Though they do everything for their Lord, and omit nothing, they must put away all claims against him; so only will their work be rightly done.—The parable which Jesus uses is put into the form of a question, and this question is extended to include an additional thought. The question form makes the parable stronger than a mere assertion would have made it. It brings out how self-evident the thing is which Jesus here uses as an illustration. No man would think of doing differently in the case portrayed; and as regards the second question, no man would think of doing what is there suggested.—The picture drawn by Jesus is quite simple: **Who is there of you, having a servant plowing or keeping sheep, etc.** The phrase $\epsilon\tilde{\xi} \upsilon\mu\acute{\omega}\nu$ is partitive. Zahn finds $\delta\varsigma$ pleonastic, and translates: "Who of you will say, etc." But we prefer to leave this relative untouched, and supply $\epsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}$ as the predicate: "Who *is* there of you," etc. The answer is: No one, of course.—The **servant** is essential to the parable, so also his work through the day. By $\delta\omicron\upsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ we must understand a bondservant, one whose servitude is a matter of necessity, and who is bound to a certain master. The kind of work is not essential, yet Jesus names two kinds, and not merely one; and these two are the very kinds which otherwise also are used as symbols of the spiritual work appointed for his disciples, namely **plowing** and **keeping sheep**. Regarding

the former compare 1 Cor. 3, 9: "ye are God's husbandry," or tillage; and all the figures of the sowing and reaping presuppose that there was also plowing. Plowing too is hard work. The A. V. translates the second participle: "feeding cattle"; the verb simply means herding or shepherding, not specifying the animals. Yet shepherding is decidedly to be preferred, because of the analogy of Scripture; for we never find the imagery of tending cattle used, always it is the imagery of feeding and managing sheep. The two present participles may be translated: "engaged in plowing or engaged in shepherding." At this point already we may say that the person owning the servant is intended to parallel God or Christ, and the servant in his labor is to parallel us as called to the work of God. The entire parable is used somewhat differently from the regular parables of Jesus, as we shall see in the interpretation; hence we speak of a parallel, instead of saying the master is God or Christ, and the servant is the believer. — **When the servant is come from the field** uses the aorist participle: "having come in out of the field," and this pictures him as having done his day's work of plowing or shepherding. The man is tired from his labors, and is hungry after his exertions. We would suppose that he is entitled to rest and refreshment, and that he expects both. — Yet where is the master who **will say unto him, Come straightway and sit down to meat?** The A. V. connects the adverb with the wrong verb: "will say unto him by and by." What makes the matter worse for the English reader of to-day is that "by and by" now means "after a while," whereas in the seventeenth century it meant "immediately." It is not that the master will tell the servant *at once*: Come, etc.; but that he will not say: Come *at once*, etc. And the Greek subordinates the coming to the sitting down to meat, since the latter is the chief act. So we have a mere participle for the former, and an imperative only for the latter. The form ἀνάμεινε is the correct

reading, a regular second aorist imperative, from ἀναπίπτω, and means simply: "recline." **Sit down to meat** is a strong modernization; the Jews reclined upon low couches. Thus to recline, of course, meant to dine. The emphasis is on "straightway"; eventually the servant will also recline, his master will want him to do so, but not immediately. — A negative lies in ἀλλά: "on the contrary"; or as our translation has it: **and will not rather say unto him**, the strong negative οὐχί, implying this time an unquestioned positive answer. Certainly, this is what any master among Jesus' hearers will say: **Make ready wherewith I may sup etc.** The servant's work is not done, he must prepare his master's evening meal first, and even wait upon him while he dines. "Wherewith I may sup" is an indirect question, and therefore has the (aorist) subjunctive. The meal in the late afternoon or evening was the main one of the day, and therefore required more labor to prepare. — **And gird thyself and serve me** again subordinates the first act to the second by means of the aorist participle. Trench states that to wait at table with the dress succinct or girded up, was a mark of servitude, which to keep in mind makes more wonderful the condescension of the Son of God in his saying Luke 12, 37, and in his doing John 13, 4. Literally we read: "Having girded thyself be serving me." — But the translation: **till I have eaten and drunken**, should really be: "while I shall eat and drink," Robertson, 976. The subjunctive has the idea of expectancy. So the servant prepares his master's meal and acts as the waiter while his master refreshes himself. All this on top of his other work. It is the regular course with a servant like this; nobody expects anything else. **No wrong whatever is done him, and he is the last one to complain.** If he were the master, he would expect his servant to do the same thing. — In due time his turn to rest and eat will come: **and afterward thou shalt eat and drink.**

This rounds out the picture. It is added here as a part of the master's speech, not because a master would add it ordinarily in so many words, but to give us the whole story. The master expects the servant to eat in the end—that is the servant's proper place. "In the New Test. such so-called futures as *πίσαι* and *φάγεσαι* are really old aorist subjunctives," R., 869. Both forms have the uncontracted personal ending of the second person, — *σαι*.

9. Doth he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded? 10. Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which it was our duty to do.

Here is the climax of the parable and the point of its application to us. The master is done with his *δείπνον*; he arises from his couch and goes his way. The servant clears the table, and then prepares to eat at last. Does the master think that the servant has done anything wonderful or worthy of special consideration? Not in the least. **Doth he thank the servant because he did the things that were commanded?** or, to bring out the self-evident negative answer that is expected by the form of the question, which begins with *μή*: "He certainly does not thank the servant," etc? The things commanded are those mentioned as such, those added after he came in from his out-door work. His entire service belongs to his master as a matter of course. The servant knows this, and therefore unhesitatingly renders that service. He is the last one to imagine he is doing something especially creditable and meritorious, the last one to think that any special thanks are due him. Not that the master does not appreciate the service rendered him by his faithful and obedient bondman. The remark of Trench is in place, that our translators have made the matter appear needlessly severe; *ἐχει χάριτι* is not really: "Doth he thank that servant," as though all recognition of the servant's

work is denied; but: "Doth he count himself especially beholden to that servant?" *Weiss er dem Knecht besonderen Dank?* The addition in the R. V.: "I trow not" is a piece of interpretative translation, an effort to show to the English reader the force of the negative answer presumed in the Greek form of the question. Jesus ends the parable proper with the question alone, which makes the point more effective.—And now the purpose of the whole picture is summarily stated. The parable is for us, not for the Lord. It is to show us our proper attitude, not what the Lord either actually does or in justice ought to do. This point is essential, and at once clears away those criticisms of the parable which have been made because this point was overlooked. The very first word in the application is decisive: **Even so ye also**, although the entire statement is all in this line too. The faith of the disciples will indeed be greatly increased; they will be filled with power from on high; they will render great service to their Lord. But let no false thought connect itself with what they will be called on to do, and by the grace of their Lord actually do in his service.—**When ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you**, like this servant in the parable, then do not boast of it, and do not build any special claims on it. We need not discuss whether any servant of Jesus ever did all that was commanded him, leaving no omission whatever. The Lord takes a case that is perfect in this respect. Paul wrote of himself: "For I know nothing against myself"; but he is constrained to add: "yet am I not hereby justified." 1 Cor. 4, 4, R. V. It is very plain that if we do less than is commanded us, we lose all claims; but even if we do all that is commanded us we have no claims.—The Lord bids us **say, We are unprofitable servants**. The sense of this word ἀχρεῖοι is fortunately well understood by our English Bible readers, for the simple reason that the entire context helps us to get it. It is otherwise with some commentators.

Meyer stresses the idea of *χρεία* or use, and figures it out that this use or profit would not begin until the servant did more than had been commanded him. Of course, he denies any such possibility; the Romanists, however, think that we can attain to works of supererogation, for which they claim the highest merit. Zahn finds himself in doubt. The word has something *Befremdliches* for him, especially since in Luke 12, 37 the Lord promises something which here he seems to deny and describe as altogether out of order. So he makes the word in question signify *entbehrlich*, "for whom we have no special use." But this signification is itself rather "unprofitable." The word here is interpreted by Jesus himself; "unprofitable" = deserving no special thanks, hence having no special claims upon his master. — This interpretation is corroborated by the final statement: **we have done that which it was our duty to do.** The position of the servant carries certain duties with it; when he does these he is indeed the servant he ought to be, but that is all. He has no claims beyond his servant station, and all that he does in fulfilling all his duties is nothing but what his servant position involves. So we in our servant relation to the Lord. The most complete and perfect service on our part entitles us to no claims whatever as over against him. As his servants all the service we can possibly render is nothing but our self-evident due towards him. — But now it is a fact that the Lord on his part is not going to act as the master in this parable. And remember that this master is a picture of ourselves as we act toward people who are our servants and work for us. The Lord is going to reward his unprofitable servants, even those who fall short in many a duty. What now of all such rewards? They are due wholly to his grace. They are an expression of his unbounded generosity. They are not in the least due to any merit on our part. This too the parable makes perfectly plain. If the master had praised or rewarded that servant, it would

have been altogether gratuitous on his part. And now we can add what every one of us must learn once for all: if for our service imperfect and poor at best and not to be compared with that of the servant in the parable, we now think we ought to receive special recognition at the Lord's hands, we are doing an outrageous and utterly presumptuous thing. It is such a thing looked at from our side, because we are falsely presuming claims where there are absolutely none. But the thing is even worse when looked at from the Lord's side: his wholly undeserved grace, his glorious generosity, which is so wonderful just because he gives it to us without our deserving it, we would turn into a totally different thing, we would make of it nothing more than a payment coming to us of right and justice. The glory that is the Lord's we would snatch from him and make a credit belonging to us. Can the Lord consent to such a double lie? — Philippi has this doctrinal summary, *Glaubenslehre*, V, 1, 223: "If now the good works of believers are imperfect, they are also without merit, and that the more since the Lord designates them, Luke 17, 10, as nothing but the due fulfillment of duty, even though they were altogether perfect. If then in Matth. 10, 13, cf. Luke 10, 6, mention is made of a worthiness to receive peace, this can consist only in a believing receptivity of the preaching of peace, as vice versa in Acts 13, 46 unbelief declares itself unworthy of the reception of salvation. Least of all, however, are good works able to merit eternal life, since this, as we have seen, has already been bestowed upon faith as a free gift of grace. Wherever, therefore, good works, spiritual striving and fighting, the confession of the Lord, and suffering for Christ's sake receives the promise of the deliverance of the soul, of the vision of God, and of the entrance into the kingdom of heaven" (here follow many passages), "there the thought is only of the divinely ordered way which believers must walk, in order that arriving at the goal they may re-

ceive out of God's hands of grace the crown of eternal life accorded to their faith."

SERMON.

It seems exceedingly hard for the human heart to grasp properly the wonderful doctrine of God's grace in Christ Jesus. A secret Pharisee lurks within every bosom, and the strongest measures must be taken to drive him out and to prevent him from coming back. This explains why the Bible is full of warnings against men setting up any claims of theirs against God, and trusting in any merits of their own in dealing with God. Our Lord Jesus Christ has gone to great lengths to show us most fully and clearly just what God's grace is, all its richness, all its glories, and all its comfort, and how utterly foolish, dangerous, and deadly it is to put our trust in anything but this grace. In the parable of the unprofitable servant he lets the light of truth shine on all our supposed merit before God. There is no such thing as merit on our part at all. It is a figment of the brain, a blind delusion of those who refuse to listen to God. Hear what the Savior tells us.

Look at the Question of Merit in the Light of the Parable of the Unprofitable Servant.

There you will see what it means when men boast of **great merit**—when Christ speaks of **no merit at all**—when thus nothing is left us but **unmerited grace**.

I.

Here is a picture from every day life. A man owns an estate to which many servants belong. We see one of these servants at his work. He plowed the fields all day long. That, of course, was no easy work, as every farmer well knows. Or he spent the day taking the flocks out to pasture in the old way, when the shepherd led them out into the open country, guarded them carefully, and brought them safely back at night to their fold. With all this work done the servant comes in, but now new work awaits him. He is not told by his master to go and sit down to meat. He must first prepare the evening meal for his master. In the olden days this was the chief meal, and, of course, meant special preparation. With everything ready at last for his master to dine, the servant is obliged to add yet the work of waiting at table. He goes back and forth as he is bidden, and not till the master is

through is this servant's work done, so that he himself can rest and eat, and enjoy a little relaxation before he retires to his bed to sleep.

Mark well what the point in this little picture really is. Here is a faithful, diligent, willing servant. He carries out every command of his master. He does not grumble at the hard work of plowing or tending sheep all day long. He is not sullen when still more work is asked of him at the day's end. With willing hands he waits on his master to the last. If you asked what more he could possibly do, you would have to admit that there is no more. The Lord himself points this out when he draws his application to us: "So likewise ye, when ye have done all those things commanded you." This, then, is a perfect servant, a picture of what we would be in our service to Christ, if we perfectly fulfilled every last command which he makes of us.

But now what about the question of merit? Suppose for a moment that every one of us were actually like this servant, doing now and every day every last thing Jesus commands us, and doing it with a willing, ready, eager heart, so that not one thing is omitted. What would we think and say of ourselves with such complete and perfect service standing to our credit? Well, some of us, perhaps a good many of us, would at once think that by such complete and excellent service we had attained **great merit**. Our hearts would swell in pride, our pride would begin to boast, and we would be quite sure that God ought to recognize such service, that by it we had earned this recognition, and that God ought to reward us accordingly. That is exactly what many would think, and the worst of it is that they would feel in their very hearts that such thoughts are right, and that God surely ought to act in accord with them.

Jesus purposely pictures an ideal, perfect servant to us. He wants to give us as much ground as possible to build our thoughts of merit on. In reality our case is never as favorable for claims of merit as the case of this servant in the parable. We always fall far below. Even the best saint among us has to confess: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done." But even so the notion of merit keeps clinging to us. With the little that we actually do in God's service, and with the mistaken things which many imagine count in God's service, the idea possesses us that God must put a great price on this, that he is bound to do so, and that for what we thus do a great and mighty reward is awaiting us. Let us be honest about it. The world is full of such thoughts, and surely we too have had them, and in a way may have them yet.

That is what this parable wants. It is intended to call out our dreams of merit. Surely, a perfect servant like this one in the parable has correspondingly great merit with God! And if *our* obedience is not quite up to this man's mark, at least it is something, or at least our intentions have been good—at times; and so our merit with God ought certainly to be something, to say the least. Ah, if only Christ had stopped with the parable! If only he had added no explanation! Then, very likely, all those who are so bent on building up a merit of their own would have used this text as a proof passage for their dreams, like they try to use some other passages. But now, what does this parable of the perfect servant do? It only calls out our foolish claims of merit, and then it crushes them altogether.

II.

Look again at this parable. There is an application to it, one which casts a new light altogether on this servant whose obedience was so perfect.

His work is all done at last. There was the arduous labor during the day, and on top of it this added labor in the evening. He has served his master's meal, and has diligently and devotedly waited on his master while he ate. Now what does the Lord say? Does he praise and exalt the servant? Does he tell us how the master of that servant is or ought to be beholden to him? Does he describe some great reward and honor bestowed upon that servant by his master? Well, if you think anything of the sort, you are going to be badly disappointed. This is what the Lord says of the master of that servant: "Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not." Does that surprise you? If it does, then that shows how wrong and mistaken are all your ideas about your service to God. And by the grace of God this parable of Christ is to correct them.

For mark well the point of Christ's question at the close of the parable. Here was a perfect servant, and he rendered a perfect obedience. But even by this perfectness he earned **no merit at all** from his master. He had done his part as a servant, and that is all. And what that means for you and me in our service to God Christ brings out still more clearly: "So likewise ye, 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." The Lord is right. When it comes to the question of merit the servant in the parable has none at all. His master knows that he has none, and he himself knows it, and we who are in the place of that servant now ought to know it likewise. Only blind people can see merit where there is none.

The man in the parable is a servant. What does that mean? This that his time and labor belong to his master. For this he was hired and bound to his master. For certain wages he had agreed to render certain service. When now his master asks for those services, must not the servant render them? Is it not so with all servants, with all employees? Their service and work belongs to their employers. When they perform it fully and completely, they are doing only what in common honesty they ought to do; they are giving to their employers nothing more than what belongs to them. If they did less they would be robbing their employers. Is there any claim beyond that? Why your employer would laugh at you, if after doing your work for the wages agreed on you would come to him claiming that he ought to do all sorts of other things besides for you, because you had worked the allotted number of hours or performed the apportioned task. If you were an employer, what would you say to a workman who came with such claims to you? Who is there among us that does not take a servant's work, in fact insist on that work, and when it is done and paid for feel no further obligation whatever? Is there any obligation beyond, which the servant can urge? Nobody knows of any.

Perhaps you think that this does not cover our case with God, when we consider our service to him. You are right, it does not. Only instead of our case being more in our favor in our service of God, it is altogether and completely less so. We are not like the servant of a human master who can in most cases work for that master, or leave it alone. We literally belong to God. He made us. Every breath we draw, every minute we live, every power we have, every thing that we own, belongs to him, and is a gift from him to us. St. Paul reminds us: "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?" We could not pay God for these his gifts if we tried. If we lived and labored a million years, we could not pay him.—More than this. When we talk of being servants of his, that means that he has made us such, taken us out of the devil's bondage, washed us clean from our sins through his Son's blood, and set us in his church as his servants. So all that enables us to render any true spiritual service to God is altogether and in the very first place a gift of his to us. Now what about our service? Why, it all belongs to him. He has paid us for it in advance, paid us at an enormous rate. We cannot even estimate what all we have from him before we ever do a stroke of work for him.—Now think of us, after all this, standing up before him and declaring that he owes us still more! The thought is outrageous. He never

owed us anything in the first place. But worse yet, to stand up thus before him when we have failed to render him complete service, claiming still more from him when our service has only been half of what it should have been! Thousands do even a more outrageous thing still. Instead of serving God as he demands, they do a few things which they in their own folly choose to do. He wants them to believe in Christ, but they refuse to do it; he wants them in his church, but they stay out of it; he directs them by his Word, but they will not even hear and read it. And yet they come with claims upon God! No man on earth would submit to anything of this sort, if any servant of his would do such a thing. It is only God whom men thus try to abuse.

No, my friends, there is no such thing as merit, either *great merit* or any merit at all in our relation to God. After all that he has given us he owes us absolutely nothing—we owe him everything, and with the longest and most perfect obedience could not pay even a fraction of it. Look thus at the question of merit in the light of this parable, and then no thought of merit great or small will ever rise again in your hearts.

III.

All this is meant to sober us by properly humbling us. But there is a blessed purpose behind it all, and we would not read this parable aright if we failed to detect it.

Remember it is the Lord Jesus who speaks this parable. He is the very embodiment of God's grace to us, and God's grace is the direct opposite of all human merit. This explains to us the real object of the parable—it is intended to sweep away all our false and foolish dreams of merit, to clear the ground properly, in order that we may realize fully just what God's grace is, and accepting it as grace may possess all its infinite blessings. The thing that we must learn first of all is what Jesus here says: "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."

The very presence of Christ, and his speaking a parable like this for our enlightenment, is evidence sufficient that God does not intend to do as the master does in this parable, and as we constantly do in the ordinary affairs of life, when we take the full measure of work from our employees for the stipulated wages and count the matter as ended there. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts," says the Lord. God plans to bestow upon us his **unmerited grace**. This is a thing no ordinary master or employer does as regards those whom

they employ. They all stop short of grace. It would bankrupt them, or break up their business, if they should attempt to dispense with a free hand all sorts of unmerited grace. But God who is infinitely rich not only is able to bestow gifts of priceless value upon us, but also delights to do so—his wondrous grace is his highest glory. And this is grace—to receive from the hand of God what we have in no way earned or deserved; yea, when we have deserved his wrath and punishment, to receive instead his love, his kindness, and his blessings in time and in eternity. Grace is when the criminal who ought to be hung is pardoned and set free; when the wicked son who repudiated his father and went into a far country is received back to his father's house; when the malefactor, receiving on the cross what his deeds are worth, instead of being cast into hell as he deserves, is taken into Paradise for the sake of Jesus Christ his Savior. Such grace is to be ours, and in the same way through Christ, God's fountain of grace.

Now the one thing that blocks this grace and bars it out from us is our refusal to recognize it as grace, our determination to make demands upon God as though he owed us heaven or any of his blessings because of our goodness or works, instead of recognizing that all demands on our part are an outrage towards God, since there is only one thing we can rightly demand of him, namely the just penalty for our sins and misdeeds. To come with such demands is to cast aside God's grace. To insist upon our supposed merit is to force God to give us our merit, and that means to throw us out of his kingdom forever. O the folly of men, when God desires to shower unmerited grace and gifts upon them, for them to stand on merit! when God owes them nothing, and they owe God everything, and can never pay him what they owe, to make it appear the reverse! Can God submit to such a thing? Will you submit when a man owes you, for him to declare that you owe him? And in this case God is on the one side, and you, a worm of the dust, on the other! No wonder Christ made such effort to save us from this deadly folly.

Oh, then, let us recognize the blessedness and glory of *unmerited grace*! It is twofold. First the grace that has made us servants of God. This we have already received. Miserable, damnable sinners that we were, God has sent us his Son, cleansed us through his blood, placed us in his kingdom and church, honored us by letting us work for him. In all eternity we cannot thank him for this part of his grace. The very thought of it ought to kill the least idea of our making claims upon God on the strength of anything we now may be able to do for him. Our one motive ought to be to serve him now with all our might, in the most perfect service we are able to render. Can we ever with-

hold anything from him who has bestowed so much upon us?—And the other part of his grace is similar. After saving us and honoring us by making us his servants God in his super-abounding grace intends to put his own undeserved estimate upon our poor, imperfect service. To each one of our little works, which really is worth nothing to him, and for which his past grace has already paid a millionfold, he means to add another measure of his grace, and to give us for such works the most priceless blessings in time and in eternity. It is as if a man should do a poor day's work plowing, shepherding, or waiting at table, and instead of getting his proper wage of a couple of dollars a day should receive a million dollars for each single day. And even this estimate is too slight, for none of earth's millions could pay for one of these unmerited rewards which God bestows upon us. Hear what the Lord says: "Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." And again: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." And Daniel, the prophet, declares: "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Do we want to blot out these promises? Then let us talk of our merit instead of God's grace. But who that has the least conception of his own utter lack of merit, and of God's infinite richness of grace will ever hesitate as between the two?

Great merit?—Why, there is *no merit at all!*—But thank God through Christ Jesus, there is an infinite measure of *unmerited grace!* That and that alone shall be our heart's joy and hope.

OUTLINES.

The heart of the text lies in the two words: "unprofitable servants," and every sermon on this text must penetrate to this heart. Now, of course, we may formulate the central thought in our own way, and that will distinguish the sermon. In addition we may approach that center from one or the other side, and that again will make the sermon distinctive.—Why does the Lord call us unprofitable servants? Because we like to deny it; because we ought to realize it; because so much is involved in our realizing it.—The servant who did all that was commanded him—are we like him? We are not, because we do less, and claim more.

•

We ought to be like him, doing as much, yet claiming nothing. — Langsdorff has this division and treatment: What does it mean to be servants of God? It means that we are bound to serve and obey him—that all our service is without merit before him—that by his grace alone are we justified and saved.

“We are Unprofitable Servants.”

1. That sounds like a *hard judgment*.
2. That is a *necessary confession*.
3. That ought to be a *fruitful admission*.

How to Read the Parable of the Unprofitable Servant.

1. *Read it first with the idea of merit, in order that this idea may wholly vanish from your heart.*
2. *Read it secondly with the idea of grace, in order that this idea may wholly possess your heart.*

**The Parable of the Unprofitable Servant:
Or: the Case of Merit versus Grace.**

1. *Establish merit, and you lose grace.*
2. *Drop merit, and you find grace.*

**The Strange Thing about the Parable of the
Unprofitable Servant.**

In most parables there is only a likeness between the picture and the thing pictured; here there is a likeness and an unlikeness combined.

1. *We are like this servant, and yet altogether unlike him.* He does all that is commanded; do we?
 2. *God is like this master, yet altogether unlike him.* He has a right to take all our service without a word; does he?
-

THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 13, 10-17.

This is one of the Sabbath miracles. It was purposely wrought on the Sabbath, and thus constituted a solemn protest against the unwarranted authority of the rabbinical regulations regarding the holy day of the Jews. It challenged and overthrew that false authority and broke the bondage it fastened upon the people in the old covenant. Christ's miracle was a vindication of the liberty and blessing connected by God himself with the regulations he had given his people in the old covenant. This note of *liberty* stands out in the miracle itself, for a woman bound and fettered by Satan is set free by Christ. Her bodily liberation goes together with the spiritual liberty God's Son brought to God's people. In considering the wonderful act of Christ we must hold fast that it does not go beyond the bounds of the old law of God prescribed for the people of the old covenant. Christ keeps the third commandment as it applied to the Jews of his day. He does not repudiate the ceremonial features of this commandment as still in force until the new covenant should be established in his blood. In due time the fuller liberty of the final covenant would come in, but the time for this had not yet come. So we must not put too much into this or any similar miracle. Christ is not yet setting aside the ceremonial side of the law; he does not release his disciples as yet from the law of the seventh day; this is not a text on the Christian Sunday and the Christian significance of the third commandment. At best we may say that the liberty here vindicated by Christ is a foreshadowing of the fuller and more blessed

liberty to come. We must content ourselves, then, with what this text actually teaches and demonstrates, namely that men must not bind what God has left free.

13, 10. And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath day.

The imperfect ᾔειπε with the present participle is really like saying that Jesus was engaged in teaching in one of the synagogues. He was in the midst of this work. Yet where the synagogue was we are not told, nor is there any specific time mark. The time and the place, then, make no difference as regards what was here done and said by Jesus. We get all that Luke intends for us without these additional points. Perhaps Zahn is right when he thinks Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem going through Perea. — Yet we must know that this wonderful deed took place **in one of the synagogues**. The service was in progress, the people were assembled, and with the consent of the ruler or rulers of the synagogue Jesus was teaching. This pictures the scene for us, and explains what follows the miracle. So also the fact that this all took place **on the sabbath day**. In fact, this is the chief point. The miracle is not reported so much as an illustration of Jesus' power or mercy, but as a signal mark of his view of the Sabbath day. Here he clashed once more with the pernicious traditions of the scribes and rabbis. They had darkened God's law and commandment by piling on top of it a mass of human regulations, counting these as sacred as God's own commandment, yea, making these the chief thing and thus failing to apprehend aright what God's commandment really meant. So the scene is set, and the action begins.

11. And behold, a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years; and she was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up. 12. And when Jesus saw her, he called her, and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. 13. And he laid his

hands upon her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God.

Jesus is in the midst of his teaching. Now all at once this woman appears. It is best to assume that she came into the synagogue at this moment, and not that she was in the audience from the start. If the latter is assumed we have no explanation for the interjection **behold**, and for the fact that Jesus did not see her before this moment. All is clear, if we suppose that she now entered. With her sad infirmity she most likely did not attend the meetings at the synagogue regularly, but now, when she heard Jesus was there, either of her own accord, or induced by others, she painfully and slowly made her way to this place of worship. When *ἰδοὺ* has the acute accent it is read as a mere interjection; if read as the imperative of the verb it would have the circumflex. The interjection draws attention to the woman. Hers was a strange case, and still more extraordinary was what now was done for her.—No name or other description of the **woman** is added, nothing but her peculiar affliction. We may take it that she was one of the ordinary people of the place. Her coming to the synagogue, however, betrays in advance what Jesus states positively a moment later, namely that she was a Jewess, and that her place was thus properly at the house of Jewish worship.—The affliction of this woman was very unusual: **which had a spirit of infirmity**. The Greek is even more expressive, putting the word "spirit" forward, and placing the participle between the noun and its appended genitive "of infirmity." We may imitate it: "which had a spirit, namely one of infirmity." Zahn contradicts the other commentators by asserting quite positively: "The kind of disease is described so exactly that one cannot think of demoniacal possession. Nor does v. 16 justify it." Luke, himself a physician, is indeed exact; but how this shuts out the idea of posses-

sion is hard to see. Zahn ought to tell us why this inspired physician wrote *πνεῦμα*, when he meant, as Zahn asserts, that there was no spirit in the case. Ordinary cases of crippling are not thus described, and certainly not by making the word "spirit" decidedly emphatic. Zahn supposes the woman was hysterical and neurasthenic; but this seems to be a mere effort to substitute something in place of what Luke writes. Neither hysteria nor neurasthenia explains Luke's emphatic *πνεῦμα*. The true meaning of Luke is that this woman suffered from an evil spirit which bent her almost double and kept her body in this pitiful condition. Other spirits vented their malice upon this or that sense or faculty of their victims, but here the spirit inflicts this trying **infirmity** or weakness on the body as such. — And this had continued for **eighteen years**. The length of time is mentioned to show how utterly helpless and hopeless this case was. No doubt, many a remedy had been tried during all this time, but none had been of any avail. As year followed year the woman herself, as well as her friends, must have given up all hope. — A simple **and** is used to describe the "infirmity": **She was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up**. The present participles with *ἦν* strongly mark the continuance — this was her fixed condition. The modifier, however, belongs to the infinitive: "She was not able to lift herself up fully or completely." Her stooped position showed she was bound, under the evil spirit's tyranny. — The woman came into the synagogue while Jesus was preaching. But **when Jesus saw her**, and, of course, at once recognized the true cause of her trouble, **he called her**. We may imagine that she at once obeyed; instead of seeking a seat in the place reserved for the women in the synagogue, she came forward to where Jesus was sitting while preaching, and then **he said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity**. Keil thinks that Jesus spoke these words first, and that after

this he laid his hands upon her. The reason for this separation of the words from the laying on of the hands Keil takes to be the Lord's intention, that the woman should attribute no magical power to the hands, but should put faith in Jesus' words. The trouble is that then we have no reason whatever for the laying on of the hands. Moreover, it is a mistake to assume that in every case of healing faith on the part of the person healed was required. In some cases Jesus tried to instil faith in advance, in others, however, faith plainly comes afterwards. When Jesus raised the dead, did he try to instil faith in the dead before he called them to life? and was the return to life dependent on such faith? All such ideas are wide of the mark. In every case the healing depended wholly upon the Lord's power and word, and not upon the sufferer's faith. How best to add also the gift of faith the Lord himself determined, and he followed no set method; in fact, some were healed and never came to faith at all. The notion of magical powers is a mere supposition on the part of Keil, with not foundation in the text. Zahn too has peculiar ideas, when he tells us that not until Jesus laid his hands on the woman did she gain courage and strength to raise herself up. Were the words of Jesus too weak to set the woman free? Was there some special power in the Lord's touch? And why this mention of courage?—Luke writes only this: Jesus spoke to her **and laid his hands upon her**. There was no interval, no waiting to see whether the words alone would suffice, or whether the words would produce faith. The words and the act went together. Our English versions have no business to place a period after "infirmity" and begin a new sentence with "and" in v. 13. The act of laying on hands is symbolical of blessing, and therefore always goes with words which state the blessing. Apart from proper words of blessing the laying on of hands signifies nothing. And as regards mag-

ical power, this may be imagined as belonging to words as well as to the touch of hands. To separate the words from the action of the hands gains absolutely nothing, it only introduces wrong ideas, which have no place here, only spoiling the story of Luke, and attributing similar wrong ideas to the woman. — The effect of Jesus' words and act was instantaneous: **and immediately she was made straight**, or more literally, "she was made upright again." Luke loves words like "immediately," which in cases like this one picture the effect to us as it really was. Trench writes: "And from him there streamed into her the currents of a new life, so that the bands, spiritual and bodily, by which she was holden, were loosened." The passive verb contains an implied agent. This was Jesus. His will of almighty power freed the woman from the spirit that had held her abjectly bound, and restored her to her natural condition. As in the case of all miracles no human mind is able to conceive how the deed was really wrought. Only one thing is perfectly plain, as here, so in every case, the restoration is instantaneous, complete, and beyond the shadow of a doubt. All men present see that the woman is free after all these years of bondage. — No wonder that we read of the woman that she **glorified God**. This statement is not meant as detracting anything from Jesus. Quite the contrary, all his works were done for the very purpose of glorifying God, i. e., ascribing glory, honor, and praise to him. When thus God's power and mercy was recognized in what Jesus did, men connected Jesus with God, began to acknowledge his mission from God, and were thus in a fair way to discover and believe that he was indeed the Messiah sent of God. A mighty impression must thus have been made upon all those assembled in the synagogue that day. But now we meet an effort in another direction.

14. And the ruler of the synagogue, being moved with indignation because Jesus had healed on the sabbath, answered and said to the multitude, There are six

days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the sabbath.

The ruler of the synagogue who had permitted Jesus to preach that day was still in charge of the service. Whether he had any associates we cannot make out. Perhaps he was especially prominent, so that any others who ruled with him deferred to him. This man did not appreciate what he was privileged to witness that day. He was a thorough Pharisee in his thinking, a genuine pupil of the rabbis and their casuistic teaching concerning the law, and in particular concerning the proper observance of the Sabbath. He saw nothing of the glory of God as it shone out in this most wonderful miracle. All he saw was that the rabbinical traditions had been violated by this act of Jesus. So his indignation is aroused: **being moved with indignation because Jesus had healed on the sabbath.** Luke lays bare the man's real thought and motive. He is angry at Jesus. But the only thing he can attack is the healing. The verb used signifies to give aid and help to the sick. In working the miracle Jesus had avoided doing anything that even the rabbis might have classed as work. He had only uttered a mighty word, and had accompanied this with a gesture of benediction. Even a rabbi could not have assailed either. The liturgical act of laying on the hands in benediction even the casuistic Pharisee had never forbidden. Jesus purposely cut off any occasion to charge him with "work" whenever he healed on the Sabbath, and thus compelled his opponents to lodge their objections against the miraculous act itself. So here also. This ruler had to attack the miracle, not some minor feature connected with it. — In doing this, however, the ruler proceeds in an indirect way; he does not rebuke Jesus to his face, but scores the multitude: he **answered and said to the multitude.** His words are a reply to what Jesus had done, and to the impression produced upon the assembled people. This, of course, includes the woman, although it does not single her out. Why

the ruler did not face Jesus and rebuke him we are left to surmise. His proceeding in this indirect fashion seems to be part of his hypocrisy. Even in this he does not act fairly and with full honesty. — In a peremptory way he reminds the multitude: **There are six days in which men ought to work**, thus recalling God's commandment, Deut. 5, 13, etc. Then he adds his commentary, which shows how he understood this commandment: **in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the sabbath.** This reads as if the woman had come in order to be healed. It may well have been, although the ruler could only surmise that she had come with this secret purpose. Still, there is another thought here — the healing of this woman might draw others to come to Jesus on this day to secure his miraculous aid, and the ruler may have wanted to keep these all away, lest the Sabbath be still further desecrated. But the ruler's exegesis of God's commandment strikes directly at Jesus; for the point of "work" cannot be charged against the people who would only come to Jesus asking for his help. Any "work" Jesus would have to do in their case. And the ruler holds that healing, such as had just been effected by Jesus, was "work" forbidden by the divine command. The multitude at best could be held guilty for such work only by way of desiring that it be done by Jesus for them. No doubt, the ruler thought himself shrewd in thus delivering an indirect attack upon Jesus, and one fortified by a divine command and a strong exegesis. The trouble was that the man was blind, both as to the commandment of God and as to what his own eyes had witnessed from Jesus.

15. But the Lord answered him, and said, Ye hypocrites, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? 16. And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, lo, these eighteen years, to have been loosed from this bond on the day of the sabbath? 17. And as he said these things,

all his adversaries were put to shame: and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.

Though not addressed by the ruler **the Lord answered him.** Luke purposely writes: "the Lord," and not merely: Jesus. Luke wants us to feel the presumptuousness of this ruler who sets himself up to judge the Lord himself; and likewise we are to feel the authority which meets this man's presumptuous charge. — The A. V. has the singular: "Hypocrite!" referring to the ruler alone. The better textual authority is for the plural: **Hypocrites!** Zahn is ready to accept the singular in spite of the textual authority, as more appropriate over against the one ruler. But v. 17 speaks of "adversaries," and in the reply itself "each one of you" implies plurality. This ruler was not alone with his condemnation of Jesus; he had a certain backing which Luke, however, only implies. The vocative "hypocrites" is really a judgment = ye are indeed hypocrites. And this judgment is put forth without temper or passionate heat, with the fullest deliberation and justification. It is a true judgment, and must ever stand as such. — On what grounds it rests we now learn. Jesus chooses the form of questions, the answers to which are self-evident and so plain and telling that no reply can possibly be offered to invalidate what they convey. **Doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering?** Beyond question this is exactly what each of these adversaries did. And it was "work" in much more tangible form than any healing Jesus wrought on the Sabbath. They untied the rope with their hands, they held the hope and led the animal out, and then they tied it up again. According to the definition of the rabbis this was most plainly work, and Jesus here applies the *argumentum ad hominem*. The law itself did not forbid this act on the Sabbath, but these hypocrites first set up a definition of forbidden work which was not forbidden, and then apply their definition only against

Jesus, and not against themselves. This was hypocrisy, and the greater because what they called "work" in Jesus was not work even by their own definition, while what they did was "work" according to this their definition. Hypocrisy can go little farther. The term translated "stall" is really "manger," and in fact animals of this sort are always tied to the manger. — The second question is like the first, only this makes the application to the act of Jesus by means of the argument from the lesser to the greater: **And ought not this woman, etc.** Only the Greek is more telling, since it places the object forward: "And this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan did bind," etc. The argument as Jesus formulates it is cumulative: first, he places this woman as a human being over against the ox and the ass as mere brutes; secondly, he places her as a daughter of Abraham over against these brutes; thirdly, he contrasts her dire need as having been bound by Satan to a terrible affliction, over against the slight need of those animals tied to their mangers away from the water when thirsty; fourthly, he emphasizes the length of her longing for relief, lo, these eighteen years, as compared with the few hours during which those animals were held tied. The argument was overwhelming. Did these men permit the loosing of oxen and asses with actual work merely for watering on the Sabbath, and then forbid the loosing of a poor sufferer from years of affliction by an act which involved no physical work at all? Such a proceeding was ridiculous and preposterous. — In the modifier: **being a daughter of Abraham**, we have Jesus' admission that this woman was a child of God; her praising God as she did establishes that. — Zahn thinks the statement: "whom Satan did bind," refers to her affliction only as an ordinary disease; and he tries to establish this by saying that all diseases were supposed to be due to the devil, bringing us as proof Acts 10, 38, and 2 Cor. 12, 7. This proof does not hold, and the doctrine built on it falls to the ground. **Whom**

Satan had bound defines what is meant by the πνεῦμα ἀσθενείας in v. 11. Satan is mentioned as the ruler of the kingdom of evil who works through his agents, the spirits of evil. — The exclamation **lo**, added to **eighteen years** makes these stand out in all their length of sadness. Would it be right to prolong this long bondage by a single day? No need to ask how Jesus knew about these eighteen years — either the woman herself mentioned them when she began praising God, or Jesus by means of his omniscience knew also this part of her infirmity. — The translation: **ought she not to have been loosed from this bond, etc.**, uses the perfect infinitive where the present would do in English: ought she not to be loosed. The aorist passive does not denote past time, but only punctiliar time: to be loosed by one act of loosing — such as Jesus had granted her. But the term “ought,” δεῖ strikes at the point of obligation as laid down by the divine law, and denies that there is anything in the law forbidding such gracious loosing **on the day of the sabbath**. This denial is beyond doubt for him who knows the law, as the Lord of the law surely also must know it; but here this denial is, wrung also from the adversaries of Jesus through their own actions which they allowed as not in conflict with the law. Only their base hypocrisy dared to hold Jesus guilty where they absolved themselves. Thus the ruler and all who backed him had their answer. — In the concluding verse we must note the tenses. **And as he said these things**, which Luke reports briefly, and which may well have included more to the same effect, **all his adversaries** (literally: who were lying against him; who were opposing him) **were put to shame**. The tense here is the imperfect; it does not report only the fact as such, but the duration of the shame. The verb may be middle: “were ashamed,” *shaemten sich*; or passive: “were made ashamed.” The latter is preferable, since we have so fully and clearly both the person and the argument by which they were shamed. — On the other

hand, **all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.** Here again, the same imperfect tense with its descriptive force: they went on rejoicing, and no doubt expressed their joy in various ways. And the subject of their joy is stated by a present participle: "for all the things that were being done by him." So Jesus did more deeds like this, all of them "glorious," showing forth his wonderful attributes to the delight of men. This time too the *ὄχλος* is with Jesus. And when he left this locality a strong impression of his Messianic character remained in the hearts of the common people, one promising a fuller faith in the days to come.

SERMON.

Liberty — what a glorious word!

Men strive and strain to attain liberty; they bleed and die to secure and maintain it.

Tyranny, bondage, slavery — what terrible terms!

To destroy what they signify men are ready to pay almost any price. Their one effort is to be free from oppression, and to enjoy their rightful heritage of liberty.

But all this applies only to the lower forms of liberty, namely liberty from political oppression, from social and commercial tyranny, from the wretched bondage of the intellect and conscience. When it comes to the highest liberty of all, that of the soul, men are far less responsive and enthusiastic. This or that yoke of human contrivance they shake off, and then celebrate the deliverance with exuberant joy; but at the same time they willingly wear the shackles of Satan's contrivance, and even resent the efforts of Christ, our divine Liberator, who would give us the highest freedom of all.

Shall we be content, like so many, to cast off the yoke of human bondage, while we go on wearing the yoke of Satan's tyranny? Nay, if the lesser liberty is precious also to us, and well worth the price men pay to attain it, then the supreme liberty is surely precious in proportion, and nothing should ever deter us from securing it and keeping it in our possession. Let us realize what this liberty is, and how we too may have and enjoy it all our life long. Our text displays it. Here we see the divine Liberator himself, and he is busy with his work of setting men free. A poor sufferer, held for eighteen years in the bondage of

Satan, is loosed by the miraculous deliverance of Jesus. And by his saving word of truth he likewise seeks to loose the bonds of delusion and error which fetter the hearts and consciences of men.

Jesus Brings us the Most Precious Liberty of all.

It is liberty from Satan's dominance—liberty from Satan's delusions.

I.

The worst tyrant of all is Satan. And the most terrible tyranny which the world has seen is that which emanates from him. His one desire is to lord it over men, to show that he is their master, and that they are his helpless slaves.

A true picture of this tyrant's work is given us in our text. Jesus was preaching on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, in one of the synagogues near the Holy Land. The place was full of people, who also were attentively listening to the Savior's words. In the midst of it all a poor woman comes slowly and painfully into the synagogue. She was bent double and absolutely unable to raise her body upright. What a pitiful sight! But the worst of it was that she had been thus for eighteen years. During all this time she had been held as in a vise, and all the remedies she had tried had been unable to give her even partial relief.—What was the cause of her sad condition? St. Luke tells us—she had "a spirit of infirmity"; and Jesus tells us still more plainly—Satan had bound her body and locked it fast in this stooped position. This was a sample of his tyrannous power, which with hellish delight he vents upon helpless men. In the days of Christ he often did this openly and directly, taking possession of some poor victim's faculties, making some of them dumb or deaf, rendering others violent and uncontrollable, and in the case of this woman keeping her body bent almost double. These were cases of demoniacal possession. One of the wicked spirits of hell, sometimes a number of them in unison, enslaved some poor human being, maltreating him in vicious and cruel spite.

Let us learn here what the devil's tyranny really is. His great power and cunning is used only for one damnable purpose—to bring misery and pain upon men. God who made us has given us a thousand blessings; and even when sin came into the world through man's own fault, a vast number of these blessings remained for us to remind us of the goodness of God, and to point us upward to him from whom these blessings flow. But sin enabled Satan to go on with his nefarious work among men. He wants to lord it over us and to show us that we are helpless in his power. Because of sin we are exposed to the attacks of his power. And this power of his lets loose a flood of evils

of all kinds upon us. He stirs men to hate, murder, vice, and all manner of crimes; he kindles the fires of hellish passions in them and causes them to inflict all manner of suffering upon each other. Look at the fearful things that happen in the world, so many of them plainly beyond what men of themselves would do—the devil is behind them, they smell of hell itself. In cases like these demoniacal possessions Satan applies his tyrannous powers directly, dispensing with ordinary means and agencies. Jesus himself tells us that these are Satan's own deeds.—What folly for skeptics and unbelievers to scoff at the existence of the devil! Do they mean to tell us there is no devil? that all this hellish wickedness and the agony it causes are not due to the devil, but to man alone? That would make a very devil out of man himself—a fine compliment they would pay to man! It is as when they deny the Bible story of his wonderful creation by God—they make him a descendant, or as the latest evolutionary science has it, a cousin of the ape. Once they make him a relative of the brute, and again they make him a very demon. But it is Christ, our Savior, and God's own Word of truth which tell us what the facts really are—Satan and his power, through the sin they have brought into the world, reign now among men, and this terrible reign is nothing but tyranny, bondage, oppression, and untold misery and woe. The poor woman in our text is a sample of what this power has done, and would like to go on doing to the fullest limit.

Now imagine what the condition would be if there were no restraint to the devil's power, no Liberator from his thralldom, and no release from his abominable sway. Then the devil could wreck his spite upon us literally as he pleased. He could fill the whole world with measureless suffering and feast his eyes upon our writhing and torture. How many of God's blessings would he leave us? And what wretchedness that he is able to invent would he omit to send upon us? These are things we must never forget when God tells us of the vicious work of the devil, and how his one delight is in our suffering.

But see what happened in the synagogue when the poor sufferer came in. Not one moment did Jesus make her wait. At once he called her to him, and while all the people looked on he said to her: "Woman thou art loosed from thine infirmity." And suiting the action to the word, he laid his hands in benediction upon her head. In that very instant the power that held her was broken. A mightier power had come upon it and shattered it. She who had been held bent double these eighteen years was loosed in that instant, raised herself upright, and realizing what had happened to her praised God for her wonderful deliverance through Jesus Christ. Behold the liberty she had obtained—part of the most precious

liberty of all—**liberty from Satan's dominance.** And this through Christ, the divine, the heaven-sent Liberator himself. This is the thing for us to contemplate that we too may rejoice in the fullest possession of this most precious liberty of all.

Let me sum it up in one brief word: this liberty from Satan's dominance is ours when the devil no longer has power to harm us. You see at once what it means—one mightier than the devil must come to our rescue and take us into his power. There is only one mightier, namely God, and he sends his liberating power to us through his Son Jesus Christ, our Savior. The miracle wrought upon the woman in the synagogue is a vivid picture of how God's liberating power works through his Son in our behalf. There can be no doubt here as to who freed the poor woman—it was Christ with his divine power. For eighteen years she had been helpless, now she was loosed. There can be no doubt either as to the kind of Liberator who freed this poor woman—it was the Christ of infinite mercy and compassion. As Satan's delight is to bind and maltreat, so his delight is to set free and bless.

Now Jesus wrought this and many a similar deed to reveal to us all what his liberating power really is, so that in our bondage under sin and Satan, and from all the evils these bring upon us, we may flee to him, find freedom and remain free all the rest of our days. Jesus did not come to earth for a brief day only, to liberate only a few sufferers from Satan's bondage of evil, and then leave again. He came to erect his kingdom on earth, to establish his sway of grace and mercy among men, and thus to open the door to us all that we all may escape the tyranny of the devil and find freedom and deliverance under his heavenly rule. Here is one mightier than the devil, who came to destroy the works of the devil, and to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. All those who believe in Christ are his own; they are free from the devil's dominion; no longer is he able to wreck his spite upon them. The almighty hand of Christ is over us, and the moment we cry to him in prayer the devil must flee from us. O glorious liberty! Who can measure its value? Would that all men might possess and enjoy it!

But do not Christian people suffer all kinds of affliction here in this life? Do not evils of one kind or another come upon them? Some of them are painful bodily evils too, infirmities of all kinds. Is this deliverance after all what the Bible says of it, or does the devil still hurt and harm us as he wills?—Let no thoughts of this kind ever disturb your hearts. When Christians suffer it is a different thing from the suffering of other men. Hear St. Paul's word: "What shall we say to these things? If God be for us,

who can be against us?" And again he says: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." This is the difference: the suffering of unbelievers is due to God's wrath, because they are determined to stay under the devil's power; so the devil is able to heap evils upon them for their destruction—but the sufferings of God's children and Christ's believers is due to God's love, working for their good, drawing them more closely to God; their sufferings are crosses, a sign that God is training and preparing them for heaven. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked," as the Psalmist says, but note, no crosses; "but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about." Ps. 32, 10. Therefore, while the wicked howl and cry under the bondage of Satan, God's children are comforted in all their afflictions. And while the evils which Satan heaps upon the ungodly shall increase until he drags them down to hell, the children of God shall be delivered from all evil. St. Paul glories in this deliverance: "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." 2 Tim. 4, 18. Our deliverance here in time is the prelude to our perfect and most glorious deliverance in eternity.

II.

But this most precious liberty which Jesus brings to us has another side. It is deliverance from Satan's dominance, by which he brings evil upon men, and then also it is **liberty from Satan's delusions**, by which he holds men's souls in bondage.

That poor woman in our text was indeed a pitiful sight till Jesus loosed her from her bondage. But there was a man in that synagogue in bondage even worse than the woman's. And think of it—he was the very ruler of the synagogue, the man at the head of it, who managed its affairs and helped to conduct the services. His bondage was not some bodily evil, but the delusion of his mind. You see it when the ruler beheld the gracious deed of Jesus upon the woman. Did this ruler also praise God for what Jesus had done? Not he! He found fault with Jesus, and he did it in a kind of cowardly way. He was indignant at the act of Jesus, and ordered the people to come during the six work-days of the week to be healed, but not as that woman had done on the Jewish Sabbath. There was something vitally wrong with this man, and the worst of it was that he did not even realize it. The devil had his soul bound by the chain of a vicious error and delusion, and the bondage was so strong that even the sight of a glorious miracle like that wrought by Christ did not break

it. In and by that miracle Christ was trying to help also this ruler's soul; he was holding out deliverance to his soul. But this man preferred to stay in his miserable bondage.

There was only one thing, then, for Jesus to do, namely to expose the delusion which bound this ruler's soul, in order that thus if possible he might yet be liberated, and in order that others might not like him remain in the same bondage. So Jesus faces the ruler who had struck at him through his word to the people: "Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox and his ass from the stall, and lead him away to the watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?"—God indeed had forbidden the Jews to work on Saturday, making this their Sabbath. And Jesus who had come to fulfill the law for us was the last person in the world to break God's commandment. Who but a deluded Jew could dream of charging that Jesus had worked when he spoke the words of deliverance to the woman and laid his hands in blessing upon her head? Without any work as God's law forbade it Jesus had loosed a poor sufferer from Satan's bondage. But think of this ruler and others like him. They never hesitated to go into their barns and untie the ropes which fastened their cattle to the stalls, to lead them out to water, and then to tie them up again? That was loosing too, and loosing with a little work at least. Yes, a brute beast they would loose, and merely to quench its thirst with water; but a human being, tied by Satan, they demanded should wait till the next day. An ox and an ass they untied even on the Sabbath, but a daughter of Abraham, one of their own chosen people, intended of God as an heir of heaven, they forbade to be loosed from the devil's own rope, just because it was the Jewish Sabbath. What a delusion? God's Sabbath, while it was never meant to deprive animals of water though they had to be untied and led out to get it, most assuredly *was* intended of God to bring help and blessing of all kinds to men. Therefore Jesus used his tongue in preaching on the Sabbath, and therefore he used both tongue and hand in loosing the woman from her bond. What a miserable delusion for this ruler to blame Jesus as if Jesus had worked on the Sabbath, when the ruler himself regularly did on every Sabbath what could be counted work in a sense far more real!

But this was not the worst part of his delusion. When this man found fault with Jesus regarding the Sabbath he blinded himself to the wonderful revelation Jesus was granting him. Here was almighty power, here was heavenly grace and mercy, here was the eternal Savior himself, and here was one poor sufferer freed by this Savior's power and grace—and this ruler failed to

realize what all this was and what it meant. He stickled about the Sabbath, when the great Lord of the Sabbath and Lord of salvation stood before him and revealed himself as such. That is what the devil wanted. That is why he had fastened these perverted notions about the Sabbath upon men like this ruler, when the whole law of God was utterly against such notions. He wanted to keep the souls of these men so tied and fettered that they would not accept Christ nor his saving help. The devil persuaded them that Jesus broke the Sabbath, in order to persuade them that he was not the Savior sent of God. This is the worst part of the ruler's delusion.

Here think of the delusions with which Satan keeps men's souls bound to this very day. Some of them are just as trivial and hypocritical as the Jewish notions about the Sabbath. Some find fault with his person, some with his doctrine, some with his work, some with his church. They will not believe that he is the Son of God, though all his miracles attest it, and all the Scriptures declare it, and any Savior who is not God could not possibly remove our sin and deliver us from Satan's power. They reject this or that about his doctrine, especially that faith alone secures salvation; and yet how can a sinner be saved except he entrust himself wholly to Christ's saving power, and except he take Christ's Word just as he says it, knowing that he who saves us will surely never mislead us. Likewise this Savior's work, especially his atoning death on the cross; and yet the whole Bible attests that without the shedding of blood no sin can be removed from the sight of God, and this wondrous death of Christ in our stead is his highest glory. So with all the delusions invented by the devil to bind men's souls to himself. Why will men not see that their real purpose is to draw and keep us away from Christ, to make us think we can be saved without him, or so to misconceive him and his salvation that though we think we are saved we still remain bound fast to sin and Satan.

But thank God, here is our blessed Liberator who by the power of his Word and revelation shatters these Satanic delusions and sets men's souls free. Alas, the ruler in the synagogue would not be freed, even when the black bonds that held him were exposed. But liberty was there calling to him, trying to take the fetters from him, opening heaven itself to him. The people in the synagogue, however, realized what Jesus was bringing them. They disregarded the wicked folly of their own ruler and joined the woman in rejoicing "for the glorious things that were done by Jesus." That joy showed that Jesus' power was beginning to free their souls. Freedom, true freedom, as Jesus bestows it, always brings forth joy; and the more we enter that freedom, the deeper and happier will our joy be.

Away, then, with every delusion with which Satan would bind us! Let us give our hearts wholly to him, and his Word of truth shall make us free indeed. Above all let him make us true and sincere in learning from him, for hypocrisy is only another secret chain of Satan. Thus having obtained this precious liberty through the grace of our heavenly Liberator, let us follow him in ever increasing joy. With Satan's power no longer hurting us, and with Satan's delusions no longer ensnaring us, we shall be free indeed, and all our liberty, priceless beyond measure, shall be to the praise of our Savior's glorious name.

OUTLINES.

The distinguishing mark of this text appears in the word "loosed." Jesus uses the word twice, once when he frees the woman, and again when he rebukes the ruler. So this text deals with freedom and liberty. Moreover, there is no call whatever for us to allegorize either the miracle itself or any other portion of the text, as is done to such a deplorable extent in the outlines of Langsdorff, some of them from men of whom we certainly should have expected something better. But they are compelled to resort to allegory when they set out to use this text as a basis for the Christian doctrine of Sunday. It cannot properly be used in such a way, and we certainly ought to give up the attempt.—We may divide the text horizontally, using as the first part Christ and the woman, and as the second Christ and the ruler. Thus: Christ delivers from the bondage of Satan: his power frees us from the evils with which Satan would bind us—and his word of truth frees us from the falsehoods with which Satan would fetter us.—The split may also be made perpendicularly, for the woman as well as the ruler are bound by Satan, and there is deliverance for both. Christ sets the captives free: consider their captivity—their freedom.—A division into three parts results when first the bondage is described, secondly the Liberator, and finally the freedom which he bestows.

Christ Breaks Satan's Bonds for us.

1. *We see it in the miracle he wrought on the woman with a spirit of infirmity.*
2. *We see it in the truth he brought for the men still held fast by error.*

How Jesus Put His Adversaries to Shame on the Sabbath Day.

1. *They were willing to leave a poor daughter of Abraham bound by Satan—Jesus sets her free.*
 2. *They themselves were bound by the bonds of error—Jesus labors to liberate also them.*
-

The Ox and the Ass on the Sabbath Day.

1. *They are led out to water.*
 2. *They expose hypocrisy.*
 3. *They justify Christ's mercy.*
 4. *They furnish us cause for joy.*
-

The Bonds which Jesus Broke.

1. *They are the worst of all.*
 2. *They required the greatest power to break.*
 3. *They now help us to realize the preciousness of our deliverance.*
-

THE EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Matth. 25, 14-30.

The parable of the talents brings out the mark of Christian *faithfulness* in using God's gifts with all devotion and diligence in his service. This is our text on good works, which distinguish all true children of God. "Especially in these last times it is no less needful to admonish men to Christian discipline and good works, and instruct them how necessary it is that they exercise themselves in good works as a declaration of their faith and gratitude to God, than that the works be not mingled in the article of justification; because men may be damned by an epicurean delusion concerning faith, as well as by papistic and pharisaic confidence in their own works and merits." F. C., 506, 18.

25, 14. For it is as when a man, going into another country, called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. 15. And unto one he gave five talents, and to another two, and to another one; to each according to his several ability; and he went away on his journey.

Little needs to be said on the difference between the parable of the Talents and the one on the Pounds. Gerhard already exploded the efforts of Moldonatus and others who tried to identify the two parables, and it is a pity to see that Meyer allowed the superficial criticism of Strauss and others to twist his judgment regarding these parables. What if the simpler parable was spoken second, and if part of the imagery runs in similar lines. The scope and persons addressed determined these matters. The Pounds was spoken when Jesus was drawing nigh to Jerusalem, the Talents

three days after his entry, while seated on Mt. Olivet. The Pounds takes in Christ's enemies and was spoken to the disciples and the multitude; the Talents deals only with Christ's followers. The Pounds gives the same gift to each servant, whose master here is a nobleman; the Talents bestows unequal gifts, and there is no nobleman, hence no reward like the rule over cities. The Pounds shows that as men differ in fidelity, zeal, and labor, so will they differ eventually in the amount of their spiritual gains and rewards; the Talents shows that according as we have received will it be required of us. — Matthew connects our parable with that of the Virgins by means of γάρ. This **for** helps to mark the scope of the parable; it shows that the parable is intended to explain more fully how we should watch and be ready for our Lord. To the brightly shining *faith* in our hearts we should add true *faithfulness* in good works. — After ὥσπερ we might expect a complement with οὕτω, but we are left to make the application ourselves. Or we may say ὥσπερ merely introduces the parable, so that we may translate: "Just like a man . . . called his own servants." — Here we have only **a man going into another country**. The parable shows that he is a man of means with servants and property, and all that is brought out is that he will leave home for a time. No more is needed for the Lord's purpose in this case, and hence no more is said. He is this "man," and his going into another country pictures his transfer into heaven till the time of his return to judgment. We are living during this interval now. In a way our Lord is gone, and we are left to ourselves; his visible presence is removed from us. — Before the man left he **called his own servants**. They were his δοῦλοι or bond-servants, "his own" as belonging wholly to him, like the retainers on some large estate, whose life and fortunes were completely bound up with those of their lord and master. His interests were theirs, and theirs were his. — And **delivered unto them his goods** shows why he

called them into his presence. The word for "goods" signifies possessions, and here we see that money is meant. They were to manage and carry forward his business during their lord's absence. We ought to note that the man certainly showed great confidence in his servants. It was no small honor he bestowed upon them thus to leave everything in their charge. The aorists point to a single act, which for the purposes of the picture is sufficient to describe what the Lord did for his followers on Pentecost when he gave them his Holy Spirit and all his gifts, an act which embraces us and all others who afterwards came into the possession of these gifts. We who now follow Christ are these servants. and the apportionment he made at Pentecost includes us at this day and date. — The division of the "goods" is significant, and is therefore briefly pictured: **And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one.** Three are sufficient to bring out the diversity in a concrete way, and so no more are mentioned here. In the parable of the Pounds we have ten servants and ten pounds, one to each servant. The difference is great. Ten = all; so we have ten virgins, ten commandments, etc. And every one of these ten gets the same capital to trade with, namely Word and sacraments, which belong to us all alike. In our parable, of course, all the servants are also meant, though this is not stressed; we are simply left to infer it. But the "goods" divided out can hardly be said to constitute all that the Lord has. For the "talents" are unequally distributed, and thus constitute the gifts and treasures which Christ's followers possess in unequal measure. They are the spiritual gifts which he bestows upon us, of which some receive a greater, others a lesser measure. Nor need we exclude those other gifts which are not spiritual in themselves, like faculties of body and mind, money, position, earthly advantages. They too come from our Lord's hands, and as his servants we will use these also for spiritual ends, sanctifying the

earthly in connection with the heavenly. It is remarkable that when the Lord pictures these gifts he uses the symbol of the talent, but when he pictures his Word and sacraments he uses the pound. The latter is about \$560 in Hebrew gold, or about \$32 in Hebrew silver, and it seems that in the parable of the Pounds the latter sum is meant. But a talent, or hundredweight, is about fifty times as much as a pound, thus over \$1,600 in silver. So the one servant received over \$8,000; the other over \$4,800; and the third over \$1,600. Is there a touch of sacred irony here, that our gifts should be pictured by such comparatively grand sums, while the Lord's own means of grace should be pictured by a rather insignificant sum? Well, those means of grace save men's souls, but our gifts though ever so grand only aid the Lord's work in a subordinate way. Luther had grand gifts, but not by them did he accomplish the Reformation, but by the Word; moreover, among his contemporaries there were very likely some with gifts as grand as his. None of the servants is left without gifts.—But why this inequality in the distribution of gifts? It might be enough to say that this matter belongs to the Lord and his decision alone; but he condescends to give us answer: **to each according to his several ability.** By nature men are not alike, each has his own *δύναμις*. So also in the kingdom of Christ there is a disparity of gifts. Paul has pictured it for us in 1 Cor. 12, 12, etc. As varied as are the natural needs and conditions of men, necessitating great variety among them and apportionment accordingly, so also are our needs in the church, and there must be an apportionment accordingly. This the Lord alone can make, for he alone has the wisdom, the complete view, and the corresponding power. Each, then, has his place and his part. Nothing would be gained, and much would be ruined and lost, if he who has ability only for one talent should be loaded down with five, or he who can profitably use two is left with only one. This would

make the Lord himself spoil his own business, like the meanness of the slothful servant. — **And he went on his journey,** leaving everything arranged in the best and most promising way. The adverb "straightway" should be read with the next sentence, since it is self-evident that the master would not delay after making the division.

16. Straightway he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents.

17. In like manner he also that received the two gained other two. 18. But he that received the one went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

Here is a picture of the Lord's followers as they are dealing with his gifts even at the present day. Some are faithful, and the results are according; some are unfaithful, and here too the result accords. Already the word **straightway** is a sign of faithfulness. This first servant does not wait in slothful ease and think that after a time he will attend to the business allotted to him by his lord; he goes to work at once. So also the second with his lesser gifts. — The aorists sum up his entire conduct: he **traded, and made other five talents.** The same thing is said of the second servant, only that with his two talents he **gained other two.** Both of these servants are equally faithful, and in this respect there is no difference between them. Their gains represent what the Lord requires of us, namely that according to what we have received we shall return unto the Lord. But our responsibilities are not alike, some have more committed unto them than others. They must realize that and proceed accordingly, else he with lesser gifts may be found in the end more faithful than he with greater gifts. One has a higher office in the church than another, wider opportunities for service, a greater measure of knowledge, a different and superior line of duties. One is president of a synod, another only the pastor of one little flock; one is a teacher of men preparing for the ministry, another only a humble member

in the congregation. Equal faithfulness will produce unequal results, each result, however, necessary in its place. The question of degrees of faithfulness is not treated directly in our parable; this is elucidated in the parable of the Pounds. And there we see that greater faithfulness brings greater returns, and hence greater rewards. Of course, we may ourselves make this inference also regarding the talents or gifts. A man with five talents may waste time, or be otherwise careless, and instead of trading in five other talents, may come in the end with only one or two. But the Lord omitted this variation as regards results. The point that the talents produce other talents need not trouble us. It will be sufficient to say that our work for Christ will extend his kingdom, and thus bring in more men, and help others already in to be more and more what they ought to be; and so there will be an extension and multiplication of gifts devoted to Christ's work — talent in this way producing other talent. The point, however, in the parable is the faithful use of our talents, and that is sufficient.—Over against the faithful servants Jesus puts the picture of the unfaithful one. He uses for this purpose the servant **that received the one**. Evidently it would be a false conclusion to think that only less gifted Christians may prove unfaithful. Jesus uses this servant to portray unfaithfulness, because of the three it should have been easiest for this one to be faithful. See how small was his responsibility as compared with the other two. How little was required of him! Let no man think that, if he had been honored with five talents, he too would have proved faithful. This would charge the unfaithfulness upon his master. How can he who is unfaithful in what is least possibly be faithful in what is greatest? Since only three servants are mentioned each stands as a type for an entire class, and this third typifies all the unfaithful ones, no matter what their gifts may be. By picturing him as burdened only with one talent the point is

brought out that he, like every servant of Christ, is given no more to do than he easily can do, and therefore surely ought to do. The Lord never sets a requirement beyond our ability. — This servant **went away and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money** (really "silver," so that we count talents of silver, not of gold). He let the money lie idle, that is the point in the imagery. And this is the least guilty of the forms of unfaithfulness. He might have abused his gifts to unholy uses, and that would have been worse. By revealing the grave guilt of the less glaring forms of unfaithfulness, the guilt of all other forms is established. This servant treated the gift as something he did not desire. Since it was committed to him he kept it indeed, because he could not avoid it, but he kept it in a way which showed his attitude toward the gift and the Giver — he buried it. He thus was like one who had no gift at all — only it was he himself who made himself thus. In this he is a picture of all those in the church who refuse for any reason to use the gifts Christ has entrusted to them, for his service. By such non-use these gifts are in fact buried, and they who have them make themselves as if they were without them. Moreover, this servant's complete unfaithfulness covers all degrees of partial unfaithfulness. Does any one among us want to be like this man in any way? To do in part as he did seconds his act, at least to that extent.

19. Now after a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and maketh a reckoning with them. 20. And he that received the five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: lo, I have gained other five talents. 21. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. 22. And he also that *received* the two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: lo, I have gained other two talents. 23.

His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

The great moment has come—the lord of the servants returns. **After a long time**, as Trench suggests, is a hint from Christ, that the day of his return will not follow so soon as his disciples were disposed to take for granted. Still the expression is indefinite. For the servants, however, it surely implies two things: it tests out their faithfulness by this delay; and it gives the unfaithful a long time in which to repent and amend. Many start well, but do not hold out against the temptation to sloth or waywardness; some begin ill, but after all return to better thoughts.—The present tenses: **cometh**, and **maketh a reckoning**, lend a touch of vividness to this return and the long looked-for reckoning. Yes, there will be a reckoning, and every member in the church will face it.—We lay no stress on the order in which the servants report. Burnand in his picture places the two faithful servants side by side, as if they reported together. In their words there is something of “boldness in the day of judgment.” We hear it in Paul’s words: “What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?” 1 Thess. 2, 19. Only behind all such joy of faithful service to Christ there is the sure confidence of faith in Christ’s service for us, from which faith our faithfulness flows. So the first servant comes with his ten talents, and delivers them to his lord. He then makes his report, first acknowledging: **Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents.** Without these he could have done nothing. The Lord deserves all credit for any gain we may bring to him. In the Greek there is no stress on the personal pronoun when the servant adds: **lo, I have gained other five talents.** There is no ἐγώ, only the form of the verb. Yet there is a joy and satisfaction in the words when

the servant hands over these five additional talents. Jesus would not rob us of that delightful feeling that our labor has not been in vain in the Lord, 1 Cor. 15, 58.—Now follows the lord's reply: **Well done, good and faithful servant.** The Greek has only *εὖ* = "well," i. e., "it is well." Meyer wants to draw this adverb to the following verb: "well hast thou been faithful," but this would have been expressed by some addition to *πιστός*. "Well" is absolute, a judgment in itself (Noesgen).—And with it the title: **good and faithful servant**, i. e., one who is excellent and reliable, and thus a great satisfaction to his master. No higher commendation can possibly come to any human being. This significant praise outranks any flattery or honor which the world may bestow. The Lord holds up this commendation for us in advance, in order that we may keep it before our eyes and allow it to stir us to greater faithfulness.—The master might have stopped at this, and most masters would; or they might add some more tangible recognition, namely part of the profit made for them. Not so this lord: **thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things.** So these talents are only "a few things," yet they try us out and are ample to reveal what kind of servants we really are. Over against them are "many things," veiled in their multitude and richness, partly because the imagery of the parable will not permit a fuller revelation, and partly because our poor earthly minds cannot grasp fully what these coming heavenly things will be. But here all the Lord's goodness and grace appear. His one thought is our elevation—to put us up as high as he possibly can. Note also the idea in the preposition "over," *ἐπί*, once with the accusative, and again with the genitive. We are to rule with Christ; he will make us kings and princes in his heavenly domain. Our use of the gifts entrusted to us now is to be the prelude to such elevation. Let us make it that more and more by the Lord's help.—If the previous words of reward,

spoken in abounding grace to a humble servant, went to the verge of the imagery used in this parable, the final word surely goes beyond that imagery: **enter thou into the joy of thy lord.** It is not strange that in some of the parables the imagery should be too weak to convey the full reality of what the Lord wants to reveal to us. Trench forgets this, when he thinks that these words refer to a feast arranged in honor of the master's return, and half thinks that the invitation to partake of this feast includes a kind of manumission or release from servitude. Meyer is right, there is no hint here of any feast, much less of manumission. Noesgen simply insists that the bounds of the picture are not transcended; but his duty is to prove it, which he does not attempt. These commentators, and others, forget to look at v. 30: "outer darkness . . . the weeping and gnashing of teeth." How about the parabolic imagery here? And if, in pronouncing the penalty on the unfaithful this imagery is left behind, shall it not be left behind in the same way when the reward of the faithful is pronounced? So we frankly say, "the joy of thy lord" is the heavenly joy of Christ himself. Leighton: "It is but little we can receive here, some drops of joy that enter into us; but there *we* shall enter into joy, as vessels put into a sea of happiness." Gerhard had the same thought: *homo intrat in illud incomprehensibile gaudium.*

V. 22. The second servant makes his report just like the first, so that no special comment is needed. And he receives the same commendation from his lord. The only point to be noted is that the faithfulness of the first two servants is equal. Both bring in a full measure of profit; both have done all that their lord expected. Hence their reward is equal. So not the measure of our gifts decides our station above, but the measure of our faithfulness to Christ. Some with few gifts here below, but altogether faithful with those few,

will outshine others, favored with many gifts, but not fully faithful with the many.

24. And he also that had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter: 25. and I was afraid, and went away and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, thou hast thine own.

Yes, he also came. He had to come. Every unfaithful servant will have to come. And this is a parable, and as such it reveals what otherwise men like to hide. Here we have the real thoughts which lie behind this servant's unfaithfulness. He says: **Lord, I knew thee;** but he did *not* know his lord. His wicked heart blinded his eyes and perverted his judgment. He imagined his lord to be like himself, self-seeking, afraid that others might secure what he wanted for himself.—He says what he thought of his lord: **that thou art a hard man,** stiff, like a dried twig or stick. And hard in this respect: **reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter.** The sense is this: thou makest thy servants sow, that thou mayest get a fine harvest from their labor; and thou makest thy servants thresh, that thou mayest fill thy barns with the grain they have cleaned. "To scatter" refers not again to sowing grain, but to letting the wind disperse the chaff when the grain is threshed. Now in a way what this servant says is true—we all do work for the Lord. And so the first two servants had brought all their gain to their master. But a part of a truth may be the very worst kind of a lie. So here. We are the Lord's servants indeed, and that may sound as if he would profit from our labor; but think what it cost him in the first place to make us his servants. If we labored for him a million years we could never repay that. Secondly, while our labor and its fruits belong to the Lord, this *all* is only the return from the gifts he first bestows upon us; it surely is rightly his. Then there is a holy

joy and heavenly satisfaction in laboring for him, our rightful master—or shall we serve the cruel tyrant, Satan? Finally, this blind servant saw only the labor and the gain turned over to the lord; he did not see what that lord had in mind, the astounding reward he held in store for his faithful servants. Now, many are like this fellow—they think the Lord is seeking profit of us, when we work, suffer, give for his sake. They think this brings them in nothing—and it does not, looking at it in a worldly way. Paul remained poor, lay long in prison, suffered a thousand hardships, died a martyr. The Lord took all Paul's labor—that is all they see. But these fools do not see what faith sees to its joy: the sweet content of serving him who first served us, to whom we owe all that we have and are, and from whom shall come to us a reward of grace at last so great that no human imagery can adequately picture it.—So the unfaithful servant tells what he did with the talent, saying that he was **afraid**. Again a half truth. If only he had had the proper fear! He feared he might lose the talent or part of it in trying to trade with it for his lord; but he did not fear to come as he did, with no profit after all this long time, the whole talent having been left idle all this while.—**Lo, thou hast thine own!** A true word at last. This fool had never made the talent *his* own in any real sense of the word. It has been asked how any unfaithful servant of Christ can possibly return to him the gifts he has received. That, however, is not the point in the picture. The point is what such wicked servants think. And here we have one of the better class, as we may say. He had not spent and squandered the talent in riotous living like the prodigal son; he had sinned more negatively than positively; he had simply done nothing with his lord's gifts. And so he imagines he will escape blame. Here, then, is a man who does not go in for the world's abuse of God's gifts, but one who stays in the church, a servant outwardly, but a drone, letting all his talents lie idle.

He is respectable in his way, but cold and indifferent. He has his faculties, his life and health, his influence and abilities, but that is all — no fruit of them for the Lord. Faith without works is dead. And so he comes at last to judgment, and indeed brings with him what thus he had, but with this dead faith, and with this perverted notion of his Lord.

26. But his lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I did not scatter; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back mine own with interest. 28. Take ye away therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten talents. 29. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away. 30. And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Here too we have a preliminary judgment; instead of "good and faithful servant," **thou wicked and slothful servant,** the direct opposite; only "wicked" receives a special emphasis in being placed before the noun. This lays bare the real character of this servant. His heart was evil, leading him to do an evil thing; and slothful, refusing due service to the lord to whom he owed all. — But instead of answering this man's base slanders, his lord exposes his falseness by showing him what his own mean judgment of his lord really demanded of him. In substance his lord says to 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 from my moneys." — Trench. The man had not acted in accord with his own ideas con-

cerning his lord. Thus he stands condemned out of his own mouth. What does it mean **to have put my money to the bankers?** and in connection with this: **I should have received back mine own with interest?** These words point to the lowest possible degree of faithfulness, to the very least the servant could and should have done for his lord. Even with a low view of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the low motive of fear to impel us, to do nothing at all for our Lord would not be our course, but to do at least this little, to let others who do business for the Lord on an extensive scale use our gifts in their work. The A. V. has "usury," but in the good sense, namely a proper rate of interest.—There is no trace of faithfulness whatever in this wicked servant's soul, so his judgment is pronounced: **Take ye away therefore the talent from him.** He never really made it his own, for this it could become only by his in some way, however slight, using it. We feel the justice in his being deprived now even of its nominal possession.—But the addition: **and give it unto him that hath ten talents,** comes as a kind of surprise. Yet of the three servants who was best able to take on an additional bit of burden? Evidently the first. And another thing comes out here—none of the Lord's gifts shall be lost. He takes care of them, for they are valuable to him, both here below and in the higher world. There in the hands of faithful servants the Lord will get a full heavenly return from the gifts which slothful servants here allowed to lie idle. What a mass of such gifts there will be!—But we have the Lord's own justification for this last order: **For every one that hath etc.** 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 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 high 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 to 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 this law at the last day, if we have despised its operations during our time of grace. He to whom the Lord allotted the ten talents was best fitted to take the one the cast-off slothful servant had kept buried in the earth. — The taking away of the talent is only preliminary to the taking away of the servant himself. And here the Lord breaks with the picture in all frankness. His words sound as if he himself on his throne of judgment were pronouncing the doom of the unfaithful: **And cast ye out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness.** On the term "unprofitable" compare Luke 17, 10, Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity. Here the word denotes utter uselessness; it sums up all that we have learned of this servant, who was servant only in name. — Who is meant when Jesus commands: **cast ye out?** This address also shows that we are outside of the imagery of the parable; for evidently the meaning is not that the two other servants are to take this third one and cast him out. We know that this is the work of the angels in the final judgment, and they are evidently meant here, although the parable itself could not make room for them in its picture part. — **Into the outer darkness** is definite, namely that darkness re-

served for the devil and his angels. It is called "outer," using the comparative, because there is a darkness already here in this world, where spiritual light and life are absent. Why the commentators pass over this significant comparative is hard to see. One may yet escape from the world's darkness by heeding the Gospel, but in that other darkness there is no more means of grace. It is the final separation from the light and life of God. The outer darkness is a description of hell, using one of its terrible conditions to convey to us what hell really is. — And a second is added: **there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.** The future tense here is used not merely to show time subsequent to the casting out, but in general the time after the final judgment, so that here again the parable is left behind. Of course, there will be no time when the last day arrives; time will cease, and we will be in eternity, which is not again time, only then endless, but timelessness, the opposite of time. What timelessness is no human brain can conceive; all that we are able to do is to use time expressions for it. Yet when we do this we ought to bear in mind that such poor makeshifts are inadequate to express the reality. "The weeping and the gnashing of teeth" are again definite, as the two articles show. This is the weeping of the damned in utter and absolute misery, and it is combined with a gnashing or gritting of teeth. But we cannot think that this gnashing is a sign of rage, or of despair (Meyer), or of impotent despair (Noesgen). It is a sign of excruciating pain. The Greek word for "weeping" also is not the mere shedding of tears, but audible, loud weeping and wailing. Terrible pain causes men both to howl and to grit the teeth. And this is the thought here conveyed. Repeatedly Jesus used this description of hell. It goes beyond human imagination, but is plain enough for us as a mighty warning of what fate awaits the damned, among whom also the unfaithful shall be found.

SERMON.

Every Christian ought to weigh carefully and take to heart fully what our Confessions tell us when they declare that "especially in these last times it is no less needful to admonish men to Christian discipline and good works, and instruct them how necessary it is that they exercise themselves in good works as a declaration of their faith and gratitude to God, than that the works be not mingled with the article of justification; because men may be damned by an epicurean delusion concerning faith, as well as by papistic and pharisaic confidence in their own works and merits." That means that there are two ways of losing eternal salvation. One is to put our trust in our own good works, instead of in the grace of God in Christ Jesus our Savior; and the other is to content ourselves with an empty faith, which fails to do good works. Both of these fatal errors we must avoid. And that is why the Lord spoke this parable concerning the Talents.

Here is the instruction we need. Let us learn with the Lord's help

What the Parable of the Talents Teaches us Concerning Good Works.

The Lord's instruction centers in three words. They are the keys to the parable itself and to what we most certainly ought to learn from it.

I.

Let us learn, first of all, *what lies in the word servants*. The entire parable hinges on this word. The man who travelled into a far country called *his own servants*. When he returned he commended the two faithful ones, saying to each: *Well done, thou good and faithful servant!* But the one who proved unfaithful he condemned, saying to him: *Thou wicked and slothful servant*. What has this word to say concerning the doctrine of good works?

That is very plain—only those who are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ are called by him to do good works.

Good works are by no means the business of everybody. How can men do good works, works really acceptable in the sight of Christ, when their very hearts are full of sin? Already in the days of Noah God declared: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." In the book of Job we read: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." And Jesus himself has told us that a tree must itself be good before it is able to bring forth good fruit; a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruits. Men are indeed able to do works that seem good

to them. These works are good by comparison with vicious and criminal works. But beyond that they cannot go. When a man is kind and helpful to others people call that good. It is good when compared with evil and criminal acts, as when men abuse others, rob them and inflict all manner of injury upon them. But all these kind and helpful deeds of worldly men lack the vital thing which makes a work good in the sight of God. He looks into the heart. And then he finds that the works of worldly men, even when praised by all the world as good, are done without love to him, without desire to please Christ, without gratitude for his grace and mercy, without the purpose to honor and obey him. How can he accept what is not done for his sake at all? How can he praise what men do without an effort even to secure his praise? No; the very first requisite in doing good works is that our hearts must be good. Our hearts must be filled with faith in Christ, with love to him, with the earnest desire to do his will alone. Then, and then alone, can any man begin to do works that Christ will call good.

That is what the word "servant" means in this parable. Christ calls his servants, and these alone he sends to do good works, namely to serve him and his kingdom. He first makes us his servants, converts and changes our hearts by his grace, takes away our sins by his blood, lifts us out of the kingdom of this world, and places us into his own kingdom of grace, the Christian church on earth; then he bids us go and serve him. Let us hold this fast. It will set us right in the very first and most essential thing regarding good works.

For here we see how our parable at the very threshold shuts out the idea, that any man by his good works is able to earn salvation from God. Why as servants of Christ salvation is already ours; Christ gives it to us when he makes us his servants. He earned it with his blood; no man could ever in the least earn it; and this priceless gift is ours when we are made his by faith in him and thus become his servants. And this we must ever hold fast, when we hear the call to do good works, else we will spoil all our efforts. For no worse thing can be done than this that we should try to earn over again what Christ alone could and did earn for us; that we should set aside his work and his gift, and substitute our poor works in their place.

But here we see also what the real motive must be when now we try to do good works. It lies in this word "servant." Think of what it means to be a servant of Christ. That means that he has released you from the servitude of the devil, that by his grace he has made you completely his own to live under him in his kingdom, that a new life, new spiritual powers, heavenly graces and blessings have been bestowed upon you by his love.

That is what it means to be a servant of Christ. How can you or any other man be thus made a servant of Jesus without feeling towards him the deepest gratitude and the most fervent love? Surely, we must love him who thus first loved us; we must now seek to serve him, who thus first came and served us. And all our service—how can it ever repay him for this love and blessing he has made ours in lifting us up to be henceforth “his own servants”?

In addition we see here how it could not be otherwise than that we should now serve our Lord and Savior. The Scriptures often speak of us as children of God. “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” We are called the heirs of God, yea, joint-heirs with Christ. In all these expressions we are shown what we receive from and through Christ. And that is the chief and most essential thing—that Christ does for us and gives to us. Then, however, come these other expressions. when, as in this parable, we are called “servants” of Christ. And these names show what we owe to Christ who has done so much for us. Why, it is simply impossible for us to take so much from Christ, and not love and thank him for it all. It is not that he forces us now to serve him, drives us to the service like slaves; we ourselves rejoice to serve him and by our poor and humble service to show how we appreciate what he has done for us. It ought to be our meat and drink to do as much as we possibly can for Christ. Only one, like this wicked and slothful servant in the parable, a servant of Christ not in fact, but only in name, a mere false sham-servant, could refuse to serve Christ. Who of us wants to be a servant like that? No; this term “servant” is our honor title in the presence of Christ. Blessed are they who bear it as such. Our service shall be our good works; they shall proclaim day by day that we indeed believe in Christ and belong to him.

And finally, this word “servant” makes plain to us what good works, good in the sight of Christ, really are. A true servant always does what his lord tells him to do. And so we who are Christ’s servants. Never will we set up our own ideas of what we ought to do or leave undone, but always we will let Christ direct and control us. His Word is our law. Men may invent all kinds of works which they think will please Christ, and they may do these self-invented works with all their might. We know that Christ has said: “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” Nor will we deviate from Christ’s Word when in some things it bids us to put away what our sinful hearts may still love and desire. We will heed him, deny ourselves, take up our cross, crucify the flesh, give up the love of the world, and faithfully follow him. “For the love

of Christ constraineth us; . . . that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." 2 Cor. 5, 14-15.

II.

And now let us learn what the second great word in our parable teaches us concerning good works. It is the word *talents*, the word from which the entire parable takes its name: *what lies in the word talents?* The man who travelled into a far country gave to each of his servants certain *talents*; and when he returned he made a reckoning regarding these talents; and to the faithful servants he turned over these talents plus the others which they had gained, that they should keep them forever. What does this word "talents" teach us concerning good works?

A talent is a sum of money, reckoned by weight. If we estimate it in silver, a talent will be about \$1,600 in our money. But this is a parable, and the sums of money mentioned here are used as illustrations of the gifts which Christ bestows upon those who belong to him as his servants and followers. And that makes plain to us what we need in order to do good works, such as Christ counts good—we need his spiritual gifts. The man in the parable did not simply call his servants and order them to go serve him; he himself fitted each one out for this service, he gave a certain sum into each servant's hands. With that sum they were to go to work.

This shatters the idea, as if any man could just start out of himself to serve Christ. He has to be made a servant first, as we have seen. But more than this—even as a servant he must be given his talent or talents, his share of the Savior's spiritual gifts before he can begin to serve him in doing works that will really please Christ. Good works are the fruit of the spiritual gifts which Christ bestows upon us. So again, without him we can do nothing. Let us mark that, for many forget it, and so fail in accomplishing good works, when, if they would let Christ enrich them they might indeed produce works to the praise of his name.

Christ calls these gifts "talents." That means they are valuable. Of course, they are, for they come from him. He has bought all these gifts for us at a great price. And now when he enriches us with these blessings we ought certainly not to count them cheap, but prize them highly and use them accordingly. These talents are all the powers, virtues, and graces which Christ by his Holy Spirit adds to our faith. Among them is knowledge, a good understanding of his Word and doctrine. Surely, a

precious talent! Next to knowledge is wisdom, the ability to use this knowledge in the Savior's work. Then comes zeal and energy, a holy fervor to do what we can for Christ. Then we may think of patience, kindness, brotherly love, bravery in confessing Christ, strength to suffer for him and the brethren, humbleness, gentleness, temperance, and other Christian virtues, all given and wrought in us by Christ. We may add all kinds of ability and aptitude for service, both of body, mind, earthly property, position, and influence, but all these sanctified by faith and love to Christ and thus lifted up into a higher sphere. What a precious gift any one of these is, to say nothing of a goodly number of them. How could any one of us get what we have of them except through Christ? "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" asks St. Paul, and then admonishes us: "Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

In the parable we see that each servant receives his share of the gifts. No servant is left without his portion. That is significant. No servant of Christ is forgotten by him—he has some measure of gifts for even the humblest among us. Yet the gifts are not distributed in equal measure. We see one servant who receives five talents, one who gets two, and a third who gets one. And the Lord tells us why he makes this difference: "to every man according to his several ability." How this is meant St. Paul has shown us most beautifully when he compares the members of Christ's church to the members of the body. It would not do to have them all alike, there must be great diversity, and this for the benefit of the whole body. If all the members were hands how would the body walk? If all were eyes, how would the body hear? There are a thousand tasks to perform in the church on earth, and to have these tasks properly attended to there must be corresponding gifts and a distribution of them for the best interests of the church. The feet are as necessary as the hands, although the feet walk in the dust. The eyes indeed are placed in the head, but they see not for themselves alone, but for the whole body and every one of its members, even as the feet carry and move forward the entire body. So all the talents are necessary. Even the humblest gift has its necessary and valuable part to perform. The Lord alone knows best what gift or gifts you can use, and so he has blessed you accordingly. Happy are we to have even one of his talents!

But let us not overlook the responsibility that goes with our measure of gifts. Often we think we ought to have more gifts, forgetting that "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required." If you have received less, the Lord will not require of you what he will and must require of another to whom he has committed far more. The pastor of a church has

a greater responsibility than one of its humbler members. God will not ask of a child what he will of a grown man. He who owns thousands as a child of God will have to give an account of thousands, but he who owns hundreds only an account of those hundreds. Let us be satisfied with the gifts we have, take what the Lord adds to us in his goodness, and use with all faithfulness the gifts he has placed in our keeping.

All his gifts, even the gift of one talent, is a trust which the Lord bestows upon us. In the parable the man gives the talents to his servants, and then takes a journey into a far country. You see how the servants now have the talents all in their own hands. Their master must have had great confidence in them thus to entrust his goods to them. It is indeed a high honor for Christ to entrust his precious gifts to us. He expects us to take care of these gifts, not to waste and abuse them, but to put them to the most faithful use in his service. Shall we prove recreant to his trust? Shall we abuse his confidence? Well, there is a servant of that kind in our parable. He utterly failed to appreciate the talent he had received, he buried it in the ground. That is how he rewarded the trust placed in him. Do you want to be like him?

The talents were given the servants in the parable in order that they might put them to use for their master. That is the real meaning and purpose of these talents. St. Paul writes: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Eph. 2, 10. Our gifts are really not our own, but the Lord's, for us to use. We are to serve and honor him with them. They are not for our aggrandizement, that because of them we look down on others; nor for us to abuse, debasing them for our evil desires; nor for us to let lie idle, as the wicked servant in the parable treated his talent. Remember what our Confessions say: "Faith should bring forth good fruits, and that men ought to do the good works commanded of God, because it is God's will." Every talent we have is for Christ's service in faith and love. He who understands what the Lord means with this word "talent" will rejoice that he is so honored by him, and will strive to serve him faithfully to the full measure of his talent.

III.

And now we must learn what our parable teaches us concerning good works when it adds yet another highly significant word. *What lies in the word:* **"Enter into the joy of thy lord?"**

That is what the master said to the two faithful servants when he returned and found that both had done what they could with his talents, the one with five bringing in other five, and the one with two, other two.

Did these two deserve such a reward? How can any man think of such a thing? Why, they were servants of their lord; all their time and strength belonged to him, and the talents were his. Then think what this joy of their lord is. This expression is no longer part of the picture of the parable, it is the reality itself, namely the joy and blessedness of Christ our Lord in the glory of heaven. Into that joy Christ says he will bid all his faithful servants enter. No, our little faithfulness here in this life cannot possibly merit such a reward. It is as if a child worked one hour for his father, and the father then should give it an inheritance of millions. We cannot talk of earning here; it is all love, generosity, grace, infinite goodness. Such a Lord is he whom we are called to serve. Oh, realize his true character! All the joys of heaven he holds in readiness for us, to give them to us all by grace; and so he asks us now to serve him faithfully in good works.

How miserably then that wicked and slothful servant slandered his lord when he called him a hard man who tried to get as much as possible out of others, using their labor of sowing that he might reap the harvest, and their labor of winnowing the grain that he might fill his granaries with it. Alas, that there are people who think the same of Christ to-day—as though he is after our work, our money, our service to enrich himself therewith. And so they count what they do for him as losing that much themselves. Away with all such follies and insults to Christ. Why, when he bids his faithful servants to enter into his eternal joy he tells them to keep not only the talents he entrusted to them, but besides all the talents they earned by their faithful work. Earth never saw a master like that among men. Oh, how we ought to delight to do all we possibly can to please and honor him!

Only the faithful are admitted into the joy of the Lord. Not because their service is worth so much to Christ, or could possibly merit such a reward; but because our faithfulness shows indeed whether we are truly the servants of Christ. Faithful service is the test. Those first two *were* servants of their lord, they showed it. The third, however, who never turned a hand for his master, was he a servant of his? He did not act it. And see what his thoughts were—miserable insults to his gracious lord. Neither in act or in thought was this man a servant of his lord. The talent brought that out so that all could see and hear it. Why, the man did not even bank the talent for his lord, that thus, without any labor on this servant's part, it might have brought

his lord at least some gain. So little did he care for his lord.— Could the Lord possibly say to a man with such a heart and such a life: "Enter into the joy of thy lord"? How would his scowl look in the bright joy of heaven? How would the black thoughts of his heart fit the happy songs of heaven? No; he belonged elsewhere. He himself had prepared himself for that other place: "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." He loved the darkness here already in his wicked thoughts and ways; so the outer darkness, the darkness beyond, was his proper place. Unfaithfulness proves that a man will not accept Christ, his salvation, and his blessings; then there is only one other place left for him. Let us remember that when temptations come to us to misuse the gifts the Lord has given us, or at least to let them lie idle, like the buried talent in the parable.

A wonderful principle lies behind this word concerning the joy of our Lord, his wonderful gift of grace to the faithful. It is this, that "unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Unfaithfulness loses even what at first it has. And this is true even of the lesser unfaithfulness. You need not waste and abuse the Lord's gifts to lose them and to lose likewise the final joy he has prepared for you as his greatest gift. Even to bury the talent, and thus not to use it, is to lose it. O the pity, when one might be infinitely rich, to become a total beggar, and thus to be cast out forever! But faithfulness multiplies our gifts. See how the five talents grew in the hands of the faithful servant, and the two in the hands of the other. So the Lord gives to him who hath, who really hath in love and devotion to him. And when the one talent was taken away from the wicked servant at last, who was best fitted to take charge of that? Why, without question he who had administered the five talents so as to gain other five. The Lord stands ready to enrich us more and more with his gifts, if only we show by our faithfulness that we will use aright these gifts of his. What an incentive to good works for us all! Such a wonderful, blessed Lord is ours. Let us look at all our gifts, at the increase the Lord delights to give us, and at the final joy he has awaiting us. Thus will our faithfulness grow day by day, and be full of joy even now, the pleasure of serving such a Lord, and the anticipation of the joy he has awaiting us.

Take to heart, then, what the parable of the talents teaches us concerning good works. We can sum it all up in one word—faithfulness. We are *servants*—let that make us faithful; we have precious *talents*—let that move us to use them faithfully;

we shall hear at last that glorious word of grace: "*Enter into the joy of thy Lord!*"—let that make our faithfulness our highest delight.

OUTLINES.

The parable of the Talents has three chapters, we may say, and these may serve as the parts of the sermon: the bestowal of the talents, the use made of the talents, the final reckoning in regard to the talents. The business of the theme will be properly to combine these three.—The parable has a climax, namely the final reckoning when the master returned from his journey. The sermon may be built around this climax. Theme: When the Lord of the talents returns: Will you meet him like those two faithful servants?—or will you meet him like the wicked and slothful servant?—Looking at the substance of the text, we see that it is intended to urge us to faithfulness. Our theme, then, may be: The Parable of the Talents calls for faithfulness. The division will bring out how the parable does this.—Likewise, the parable urges us to do good works, but really good works, and in the way set for us by our Lord. So our theme may be: Christ's servants must use their talents in doing good works: Look at the talents, and you will see what those good works are; look also at the reward of grace, and you will see how these good works are to be done.

Blessed are the Faithful!

1. *Theirs indeed is the work, while the unfaithful are at ease.*
2. *But theirs is also the reward of grace, while the unfaithful are cast out.*

The Most Generous Master in the World.

1. *He equips his servants in the richest manner.*
2. *He trusts his servants with the highest work.*
3. *He rewards his servants with the most wonderful grace.*

The Servant who would not Use his Talent like the Rest.

1. *He vilified his Lord, where with the rest he should have loved and honored him.*
2. *He dreaded to serve his Lord, where like the rest he should have delighted to work for him.*
3. *He had himself cast out, where with the rest he should have entered into the joy of his Lord.*

Are your Talents at Work?

1. A reminder of your *duty*.
 2. A call to what should be your *delight*.
 3. An intimation of what surely is also your *highest expectation*.
-

THE NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts 21, 8-14.

This text closes the second sub-cycle in the after-Trinity line of texts. We have examined in turn some of the chief marks or features of the life of faith. The final mark chosen for our consideration is *submission to the Lord's will*. We see it beautifully exhibited in the Christian church at Cæsarea, when Paul was leaving for the tribulations and imprisonment awaiting him. With sad hearts his beloved friends let him go, saying: "The will of the Lord be done."

21, 8. And on the morrow we departed, and came unto Cæsarea: and entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we abode with him. 9. Now this man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.

Paul is on his journey where bonds and imprisonment await him. His sea-voyage ended at Ptolemais, distant about eight and a half hours from Tyre. It was only one day's journey by land to Cæsarea. Perhaps because no ship was available at the moment by which to go on to Cæsarea, and perhaps also because the long voyage had been trying enough for the apostle, he now went forward to his last sea-port by land. **On the morrow**, after a day and a night in Ptolemais among the brethren, Luke writes, **we departed and came unto Cæsarea**. Luke is in the company, which explains the plural "we," and there were other associates of Paul. From Cæsarea their journey would go inland to their final destination Jerusalem. — A longer stop was made at Cæsarea, evidently that Paul might rest up for whatever awaited him in Jerusalem; at the same time he was able to inform himself fully as to the situation in

general in Jerusalem. The apostle made his stay in Cæsarea with Philip, and it seems that the little band of travellers all lodged together with this former deacon: **entering into the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we abode with him.** Nineteen years had passed since Philip had preached so successfully to the Samaritans, and had then brought the eunuch to faith on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. After that he had preached at Azotus (Ashdod) and followed the coast-line up to Cæsarea, where now we find him permanently located. Some translate the genitive participle with the noun: "being the evangelist of the seven." But the Greek, to insure this reading, ought to place the partitive phrase "of the seven" next to the noun "the evangelist." So the old rendering is best, which assumes that Luke means to distinguish this Philip from the apostle Philip. This Philip was not an apostle, but only an "evangelist," one who preached the Gospel in various places. We need not say that this was a different thing from the modern idea of evangelists, men who conduct revivals in the churches, operating a number of days or weeks in one place, and then going on. To make the identification still more complete Luke adds that this Philip "was one of the seven," namely one of the seven deacons elected in the church of Jerusalem years ago. When the church at Jerusalem was scattered by persecution Philip's office as a deacon there was ended. But his having been chosen for that office years ago still marked him, especially for Luke's readers who have his history of that election. Philip's name is the second one in the list of deacons, and he and Stephen are the only two of whom we hear something more than that one incident. Paul would certainly feel at home with a man like Philip; for as the apostle had preached to the Gentiles, so Philip had wrought among the non-Jews in Samaria, had converted the African eunuch, and was now living in a city a great part of whose population consisted of

Gentiles. — A remarkable thing is added, namely that Philip had **four daughters, virgins which did prophesy**. These daughters had never married and thus continued to live in the home of their father, and thus were present when Paul arrived. There is no reason to assume that their gift of prophecy in any way depended on their being virgins, for all the male prophets as a rule were married men. The word "virgins" explains the presence of these daughters here in their father's home at this time. The participle: "prophesying" = having and exercising the gift of prophecy. Not that they could prophesy at pleasure, but only when the Holy Spirit moved them and gave them a message. This gift was one of the charismata of the early church, and the remarkable thing is that all four daughters in this house had the gift. The wonderful gifts of the Spirit are, of course, never restricted to one sex; God distributes his gifts as seems best to him. We would err if we concluded that these four prophetesses were women preachers in the early church. Their gift was no office. How they exercised their gift we have no means of knowing, only the Spirit who bestowed the gift surely indicated to them the proper manner in which to put it into action. This may have been at times in private, and at times in public. A gift like that of prophecy would in the nature of the case be exercised only on specific occasions when the Spirit moved a prophetess to speak. A guide in this matter is what Luke reports to us concerning Agabus in this very text. We are not told that these four daughters, or any one of them, uttered a prophecy concerning Paul at this time; but there seems to be no reason for Luke to tell us at all about these four daughters at this point, if there had been no exercise of their gift on this occasion. Luke is not in the habit of adding to his account merely some interesting fact or other. The reason why the revelation made to Paul by these daughters of Philip is not recorded by Luke seems to be that a fuller and

more dramatic revelation was made in this regard by the prophet Agabus. The lesser revelation is thus superseded by the fuller and more important.

10. And as we tarried many days, there came down from Judea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11. And coming to us, and taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. 12. And when we heard these things, both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

The Greek here translated **many days** is literally: "more days," but without stressing the comparative idea; somewhat like our English "several days." The participle is the genitive absolute with the subject omitted in Greek, since it is easily supplied. — Luke simply reports the facts as they occurred, namely the arrival of Agabus and his coming to Paul and foretelling what awaited him in Jerusalem. But we may well take it that the Spirit who gave him this revelation directed him thus to seek out Paul and deliver this prophecy to him. We know that the apostle had warning to this effect from others gifted with the charisma of prophecy, cf. 20, 23. Here the full account of such a prophecy is given us, it seems, because it was very specific and striking, and because now the apostle was close to Jerusalem, this being his next destination. Commentators all remark on the fact that Luke here introduces Agabus, as if his readers had not yet heard of the man, when in fact Agabus was mentioned as one of a number of prophets in 11, 27-28. Some think that Luke here simply followed the "We"-record, in which, of course, Agabus is mentioned here for the first time; only this looks too superficial and mechanical altogether. The simplest explanation of the expression: **a certain prophet**, is that Luke does not intend here to refer to the other mention of Agabus, since that was made so

far back. There is no reason to doubt, however, that the same prophet is meant. He **came down from Judea**, most likely from Jerusalem itself, and this would be "down" both actually, Jerusalem lying considerably higher, and in a symbolic way, Jerusalem and its sanctuary always being conceived as a great height towering above all other places no matter how high they might be.—Three aorist participles usher in the next statement, all three thus indicating actions considered subordinate to what the main verb brings, namely the words of the prophecy: "(he) said," etc. So also the participles are subordinated in order: the coming to the taking, and the taking to the binding. The latter subordination is more marked, there being no connective between these participles. **And coming to us** reads as if he came for the purpose of giving this prophecy to the apostle. After arriving at Cæsarea Agabus made his way to the house of Philip where Paul and his company lodged. Here **taking Paul's girdle, he bound his own feet and hands**. He took the girdle up from where Paul had laid it aside when he laid off his long outer robe and the girdle used to bind it up with when walking or working. With the girdle he bound his own feet, and also his hands. This is best conceived as a twofold act, first stooping and tying the girdle around his ankles, then repeating the action by putting the girdle around his wrists. Noesgen thinks Agabus tied his ankles, and then pushed his hands through the loops of the girdle, as if hands and feet were tied together; but this seems unlikely. The act, of course, was symbolic, a sort of picture-prophecy. Cf. Jno. 21, 18; Is. 20; Jer. 13; Ezek. 4.—It is at once fully explained. Agabus **said: Thus saith the Holy Ghost, etc.** Let us note and weigh well that here the prophet is literally quoting the Holy Ghost. If this is not verbal inspiration, nothing is. The Holy Ghost has no difficulty whatever in communicating his word and will to the prophets in the most specific and exact terms; nor does

there seem to be a trace of anything "mechanical" about it—this dreadful feature which modern theologians feel they must eliminate, even if they have to destroy Inspiration itself. —Now this was the word of the Holy Ghost: **So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.** There is a slight resemblance here to what came upon Jesus, Matth. 26, 45. Paul's fate was not to be that of Stephen and James. Neither the symbolism of Agabus nor his words imply the death of the apostle, cf. 20, 23. To be delivered into the hands of the Gentiles might indeed mean that Paul's death would be demanded, but there is no hint that any implied demand like that would be honored by the Gentile authorities. One more point may be noted, namely that Paul's girdle is thus used by Agabus and mentioned by the Holy Ghost. The girdle binds up the robes when one walks and works—Paul would be confined, no longer able to go from city to city, and he would be compelled to rest, deprived of his work.—Agabus delivered his prophecy in public, when many of the local Christians, of whom now we hear incidentally, were present with Paul and his company in Philip's house. **When we heard these things** means we of Paul's company. But now the subject broadens: **both we and they of that place besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.** Of course, all present heard what Agabus said. Luke, however, stresses the unanimity with which both Paul's companions and the local Christians joined in trying to dissuade the apostle from placing himself into the power of his enemies. We need not argue the question that these pleadings, if listened to by Paul, would be like an effort on the part of men to prevent the fulfillment of the Holy Spirit's prophecy. Could such a prophecy remain unfilled? could human effort annul it, as it were? Not that there is a determinism behind the prophecy, forcing its fulfillment to come to pass. We know that the prophecy rests on the event, not

the event on the prophecy; yet the foreknowledge of God cannot possibly err. The situation, here, however, explains everything. The friends of Paul were actuated not by any close reasoning in regard to prophecy, but by their abounding affections for the apostle. They dreaded to see him snatched from their midst, delivered bound and helpless into the hands of his enemies. They act very human in the whole matter, giving way to their natural feelings in the first moments when they realize how close the impending calamity looms over their beloved leader.

13. Then Paul answered, What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.

If the others for a little while lost their balance under the stress of feeling, Paul kept both his head and his heart. Gently, and with deep but controlled feeling he rebukes his friends: **What do ye, weeping and breaking my heart**, i. e., making it altogether soft and mellow, and thus crushing or breaking it. The participles are in the present tense, descriptive of the action of these friends, but not stating that Paul's heart was thus actually crushed; his own firmness prevented that. While all the friends of Paul would induce him to run away from what God had planned for him, Paul is willing to follow God's leading no matter where that may take him. So he bids them think what they are doing, only making his heart heavy in advance, when he ought to go bravely forward.—The γάρ gives the reason for Paul's rebuke and the implied command to his friends not to weep and urge him thus. Note the emphatic ἐγώ: **I (for my part) am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.** Paul here indicates that the prophecy of Agabus did not point to his death. But even if that were included the apostle declares that he is ready for

it. Often enough he had faced death already—why should he run away now when less than death threatened him? The readiness of which he speaks here is that of true Christian courage and bravery. The emphasis, however, is on the concluding phrase: “for the name of the Lord Jesus,” in behalf of that name or revelation by which Jesus is known and by which our faith embraces and holds him. His whole life had been dedicated to that precious name. To suffer bonds for it would only be an honor; to suffer death for it would be a still greater honor. Thus Paul was ready. Starke remarks: “Love indeed means well with the loved one, but it does not always accord with the thoughts of God.” And Gerok: “The tenderness of friends, the anxious love of a wife, the well-meant care of good children, the cautious counsel of a timid friend may often make the duty of a faithful servant of God so much harder and may help to block the path of his calling. But dare he allow himself to be halted thus when he knows, duty calls me, the Lord sends me? No; he who loves father and mother more than me, says the Lord, is not worthy of me.”—But the outburst of feeling on the part of Paul’s associates and friends subsided before his firmness: **And when he would not be persuaded, etc.**, literally: he not being persuaded, continuing unpersuaded, **we ceased** weeping and urging him. They quieted down and grew calm again.—The tense of the participle *εἰπόντες* should be noted; it is not merely, as the English versions have it: **saying**, which would be *λέγοντες*, but, adding the punctiliar idea: saying definitely, once for all, and letting it rest at that. They came to this conviction in the matter, and expressed it: **The will of the Lord be done**. Perhaps Paul’s own word about the name of the Lord Jesus helped his friends to arrive at this final decision. The imperative is in the present tense: be done now and continually, in all that he may determine for Paul and the church. There is no notion here of a

decretum Dei, such as Calvin reads into the words. The will, or θέλημα of Jesus, is that which is in his heart, his decision. That will can will nothing but good to those who love him. To submit to it is a mark of true faith. Some submit reluctantly at first, as Paul's friends here, with a sigh and a tear. From that we must advance to submit joyfully to it, with head erect and heart elate, as we see this in Paul.

SERMON.

One of our daily petitions in the Lord's Prayer is: "Thy will be done!" And certainly we must say that every Christian ought without question to submit to the will of his heavenly Father, and accept from his hands whatever he may resolve to send. But what seems quite self-evident when stated in a general way becomes an entirely different thing when put to the test of actual experience in our lives. Then we who pray so readily day by day: "Thy will be done!" may find that after all we are not so ready to abide by what that prayer implies, but would often like to choose and decide for ourselves what is to be our lot, to select a way different from the one determined by the Lord for the course of our lives, to obtain for ourselves what the Lord does not want us to have, and to avoid what he deems best to lay upon us. This is the case generally when we are called upon to face tribulations and trials. Then the test comes for us whether we really mean what we say when we pray this prayer about the will of the Lord.

We have an example of this situation in our text. When the dear friends of the apostle St. Paul heard that he was to be bound hand and foot in Jerusalem and given over to imprisonment at the hands of the Roman authorities, they were completely upset. They tried to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem; they begged him to seek some place where his foes would not be able to reach him; in short, they urged him to try to defeat the will of the Lord, and to choose a course contrary to that will. We are happy to say that St. Paul was proof against all such solicitations, and by his noble faith and courage brought even these tearful friends of his to submit to the Lord's will. St. Luke writes: "And when he would not be persuaded we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done."

That is what we too must learn to do, even though it may cost us a struggle. By the grace of God

Learn to Submit to the Will of the Lord.

I.

That means, first of all, that we **give up all self-will.**

What was the trouble with the Christians at Cæsarea when St. Paul stopped there on his way to Jerusalem and heard from the Lord's own prophet what trials awaited him at the end of his journey? They clung to their own will. Their own will seemed better to them than this will of the Lord which held out suffering for St. Paul and sorrow for themselves. And this will of their own they had to give up. That is what it meant for them, as it still means for us, to submit to the will of the Lord.

(Now by nature we are all set on our own will as over against the Lord. Men who are in their sins want to stay in those sins, and when God comes to change them they refuse to yield to his will. In their sinful blindness men see only the treasures and pleasures of earth, and when God takes these from them and holds out to them the treasures of heaven, for which his own Son shed his blood, and the pleasures of a heavenly life, which his own Son came to earth to bestow upon them, they oppose God, they resist his good and gracious will, they love their own will better. (Many of them never let God's grace change their will, but harden themselves in rebellion against him. The only way these ever submit to his will is by sheer force, when the Almighty lays his irresistible power upon them and crushes them in his righteous indignation. Even then their will is not changed. In hell itself we hear how the rich man, of whom Christ tells us in one of his parables, answered Abraham only by contradicting him. "Nay, father Abraham!" was his reply. "Nay!" is what he had said to God all along in his life, and he kept on saying it even in hell. Let us note well this old self-will of the human heart and its sin-born opposition to God and whatever God's good and gracious will brings to us. It will help us to understand the self-will that still stirs in us now, who by the grace of God have been reborn, whose will by that blessed grace has been altered, and turned in a new, higher, and blessed direction.

When the people in our text gathered around the apostle St. Paul that day in Cæsarea, when then the prophet Agabus stood up and delivered his message from God regarding St. Paul, when he took St. Paul's girdle and with it bound his own hands and feet to show how St. Paul would be bound by the Jews in

Jerusalem and given over to the Roman governor for imprisonment—what did these people say? Remember they were all true Christians. Some of them were even helpers and assistants of St. Paul in his great missionary work. One of them was St. Luke who wrote two books of the New Test. under divine inspiration. Did they at once submit to the will of the Lord? Did they say: "It is the Lord; let him do whatsoever seemeth good to him"? That is what they should have said. But instead they began to weep and lament; they surrounded St. Paul, and begged him not to go to Jerusalem, not to place himself where these tribulations could come upon him. St. Paul himself had to rebuke them: "What mean ye to weep and break mine heart?" What was the trouble with these Christians? (What was wrong with this man St. Luke?, Their old self-will was reasserting itself. They were beginning to act once more as when they were no Christians, setting up their blind desires against the purposes of God, their foolish wills against his good and blessed will. That is the real situation here, and we must recognize it, in order that when we ourselves are put to the test we may not do again as these foolish Christians did at Cæsarea.

Let none of us think that there is no danger for him in this respect. It is all very well as long as the Lord sends us sweet and delightful blessings. Then indeed, we may have little trouble to say: "The will of the Lord be done!" When he lets the sun shine for you, so that men are your friends; when he continues your life in health, happiness, and earthly prosperity; when sorrow, suffering, persecution, loss, and trouble are kept far from you, and you feel the sweetness and richness of his favor, yes, then you will be glad to submit to his will. But has he not told you that through much tribulation you must enter his kingdom above? Have you forgotten that his will is for you to deny yourself and take up your cross? Have you not heard that the world will hate you for his name's sake, and will vent this hate upon you in all sorts of painful ways? St. Paul had had abundant experience of that. The others there at Cæsarea had also tasted of tribulation in greater or lesser degree. Yet such is often our weakness, that when a new trial is set for us by the will of the Lord, we may not be ready at once as we should to accept it in humble submission. That old self-will is not quite dead in us. An unexpected cross is liable to make it flare up again. Let us keep that in mind. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh so often is weak. It likes to shrink from the burden, it flinches at the flash of pain, it tries to avoid the cross. The danger is there, and we must know it.

But it is worth something to know it. St. Luke records the weakness of himself and his fellow Christians there in

Cæsarea, not that we may blame them, not, of course, either that we may excuse them, but that we may think of ourselves and learn from them. And this is what we are to learn—to submit to the will of the Lord by giving up all self-will. Look at St. Paul when all those friends of his were going wrong. He was not moved by them; even their tears did not make him waver in his submission to the Lord. "I am ready," said he, "not to be bound only but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." St. Paul had given up his self-will. And his fine, noble example of true submission to the Lord had its effect upon his wavering friends. They had given way a little, but now they recovered themselves. They too brought their wills into subjection to the Lord, and presently all of them joined with St. Paul, using these words full of the true spirit of childlike submission: "The will of the Lord be done!" So let all self-will in your heart die also. It is not of Christ, it is of the flesh. It is not faithfulness to Christ, but a bit of the old rebellion coming to light again. When you realize that you will the more readily put it away and return to full submission, which is your proper attitude toward your blessed Lord.

II.

But there is another side to this matter. Learn to submit to the will of the Lord since this means to **put your full trust in the Lord.**

St. Paul was a beloved disciple and follower of Christ. It was Christ who had rescued him from his old blind and deadly Jewish folly. It was Christ who had made him a child of God by faith in his Savior's blood. Yea, it was Christ who had used St. Paul in building his kingdom among men. Christ had been with him in his three great missionary journeys and had crowned his labors with the most wonderful success. Do you think that now, after all this, Christ could will anything regarding St. Paul that would really be to his hurt? If now he sent St. Paul into prison and bonds, bade him cease his active labors and travels, and made him rest in chains under soldier guards, do you for one moment think the Lord's will concerning his beloved disciple and apostle had changed? It surely had not. Christ was using his instrument in a new way, that was all. Men who otherwise would never have heard the Gospel as they should would hear it now. The prisoner St. Paul would speak of Christ to the Roman governor himself, and by that very governor's direction to the Jewish king Agrippa, and then finally also to the ruler of the great Roman Empire, in the very capital of the world at that time, in the great city of Rome. These great men, together with their noble attendants and many of their servants, would hear of

Christ from this follower of his who was ready to die for his Savior's sake. That was what the will of the Lord had in store for St. Paul.

Of course, it was all hidden as yet when Agabus came there in Cæsarea and announced that St. Paul was to go into prison and bonds. St. Paul had no idea himself what the Lord's will really had in store for him. He, as well as his friends, saw only the dark side of what was impending—separation from each other, grief and sorrow for them all as a result, days of trial, of loneliness, inactivity, suffering of various kinds for the apostle. That is what upset St. Paul's friends at first. But St. Paul clung to his Lord. He knew the Lord's will was best, even though he could not see as yet what all that will meant. (It was best for St. Paul as an individual follower of Christ, and it was best for these friends of his and the whole work of Christ. He alone sees all things; he alone is able to direct all things that the highest good may result. And that is what St. Paul meant when he said he was ready even to die for the Lord, if that should be his will. So to die, it being his will, could not but redound to the glory of Christ and to the best interests of his kingdom. St. Paul put his full trust in the Lord by thus submitting to him completely. He helped his friends to do the same, at least in some measure. And now that it is all over these many years, we see indeed that St. Paul's trust was fully justified. By his very bonds and imprisonment St. Paul was enabled to do great things for his Lord. The whole church of all future ages was blessed thereby.

Surely, here is a glorious example and admonition for us all! This Lord who made St. Paul a faithful disciple of his is our Lord to-day, and he has made us his own by the same heavenly grace. Just remember that he shed the same blood for us as for the apostle, and the same heaven too is to be ours. Therefore, as it was impossible for Christ, after having brought St. Paul so far to abandon him to his hurt, so it is impossible that the Lord's will, which has done so much for us too, should ever spoil it all by sending us what would be for our harm. The Lord knew what he was doing when he sent St. Paul into prison and bonds, and he knows what he is doing in every affliction he now sends to us. And if you think that because St. Paul was a great apostle the Lord's will regarding him was exercised with greater care and wisdom than it would be for us his ordinary followers to-day, you have the thing turned around—he who did the great and wonderful things in the life of St. Paul surely will have no difficulty to do the lesser things for us in our lesser lives. Remember how lovingly he speaks of the little ones in his church, calling them babes, as if he meant to give them special

love and care. If anything is assured for us it is this that the Lord's will for us contains nothing but blessing and the highest benefaction.

Only this good and gracious will of the Lord works in our case just as it did in that of St. Paul—we cannot always see in advance just why the Lord does certain things with us. Why should he allot prison and bonds to St. Paul—he knew why. We too know now; but at the time even St. Paul did not know, and to his friends it seemed only a sad and dreadful thing. Why now does he send you affliction and pain, sorrow and loss, some difficult trial, some burdensome cross? In due time you will know, just as St. Paul afterwards knew, and his friends likewise. Think what he said to St. Paul: "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." How foolish, then, to murmur and find fault, or to weep and lament like the friends of St. Paul, and to try to evade the Lord's will and run away from the path it marks out for us. The only right thing to do is what St. Paul did—submit to the Lord's will and trust it fully. Yes, that is the right thing—trust! We who cannot see even into the next day and cannot control even one of the forces around us, how shall we think of setting up our will against the Lord's will, and trusting ourselves refuse to trust him? When he lays a cross upon us let us cling the closer to him.

"When we cannot see our way,
Let us trust and still obey;
He who bids us forward go
Cannot fail to show the way."

III.

To submit to the will of the Lord by giving up our self-will and trusting him fully means to **find in him true comfort and support.**

What a pitiful figure those friends of St. Paul made when they broke down in tears and begged him not to go to Jerusalem. Suppose he had consented to do as they said,—they might have dried their tears, but could they have had true comfort in going counter to the Lord's will? What a glorious figure in contrast is this man St. Paul with his trustful, confident, brave submission to the will of the Lord. He had the true comfort. Trying to run away from the Lord that Lord would have to forsake him; but submitting to his will that Lord would go with him, support and keep him, and crown him at last with happiness and joy. And those friends of the apostle, when finally they righted themselves and came to the same submission to the Lord,—how much better they look. The tear-stains were yet on their faces, but

true comfort was stealing into their hearts. They were beginning to feel again that the Lord's will would lead them all upon the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

It is always so: submission to the will of the Lord means comfort for our hearts and true support in our trials. For the Lord never lays a burden upon us but what he gives us strength to bear it. He asks no work of us except he lends us ability to perform it. He sends us into no battle without giving us the necessary weapons and fighting at our side. Only when we turn away from him and reject his will do we lose this support and the comfort it gives. And nothing is more pitiful than to see men choosing a wrong course and struggling on alone. Their path may seem easier at first when they follow their own leading, it always ends in disaster at last. Only one hope remains even for such, to hasten back to the Lord and to throw themselves in submission at his feet. Without the Lord we are able to do nothing, but yielding to his will, our path, though it go through clouds and shadows for a while, shall be as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, Prov. 4, 18. St. Paul reached that perfect day, and so did his friends when more and more they learned to submit to the blessed will of the Lord. We too shall reach it, if we follow the same course of trustful submission.

Take then this comfort of Christ and let it keep your hearts as you bow to his will. Say to your soul with the Psalmist: "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance." Let Isaiah's words steady you in trial: "Say ye to the righteous that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat of the fruit of their doings." Then will our mouth be filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. The Lord hath done great things for us whereof we are glad. Ps. 126. From the abundance of this comfort Paul Gerhard sang that precious hymn, "Commit thy way confiding, when trials here arise, to him whose hand is guiding the tumult of the skies." Let this stanza cheer you especially:

"Hope on, then, weak believer,
Hope on and falter not!
He will thy soul deliver
From deeps of troubled thought.
Thy graces he will nourish,
With hope thy heart employ,
Till faith and hope shall flourish
And yield their fruit of joy."

A piece of beautiful embroidery looks ragged and disordered with its thread-ends and jumble of stitches on the under side. But the upper side—how lovely with its design and coloring! We see the under side now of the patterns the Lord's will is stitching now into our lives; anon, when the light of heaven is shed over us, we shall see the upper side. Then will our hearts be filled with rapture and with praise.

Learn thus to submit to the will of the Lord. Give up all self-will—put your full trust in him and his will—and thus find in him now and till the end true comfort and support.

OUTLINES.

Two statements stand out distinctly in the text and invite us to use them as themes. The one: "The will of the Lord be done!" The other is: "I am ready!" But the former has more the note of resignation to the painful things the Lord may send us, the latter the note of confident submission, assured that what the Lord sends is best. We may combine the two: St. Paul facing prison and bonds: or, When trials here arise:—Submit at least with humble resignation—Better still, submit with confident readiness.—St. Paul, a shining example of submission to the Lord's will: He submitted—he did it without hesitation (not so his friends)—he did it with a brave and confident heart.—Our theme might also be: "Commit thy way confiding, when trials here arise." 1) Trials must come—the Lord sends them. 2) We need trials—the Lord has his purposes in them. 3) All trials require confident submission—the Lord is ready to work this in us.

St. Paul's Noble Word: "I am Ready!"

1. *With this he faced the trials awaiting him.*
2. *With this he dried the tears of his friends.*
3. *With this he awaited the blessings in store for him.*

When you say:

"The Will of the Lord be Done!"

make this

1. *The vow of an obedient heart;*
2. *The confession of a trustful soul;*
3. *The testimony of a sanctified life.*

"The Will of the Lord be Done!"

1. *Have the right conception of this will.*
 2. *Then put the right trust in this will.*
 3. *And so find the right comfort in this will.*
-

St. Paul was Ready — Are You?

1. *Ready for what the Lord would send.*
 2. *Ready with complete submission.*
 3. *Ready with full confidence and trust.*
-

THE TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Matth. 23, 1-12.

Four texts are here combined to give us a glimpse of what the Gospels have to say on *the life of faith in the church*. The Christian does not stand alone, he belongs together with others, he is a member in the church. As such his life will shape itself in a definite way, and some of the features of this life are now to engage our attention. — The first text is certainly fundamental in this respect. It shows us *the true position of the Christian in the church* — he knows only one Master, namely Christ; all others are only brethren, yet, of course, brethren. It is a text for our times, casting down all false masters and authorities together with their usurpations, placing Christ where he really belongs, and ranging us all under him in the proper position we ought to occupy. — The second text, Matth. 18, 15-20, deals with *Christian discipline in the church*. It is a text on the church, this very word marking it, and the last three verses dwelling on what the term here means. Men who sin and err cannot go on thus and be left in the church. If they refuse to correct their lives they must be put out, but the entire procedure of the church in regard to such erring brethren must aim at turning them from their evil course and thus at retaining them in the church. — The third text, Acts 15, 6-12, describes *the first general assembly in the church*. We may call it *the first synodical meeting*. It shows us the wider interests of the church as these involve the well-being not of one congregation only, but of many, perhaps all. Vital questions for the entire church were settled in Jerusalem, and settled in the right manner. This text too is timely, when congregations still persist to stand aloof from proper synodical connection, or take an in-

terest all too slight in their sister-congregations and the church as a whole. — The final text in this sub-cycle deals with money. This text might be treated so as to refer only to the individual Christian and his relation to his earthly possession; even so the church will very likely be brought in. Here the latter point receives primary emphasis; the text is meant to treat of *the money question in the church*. One might wish to extend this sub-cycle by adding still other texts treating additional features of the Christian's church-life. A cycle of special texts on *Our Church Home* has been prepared by the author, with texts and material for sermons on the mother church in Jerusalem, the pastor, the church-council, the children, and various features of the work of the church. A cycle like this may be used for the evening services, or at a special time in the church year for the main services. As a general thing our people hear too little on this grand subject, and for this reason also the four texts on the church were added in these *New Gospel Selections*.

Our text forms the introduction to Christ's great Woe against the Pharisees. These words were spoken on Tuesday after Palm Sunday, the last day Jesus appeared in the Temple, and the last day of his public ministry. Read from Matthew 21, 23 on how the Jewish leaders tried again and again on this last day to overthrow Jesus, and each time met the most shameful defeat. In 22, 46 we learn that they were completely done; of course, their hatred of Jesus had only increased. Now, finally, Jesus turns against them. "Since Love had played her part in vain, 'Justice leaped upon the stage'; since the Light of the World shone for them with no illumination, the lightning flash should at last warn them of danger. There could now be no hope of their becoming reconciled to him; they were but being stereotyped in unrepentant malice against him. Turning, therefore, to his disciples, but in the audience of all the people, he rolled over their guilty

heads, with crash on crash of moral anger, the thunder of his utter condemnation." — Farrar.

23, 1. Then spake Jesus to the multitudes and to his disciples, saying, 2. The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; 3. all things therefore whatsoever they bid you, *these* do and observe: but do not ye after their works; for they say and do not.

The multitudes are the pilgrims attending the Pass-over festival; the **disciples** are the Twelve. The words now uttered (*ἐλάλησεν*) are addressed to all, sometimes to all conjointly, and sometimes so that one class is meant directly, but the other is also intended to hear. It is not said that the scribes and Pharisees were also present, and some think they were not. But Matthew mentions only those whom Jesus addressed directly. As far as the leaders were concerned Jesus was done with them. For them he had only the final denunciation, beginning with v. 13. This, however, reads as if these leaders, or at least a goodly number of them, were still at hand and themselves heard the words which sealed their doom. With the situation thus at its climax, Jesus begins his mighty utterance. It is tense enough as far as our text extends, but after that burns like destructive fire. — **The scribes and the Pharisees** are the religious leaders of the Jews; see the description Matth. 12, 38, Reminiscere. Some of them were in the Sanhedrim, but all of them stood as a class above the people, their authority unquestioned, and their pride and arrogance according. **They sit on Moses' seat** translates *ἐκάθισαν*, an aorist, with "sit." Robertson calls it a gnomic aorist, p. 866, which also means timeless. But why a gnomic aorist, and not a gnomic present tense, which also would be timeless? Whatever may be said regarding this peculiar aorist, it seems plain, Jesus is not admitting the right of these men to Moses' seat. They were not called to this seat, as Moses was. He assumed that seat reluctantly, but these false fol-

lowers of his took his seat of their own own accord. They were determined to have and hold it. Meyer is right: "The entire mode of expression reflects their presumption and self-seeking." These men were really usurpers, self-appointed, and they acted as if their dicta were as divine and binding as the revelations made by God to Moses, cf. 15, 3-9. — The *οὐν* in v. 3 should, therefore, not be read as if Jesus admitted the authority of these usurpers, for he certainly does nothing of the kind, cf. John 10, 1, etc., where he calls them thieves, robbers, and hirelings. **Therefore** here means: with the situation thus as described. What course are the people to pursue? They are to recognize all the falsity of these self-appointed successors of Moses and are to fight shy of it. — **All things whatsoever they bid you** does not mean all the interpretations the scribes and Pharisees may hand down, and all the traditions they may set up. *Apology* 298, 21. Seated on Moses' seat these teachers read the words of Moses to the people, and these are the ones Jesus bids the people hear and heed: these **do and observe**. The first imperative is an aorist, to do and finish the thing; the second is a present imperative, and means to guard and thus keep and observe as a constant thing. So when these self-appointed teachers hand down the words of Moses the people are not to disregard them as coming from men of this kind. The binding power in these words is not derived from those who may speak them to us, but from God who first gave those words. Compare the Augsb. Conf. VIII: "It is lawful to use the sacraments administered by evil men; according to the voice of Christ," and then follows our passage. — Now the warning: **but do not ye after their works**. Why? Because they are rank hypocrites: **for they say, and do not**. Here Robertson registers two gnomic present tenses, but we may also be satisfied with ordinary present tenses, since the durative feature is prominent: the constant practice of these men was to read the Mosaic

Law, but not to do what that Law really said. And as regards this doing let us not think merely of the legal parts of Moses' words; there was Gospel combined with the Law, and this Gospel all through Moses' writings required faith and desired to work faith. The scribes and Pharisees read over all this Gospel part without even understanding it. They failed to do, i. e., believe, this part. And naturally that ruined also the other part, the Law. They went at this in a wrong way entirely, missing both its spirit and its purpose. So Jesus warns the people: let them take to heart and do what Moses says in Law and Gospel, though his words come to them through false teachers; but let the people note how these teachers treat that Law and Gospel on their part, and beware of doing the same thing. Here we may recall how often Jesus had referred the Jewish leaders to Moses and to the whole Torah (Old Test.) in demanding true contrition and faith in him as the Messiah, but steadily they would not do what even they themselves had to admit that Moses said.

4. Yea, they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one finger. 5. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: for they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, 6. and love the chief place at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, 7. and the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called of men, Rabbi.

The adversative $\delta\epsilon$ in v. 4, translated **yea**, is not intended to add a concrete specification of what the scribes and Pharisees say and yet fail to do, as Meyer supposes; nor can we accept the **heavy burdens**, as Noesgen desires, in the sense of rabbinical traditions, for the Pharisees certainly did try to carry these. After telling his hearers to heed the words of Moses, though brought to them by false teachers, and to do and treasure up these words by faith in the Messiah

and a new life according to his will, though these false teachers failed utterly in both, Jesus described what these teachers actually did with Moses' words. They omitted, not from their reading indeed, but from their teaching, all the Gospel promises; they turned what they read into law only, **heavy burdens and grievous to be borne.** They **bind** these together into bundles, like sheaves or faggots, **and lay them on men's shoulders.** That is all they knew how to do with the Law, since they failed utterly to grasp the Gospel. They made work-righteous law-slaves out of the people, but when it came to bearing these burdens of the Law themselves, they evaded them completely: **but they themselves will not move them with their finger.** The finger is in opposition to other men's shoulders and to move the load, or to stir slightly, is in opposition to piling it upon others. Their teaching and doctrine left the people nothing but Law. This, of course, no man could fulfill of himself. But instead of honestly burdening also themselves with the Law, they made no attempt whatever in this direction, cf. v. 23, etc. They were arrant hypocrites, by their teaching barring men out of the kingdom, v. 13, and not even trying to enter themselves. The Romish Pharisees continue this nefarious business to-day. — V. 5. Now follows another $\delta\epsilon$, also mildly adversative, developing the side of their practice already touched, namely their hypocrisy: **But all their works they do for to be seen of men.** The "works" are specified, first as obedience to traditions and foolish perversions of certain words of Moses, and secondly as samples of their arrogant and prideful conduct flatly in contravention of Moses' words. The aorist infinitive is made a substantive in the phrase: "for to be seen of men," and the aorist conveys the idea that they know how to succeed in this purpose. To be seen of men intends to say: that men seeing them may admire, praise, and honor them; wherefore also the honor they love is specified: "the chief place at feasts," etc. Fine

spiritual leaders whose conduct bore such a stamp!—The γάρ brings in the two specifications of hypocrisy. First: **they make broad their phylacteries**, in order to make them as prominent as possible for people to see. The phylacteries, or headbands, *totaphoth*, or *tephillim*, were capsules with bands passed through them in order to fasten them one on the forehead, the other on the left wrist. The capsules contained a little strip of parchment inscribed with Ex. 13, 3-16; Deut. 6, 5-9; 11, 13-21, thus in a mechanical, superficially literal fashion making the Law “for a sign upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes.” While originally to be worn only during the *schema*-prayer during the morning, some wore them constantly, even during the night; there were various regulations about their construction, the way to tie the bands, etc., all in true Pharisaic fashion.—**And enlarge the borders**, or rather the tassels. There were four of these tassels, Num. 15, 38, etc., fastened at the four corners of the square piece of cloth which, like a kind of shawl, was worn as the outer garment, and the tassel cords were sky-blue in color. They were to remind the wearer and others of the heavenly origin of the Law. These too the scribes and Pharisees made large, in order to attract attention, “for to be seen of men.”—This show before men was naturally coupled with the desire to have men duly impressed, which they would show by conferring due honor upon such distinguished saints. So these hypocrites **love the chief place at feasts**, i. e., the first place, at the left side, of the couch or divan upon which several persons would recline while dining. Why this was considered the chief place is easy to see, since the person occupying this place could overlook the entire table without throwing his head back or turning. Where there were a number of couches, ranged in the form of a rectangle with one side open, there were as many chief places as there were couches.—Likewise they loved **the chief seats in the synagogues**, the places

of honor beside the rulers and other official persons of the synagogues, counting also on being called upon to offer their wisdom during the services. — Similarly they loved **the salutations in the marketplaces**, and in such public places, in the hearing of as many as possible, **to be called of men, Rabbi**, = my master, i. e., religious teacher. The *love* of these honors and titles is what Jesus brands as hypocrisy. The falsity of these men was not only in utterly perverting the Word of God as taught by Moses, but in adding thereto the most despicable religious vanity and pride.

8. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren. 9. And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. 10. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your master, even the Christ. 11. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. 12. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Two things are necessary to understand Jesus aright, first what he has just said concerning the love of honors and titles on the part of the scribes and Pharisees, and secondly the conclusion in verses 11-12 as this explains what precedes in v. 8-10. Jesus is now addressing his disciples in particular; notice the emphatic *ὑμεῖς*. He uses the peremptory aorist imperative: **But be not ye called Rabbi**. Besser writes: "There is nothing in the name itself which the Lord forbids in the church, for he himself gives to his church teachers and leaders in various offices, which also have their distinctive names, Eph. 4, 11; 1 Cor. 12, 28; also the subordination of one brother to another, expressed by the term Rabbi, master, is not contrary to the Lord's will, for he himself speaks of him 'that is greatest among you,' v. 11." We ourselves must not repeat the mechanical interpretation of the Pharisees, as shown by their phylacteries. What Jesus forbids 'is that any of his ministers should arrogate to himself an authority

like that of the scribes and Pharisees who usurped the seat of Moses and despised the people beneath them, John 7, 49: "But this multitude which knoweth not the Law is accursed" (Second S. after Epiph.); an authority which would set aside our true Rabbi or Master, Christ, and destroy the equality which puts us all on one level beneath Christ as "brethren." — Therefore the prohibition is not left bare, but is lit up by the explanation: **for one is your teacher, and all ye are brethren.** He does not say: "and all ye are disciples, or pupils," for the point is not so much to bring out our relation to him, but our relation to each other. We are all alike the children of God, and his saving truth belongs equally to us all; none is thus dependent upon another, and all religious autocracy is abolished. Any title contrary to this equality of brethren in Christ Jesus, even the desire for such an honor and title (*μὴ κλήθῃτε*), is sinful arrogation as far as the membership is concerned, and wicked usurpation as far as our one real Master is concerned. We all sit alike at his feet, although what one learns from him he may teach his brother, either merely as a brother, or as a rightly called minister and teacher. — V. 9. As none shall lift himself up unduly, so also none is to be thus lifted up unduly: **And call no man your father on the earth,** namely in the religious sense. The Greek separates "father" and "your," thus emphasizing both words. As regards the title "father," this was accorded only the most prominent teachers, so that here there would be less the question of wanting to be so honored as the question of wanting to give this honor to anyone. Now ordinary earthly fathers are rightly honored by the name father, according to God himself. In 1 Cor. 4, 15 Paul calls the Corinthians "my beloved children," and Gal. 4, 19 he calls the Galatians "my little children"; so also John in his Epistles. Here again the explanatory *γάρ* helps us: **for one is your Father, which is in heaven,** i. e., "the heavenly one." We are to revere no man, however great he may be in the

church, or however great he may have been in ages past, so that we bow to his paternal authority in a way that would in the least set aside the one and only real paternal authority in force for us, namely that of our heavenly Father, whose children alone we are in the proper sense of the word. Paul may call Timothy his son, and may like a mother travail again until Christ be formed in the Galatians; we may call the great teachers of old the church-fathers, the Reformer "father Luther," the old and revered men in the church "fathers," and the like—all such loving terms are on the basis of our common brotherhood in Christ only, on the basis of our common childhood through faith only. But if any old teacher errs from the Father's Word, we know no father authority from him which would cause us to accept such an error. So also no man in the church to-day has authority to make us do anything out of harmony with the Word of our heavenly Father. In the last analysis there is only one Father for us all. Therefore we challenge the claims of the Roman Catholic Catechism: "*quamobrem omnium fidelium et episcoporum . . . pater ac moderator universalis ecclesiae ut Petri successor Christique verus et legitimus, vicarius in terris praesidet.*" We reject the "holy father" in Rome, this "vicegerent of Christ," who foists his false authority upon the church; and in the same way we reject all others who come in any way with any measure of the same sort of authority whether it be in doctrine, or in church practice, or in matters of Christian living. Even the state has no authority here.—V. 10. **Neither be ye called masters** introduces another term besides rabbi or διδάσκαλος, namely καθηγητής, leader, one who shows the way (Heb. 12, 1 ἀρχηγός). The Hebrew equivalent was most likely *rabbon*, Mark 10, 51; John 20, 16 *Rabboni*; with the possessive "my." Zahn thinks this title = an illustrious teacher. But evidently we have here more than a repetition of one of the other two titles, whether "master" here is really for *rabbon*

or not. By *καθηγητής* we must understand a leader who commands and directs, and whose word is obeyed. No man is to claim a leadership in the church which in any way conflicts with the leadership of him who alone has the full right to this title: **for one is your master, even the Christ.** To him alone we accord unquestioned obedience. Not that men may not also lead us, and that great assemblies of the church may not also pass resolutions for us, both as regards doctrine and practice. But all these human leaders are themselves subject to Christ's authority, and all of us have the fullest right to test out any of their decisions by that one and only supreme authority, to reject forthwith whatever is contrary to that supreme authority, and to accept all else only for the one reason that it is backed by that supreme authority. No man may curtail this right for us on the plea that he will assume the responsibility for us of keeping in agreement with Christ. Moreover, when Jesus calls himself alone our Leader and Ruler, he means a constant and present leadership, actively exercised this very moment. This is by his living Word. Rebels and traitors are all who leave that Word and try to lead any of God's people in a direction opposite to its contents. That Word condemns their action, from the Antichrist on down to the little antichrists, and the spurious leaders and false teachers and guides. Even they who err in one doctrine only are to that extent leading amiss, and not true to their one and only Master. **The Christ** is appellative = the Messiah, though, of course, Jesus means by this appellation himself alone. — V. 11. **But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant,** really: "the greater one among," greater compared with the rest of you. So some shall indeed be greater, with greater knowledge, faith, and gifts, like the Twelve, or Paul, or other brethren of lesser note. We may designate them by certain titles, if we wish. But all of them are to keep free from the vanity which seeks such titles for the titles' sake, be-

cause of the honor involved. Their one aim is to be, each one, "your servant" or minister. Jesus uses *διάκονος*, which must be distinguished from *δοῦλος*. The former is one who serves freely, for the sake of the service or benefit he may render another. Thus one brother serves another. Compare the servants in John 2, 5; they were voluntary helpers at the wedding. The latter is a bondman or slave, compelled to serve. We are *δοῦλοι* over against Christ, having given ourselves over to unquestioning obedience to his exalted authority; but over against each other we are *διάκονοι*, gladly helping and benefiting those whom we can. Such ministers are all true teachers, fathers, and leaders in the church, and whatever titles they bear they bear them in this spirit. Their greatness too is in proportion to the service they render, the good they do others, and the lowliness and humble devotion with which they serve. — V. 12. Therefore also this closing word: **And whosoever shall exalt himself etc.** Self-exaltation is a capital offense in the Christian church; it has produced the great pope and many little popes, down to the "bosses" in little congregations. Such self-exalted men **shall be humbled**, put down low; and the passive voice carries an agent in it, namely Christ. Sometimes such humbling comes in this life, and then it may be a bitter and wholesome medicine for the proud man, leading him at last to self-humiliation; though it may here already be a judgment, as it always is when it comes hereafter at the divine judgment bar. — But the reverse shall take place for him who **shall humble himself** in the way pointed out by Christ, in lowly, loving service for Christ's sake. This man **shall be exalted**, and the same agent is behind this passive verb. Augustine writes: "God is above all. Thou exaltest thyself, and dost not reach up to him; thou humblest thyself, and he stoops down to thee." And John Gerhard: "Thus Christian brotherhood does not exclude that by his office and gifts one brother may be above another; no disorderly

equality of all does Christ teach, rather does he command that the brethren who are greater than others may in heartfelt humility put themselves at the service of the rest and hold themselves in lowliness."

SERMON.

In the Holy Christian Church there is only one authority, that of the divine Head of the Church, namely our Lord Jesus Christ. In the most emphatic way our Savior himself has told us so, and that not once but many times, and all his holy apostles have repeated this supreme truth, so that there ought to be no shadow of doubt about it for any one who knows Christ and bears his holy name.

And yet like every other truth of our holy religion this too has been denied, set aside, perverted, and ignored, now in one way, now in another, to the great injury of vast numbers of Christians. All sorts of false authorities have been set up among Christian people, generally in the name of Christ himself, and yet no less false, because contrary to Christ, in conflict with his authority, and thus harmful in the highest degree to those concerned.

One of the great duties of all Christ's followers, therefore, is to study his Word most carefully, in order that with one heart and mind they may repudiate and cast off the false bondage of human rule in the Christian Church and bow to Christ alone, our one Lord and Master, besides whom there is none other. Let us weigh anew, then, the Lord's own word, when most solemnly he declares to us all:

"One is Your Master, even Christ."

That puts down all false authority in the church.

That elevates us all as brethren in the church.

That leaves only the distinction of brotherly service in the church.

I.

When the Lord tells us so plainly that One alone is our Master in the church, namely he, our Lord himself, we must realize how *that puts down all false authority in the church.*

(The question for us to settle once for all is this: Who is to teach, lead, guide and control the Christian church? Is it Christ alone? or are there others beside him? It is a question

which concerns each of us personally: What must you and I as a true Christian believe and what must we do? What Christ says, and he alone, or what someone else says? Really the answer ought to be easy. Christ himself has given it to us. We are to heed and follow him alone, and without question repudiate all other authority.

1. When the Lord came to earth he found the church of the old covenant full of false authority. The scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, but not to tell the people what the Lord had revealed to them through Moses, namely the Law of God to lead them all to true repentance, and the Gospel of God to bring them all to faith in the promised Redeemer. These false leaders of the people of Israel perverted the revelation made by God through Moses; they turned that revelation into a set of rules and regulations, and laid these as a heavy load upon men's shoulders. At the same time the Jewish leaders did not themselves, even as much as with a finger touch that load to bear it themselves. All they were concerned about for themselves was to maintain their own miserable authority over the people, to get power and honor for themselves at the expense of the people. They put on a show of holiness for themselves, without the least conception of what true holiness was. They tied verses of Scripture, written on little pieces of parchment, to their foreheads and wrists, to make people admire them as holy men, and bow in submission to them, but the real Word of God they never put into their hearts. They were anxious always to get the uppermost places at feasts and in the synagogues and to have men bow low before them and address them with the honorary title of rabbi, especially in the public places, but true rabbis, true teachers who lead men to bow to God and his Word alone, none of them were.

Their falseness was fully revealed when the true Lord of the church, the Redeemer of whom Moses had written, came among them. The scribes and Pharisees with one accord turned against him. The more Jesus showed himself to be the true Redeemer by word and deed, the more they hated him. In every way they tried to prevent the people from following Jesus, for this meant that their false authority would be overthrown. And when no other means seemed to prove effective these wicked Jewish leaders, with their false show of holiness, set about to murder Jesus. You know the story of the Savior's betrayal and crucifixion. That was the climax of the false authority which would not have the true Lord of the church rule over his own.

Now this very opposition of the false Jewish authority, which Jesus met when he lived and labored on earth, led him to declare so emphatically to all his true followers, that for us there is only one Master, one Lord and Head to guide and direct our

souls. Christ, and Christ alone must we follow, and turn forever from all others.

The false, hypocritical, self-seeking scribes and Pharisees of Christ's day are long dead and gone. But the church of the new covenant, in which we live now, has not been free from false leaders and masters. The chief among them is the pope at Rome, who claims to be the visible head of the Christian church on earth, and demands that all men bow to him accordingly. In fact, he arrogates to himself not only religious authority in the church, but also secular and worldly authority over the state. The people in the church and the rulers of the state must all obey what he says. This authority he asserts Christ himself has given him, and no man dares to question it—if we do, he says we shall be anathema, that means damned. And boldly he orders men to believe and do all sorts of things which anyone with the Scriptures in his hands can see are as false and contrary to Christ as this papal usurpation of double power. Therefore we apply to him the words of St. Paul in the second chapter of Second Thessalonians, and call the pope at Rome the Antichrist, the great foe and opponent of the true Christ.

Would to God that he were the only one who sets himself up as a master contrary to our One Master Christ. But there is a host of little antichrists, men who have set themselves up as leaders of Christ's people, and yet lead them away from Christ, not unto him. Some of them have drawn thousands after them, using the holy name of Christ, but contradicting and subverting his holy Word.—Beside them there are others who in a great variety of ways clash with the one and only authority of Christ. They take his Word and pervert it, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. They set up their own reason and wisdom and change the Word of Christ to make it agree with their own deductions. Some of them may mean well enough, and not actually realize that they are in conflict with the Master,—what of it, the conflict is there just the same. To set aside, or contradict one doctrine or word of Christ is to cast off his authority to that extent, and to follow some other.

And this is the very thing Christ warns us against. "One is your Master, even Christ!" Down with every other religious authority in the church! Away with all teachers, leaders, and rulers, who refuse to bow fully and completely to the one authority of Christ!

2. But how are we to know and to recognize this false authority, (so that we may escape its hurtful bondage)? That is really an essential question. Some think they are following Christ, when in fact they are doing nothing of the kind. Moreover, it is the constant practice of all false religious leaders and teachers to

mask their falseness behind the name and Word of Christ, thus to catch and hold the unwary. We must know how to distinguish their falseness, in order really to be true to Christ in all our faith and life.

Here is the answer to this important question: Take the Word of Christ, and follow that alone.

When Jesus scored the scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat he told his hearers: "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works." What did he mean? This that when these false teachers read the words of Moses from the Old Testament to the people, the people were to observe and do those words of Moses, because they were the words of God himself, the very words which told of Christ and his salvation. But the works of these false leaders, by which they set up their own authority contrary to God and opposed to Christ, all men were to reject and not for one instant to acknowledge as right.

The Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, they alone bring us the genuine authority of our heavenly Lord, and by that Word we are to overcome all the false authority which would bring us into bondage. It is not difficult to see how the Word becomes thus decisive. When Christ tells us that he alone is our Master, we must know that to this very day he personally rules in his church. He does it by his Holy Word. In that Word is his own blessed will towards us all. In that Word he personally speaks to us all and makes his will known to us. In that Word he tells every one of us just what to believe and trust, just what to do and to leave undone. And all that he thus tells us is everlastingly sure and certain, as if he stood face to face with us, as once he walked on earth, and addressed us with his own lips. In fact, heaven and earth shall pass away, but his Word shall stand forever. The only question is: Do we want him to be our one and only Master? or do we want to be our own masters, or have some one else control our souls? If we are sincere in desiring to follow him alone whose will is salvation and never-ending blessing for us, then hold fast to this Word of his. And then, when anyone comes to you speaking and acting contrary to that Word, you will know at once that you dare not follow him if you would be true to your only Master Christ. The Word decides it all—there is Christ and his authority, living, glorious, blessed to this very day; and before that Word all false authority falls.

And that is why the Word is given to us all. The very worst thing ever done in the church by false leaders was to take the Scriptures out of men's hands. Pontiffs and priests said: We will take charge of the Bible; we will tell you what you need of it; it is too hard a book for the common people, they cannot handle

it; we will take the responsibility for you—leave the Bible to us. By that these false men took away from the people whom they misled the one means by which their deception could be exposed. Thank God, Christ's Word is again in our hands. But it is one thing to have it, and quite another to use it. The dust that lies on many a Bible shows that they who own it might as well be without it. How are you going to escape the treachery of false authority, if you do not use the precious Word by which Christ, your true Master, comes to you? Do not tell me you have not time. You have time, plenty of it, for infinitely lesser things. The real reason, why so many do not use the Word, is that they care too little whether Christ really is their only Master, or whether some of these false masters of to-day rule their souls. Often, too, to follow the One Master means loss of earthly advantages, the cross for his name's sake; and to let others rule us, or to go our own blind way in religion seems to bring us earthly advantage. So men as good as sell their very souls into bondage. Poor fools! Too late they will see what a bargain they have made.

Hear, then, once more, and let it reach deep down into your hearts: Your Savior Jesus Christ is your only Master; he comes to you by his Holy Word; by that Word he would bind us all to himself alone, blessed and happy in his salvation. And thus he delivers us from all false authority and its destructive power in the church here on earth.

II.

There is another side to the blessed truth that "One is our Master, even Christ." (In putting us all under Christ alone we are all alike lifted up. Think of it—only One Master: *that elevates us all as brethren in the church.*)

1. The scribes and Pharisees in Christ's day climbed into Moses' seat in order to rule the church of their day. They hated Christ because he made it so plain that they were nothing but usurpers and rebels against their true Lord. They wanted to go on lording it over God's people; they burned with envy when they saw many of the people following Christ. Even heathen Pilate saw that for envy the Jewish rulers had delivered Christ unto him. To be nothing but brethren with the common people was too low for these prideful leaders. They wanted to be counted as more, to be honored as more—only the uppermost seats for them at feasts and in synagogues—only the highest titles for them, like rabbi, doctor, father, teacher, leader, to whom all others had to bow without question.

All such lordship of men Christ has abolished in his church, and only they who are false to Christ think of erecting it again. Christ tells us that in reality the whole church has only One

teacher, he who came from heaven to teach us, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Every single one of us must sit at his feet and learn of him. But see what that does—it puts us all on one grand level beneath Christ; it makes us all brethren in him, the one no greater and higher than the other. All are alike high and great, for the highest honor we can possibly have is to be made disciples and pupils of Christ, to receive truth, life and salvation from him.—The thing is deeper still. Christ by his Word and teaching makes us children of God; we are begotten anew by the living power of his Word. So again we are all lifted up alike—One is our Father, namely he who is in heaven, and we all are his children. No man can possibly be more. If any man thinks he is more, and wants to be honored as more, he shows that he is less, and that, not being a child of God, he does not even know the height and blessedness of that position. In the true church of Christ all are alike—brethren in Christ Jesus, because children of God.—The third step is like the first two: as pupils of Christ and children of God there is only One whom we will follow, only One to lead us. Who could lead and rule the children of God except our Lord and Savior himself? He alone is high and great enough; he alone has the power and the grace to bring us safely to our heavenly goal. We all—what can we do except follow him and cling to him? And again that puts us on the same blessed level—none greater, higher, lordlier than the other.)—Behold thus in the church the most wonderful democracy in the world: all of us disciples and pupils alike under one divine Teacher; all of us by that teaching made alike the children of one divine Father; and all of us as such children alike directed by one divine Master and Leader. (All reason for pride, self-seeking, lordship is gone, for we are all through Christ in the highest position possible for us to obtain.)

2. Yet—are we not mistaken in this? Are there not some in the Christian church higher than others? Do we not call some teachers and preachers, professors and doctors, presidents and leaders? We even speak of church-fathers; we call the great Reformer “father Luther,” and in our own midst we honor the old and venerable Christians as fathers. That seems to make a great difference among the members in the church.

We must even add that Christ said: “Be not ye called Rabbi,” that is teacher; “And call no man your father upon the earth”; and again: “Neither be ye called masters,” that means leaders. That sounds as if Christ himself forbade such titles as we still have in the Christian church. So the question becomes a double one: Did Christ forbid all such titles, and if he did not, do these titles not show that after all we are not all on the same level in the church?

The titles which Christ forbade and abolished in the church are all those which conflict with his authority (or that of our Father in heaven.) They are the titles which go with a false authority, one setting itself up in the church contrary to Christ. Christ said: 'Be not called Rabbi, for I alone am your Rabbi or Teacher; call no man Father, for God alone is your Father; be not called masters or leaders for I alone lead and guide you. That makes it plain—any teacher, father, or leader who comes apart from the teaching, fatherhood, and leadership Christ has set up for us, must be thrown down and disowned.—But when now we as congregations rightly call ministers of the Gospel to teach us what Christ taught, these men are nothing but brethren of ours doing us, their brethren, the service which Christ himself appointed. When now we honor some of them by calling them church-fathers, we only acknowledge the excellent service these brethren have rendered us. So also when we call them presidents and leaders—they encourage us to go the way that Christ went, and they do it not as lords of the church, but as our beloved brethren in the Lord.—This is a totally different thing from the honor the scribes and Pharisees sought in Christ's day, or from the proud title of the pope at Rome, who claims to be the vicegerent of Christ on earth, the visible head of the church, and the Holy Father of all believers in this sense. It is a totally different thing from the lying titles of those who set aside Christ's Word, and yet claim to be doctors and leaders of God's people, condemning all who refuse to submit to them. A Dowie called himself Elijah, but he lied in doing so; Mrs. Eddy gave herself high honors and names, but she too lied and blasphemed Christ in doing so. St. Paul wrote: Christ "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." These we have to-day, except the apostles whose work once done stands for all time, they still teaching us in the New Testament Scriptures. For these all we thank Christ, praying that he may keep them true in their teaching and leading, in fullest accord with his Word.

And again there is a simple way to test all the true teachers and leaders in the church, and to distinguish them from the false. Take the Word—if they are true to that, then we will gladly acknowledge them and profit by their service. If they on their part also invite that test and bow to it, they show that they are true, brethren of ours, and not self-installed lords over us. Especially if they submit to brotherly correction and advice on our part, thus showing that they acknowledge us as brethren, and together with us bow wholly to Christ, then we know that they are true indeed and their teaching and leading is none other than

that of Christ himself, who said of all such: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me."

And the sum of it all is that One alone is our Lord and Master, and we all are brethren—brethren still, and nothing more, though some do one kind of work in the church under Christ's direction, and some, other kinds of work. Thank God for this true spiritual brotherhood! May no sinful pride and false authority ever disturb and hurt its holy bonds!

III.

This brings us to the final truth in the great statement of Christ. He alone is our Master: *that leaves for us only the distinction of brotherly service in the church.*

Here is a secret the scribes and Pharisees had never penetrated. They longed for greatness, but in a way altogether unspiritual, and so they tried to obtain it by exalting themselves, building up an authority of their own and lifting themselves up in pride accordingly. Alas, that is the sure way of abasement. For one is indeed our Master, even Christ, and all who rise against his authority will be overwhelmed by that authority at last. "Kiss the Son," writes the Psalmist, "lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way." And St. Paul adds: "When he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power; for he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Woe, then, to those who exalt themselves, refusing the authority of Christ and the blessed fellowship this gives us as brethren in Christ.

There is a better way for you and me. Under One Master, and all as brethren together, there is open a new way for each one of us to greatness in the church. Christ points it out: "He that shall humble himself shall be exalted." And what this humbling is he also tells us: "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." This is the new way. It clashes neither with Christ as our One Master, nor with our mutual brotherhood under Christ. It is the way of brotherly service and help to each other. The more we do in aiding each other in following Christ, in keeping true to him, in putting away our sins and faults, in stirring up each other to do his bidding, the greater will we be in the sight of Christ. That is why we have the beautiful name "minister" for the pastor of a congregation. In fact, all the offices and titles in the church are used with this idea behind them. For every officer, from the highest down to the lowest, is such only for the sake of ministry, which means service to the brethren. And the inner mark of that service, which makes it sweet and acceptable to Christ, is humility, the conviction and feeling that we are highly honored by being permitted to serve our brethren

for Christ's sake. Nor need we have some special office in the church to obtain this distinction among our brethren. At every turn we all meet countless opportunities to serve each other in all humility. Alas, that so often we fail to see these opportunities, or seeing them and even having them pointed out to us, we let them pass by unused. Away with the old worldly pride which refuses to serve others, lest we be looked upon as servants and not lords! Blessed are all they who truly serve—they alone are great in the church!

Thus Christ, our Master himself served; for he came to us, not to be ministered unto, but to minister to us, even giving his life for us in his redemptive ministry. The old prophecies speak of him as the great Servant of Jehovah. That service made him great—the greatest of all. So also his apostles served. They consumed themselves in their ministry and service, constrained by the love of Christ. None of them acted as a lord of the church; their greatness was in what they did for others, nearly all of them giving up their lives in their arduous work. And so it has ever been in the church. All of us are brethren; all of us are to serve in brotherly love; and the greatest will be the ones who delight most in such service and perform it with the greatest humility, counting it an honor for the Master's sake.

Glory, honor, and praise, then, to Christ our heavenly Master! Him let us own and follow, and thus escape the wretched authority of men. Him let us trust and obey, and thus join hearts and hands as children of God and as brethren in Christ. Him let us make our model in love and service, and so find that greatness which shall not be abased, but shall receive the praise of Christ himself. Under this One Master, among these our brethren through faith, and in this constant service of love we shall be blessed now and evermore.

OUTLINES.

The second part of the text, verses 8-12, holds the real meat for the sermon. The first part, however, gives us the proper setting for what the second part contains, and so has a value of its own for the sermon. We may preach in general on: The church—how it ought to look with Christ alone as its Head: all of us ruled by his Word—all of us bound together as brethren—all of us vying with each other in service.—Or: Consider your wonderful position in the Christian church: only One is above you, Christ—all others are beside you, as brethren—and those alone are beneath you who exceed you in humility and love.—A variety of divisions may be found for the central word of the

text, according to the angle from which it is viewed: "One is your Master, even Christ." Taken as Christ's word to us, it humbles us all alike, and it lifts us up alike.' Adopted by us as our confession, it forms our answer to all false authority, our acknowledgment of each other as brethren, and our highest motive to serve each other for this One Master's sake.

We are all Brethren in Christ Jesus.

1. *That settles the question of equality among us.*
 2. *That determines the question of superiority and inferiority among us.*
-

How does Christ View the Church?

1. *As a glorious autocracy—he alone the Head.*
 2. *As the most blessed democracy—we all as brethren and servants of each other.*
-

No Popes in the Church!

1. *Only children of God.*
 2. *Only brethren in Christ.*
 3. *Only servants of each other.*
-

"One is your Master, even Christ; and All Ye are Brethren."

1. *This defines your exalted rights in the church.*
 2. *This points out your glorious privileges in the church.*
 3. *This holds up before you your coming reward in the church (shall be exalted).*
-

THE TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Matth. 18, 15-20.

This is the text on church-discipline; yet a glance shows that it contains much more. A little thought, too, reveals that naturally it had to contain more — since the matter of discipline involves other important questions, such as the very nature of the church, the powers bestowed upon it, and the essentials of church-membership. When then we speak of *Christian discipline in the church* the subject must be viewed in its larger aspect, as our text also bids us do. — Christ has warned his disciples against giving offense to others, placing his little ones and those of weaker faith under his special protection. Now the other side is taken up — suppose some brother gives us offense, real offense concerning which there can be no denial, sinning against us by some evil word or deed? Here is the answer: —

18, 15. And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

A glance at the usual commentators reveals at once the difference between what is usually called scientific exegesis and what in distinction therefrom is called practical exegesis. The former serenely omits to inform us what this word of Jesus means for us to-day, i. e., how we must understand it in its signification and application to ourselves. We leave that exegesis with the main questions all unanswered for us. Practical exegesis, while answering the few scientific questions involved, such as context, reading, grammar, and direct meaning of the statements made, answers in addition what we to-day must know to receive Christ's words for ourselves and to use them in our lives. And here

are words which more than many others demand practical exegesis.— **Thy brother** is meant for thy fellow believer and fellow church-member. As the sequel shows, the final question may be: Can I consider him my brother still? Until a clear negative has been established, I must call and treat the person concerned as my brother, that is brother in Christ Jesus. And we may recall here from the previous text, that One is our Master, and all we are brethren.— But a brother may **sin against thee**, and Jesus supposes such a case as taking place at some future time. The verb used means “to miss the mark,” i. e., the one set for us in God’s Word; it is the regular term in the Scriptures for “to sin,” and the aorist (the first aorist of the later Greek) has in mind a certain definite act or case. The reading varies, some texts omit “against thee,” others have it—practically there is little difference. The act spoken of is really one of sin, and while thus primarily an offense to God is at the same time an offense to any brother who may witness it. In this sense every plain defection from the Lord’s Word becomes “against thee,” and necessitates proper action accordingly. Such acts will, of course, include also those directed against a brother personally, wicked and insulting language, or malicious and hateful deeds. That such faults will indeed appear among his followers Christ assumes in the form of the condition which he uses. Yet here a few observations are certainly in place. The word or act must, in the first place, be really sin, apparent also as such when one or two other brethren are called in to help in the case, and when the whole congregation afterwards comes to consider the matter. This shuts out what one or the other sensitive brother may in some manner or other deem sin without due warrant. The context furthermore supplies the directive that what is thus called sin is in the nature of an offense that cannot be allowed to pass as a mere weakness on the part of a brother. A thousand and one faults appear among

us daily, but are not grave enough to sever the fraternal bond. They may at most call for a simple word of rebuke, and be allowed thus to pass. This is often the case when such lesser faults are mutual, that of the one brother provoking the other to act similarly. In all such cases brotherly forbearance and patience heals the scar; the fraternal relation is not disrupted. Christ has in mind graver matters, namely such as all the brethren would be compelled to consider too serious and dangerous to allow to pass without plain evidence of repentance. Now sins of this kind often involve more than the offense of one brother, i. e., they may be committed against several brethren, all of them seeing the deed or knowing of it. Or the sin may be public altogether, thus at once involving the entire congregation, like some public scandal or crime. Christ takes up the simplest case here, leaving it to us to determine our procedure in the more public cases. If one brother sinned against must take action as Christ directs, then likewise must several, if the sin be against more, and the church as such, if the sin be public to begin with. — To the brother sinned against Jesus says: **go, show him his fault between thee and him alone.** The Greek uses two imperatives much as we do in the translation: "go, show," no connective word being necessary. The chief verb is *ἐλεγον αὐτόν*: "convict him." The idea is that the brother be shown his sin so that he shall see it as sin and feel guilty accordingly. The aorist implies that this be really done, not merely attempted. Of course, with an actual sin to deal with, this convicting will not be a difficult matter. — But the work is to be done privately: **between thee and him alone**, *unter vier Augen*. So the person sinned against is not to blurt the matter out in public, or to spread it secretly by telling one or the other, or at once to lodge complaint with the authorities of the church. He must go to the offending brother and confer with him in private. This direction of the Lord evidently intends to shield the offender

as much as possible, and the love which prompted this direction ought to animate him also who finds he must translate that direction into action. He will convict indeed, but with love, so that the brother sees the aim is merely to free him from his sin. Compare Christ's word on taking the mote out of a brother's eye. Christ thus makes it as easy as possible for the sinning brother to confess his sin and obtain pardon for it. Let every offending brother realize that when he is convicted by the brother whom he has offended. — **If he shall hear thee** uses the verb in the pregnant sense: hear so as to yield to this conviction. It means that he acknowledges his sin and wrong; and no brother in Christ can do that without feeling sorry for his sin and asking pardon also of the brother whom he has offended. The condition of expectancy, which Jesus uses, shows that he expects many a sinning brother to give ear to the voice admonishing him. — The happy outcome then will be: **thou hast gained thy brother.** Thus to gain him was the original purpose of the procedure. The point is that a great service of love is thus rendered to an erring brother; and he who renders it has reason to rejoice greatly — one who might otherwise have been lost to the church is kept in it. This is worth as much as gaining a new member for the church. How earnestly each one ought to strive, when occasion arises, to do this work successfully for the Lord! The aorist must be noted: "thou didst gain." It may be gnomic, but we prefer to take it as a simple aorist, viewing a contemplated future result as actually already a fact, the condition on which it depended being fulfilled. But the case may turn out differently.

16. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established.

Going alone is usually called the first step. The idea is not that a person go but once; he must go alone until he sees that he cannot alone gain the desired end

of gaining his brother. This first step naturally falls away when the sin involves more than one person suffering offense. In that case what is usually called the second step is at once taken. **If he hear not** means definite refusal on his part to admit and acknowledge the sin. Nothing is said about the manner in which this refusal is made, since the point is the refusal itself, in whatever way this may come to view. A test takes place every time one of us commits an offense, a test whether we really mean to stay with Christ and the church by repentance and amendment of heart, or whether the devil shall succeed in separating us from Christ and his true followers and lock us fast with the chain of impenitence. — But the battle is not lost in the first engagement, even if this turns out adversely. **Take with thee one or two more** with the object to gain this brother if at all possible. Whether one or whether two are to be taken the Lord leaves to us. With their help the work of convicting the brother is to be repeated. They will therefore be persons suitable for this task, especially such as the offending brother will be likely to heed. The choice, then, should be most carefully made. It is not said that the pastor must be thus chosen. In many cases it will be better to choose another. Jesus does not repeat, that if now the offender shall hear, these two or three have gained him — that is a matter of course. Another purpose is to be taken care of: **that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established**, using thus the old legal regulation Deut. 19, 15, cf. Jno. 8, 17; 2 Cor. 13, 1; 1 Tim. 5, 19. Meyer thinks, this is to apply to either case, whether the brother be won or not won. In the former case, it would cut off any evasion or denial which the convicted brother might attempt. But Jesus is not contemplating complications of this kind; he takes the repentance to be real repentance, and stops with that. These witnesses are to be used in case the brother after all refuses to hear. Their very presence is thus to

act as a warning to the offender inclined to be impenitent, that these witnesses would eventually have to testify in his case, i. e., testify to his impenitence before the whole church. Witnesses are called only in formal trials, and that is the point here. Due acknowledgment of the fault can still seal the lips of these witnesses, or rather turn their testimony in favor of the offender. And this is the more to move him honestly to admit his fault. If he does; the whole matter stops right there, for these brethren must then assure him of forgiveness, both of the human and the divine.

17. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican.

This is the third step. Cases like this will occur, as the form of the conditional clause intimates. **Refuse to hear** is a compound verb, and shows what "not to hear" meant. In that case, all other efforts being exhausted, only this one thing is left: **tell it unto the church**. Here the Lord is briefer than ever, and yet his meaning is quite plain. Where the one alone failed, and where the two or three likewise failed, the entire church now is to use its best endeavors to convict and thus to gain this brother from his sin unto Christ. He now must see what his sin really involves. If he now still clings to it, nothing further can be done but to cut off his membership. The ἐκκλησία (ἐκ-καλέω) here evidently signifies the local **church** or congregation. The word signifies the members of the church as assembled together and constituting one body, whether this be large or small. By "church" here is not meant the clergy, priests, presbyters, or other heads of the church as distinct from the membership. "Church" = the membership, though, of course, in its natural and orderly arrangement for the work assigned to it. Every good church constitution fixes these arrangements in conformity with the apostolic directions, and in what lies beyond these according to the best wisdom

of the church. The church will, of course, need the witnesses in order that every word regarding the sin itself and regarding the obduracy of the brother sinning may be established for it so as to be above dispute. The church is the final court of appeal. Those who seek to go higher still, to the authority of the pope, of some high church board, such as the house of bishops, or of a synod composed of clerical and lay delegates, exceed the word of Christ. The local church may take counsel and advice, say in some difficult case, but this church has full jurisdiction in regard to its sinning members, and no one ought to question that, or by direct or indirect means nullify it. Zahn voices the old Christian conviction and exegesis on this point: "*Die Gemeinde also ist die hoechste richterliche Instanz auf Erden.*" — Therefore, **if he refuse to hear the church** the case is settled. He may decline altogether to face the church and remain away. Christian love will give him further opportunity. If he spurns that too, he has excluded himself, and the church takes formal note of the sad fact. If he meets the church, but refuses to repent, then too patience is exercised, but with impenitence fixed, the exclusion takes place. This is the ban, or excommunication — his membership ceases. — **Let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican.** This mentions only the person originally bringing the charge; but if by the very word of Christ he does this, all other members in the church will act according to that word also. Every Gentile was outside of the membership of the old Jewish church, and every publican was considered as one expelled. The same relation is to apply to one who by his sin and refusal to repent has put himself outside of the fellowship of Christ's followers, "as one who is not a sheep, nor wants to be sought, but means to be completely lost," Luther. Yet even this action of the church is intended by its very severity to bring the offender to his senses, if this be yet possible. He must see how serious is the mind of the church regarding his sin and

· impenitence; this action of expulsion is a last terrible warning to strike his obdurate conscience. He who laughs at this laughs at his own doom.

18. Verily I say unto you, what things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

With the seal of divine verity and divine authority Jesus confirms the command he has just given: "Let him be unto thee," etc., and at the same time he shows that what he directs for the one person applies to all the members in the church. The authority here given belongs to the church. Hofmann, Meyer, and others insist that the second person plural: "ye shall bind"—"ye shall loose" refers not to the congregation but to the disciples, i. e., the Twelve. Now Jesus indeed addressed the Twelve in this case, but not in their official capacity as apostles, but in their capacity as members in his church. If this is not admitted, then what of the person first addressed: "If *thy* brother sin against *thee*," etc.? Does this also apply only to the Twelve? No; here Jesus bestows the power of the keys upon the church as such, that is upon all the members of the church. This is the same power he bestowed upon Peter, cf. 16, 19, and upon the disciples, including the Twelve, John 20, 22-23. Compare the text for *Misericordias Domini*, Matth. 16, 19. The church acts through its called ministers also in matters of discipline, but the power put forth is the one which belongs to Christ and which he has entrusted to the church. Only a false exegesis is able to rob the church as such of this prerogative and reserve it for a certain superior order of men in the church.—The binding and loosing has been explained in 16, 19. The neuter, **what things soever**, does not signify the fixing of things allowed or forbidden for members of the church. It is not a legislative authority, to lay down regulation about what is

sin and what is not sin — a thing altogether aside from the context, and contrary to the significant terms “bind” and “loose.” Jesus here confers judicial authority. His Word fixes what is sin and what is not; he needs no church for this. But he sets us to guard his Word, so that when men sin against it, we may do what can be done to bring them back to repentance and a new life. Yet the neuter is significant: the church deals with cases of sin, and passes the judgment on the sinful words and deeds, either to pardon them in Christ’s name when brethren declare their sorrow, or to withhold pardon when they refuse to declare such sorrow. Christ himself deals with each soul directly; men cannot do this. We can deal only with the confession — if this be one of repentance, we must absolve; if it be one of impenitence we must retain the sin. — But while thus, in the very nature of the case, the church is limited in dealing with individuals, when it does deal according to Christ’s Word its action is as valid in heaven as on earth. This for the simple reason that the Word of Christ is always and everywhere the same. It is folly to mock at the discipline of the church exercised in conformity with the Word — in heaven itself, before the judgment seat of Christ, the eternal Judge, that discipline holds. It is equal folly to mock at the absolution and pardon of the church exercised in conformity with the Word — in heaven before Christ himself that pardon holds good — woe to those who cast it lightly aside! And so fully has Christ bestowed this wonderful power of his upon the church, that when first one brother spoke to the offender, and then afterwards two or three spoke to him, they likewise could wield that power, and in Christ’s name could absolve the penitent sinner from his guilt, or bind that guilt upon him if impenitent.

19. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask,

it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. 20. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

The greater the power Christ bestows upon his church the more necessary for him to instruct us concerning our use of that power. We are to look to him in prayer and rely on his presence in our midst. **Again** is in the sense of "furthermore." There is here too a solemn, authoritative assurance: **I say unto you.** It is the Head of the church who is addressing its members.—And this is what he assures us of: **that if two of you shall agree on earth etc.** The smallest possible communion is mentioned: "two of you," and we rightly think of the two witnesses admonishing the erring brother. So also "on earth" recalls this phrase in v. 18; on earth the church must do all its work, also this of keeping its members free from the bonds of sin.—**Shall agree . . . as touching anything that they shall ask,** means that they together discuss and weigh the matter, and come to the agreement together that they may properly present it to Christ in prayer. Note that the relative is attracted from the accusative into the genitive of the antecedent. And this antecedent itself, namely *πάν*, is drawn into the preceding phrase: *περὶ παντὸς πράγματος*.—Jesus solemnly promises: **it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.** This is a special and specific promise for joint or congregational prayer. Yet not in the sense as if our mere agreement as such insured the fulfillment as we may desire or ask it. Even this joint prayer will end: "Let the will of the Lord be done." The Father in heaven will answer it according to his wisdom and in his own good time, that is if the prayer concerns things referring to his providence. In a way, then, this promise does not go beyond Christ's other promises, but only because they already go to the limit. Yet where brethren counsel together they are more likely to keep to the will of the Lord, one correcting and helping the

other. "Combined prayer is precious," writes Luther, "and the most effective, for which reason we also come together, and from which also the church is called the house of prayer. Oh, if God would, that any gathering might pray in this manner, so that a common cry of the heart on the part of all the people might rise to God, what immeasurable virtue and help would follow such prayer! What more terrible could happen to all the spirits of 'evil? What greater work could occur on earth? by which so many godly people would be preserved, so many sinners converted. For truly, the church on earth has no greater power nor work than such united prayer against everything that may strike against her. This the evil spirit well knows, wherefore also he does all that he can to prevent this prayer. It surely does not depend on places and buildings where we come together, even though it be under a thatched roof, but on this invincible prayer, that we may practice this properly and make it come before God."—The reason for the effectiveness of united prayer is the presence of Christ among those gathered together in his name. **For where two or three are gathered together in my name** again reminds of the two or three witnesses mentioned above, but, of course, the statement here goes beyond these to any two or three believers. The preposition *ἐν* is not used with the idea of motion, or of purpose. Here we have the static use, equal to *ἐν*, and occurring constantly in the Greek of this period with static verbs and verbs of condition. **In my name** = in connection with my revelation, or the revelation of myself. It implies faith in this revelation, and thus in him who is revealed. — **There am I in the midst of them**, invisibly present among them. And this must be understood of the entire Christ, i. e., of both natures. This is not the omnipresence merely of the divine nature, by which the Son of God is present to all creatures alike, but the gracious presence of the Godman, effective to guide, direct, keep, and bless those who realize this

presence of his by faith. Though invisible it is no less real than when he stood in the midst of his disciples during the days after his resurrection. And with him thus in the assembly of the church, or present with two or three convicting a brother of sin, it is he himself who acts with his church and its members when they carry out his Word, invoking also his presence and help. — In all that Jesus here tells his disciples he implies that soon his visible presence will be taken from them. The tone is that of John chapters 14-16. But it is all great, mighty, and blessed, and thus a joy and assurance for all his true followers.

SERMON.

One is our Master, even Christ; and all we are brethren. That is the great principle on which our entire church must be organized, down to every individual congregation. One Master alone directs what must be done in the church, and all of us as members of his church must bow to him and his directions, and carry them out to the best of our ability, appealing to him for guidance and help.

Take, as our text bids us to-day,

The Great Question of Discipline in the Church.

If a member in our congregation should fall into open sin, what must be done? Neither the pastor with his wisdom or authority, nor the congregation with its united wisdom and the voice of its votes, nor some general body of the church like an assembled conference or synod, can give us answer. All of these must take their directions from Christ alone, and proceed only as he bids them. And as Lord and Head of the church he has told us fully what to do. In this vital matter of church-discipline, even as in other things necessary for the well-being of the church, following him we shall not go astray. For here, with great clearness and fulness,

**He shows us the right method;
He gives us the proper authority; and
He assures us of the necessary help.**

I.

It is a sad fact, and one which the church must always reckon with, that one or the other of its members may fall into open sin and thereby cause intolerable offense to his brethren. The entire text shows that Christ is here speaking not of the faults and failings which cling more or less to all of us in our present imperfect state, but of graver matters. The personal failings of our brethren we are to bear with Christian patience and love, knowing that our brethren must bear ours in the same manner. But when it comes to words and actions openly against the faith, plainly violating the Word of our Master, maliciously harming a brother or flagrantly wronging a fellow man, then the case is different. Then we all see and feel at once that the question arises: Can such a person still be a brother of ours in the church? Can he, with a sin like that upon him, retain his high rights and privileges in the congregation of God's people, or must he be expelled from our midst? When a case like this arises, we ourselves see that something must be done. It is a case of discipline, and the Lord himself tells us what to do, *he shows us the right method.*

The Lord takes a case of such sin known at first only to one brother in the church: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee." That may be a case in which some ungodly act is committed by one church-member against another. But it may also be such an act committed against another person, or against God directly, or against his Word and our faith, and as such causing grave offense to the one brother who witnesses that act. The point is that if only one brother is thus given unbearable offense, something must be done. It needs hardly to be said then, that if more than one witness such an evil deed on the part of a fellow member of the church, or if the deed be public from the start, like some open crime or shame, then too action must be taken, and not by just one, but by all who know the sin. What shall that action be?

We may put it all into one summary statement—the most earnest effort must be made to save the brother's soul from the deadly consequences of his sin. That means that if possible he be brought to a realization of his sin and to true repentance, in order that thus he may be absolved from the guilt he has incurred. And right here let us learn the mighty love of Christ for us all. When one of our number commits an open sin we might be inclined to make short work of the case by at once expelling the offender from the church and thus getting rid of the offense. But that would mean, at least in most cases, the loss of the offender's soul. Yet Christ died for sinners, also for

church-members who are caught by the devil in open sin. The Lord's great purpose is to save the sinner—to remove his sin and guilt indeed, and to take from the church the offense committed, but to do both if possible by saving the sinner's soul. Oh, recognize this wondrous grace of his, and let it call forth in you too a corresponding love, willing to follow the Lord in the effort to save every member among us who may become lost through sin or be in danger of thus becoming lost.

Now these are the Lord's instructions when one of our members falls into grave sin and offense. Let him who knows of the sin go personally to the offender and confront him with what he has done. The one aim must be to have the offender acknowledge his sin and repent of it in true sorrow. That means that whoever goes to him do so in the spirit of Christ, with firmness and yet with love, without resentment and yet determined if possible to gain the great end. How often is he to go to the offender? The answer is easy—as long as he has hope by his own efforts to save the offender and remove the offense. And during this time he must keep the matter strictly to himself and not blurt it about, or tell of it secretly to others. That very thing might defeat the end Christ has in view. What a blessed thing when the brother who has sinned sees his fault, declares his sorrow, and longs for Christ's pardon and that of the brother he has offended! Then that brother's pleasant duty will be to assure the penitent offender of full and complete pardon. Christ says: "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." No more blessed work can any Christian do for his brother—he has saved that brother's soul from spiritual death or the danger of such a death; he has defeated the devil, and done the work of Christ.

But this happy ending may not at once result; the offender may refuse to heed the admonition and warning of the brother against whom he has sinned. What then? Even then yet Christ wants the efforts of love continued. Let the brother get one or two others to go with him and help in the work. Where one failed, two or three may yet succeed. They too are to keep the matter to themselves, and are to continue their efforts till either they succeed, or till they see that their efforts are in vain. Many a man has thus been won and his soul saved for Christ, and they who render such service to an offender in the church are surely doing the highest and holiest work one man can do for another.

But if even they fail, the case is not yet lost. "Tell it unto the church," says the Lord. That does not mean to denounce the offender to the church, or to bring him to trial before the church; it means that now the congregation as such is to try to do with

all love and earnestness what the one brother at first tried to do alone, and what the two or three also tried. A meeting of the congregation is to be called, more than one if necessary; the offending brother is to be especially called to that meeting, as one who is still counted a brother. At the meeting all the brethren are to join in showing him his fault and in pleading with him to acknowledge it with due repentance. It ought to be impossible for any church-member who has fallen into open sin to resist the voice of all his brethren in the congregation. What a terrible thing that would be! Now the moment the offender, though he have held out this long, bows in repentance, that moment the congregation in Christ's name is to absolve him from the sin and by such absolution close the case. The struggle may have been long, but the victory is glorious. Think how the good Shepherd sought long and painfully till he found his lost sheep, and how Christ added the picture of the church doing the same thing in the woman sweeping the whole house and seeking the lost coin till she found it. Remember too what Christ added in both cases: "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." — Of course, the offender may also harden himself, refuse to come at all to the meeting of his brethren, or come with a brazen face determined to remain impenitent, yea, perhaps to continue on in his evil course, defending it as right, or at least allowable, no matter what the offense to the church and the harm to his own soul. Then what? When all efforts of love are exhausted, only one thing remains. Christ puts it into these words: "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Heathen men are outside of the church, publicans were renegades from the old Jewish church. The impenitent offender is finally to be expelled from the church. As a dead branch, whose deadness has become apparent even to the congregation, he is cut off and removed. That may be very sad and painful, especially if the offender be a relative of yours or a companion whom you have loved. But Christ is more to us than father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, child, or friend. We must follow him and his Word, though it cost our very life.

Yet even this sad outcome has behind it the thought of love. When the impenitent man sees what the church at last found itself compelled to do, perhaps then he may find repentance through grace, and return to the fold. The door is open to him to return as long as God may grant him life. Thank God, some have thus returned! Even in the face of death a few have repented at last. With joy the congregation is to receive them back, for Christ himself receives them through even this belated repentance.

This is Christ's method of church-discipline. It is altogether like Christ. May we always be animated by his spirit in following out his method.

Alas, there are congregations who refuse to do so. Some of them care little or nothing for open transgressions of the Master's Word. They let their members live on in strife and contention, in immoral acts and vices, in openly sinful and antichristian connections like the lodge, in flagrant denial of Christian doctrines, in open repudiation of plain Christian duties. In addition they are ready to take into their membership those whom faithful congregations are compelled to discipline, thus making mock of these congregations and their faithfulness, and of the Word of Christ himself. What shall we say to this? They make themselves partakers of other men's sins; they load themselves down with a responsibility they can never bear; they will meet the judgment of the great Head of the church at last. Woe to the world because of offenses! It must needs be that offenses come. But however shameful and painful they may be, let us abide by the Word of our Master, removing all offenses from our midst, and knowing this one thing, that no man's church-membership will save him except he use it to live in repentance and a Christian life.

II.

The Lord shows us the right method for church-discipline, and at the same time *he gives us the proper authority* for exercising it.

Someone might say: "What do I care for the church? It is composed of nothing but men as fallible as myself!" He may even point to many an imperfection among us, and we on our part would not think of denying that we are by no means perfect. But all such thoughts are beside the mark. It is the Lord himself who has clothed his church with his own authority in dealing with the sins of men. Faulty though we all are, Christ is not faulty, his authority is not faulty, and when that authority is put into operation there is no fault or failure as to the result.

Now this is the authority with which Christ has clothed his church. Solemnly he declares: "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Certainly, no man who knows Christ and his Word will for one moment think that this authority means, the church can do as it pleases in binding and loosing the souls of men. We all know that Christ means we are to bind and loose only according to his will and direction. They who would attempt to bind and loose contrary to Christ's Word, only call his judgment down upon them-

selves. But the church which follows Christ's Word, in using this mighty power and authority, will always find Christ himself behind it and making it good. We are but his humble agents; it is he who uses us. And so what the church binds here on earth according to his will is equally bound in heaven, in the eternal judgment of Christ himself. Who shall loose it? Woe to the fools who dream they can loose what the eternal Son of God himself has bound! The same is true of the loosing. Let no pardoned sinner ever doubt the authority of the church in this respect! The sins pardoned at Christ's command by his church on earth are pardoned in heaven itself, at the judgment seat of God's own Son. It is joy to read it in Christ's own words.

To bind means to retain the guilt of sin upon the sinner's soul, and to loose means to remit and remove that guilt from his soul. Instead of doing this only in secret, so that none could know certainly that it is really done, Christ in heaven has it done openly and audibly right here on earth through the agency of his church. Each one of us is to hear for himself what is thus done regarding his guilt by Christ. This is for the comfort and joy of all who receive the heavenly absolution, and it is for the warning and terror of those from whom that absolution is withheld. For this power to bind and to loose men's souls is by no means peculiar to the exercise of church-discipline alone; it is nothing other than the power of the Gospel itself which Christ has committed to us all. That Gospel absolves every penitent sinner and opens heaven for him, but the impenitent together with their sin and guilt it bars out. We may sum it up in Christ's own words: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." In every true Gospel sermon that is preached the binding and loosing power of Christ is exercised. We have it in the absolution in our morning service, in the special confessional service before the Holy Communion, in the two Sacraments themselves, and in every Gospel word spoken by one brother to another or to those without. And this same double power the church employs in every case of discipline when it tries with all love and patience to restore some fallen brother to the grace and pardon of Christ.

Let us hold fast the gift as Christ has bestowed it upon us — as the gift of the entire church down to the very least of its members. It is the old error of Rome to think that a certain order of men alone possess this authority from Christ to bind and to loose. No; not to the pope and the priests as his representatives, not to the pastors in our churches as a separate class, is this divine power given, but to the people of God one and all, to you and to me alike. There is only one difference — the pastors are the called ministers of the church, through whom the

church acts ordinarily when it binds and looses. Christ bids us "tell it unto the church" when the final stage of discipline is reached, and only the church may exclude a fallen member from its fold. In this work of discipline, as in the entire work of preaching Gospel absolution and pronouncing this absolution, the church uses the pastor's voice to speak for it, but it is the church which does it; it is not the pastor alone who acts apart from the church. So also when one brother, or several brethren deal with another—without any pastor they are entitled to use the power of Christ. And when they find the sinner penitent theirs is the blessed privilege to give him the Gospel pardon in Christ's name. Oh, then recognize what Christ has done for his church! Hold fast and administer faithfully his great authority, and let no man rob you of your high and holy privilege!

III.

The right method of church-discipline Christ has reconfirmed by bestowing the proper authority. But he has added still more, namely this that *he assures us of the necessary help.*

Well might we shrink from handling a power which opens and shuts the door of salvation itself to immortal souls, which either saves them eternally or damns them eternally. Who is sufficient for these things? Well, in reality none of us is, not even all of us together. But Christ has not left us to act alone. Hear his blessed promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." In the smallest gathering, if it be truly in his name, he is present, he the Godman, the great Head of the church himself, with all his grace, help, and gifts—invisibly, yet none the less truly. He has promised that he will not leave us alone, but will come to us. Only let us mark well the words: "gathered together in my name." That means: believing and trusting the Word which reveals him, and therefore following that Word alone. Where men forsake that Word and follow their own wisdom, though they call themselves his church, and count their members by thousands, Christ departs from them, and all that they do without Christ is null and void before his throne. Look not, then, to other churches, but to Christ's name and Word alone. They may even carry the glorious name "Evangelical Lutheran"—unless they, and we too, abide by the Word, Christ is not with them.

With Christ in our midst as a church ours is the blessed privilege of asking his help in administering the Gospel power committed to our trust. It is for this reason that the Lord has given us in this connection the special promise: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask,

it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Even two, gathered truly in Christ's name, have this promise; surely, then also we all with greater numbers. Looking to Christ and his name only, we will never ask of him what is contrary to his Word and will, and in all things where his will is not clearly stated in his Word, we will end our petitions to him as he himself has taught us: "Father, not my will, but thine be done!" Especially as regards the Gospel, its administration in general for the church, and its particular application when cases of discipline arise, will move us to throw ourselves completely upon the Savior's help. Let me tell you as your pastor, whom you have called especially to go after the wayward and erring, never could I think of going on such an errand without calling on my Savior to go with me, to help me speak the right word, and if it be possible by his grace to make that Word effective. So must we all do, singly, and two or three, seeking to save an offender, and the assembled congregation when in its name the Gospel is preached, sins are absolved, or correction applied to one who has erred. Away with the idea that this is mere form! The great Lord himself is in our midst; blessings are in his hands—shall any of us ignore him, fail to realize his presence, because it is invisible, trust his own wisdom, and not lean on the Savior's help? Never! We need him and all he has in store for us. We need him as a congregation in all that we do, and as individual members in the congregation. And our joy is that he is with us, now and always, and that through his great name all our needs shall be abundantly supplied.

May the Lord keep us one and all as true members of his church, preserve us from sin and error, lift us up again by the ministration of our brethren when we fall, make us truly repentant for every sin, and bless us now and ever by the heavenly absolution of his holy Gospel.

OUTLINES.

The text contains Christ's most specific word on church-discipline. The more this is ignored in some parts of the church, the more we should heed it and make it our own. We may preach on the subject of discipline, for instance on: Christ's instruction on church-discipline—the course he lays down—and the aid he offers us in following that course. Or more detailed: The great things involved in the question of Christian discipline: the presence of Christ—the power of the Gospel—the authority of the church—the purpose of saving the fallen—the love and faithfulness with which we ought to follow his will.—The whole text may

be entered by the gateway of its first word: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee"—then do what Christ tells you—and be assured that he is with you.

Christ Wants us to Keep the Church Clean.

1. *She must be clean—Christ would dwell in her.*
 2. *She can be clean—Christ enables her.*
 3. *She will be clean—when the presence of Christ is realized, and his help is used.*
-

When a Member of the Church Falls into Sin—

1. *Christ is greatly concerned, and we must be likewise.*
 2. *Christ bids us do our utmost to save, and we must follow his directions.*
 3. *Christ promises us his help, and we must thankfully employ it.*
-

The Duty of Discipline in the Church.

1. *Often neglected.*
 2. *Sometimes perverted.*
 3. *Never left merely to us.*
 4. *Always full of blessing.*
-

Our Confessions, and our church-constitution second

Christ's Word on Church Discipline.

1. *The basis on which it rests.*
 2. *The evangelical order we must follow.*
 3. *The blessed result we may expect for the church.*
-

THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts 15, 6-12.

Every local congregation needs to be shown something of the wider aspects of the church. We need the wider fellowship, though, of course, only on the basis of the one true faith and its full and genuine confession. We need to realize also the wider interests which affect us most vitally and many besides us. There are still other angles from which to view the connection of the home congregation with her many sister-congregations. So, after the text which deals with the retention of an individual member in a local congregation, we turn now to a text which speaks of the connection of the local congregation with others like her in many other places. Our text describes *the first general assembly in the church, or the first synodical convention.*

15, 6. And the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider of this matter. 7. And when there had been much questioning, Peter rose up, and said unto them, . . .

The context shows what is meant by **this matter**, compare v. 1-5. A doctrinal or confessional question had arisen in the early church, one which at the same time involved the practice of the church in a vital matter. * The thing had come to light in the congregation at Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas had returned after their first missionary journey among the Gentiles. Certain influential Jewish Christians had come from Judea and taught that the Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved. This caused considerable disturbance in the congregation at Antioch, since they had been taught that faith in Christ alone was sufficient for salvation. We see at once that the question thus raised

was of general import, involving not only the congregation at Antioch, but all others likewise, in particular also the mother-church at Jerusalem and all its members. Realizing this, and acting on it, the congregation at Antioch appointed a number of delegates and sent them to Jerusalem, where in conjunction with the mother-church and the apostles and elders there present, the entire question should be settled according to the will and Word of Christ. The appointed delegates arrived at Jerusalem and were received by the congregation and its leaders, the apostles and elders. They stated the object for which they had come, and the result was that certain of the Jewish Christians right in Jerusalem began to voice the same false legalistic doctrine which some of their number had tried to promulgate in Antioch. These men had formerly been Pharisees, and, it seems, had not been purged completely of the old Jewish legalism as regards the requirements for salvation. They held that all Christians ought to be circumcised and to keep the old Mosaic regulations. A grave question thus confronted the entire young church of Christ — a question regarding Law and Gospel, of what really is and what is not necessary for salvation. The congregation at Antioch did right in not deciding this question simply for itself, apart from the other chief congregation at that time, namely Jerusalem. The unity of the church was at stake, and if possible should be preserved on the basis of divine truth. Thus a meeting was held in which both congregations were represented. In a general way we may call this the first synodical convention, since these features characterize the meeting: the entire church is represented; the office of the ministry as well as the laity are present and take action; there is discussion full and free, and then a decision much like a resolution at our present meetings; this resolution is communicated to all the members of the church at that time. As regards the leading features of the assembly at Jeru-

salem our synodical meetings to-day still follow them, and are wise in doing so.—Luke writes: **And the apostles and the elders were gathered together.** This was not some time considerably later, as Noesgen strangely imagines, but as soon as could be conveniently arranged after Paul and the delegation with him had made the object of their coming known. The mention of “the apostles and elders” must not make us think that these alone came together. V. 12 shows the delegation from Antioch present and “all the multitude,” i. e., the laity at Jerusalem. When the decision is reached, v. 22, it reads: “Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church,” etc and the verb *ἔδοξε* with the dative may be very properly translated: “they resolved.” It is the whole church which acts in the case, its divinely called teachers and leaders together with its members — “they wrote thus,” v. 23, “having come to one accord,” v. 25.—The apostles and elders very rightly took the lead to have the church **to consider of this matter**, namely “to see concerning this statement” made at both Antioch and Jerusalem by legalistic brethren.—**And when there had been much questioning** really means that there was much discussion and debate, both parties freely contending for their views and trying to show that they were in agreement with Christ’s Word. Since none of the apostles or elders, which means here the pastors of the congregation at Jerusalem, held the legalistic view, we see that the discussion was free also to the laity, for some of these must have contended for the old Jewish regulations as still binding in the new covenant and part of the doctrine of Christ and Christian faith.—But this *ζητήσις* or debate did not as yet settle the matter in the minds of all those present. The issue was not reached until **Peter rose up** and made his decisive speech. Now Peter was not the head of the meeting, either its president or its chairman. He was not the presiding bishop, much less did he act here as the

vicegerent of Christ or pope. The man who acted in the capacity of chairman was James, who also formulated the final resolution to which all agreed, v. 13, etc. Peter spoke as others had spoken before him; but the things he said were such as to convince everybody present, even the former Pharisees. That is why Luke brings in Peter and gives us a summary of his speech. Peter was no longer a resident of Jerusalem. In 12, 17 we learn that he had left to work elsewhere; and in 21, 18 we discover that James was the head of the old mother-church.

7. . . . **Brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe.** 8. **And God, which knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.**

Peter addresses the assembly as **brethren**, and the Greek: *ἀνδρες ἀδελφοί*, shows that this is an assembly of men, not of men and women. We would expect nothing else, since the apostles and the early church very naturally followed the old covenant customs in this respect, which also agreed with the order of nature as set by God. While this is only apostolic example, still it surely is that, and thus has more weight than the modernistic idea of women's rights and the like. In calling the assembly "brethren" Peter puts himself on a level with them; he is not trying to use any special personal authority, any papistic compulsion, nothing but the voice of brotherly persuasion and an appeal to the will of God himself. — In the words: **Ye know**, he speaks of well-authenticated facts, with which all present were fully conversant. Note that *ὑμεῖς* is emphatic — they all knew, it was necessary merely to remind them. — The things referred to happened **a good while ago**, literally: "from olden days on," after the first persecution, when Peter was called to bring Cornelius in Cæsarea into the

church. — Peter does not say: “I preached the Gospel to the Gentiles,” or anything which emphasizes his own person. It was not in the least a question of man, even of one in an important office; it was something done by God himself: **God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel.** He means that God could just as well have chosen someone else for this work; it was merely his good pleasure that he chose Peter in this case. Peter, just as any one else would have done, acted merely as God’s servant and agent. God gave him the vision, Acts 10, and then had the messengers from Cornelius call him—thus God had made his choice. Now the case of Cornelius was highly significant, for he and his relatives were **Gentiles**, which evidently means just what the term states, and not proselytes, either of the gate or of righteousness. And Peter was sent by God to these people in order that they should **hear the gospel, and believe**—that was all, no further requirements were added by God. Only here and in 20, 24 have we the word “Gospel” in the Acts. It is the good news that Christ has wrought out our salvation for us to accept by faith. Note that these two are correlatives: hearing the Gospel, and believing it. Such true and blessed news, the very answer of God and his grace to our most desperate need, every man ought at once to believe. There is no possible reason why for one moment he should hesitate, doubt, or disbelieve. The Gospel itself is such as to move and impel unto faith, strongly drawing in that direction. In the case at Cæsarea this gracious purpose was accomplished, which the two aorist infinitives “should hear and believe” plainly imply.—But the point full of conviction for Peter’s hearers is this: when Peter preached to Cornelius and his friends and these all believed, God did a very significant thing: **And God, which knoweth the heart, bore them witness, etc.** The emphasis is again on God. It is strengthened by the addition *Herzens-*

kündiger, for which we are constrained to use a relative clause: "which knoweth the heart." That means that God could not be deceived as to the real faith of these hearers in Cæsarea. His action, then, was based on the most direct knowledge. And this was God's own action: **he bore them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost.** The aorist participle is simultaneous with the main verb. By the one act of giving the Spirit the witness was borne, namely that these new believers by believing, and by believing alone, were the children of God. The case was the more remarkable since here the Spirit was bestowed before the sacrament of baptism was applied, thus laying the more weight on faith alone. — What is meant by the giving of the Holy Ghost we see in the addition: **even as he did unto us**, namely at Pentecost. Peter is not speaking of the gracious and saving gift of the Holy Ghost through Word and Sacrament, but of the charismatic gift, the bestowal of wonderful powers, such as speaking in different languages, etc. It is always apparent who has this gift; men are able to see the manifestation of the wonderful powers bestowed. Cornelius and his friends were thus publicly acknowledged by God. — To make the matter fully clear, and to drive it home to his hearers, Peter adds: **and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.** Literally: he discriminated in no respect between us and them. The Greek puts the first person ahead of the second, and these two ahead of the third. As between former Jews and former Gentiles there was no difference with God, and that in this one and essential point: "cleansing their hearts by faith," or more closely: "in that by faith he cleansed their hearts." The stress is on the modifier "by faith." By that alone can Jew and Gentile come to God. And nothing more is required. The aorist participle, as in v. 8, is simultaneous with the main verb. Any discrimination was abolished by this vital cleansing. It is the cleansing of justification, comp. *σωθῆναι*, 15, 1. Could anything be plainer and

more convincing? God lifts Gentile as well as Jewish believers to the same level by faith, and has attested this by giving them the identical charismata of the Spirit.

10. Now therefore why tempt ye God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11. But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they.

After presenting the acknowledged and incontrovertible facts Peter makes the application to the situation that has arisen. The contention of the legalistic brethren does not agree with God's revelation. **Now therefore**, with these things as stated, the question is justified, **why tempt ye God**, namely by discarding his plain will and setting up other demands, as if to challenge him to see what he will do about it, whether he will tolerate it or not? Of course, the legalists did not set out to tempt God. Errorists often act in good faith; but their ignorance nevertheless does tempt or try out God, i. e., challenge his truth with human error.—How the tempting takes place is expressed by an infinitive: **that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples**. This is the freer use of the infinitive in the Greek of this period; it expresses the content, rather than the purpose or the result, Robertson, 1089. Peter uses a metaphoric argument of the strongest kind. The Gospel of faith is also a yoke, Matth. 11, 29, but one with the wonderful quality that it bears him up who bears this yoke. But the Law and all legal requirements, also those of a ceremonial nature, are a yoke of the opposite kind: **which neither our fathers or we were able to bear**, to lift and carry with the hands or on the shoulders. The image is that of a heavy, galling burden, which one vainly tries to bear. At best the Law can be observed only outwardly by those who try to win salvation by it. Thus they really do not bear it. Secondly, salvation is out of the ques-

tion when the Law is made the means for obtaining it. So again, looking to the object sought, the bearing is in vain. Do not these legalists realize that? Are they not happy to be free from this crushing yoke, and under one that is easy and light? When the Jews failed of salvation by way of the Law, do these men want to put the Gentiles into the same deplorable condition. "When oxen have long borne the yoke, and dragged heavy weights, all that they earn by their work, beyond their daily food, is to be struck on the head and butchered. Such is the experience of those who hope to be justified by the Law. They are taken captive, and burdened with a heavy yoke, and then, after they have long and painfully labored to do the works of the Law, all they finally earn is to remain eternally poor and wretched servants." — Luther. — Over against this depressing picture Peter puts the true and joyous Gospel principle: **But we believe etc.** Note that **through the grace of the Lord Jesus** is put emphatically forward. Grace is the opposite of the Law. It is the unmerited favor of God with all that by it he has provided for us in his Son and Spirit. And this grace is here made the medium (*διά*) of our salvation, as over against the Law. It is ascribed to Jesus as his, emanating from him and coming thus to us. **We shall be saved** is really: "we were saved," and the saving here spoken of is subjective, namely by faith. We must, of course, construe as belonging together: "through the grace of the Lord Jesus were we saved" — this is the thing "we believe." — But we should expect the addition: *they*, the Gentiles, in like manner as *we*, the Jews. Peter turns this around: (we) **in like manner as they**. He makes the Gentiles who come to faith the model or pattern, to which the Jews coming to faith must conform. The legalists would reverse this comparison, and make the Gentiles conform to the Jews in becoming Christians, and this to the extent of binding Jews and Gentiles alike to the observance of the ceremonial requirements of the Law. In the

words: "we believe" Peter, as on previous occasions, states the true creed of the church, here the grand article of justification by faith alone, "the highest and most important article in the Christian creed, the only key to the whole Bible, without which the troubled conscience can find no true, lasting, and sure consolation," *Apol. of the A. C.* Luther says of this article: "We cannot abandon this article, nor make any concessions here, although heaven, earth, and all things else that cannot endure, should fall." In καθ' ὃν τρόπον the antecedent has been drawn into the relative clause, and the words have become a set formula.

12. And all the multitude kept silence; and they hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.

Peter's speech went home. **All the multitude** includes, of course, those who had made the great "questioning" or dispute in the start. No new debate arose, for there was no ground for the legalists to stand on. They were convinced by what Peter said. The hush that fell on the assembly after Peter ceased speaking was significant—the voice of opposition had died. "All the multitude" plainly indicates that far more were present than the apostles and elders (v. 6), and the verb **kept silence**, used of the multitude, intimates that any of the believers present had the right to speak. — After an interval, which brought the significance of the silence home to all, **Barnabas and Paul** spoke, two of the delegates from Antioch. Luke uses the descriptive imperfect tense: **they hearkened** = "they were hearkening," "they were listening to." The Greek has the Doric genitive (α) for Barnabas. He evidently spoke before Paul, being older perhaps, but especially being better known to the brethren in Jerusalem than Paul. — But Barnabas and Paul had the same theme: **rehearsing what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.** The plural participle for "rehearsing" is construed with

Barnabas and Paul, the genitive of the person after a verb of hearing. Both men corroborated Peter to the fullest extent. They too emphasized **what God had wrought**, and they referred to themselves only as his agents or instruments: **by them**, really "through them," the same preposition as used by Peter in v. 7. This was no false or sham humility on the part of all these men; they *were* nothing but instruments in God's hands—to be this was their glory. Let every preacher and leader in the church strike the personal pronoun *l pianissimo*, never *fortissimo*, or even *forte*.—Barnabas and Paul emphasize the **signs and wonders among the Gentiles**, i. e., miracles of God's grace. These were the seals which God himself affixed to the preaching of faith as the only means of salvation. Two witnesses gave testimony as to these seals, thus making the thing sure for men trained to Jewish ways of taking testimony. The ethical term "signs" is put first, since it is most important, pointing to the things signified. "Wonders," never used alone in the New Test., since the pagan religions also boasted of portents, is here, as in many cases, added to show the greatness and the astonishing quality of the signs wrought. These signs and wonders were really secondary, wherefore also in time they ceased. They helped only to make the hand of God visible in the early days, and thus to establish that it was God himself and his grace who worked in bringing the Gentiles to faith and making them true children of God in Christ Jesus. Thus the argument was made cumulative for the assembly, and full unity in faith and doctrine was established for the whole church. The great purpose of the meeting in Jerusalem was attained. It remained only to formulate the consensus, and to apply the great doctrinal principle in an evangelical way to the church of that day. In this matter James, who seems to have acted as the presiding officer, took the lead. He formulated the resolution which the whole body adopted and then sent out to the church generally.

SERMON.

Once every year our congregation is called upon to elect one of its members as a delegate to the synodical convention announced by our church papers to be held at some convenient place. This delegate and the pastor then proceed to attend the proposed convention. Our own congregation has itself had conventions of this kind in its midst, for we are united in the faith and in the work of the church with many sister-congregations. Our congregation is a member of an evangelical Lutheran synod.

Still we have members among us who take little or no interest in these conventions and what they do, or in the sister-congregations united with them by the synodical bond. They fail to realize that their own spiritual interests are here involved. They try to live for themselves only, and scarcely ever look beyond the bounds of their own local congregation. What a mistake they make we see by studying our text. Almost immediately after the Christian church began to spread beyond its original center in the city of Jerusalem it was found necessary to have a general convention of the church. We may quite properly call it a synodical meeting. As the church grew in numbers and congregations a grave doctrinal question arose threatening to corrupt or to disrupt the early church, to blight its very beginnings. That question involved the spiritual welfare of every individual Christian living at that time, in fact the welfare also of the coming generations. Thank God, that under the guidance of his Spirit that first synodical convention was held, settling the disturbing question in the right manner, and thus safeguarding the spiritual interests of all the members in the church.

Our text invites us to attend in spirit the first synodical meeting in the Christian church, to see and hear what was done for the welfare of all. Here we are to learn something of the wider interests of the church, those which involve us all, whether at first we realize it as we should or not. Let us broaden our vision by the aid of our text and learn to understand aright

**Our Vital Relation to our Sister-Congregations,
as displayed by
The First Synodical Convention in Jerusalem.**

There is first of all **the bond of faith and doctrine** between us and our sister-congregations.

There is secondly **the obligation of love and duty** between us and our sister-congregations.

And there is finally **the joint missionary task** incumbent upon us and our sister-congregations.

These three vital interests, coming to light already in the very first synodical convention, mark to this very day the relation of our own congregation to all those joined with her by synodical bonds. Surely they ought to be fully realized and appreciated by us all!

I.

When the first synodical convention met in Jerusalem it found itself concerned in a most vital manner with **the bond of faith and doctrine** between the congregations as such as well as between the members composing them.

Following the Lord Jesus Christ the apostles had preached and taught one great faith and doctrine for the salvation of sinners. St. Peter had summed it up on the day of Pentecost in one word: "Repent!" which means: Be contrite for your sins and believe in Jesus Christ and his atoning work! St. Paul had done the same thing: "By him (namely Jesus Christ) all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses." But what happened? In one of the congregations, the one at Antioch, men arose who claimed that faith in Christ alone was not enough for salvation, that every Christian had also to be circumcized and to keep the old Jewish regulations. This was a different faith and doctrine. Could it be allowed to stand? When the matter was presented in the old mother-congregation at Jerusalem the same innovation appeared. Christians who had formerly been Jews and Pharisees wanted to hold fast to the old Mosaic rules, and demanded that these be imposed also on the members who had come into the church from heathendom. Here was a vital issue on faith and doctrine for the entire church. It was necessary to settle it for the entire church.

This was done at the synod at Jerusalem. The church at Antioch sent its representatives, and at a grand meeting, composed of the apostles, pastors, and laymen, the question was thoroughly discussed. At first there were two sides. But then St. Peter addressed the assembly and told how God himself acknowledged Gentile believers as his children without their accepting any of the Jewish regulations, God giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to the Jewish believers on the day of Pentecost. St. Paul and his assistant Barnabas testified to the same thing as men who had preached the Gospel to the Gentiles by God's special call. This settled the whole matter. The entire assembly recognized the will and Word of God, and resolved to abide by

that alone. The danger of division was past. The true faith and doctrine was fully established, and the error that had tried to creep in, put away. What a blessed result of that first synodical convention!

It is easy to make the application to ourselves. We to-day with our sister-congregations stand where the congregations at Antioch and Jerusalem once stood. The precious truth of Jesus Christ has been committed also to our keeping. But all kinds of errors, false doctrines, or mistaken views of the true doctrines of salvation, beat at our doors and seek to enter. And the worst of it is that there are always some in one congregation or another ready to accept the wrong teaching. It is worse to-day than it was in the earliest times of the church. For while indeed we now have the entire Bible, both the Old and the New Test., yet we are surrounded on all sides by churches which have given way to error and are very active in promulgating their false and dangerous teachings. How are we and our sister-congregations to keep the true doctrine pure and uncontaminated? How are we to bar out the false teaching and to help any who have given way, to right themselves again? There is one most excellent way—the formation of a synodical body and regular synodical meetings at which we may all come together, thoroughly discuss the questions of doctrine and church practice and compare them with the Word of God. Here all the best forces of the church may be brought together, here one congregation may aid another, here all together through their representatives may take counsel and join in maintaining the truth and eliminating the error. Here too men like St. Peter, St. Paul, and Barnabas, gifted to discern the spirits, equipped with the full knowledge of the Word, and rich in Christian experience, may aid the whole church by their gifts and knowledge. And this is what actually happens, and that again and again, at our present-day synodical meetings. They are a mighty force in keeping us and our sister congregation in the one true faith and doctrine.

Suppose that we had no such synodical connection, that each congregation and pastor stood alone and tried to go on indefinitely alone—you know there are congregations which refuse to join their sisters in the synodical connection. The result is not difficult to foresee. In many an instance wrong and dangerous doctrines would easily creep in; and those congregations which succeed in keeping their doctrine and practice pure would have a far more difficult time in doing it. Even as it is, with a strong synodical bond uniting us and our sister-congregations, the task of maintaining all our teaching pure and clean, as it should be,

is hard enough. Let us appreciate what we have in the support of our sister-congregations, and work together with them faithfully that among us all error may ever be defeated, and the saving truth of Jesus Christ triumphantly maintained.

Let no man among us think that it is enough for our own congregation to be kept in the true faith. Thank God, that this has been done! But mark two things well. First, how has this been done? Absolutely not by our standing separate and by ourselves during all these past years, but by joining hearts and hands with other congregations of the true faith. Thus were we strengthened and kept in the true faith; thus were we as a congregation supplied with trustworthy ministers of the Gospel; thus was sound and wholesome literature, from the Catechism down to hymn-books, devotional books, and the church papers richly provided for us. That is the first point—our connection with a confessionally sound synod has helped mightily to keep us doctrinally where to-day we are.—Secondly, thinking only of ourselves, what would happen, if all these aids were taken from our congregation? Where would we get the right kind of a pastor—if not from our synod? or the literature we need—if not from this source? And what if the whole synodical influence for integrity of doctrine, truth and soundness in faith, were taken away from us for good? We need not guess at the answer—it can actually be seen in congregations operating thus by themselves—all of them spiritually low and getting lower still, unless perchance they come into fraternal contact with some faithful synodical body.

Let us thankfully recognize what it means to be one of a band of faithful sister-congregations, by such connection kept in the bond of true faith and sound doctrine. Ours is the great blessing. Prize it, and do what you can to retain it for all time to come!

II.

When the first synodical convention met in Jerusalem its obvious concern was the bond of faith and doctrine. But, looking into that meeting a little more closely, we will see that its second concern was **the obligation of love and duty** between the congregations and the members composing them.

When the question of doctrine arose in the congregation at Antioch that congregation did more than think only of itself. The very men who voiced the false doctrine had come from Judea, the country of which Jerusalem was the great center. The members at Antioch at once thought of the mother-church in Jerusalem. They realized that the question at issue was one which concerned the whole church at that time, even also those yet to be

gathered from among Jews and Gentiles. The members at Antioch looked beyond themselves and their own limited congregational interests. Their love went out to the whole church; they felt a duty towards the church at Jerusalem especially, since from that center the Gospel had been carried out to them and others. Thus the congregation at Antioch, instead of acting only for itself and by itself, sent a delegation to the mother-church, and acted in conjunction with the church at Jerusalem. The obligation of love and duty between these congregations helped to bring about the first synodical convention. And the synod itself was conducted in the same way, looking to the true spiritual interests of the whole church, of all who composed it, or would yet be brought into it.

What a beautiful picture of the spirit of the early church and its congregations! Here was none of the blindness and selfishness which we meet so often in the churches to-day. It is a bad sign when the members of a congregation think only of themselves, and care only for their own congregation. This is the spirit of separation and division. It does not help to build, but to tear down. Our great aim must ever be to hold and maintain the truth ourselves, and to do our part in faithful love that our sister-congregations may do the same. We with them, and they with us—that must ever be our motto. And that is what our synodical connection is for. The great obligation of love and duty as between us and our brethren in the faith in all our congregations is to rule our synodical activity. Thus we ourselves will be benefited more than we could possibly be benefited by seeking our own good in separation from the rest; and our own benefit will at the same time be that of the rest.

The obligation of love and duty, however, will always hold second place, that of faith and doctrine coming first. If our sister-congregations should violate the truth and turn from the pure doctrine of the Word, then our love should not prompt us to yield to them, and our duty would not be to follow them. Love and duty must then unite in doing their utmost to bring them back to the true basis of all church-work. So also if we should err as a congregation. The love and duty of our sister-congregations in the synod would have to oppose our error, try their utmost to free us from it, and if this be in vain finally withdraw from us. Antioch and Jerusalem united and kept united in the truth of Christ; they did it by following the highest promptings of love and duty. May we and all our synodical brethren ever do the same!

Let no man of us, therefore, look away to those of other faiths and false confessions, and begin to love what he sees there and think it his duty to bring of their errors and wrong practices

into our midst. Remember those of other churches have torn themselves away from us because they determined not to follow the Word of Christ in all things. Shall we say that they did right in violating the Word, and we did wrong in following it? Love and duty never point in this direction, but in the direction of opposing these errors and their fruits and keeping ourselves free from them. Suppose Antioch had given way to the men who came with the old Jewish notions—should Jerusalem just because of love have followed? Or at the convention at Jerusalem, when the false views were voiced there, should the rest have consented to them? That would have been very popular in those days, especially in the Jewish country, for the Jews like no other people clung to their old legalistic ways—we see them to this very day keeping up parts of the old ritual of Moses. It is a mistaken, degraded love which yields to religious error because it is popular, because many people love and cling to it. Against this very perversion of love our synod calls on us to stand firm, and put in place of it the true love, which follows Christ's Word first, and then embraces those who stand with us. Woe to those, whether in our synod or not, who count the doctrine of the Word a cheap thing, forget the love and duty they owe to their faithful synodical brethren, and give way to the perverted influences of popular errors and the practices they produce! It is bad enough never to have had the truth and the fellowship of true churches, but what shall we say of those who have had it, but have come to count it as nothing, preferring error and its ways instead?

Let your eyes rest on Christ and his holy Word. Then let your heart go out to all your brethren in the congregation and the synod, with the one desire that they with you may ever be true and loyal to the Master. This is our obligation of love and duty toward our sister-congregations and their members.

III.

There is still another interest in the first synodical convention in Jerusalem. It pertains to **the joint missionary task** resting upon us and our sister-congregations.

St. Paul and Barnabas, sent from Antioch to Jerusalem as delegates to the convention, were the most notable missionaries of the church. They worked especially among the Gentiles or heathen people of that day. But St. Peter himself, who made such a decisive speech at the convention, was no longer working at Jerusalem, but in other places, chiefly among the Jews, yet to an extent at least also among the heathen. There were still others, down to the ordinary members of the churches, helping to spread the Gospel. We see at a glance how important it was that all

of them should do this blessed missionary work just as Christ himself wanted it done, bringing Jews and Gentiles to observe all things whatsoever Christ had said unto them—that and nothing but that. What a calamity, if some had taught the heathen one thing, and some another? if some had preached that faith alone is enough to save, and others had preached that the old Jewish requirements of circumcision, the Sabbath, and other rules had to be observed in addition? This would have made a sad and deplorable division. There would have been two churches instead of one, a true and faithful church, and a false and erring church. Thank God, that this danger to the most important work of the early church, its great missionary activity, was obviated by the first synodical convention! That alone makes the first synod a glorious achievement for the early church.

But Christ's great missionary command holds to this very day. It rests on every one of our congregations. And we have long ago found that this great work, like many another one, can best be accomplished by joining all the efforts of our congregations. We put all our missionary contributions together, we fit out men in schools supported by us all, and we send out our missionaries by means of missionary boards established by our synod as a great body. Of course, we are free to exert our personal efforts in bringing people into the church, but the greatest part of our missionary work, that reaching out to other cities, to other races, and to other lands, our great Home Missionary Work, our Negro Missions, and our Foreign Missions, are of necessity joint enterprises in which we all jointly take part.

We see at once how vital it is that all of us engaged in this great work should be one in the Gospel we carry out to others. And not only one in a general way, but one in the divine truth itself as Christ has committed it to us. When we send our money to the mission treasuries we want the assurance that it shall not be spent to teach those without false doctrines contrary to the Word of the Savior. When we send our sons to be fitted for the office of the ministry and the work of missions we want to feel certain that they will be trained to preach only what Christ has taught us to believe. When new churches are formed in other cities and lands we want them all to believe and practice just what we do in full obedience to Christ. There is enough false and perverted missionary work done in the world already. Too many churches send out only half of the Gospel, or still less, adding things of their own like the errorists who made their appearance in Antioch and in Jerusalem of old. All too few are the men who do their missionary work like St. Paul, St. Peter, and Barnabas, keeping wholly to the Word of Christ.

With whom are we going to stand in the work of missions? There ought never to be a question. We belong with all those congregations which put Christ's Word above everything else, no matter what other denominations and churches may do. It may be easier to bring people into the church by dropping some parts of the doctrine of Christ. Our missionaries might report thousands of new members where now they report hundreds. But our call is not to gain numbers, to build outwardly; our call is to bring the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth to those without. Christ is watching us and our sister-congregations in the work we do in his name. Oh, then, let us keep our eyes on him, and let us do our part by prayer, by testimony, by every influence our faith is able to put forth, that all this work may be done by us and all joined with us, so as to meet the Master's approval. Let the spirit of the first synodical convention in Jerusalem fill us and our whole synod to-day. All of our congregations one in Christ and his Word, and therefore one in bringing him and his Word alone in our joint missionary work to those without.

Yes, the very greatest interests are involved in our relation to our sister-congregations: those of faith and doctrine, of love and duty towards each other, and of united work for the Master's kingdom. Put away all narrow and selfish thoughts; they only stunt and starve our spiritual life. Thank God for the fellowship of true brethren in our own congregations, and in our own synod! Let us conserve, strengthen, and abide in that fellowship. May the Lord keep it pure always, and make it fruitful to the welfare of many souls and to the glory of his own blessed name!

OUTLINES.

The text might be used for a sermon on legalism in the church, using as a pivot the speech of Peter. Likewise the subject of the sermon might be the doctrine of grace and faith, using especially v. 11. Samtleben has a mission-sermon on the theme: "The Gentiles too are called to the kingdom." He has a Reformation sermon on this text: "On what does salvation depend?" But in our series we want the wider view of this text, if for no other reason than at least for this that the wider interests of the church are all too seldom brought forward in the sermon. We want an outline like that of Apelt: The Importance of the First Church Convention: The question which was discussed—the spirit in which it was discussed—the principles in accordance with which the decision was made—the confession which was made

on the basis of the resolution adopted by the convention (v. 11). —The sermon may be made descriptive by using a theme like this: Let us attend the synod at Jerusalem: And see who is there—listen to the debate—and observe the resolution adopted. —Or we may generalize from what we see in Jerusalem to what we ought to note for ourselves: The convention at Jerusalem a view of the wider interests of the church: The doctrinal interests—the practical interests.

The Synod at Jerusalem, and Our own Synod.

For all synodical connection and work there must be, as at Jerusalem so among us:

1. *The right basis*—2. *The true aim*—3. *The proper method*—4. *The divinely intended result.*
-

The First Synodical Convention at Jerusalem a Model for all Succeeding Ages.

1. *Its occasion was a vital question of the church.*
2. *Its spirit was strictly evangelical.*
3. *Its results were a blessing for the church.*

—Chas. Gerok.

Our Synodical Connection in the Light of the First Synod at Jerusalem.

1. *It rests on our church fellowship—and this brings us many blessings.*
 2. *It joins us in church work—and this enables us to accomplish much work.*
-

The Right View of Church Fellowship.

1. *Oneness in faith and doctrine.*
 2. *Oneness in love and concern for each other.*
 3. *Oneness in work for the Lord's cause.*
-

Luke 16, 10-17.

The first sentence of this text gives us its subject, namely faithfulness in that which is least, or, as we may put it: *faithful stewardship in money and earthly possessions*. There is an evident connection with the parable of the unjust steward, yet Christ's applicatory remarks are more than an elucidation of the parable—just as he always likes to amplify and bring to view the full richness of the truth we need. Moreover, the preceding verse shows that we must not take too narrow or too individualistic a view of what Christ here says. To be a faithful steward of our money and earthly wealth means really that we all as members of Christ's church serve him and his church with the possessions he has entrusted to us. Our best general commentary on our text is 2 Cor. 9. We serve Christ with our money when as members of his church we use our money according to his will.

16, 10. He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. 11. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? 12. And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? 13. No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

V. 10 is like a general axiomatic statement. But Christ now speaks of faithfulness and its opposite, not on acting wisely and the reverse. Glancing back at the

parable we may say that now the Lord is not asking us to copy the unjust steward, namely by acting wisely, and that ere it be too late, but is urging us to be unlike the unjust steward, namely to be faithful in the very start and to remain faithful always. The double statement individualizes in both of its members: **He that is faithful . . . and he that is unrighteous** — every man is to think of himself. Yet the words are general, so that they apply to all of us. To be **faithful** is to be trustworthy, so that the Lord may have confidence and faith in us. In using the negative to reenforce the positive the Lord employs a new word, namely **unrighteous**, to be in conflict with the norm, rule, or principle of right. Such a man is, of course, unfaithful, untrustworthy, but now we see what makes him so, his deviation from what is right. That casts a light back upon the faithful man — he is faithful by following the *δίκη*, the norm of right. Incidentally we may add that both statements conceive of us as not being independent, but as stewards, to whom treasures are entrusted, who are thus under high and holy obligation, who must render an account, who therefore ought always to be faithful and righteous. — There are two other opposites: **in a very little . . . also in much**. The former is a superlative, and means that which is very little or most unimportant. The context illumines the neuter, so that we know it means to designate our earthly possessions. But this rating of them as something very small and insignificant is the divine estimate; the world has a different rating — it counts wealth as a high and great thing, many even subordinating everything else to it. For the opposite of "very little," or "that which is least" (A. V.), the Lord could not again use a superlative, namely "the greatest," or "that which is greatest," for strictly speaking he alone has in his possession the greatest and highest thing of all. So he uses the term "much," which is explained for us in Matth. 25, 21: "many things . . . the joy of thy

lord"; and Luke 19, 17: "authority over ten cities." Again the context helps us to understand the word — it signifies the heavenly treasures and possessions which await us. — And now the general sense of the words. It is beyond dispute that if a man breaks the law of right and proves untrustworthy in a little thing, he will surely do the same in a great thing. The idea is not that of a momentary test, but of a test involving the entire course of life. One might fail in a single case, and yet his real character might be that of faithfulness. But when day by day a man shows himself unfaithful, because unjust, in that which is least, there is no hope as regards higher treasures and greater responsibilities. For the greater the interests involved the harder will it be to maintain faithfulness. It ought to be an easy thing for us to be faithful with such an unimportant thing as money; but if we cannot meet the test on this easy ground, we will never be able to meet it on more difficult ground. The whole argument of Jesus is very human, for no man will ever be unrighteous in much, i. e., in heavenly treasures, since only the righteous and faithful will ever come into their possession. But the point Jesus makes is plain — men unfaithful in that which is least cannot be entrusted with that which is far greater and more precious.

V. 11. This Christ himself brings out when he draws a conclusion from the double axiom just stated, using the regular term for introducing it: **therefore**. He uses the condition of reality: **If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, etc.** The tense is the aorist: "if ye were not," summing up your past life and making a correct estimate of it. — But now the Lord interprets what he meant by being "faithful in a very little," namely "faithful in the unrighteous mammon," our money and earthly possessions. The term **mammon** is the Aramaic word for riches or wealth, *mamona*. Its etymology is in doubt; but to think that it is the name of some demon or idol is nothing but a

legend. In Matth. 6, 24 we see why this word was preferred, instead of a Greek equivalent—it lends itself more readily to personification in contrast with God. The same thought underlies its use in our passage, which is followed presently by v. 13: “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Moreover, we must add that the early Christians who spoke Greek were fully conversant with the term mammon, and so needed no interpretation. A great deal has been said about the appended adjective: **unrighteous** mammon. This evidently goes back to v. 9, where we have the genitive: “the mammon of unrighteousness,” only that in the adjective the quality of unrighteousness is directly ascribed to money or earthly wealth. We, of course, cannot say that Christ’s disciples, who are admonished here to use their money aright, are thought to have obtained their money in an unrighteous manner. The quality of unrighteousness inheres not in the disciples, but in the money itself. This is so constantly in the service of unrighteousness in the world and among worldlings, that it becomes generally marked by this use, and thus, even when we get money in ways entirely legitimate and honest, the money we do get comes to us from hands which have used it unrighteously in many ways, giving it this stamp. Zahn draws attention to the difference in this respect between money and the gifts which God allows to grow for our sustenance and joy. The latter have no such taint connected with their history as money has. Yet, though money is “unrighteous mammon,” we as Christ’s followers are to add no new misuses of unrighteousness to the money which comes into our hands, but are to use it with faithfulness, i. e., righteousness.—But if we go on with the unrighteousness in our use of money, if that be the stamp and mark of our life, **who will commit to your trust the true riches?** God certainly will not, and there is no one else who can. So the question answers itself. The implication is that the money was the first trust committed to us. And beyond question it is

God, who so entrusts us. He stands ready to entrust us with far more—all his heavenly riches. Jesus designates these by the substantivized neuter adjective: the true, genuine thing. Here too there is an implication, namely that money is not a genuine treasure in itself. There is something sham connected with it. It is transient, fading, temporal, and yet people think they are truly rich when they have it in abundance, and yet they are not. Genuine riches make the inner man, the soul, rich, and that permanently, rich toward God, Luke 12, 21. It is impossible to bestow these true riches upon one who could not use the transient riches aright. It goes without saying, of course, that the true riches are a gift of God to us who because of our sins are utterly bereft of true treasures.

V. 12. Jesus adds another turn to the comparison between the two sorts of treasure. First he has "a very little" as over against "much"; then he has "the unrighteous mammon" over against "the true riches"; now he adds: **And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?** So he says of our money that it is really not our own, it is another's. The point is not to determine whose the money really is, and in doing this to emphasize our stewardship, taking it that our money really belongs to God. This conception is aside from the thought of Jesus. His point is that really our money is not ours after all. It never becomes our own, our vital, personal possession, an integral part of ourselves. It is a mere outward attachment. However much a man may try to weld himself and his money together, he never really succeeds. He is constantly paying it out. Even if he hoards a lot of it, he cannot carry it in his soul, he must put it into a wallet, a bank, an investment of some kind. Money is eternally trying to get away from us, and to go to somebody else, as if it were "that which is another's"; and it always succeeds at last—the moment

we die our last penny belongs in no sense whatever to us, but to another. Now with this so plain to us all, how easy it ought to be for us to use our money aright, faithfully, without the love of money, covetousness, avarice, or any other form of unrighteousness? — But if we fail in this easy test, how can we ever expect to have given to us that which is our own? The true riches, then, are **your own** (or the other reading: *our own*), the neuter pronomial adjective made a noun by means of the article. Their very nature is that they become our permanent personal possession. They and we are so welded together that there shall never be a separation. Note how Jesus does two things in these three verses: by his word of truth he shows how inferior earthly riches really are, thus dispelling their unwarranted attractiveness for us; and he reveals how great, valuable, and blessed the true wealth is, thus awakening in us the desire for this wealth. Psychologically speaking he uses the intellect to reach the sensibilities and to move the will by appealing to one of the norms of the will, namely that it will naturally prefer the greater to the less, the genuine to the sham, the permanent to the transient. The will which refuses to yield to this appeal can do so only by lying to itself, only by violating its own nature, only by a decision which bears its own condemnation on the face of it. Note also that here the word “give” is used. This abiding wealth can be secured in no other way. And “give” connotes grace, the opposite of works and merit. This thought must be carried back all through the three verses. By our faithfulness in using earthly wealth we do not earn the heavenly treasures; they are nothing but a gift pure and simple from above, but one from which every unfaithful disciple shuts himself out completely. And now we may ask what the true wealth really is. It is life eternal, ours fully when we pass from this world, and ours now already by faith. As regards our present pos-

session of it, it is a trust for us to administer for the benefit not only of ourselves, but also of others. This helps us to explain

V. 13: **No servant can serve two masters.** The term "servant," really "household servant," distinguishes this statement from Matth. 6, 24. It reminds us of the term "steward" in v. 1, but there is this difference: there is usually only one steward, while there are usually many servants. The latter term, then, speaks of Christ's followers as members of his household or church. Zahn writes: "He who attaches his heart to the money which is in his hand (Ps. 62, 10), and therefore is miserly with his gifts to the needy (Prov. 3, 27-28), may imagine that thereby he asserts himself as the lord of his money and maintains his independence over against other men; in reality he is a servant of mammon, and this does not agree with his position as a household servant of God, such as the disciples of Jesus are and mean to be." No man can be in the household of God serving him, and yet at the same time serve another master. — Invariably he will serve only the one or the other. **For either he will hate the one, and love the other deep down in his heart, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other** in his conduct and action. In both cases we are servants. Here again there is an appeal to one of the fundamental norms of the will. Whose servants do we mean to be? whose would we prefer to be? God's, our great, glorious, rightful lord's — or mammon's, this false usurper, deceiving us by making us think we are his lords while he turns us into his miserable slaves? Christ's statement takes issue squarely with the old delusion that we can really succeed in serving two diametrically opposed masters. It has been tried so many times, always with absolute failure, that surely we to-day ought not to be caught in this snare. It is either — or. So also the delusion as if serving God we are in servitude, while serving mammon we are lords. No; we are always servants —

nothing more. And Jesus does not even entertain the other thought. Judas tried the double service, Ananias and Sapphira likewise; we know how their master rewarded them, but read Matth. 19, 28-29. **Ye cannot serve God and mammon**, i. e., at the same time. If you serve the one you are not serving the other. If you serve God, then you will really be the master of mammon, making it do your will as controlled by God, instead of doing its will.

14. And the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things; and they scoffed at him. 15. And he said unto them, Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

While Jesus was speaking to his disciples others, in particular the Pharisees, also heard him. Christ's warning against the servitude of mammon struck them especially, for they were **lovers of money** — the Greek uses an adjective. Their greed is mentioned in Matth. 24, 14 and Mk. 12, 40, and goes together with their hypocrisy. **All these things** includes more than the last section of Christ's words, most likely taking in all from 15, 4 on. Their general answer was that **they scoffed at him**, *sie ruempften die Nase*. Besser suggests remarks like these: "Fine thing to talk disdainfully about riches when a man has none!" Or: "Sorry Messiah who has nothing more spiritual to offer than a sermon on greed!" Or a remark to the disciples: "If *you* need admonitions like this you are pitiful saints!" Scoffing is a frequent answer to unpleasant truths. It makes the scoffer assume a superior air, yet in his scoffing there is no superior answer to the truth.—Of course, Jesus made no reply to the Pharisees; he would not lower himself to answer their scoffs. Luke writes: **He said unto them**, which means that he made this statement: **Ye are they that justify yourselves in the sight of men; but God knoweth your hearts**. This was

the fatal mistake of the Pharisees—they were concerned only about the judgment of men, not about that of God. The verb justify here too has the forensic sense. If men acquitted the Pharisees, they were content. Now men cannot penetrate beyond outward appearance; hence any justification from them is valueless, we must have more. Therefore Jesus reminds the scoffing Pharisees that their case really lies at the bar of God, and that he “knoweth your heart,” hence judges with unerring judgment. Our constant thought must therefore be God, and how we appear before him. This will drive out hypocrisy, unrighteousness and unfaithfulness in the use we make of money, and will make us cast ourselves upon his mercy in Christ Jesus (as the parables in chapter 15 picture so beautifully).—And now Jesus states to the Pharisees the difference between God’s judgment and that of men: **for that which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.** The context makes the statement plain. “Exalted among men” means in their blind judgment which is satisfied with a fair outward show. Anything thus justified and esteemed high and great is nothing but a βδέλυγμα in the sight of God, a stench, an abomination, or an idol (since the word is also used in this sense). God must utterly repudiate it and cast it out of his sight. The reference is to the whole life and conduct of the Pharisees. They were esteemed by the people as holy, liberal with alms, etc., yet God saw through their shams—they were a stench in his nostrils. Christ’s word is a judgment on the Pharisees, and a warning to us all. Remember Judas.

16. The law and the prophets were until John: from that time the gospel of the kingdom is preached, and every man entereth violently into it. 17. But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall.

The thought is all in one line, only it moves forward without close connectives. There is no shadow

of excuse for the Pharisees. When one considers what God had given them, the glorious times in which they lived, and the example of many of the people, then they stood condemned by the Law itself. So Jesus seals the sentence of condemnation upon these hypocritical money-lovers. **The law and the prophets** is the regular title for the Old Test. Scriptures. The Greek has no verb, and our English supplies "were." We ought to supply from the following sentence: "were preached," **heralded and thus widely published, and this until John the Baptist.** Not that the Old Test. was then discarded; but that then the great fulfillment promised in it began. Therefore Jesus adds: **from that time the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached.** The kingdom is not an organization, like an earthly state, but the effective grace of God wherever it makes its presence felt, *Gottes Gnadenwalten*. And "the Gospel of the kingdom of God" is the glad news announcing the presence of the kingdom and thus ushering in its power and operation. The Baptist preached the kingdom, and so did the King himself. The Jewish land was filled with the message. — Now Jesus adds: **and every man entereth violently into it.** Noesgen objects to this translation, claiming that the words read thus would not be true, only a small minority pressing into the kingdom. Jesus, as Luke has told us, directs his words against the Pharisees, whose judgment he has just pronounced and whose judgment he is now sealing. "Every man," then, very plainly does not include the Pharisees, but places those covered by this term over against the Pharisees. Zahn states that $\pi\alpha\varsigma$ here = $\pi\alpha\varsigma$ or $\alpha\pi\alpha\varsigma \delta \lambda\alpha\omicron\varsigma$. There is no reason to press the word unduly. — Similarly the rest of the sentence, especially the verb. Hofmann thinks it must be passive, and Noesgen is sure that it ought to mean "apply force" in a hostile sense, namely oppose: "Everybody uses hostile force against it." Linguistically the middle voice, with active meaning, is assured: to apply energy or strength to, to press in violently. Jesus

refers to the flocking of the multitudes to John's baptism, and to the crowds that followed Jesus himself. Who was absent in cold, unmoved hostility? The Pharisees. If they came, they did so only to assail Jesus. Justifying themselves before men, i. e., themselves and others, they violated all that the Law and prophets taught, all that the Baptist had preached, all that Jesus taught, all that drew the common people, and publicans and sinners to the kingdom. If anything is yet needed, this seals the judgment of the Pharisees. — But in this way they who make their hypocritical boast of the Law are by the Law itself condemned. Therefore Jesus proclaims its inviolability: **But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall.** Just as the Law and the prophets = the Old Test., so the term "Law" itself = the Old Test. There is no reason to think only of Moses' writings, omitting the prophets. The whole Old Test. condemned the Pharisees. — "One tittle of the Law" signifies the slightest hook which marks certain of the Hebrew letters. To say nothing of a whole word, or even a whole letter, not even part of a letter shall "fall," i. e., disappear, be annulled or forgotten of God. Those commentators miss the mark who think in v. 16 Jesus means to say, that since John the Old Test. is set aside, and that the Gospel of the kingdom has taken its place; those likewise err who want the prophets left aside. None of these commentators can do justice to v. 17. No; the Old Test. Scriptures stand for all time, and God will carry out all that is written there, whether promise or threat. And by this very Old Test. the Pharisees stand condemned utterly — they who blindly boasted of being the special guardians of the Law, yet by their love of money, self-righteousness, and hypocrisy violating the very heart of it. And this applies to the modern Pharisees as well, only that now both Testaments combine in sealing their condemnation. So from the question of money Jesus goes back to the very root of the

pharisaic sin, and to the revelation of God which should make this sin impossible.

SERMON.

The sermon to-day deals with money, and not merely with money in general, but with your money and my money. And this for the simple reason that in our text the Lord Jesus himself speaks of our money.

There are church-members who do not like to have anyone preach to them about money. They sometimes say: "Let the preacher preach the Gospel to us, and leave other things, such as money for instance, alone!" Some of them even raise the complaint, that we are always "after their money." As far as the latter is concerned the case is really much worse. The Lord is not merely after your money, he is after you yourself, and therefore after all that belongs to you, money and everything else. He wants to sanctify you through and through, and this he cannot do unless he changes your heart completely also in regard to money. — And this answers also the demand that the preacher confine himself to the Gospel and leave the question of money alone. The preacher would like to comply with that command, but if he is true to his call and commission and really preaches the Gospel, he will soon find that the Gospel itself reaches down into a man's heart and life till it penetrates even a man's pocket-book, invades his bank and savings-account, his ways of spending money or investing it in one way or another. The thing comes to this point, that if a preacher says nothing about your money, you may be sure he is not preaching the Gospel to you as he should. You can see it yourself when you read this text and the Lord's own words which it contains. There are other texts just like this, both in the Old Test. and in the New, both in the Gospels which give us Christ's own preaching, and in the Epistles which give us the preaching of his holy apostles.

Moreover, when church-members dislike to hear this preaching about their money, it is a sure sign that they especially need such preaching; though in reality we all need it, since the danger connected with the unrighteous mammon touches us ever anew, and thus calls for the Lord's admonition and warning to keep us in the path of safety. Hear, then, what the Lord has to say on

The Church-Member and his Money.

We may sum it all up into two brief statements. In the first place, **your money is to be an aid in your church-membership.** And in the second place, **your money dare never become a detriment to your church-membership.**

I.

How will a man's money be an aid in his church-membership?

Very likely somebody will at once jump to the conclusion —: When the man hands out his money liberally to the various treasuries of the church! But our text says nothing at all about church-dues, church-collections, and the like. At best only a small amount of money would thus be involved, and our text speaks about all your money and mine, every last dollar of it. The Lord wants to reach not a few dollars of it only, but every last cent of it when he desires to make your money an aid to your church-membership. So put away this narrow little thought of your church-contributions, and mark what the Lord says about all your money.

1. As a member of his church and a true follower of his name you must *estimate your money aright*. Not as the world estimates it, but as Christ who gave it to you bids you estimate it. The moment you do that your money will no longer hinder, it will help you in your church-membership and life as a child of God.

Mark, then, what the Lord says when he declares that your money is "that which is least" as compared with a far greater treasure he has ready for you, which he calls that which is "much." Money, even a whole bank full of it, if it be yours, is the least of God's gifts to you. What is money compared with your life? your health? that of your wife and children? your happiness? your conscience and peace of mind? Any one of these is more than money.—Money takes a lower place still when you look at your spiritual gifts. Who was richer, the beggar Lazarus lying at the rich man's gate, eating the crumbs from the rich man's table, or the rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen like a king and fared sumptuously every day? As for me, give me the lot of Lazarus and let who will take that of the rich man. God's grace, Christ's blood and righteousness, the forgiveness of sins, are simply priceless; money—why money cannot even measure the value of these spiritual things.—But in the Lord's comparison in our text money is called "that which is least" when set against the eternal wealth of which we are made heirs by becoming true members of Christ's church. What is the finest mansion money can buy here on earth as compared with the

mansions which Christ has prepared for us in heaven? Can a millionaire, yea a billionaire buy himself one of these celestial mansions? But see this heavenly inheritance is given to you by him who bought it for you with his own blood. From his hand comes every dollar you own here and this infinitely glorious inheritance beyond the skies. But what a mistake, if now you should value your money more highly than your heavenly home! Only a blind fool would do such a thing. You and I must value things aright: your money is for this brief day of life alone, your heavenly inheritance is for all eternity. Keep that true valuation clearly before your eyes, then your money will stay in its proper place—all of it, in all your life, and your membership in the church will never lose by it, but only gain.

This right estimate of your money comes out again when the Lord calls your money "the unrighteous mammon," and compares it with "the true riches." You may indeed have gained your money in ways altogether honest, but the money that comes to your hands comes from other men; and when you look at the long line of those who have handled it you will see at once that many of them have used this money in all sorts of unrighteous ways. What did that dollar buy yesterday, last week, a year ago, that dollar which is now in your purse? Alas, it did not always buy what pleased God! It was often in the service of sin. See that it be taken out of that service now that it is yours. But the true riches are far above sin. There is no taint or stain connected with the golden mansions above. The crown there laid up for you has no jewels in it touched by sinful hands. So all money is the lowest of wealth, mired with the stains of sin; the true riches which you own are infinitely higher, awaiting you above in a sinless world. Keep that comparison vividly before your eyes, and your church-membership will grow holier and higher the nearer you come to its heavenly goal.

Still another estimate the Lord makes for you, when he calls your money "that which is another man's," but says of your heavenly treasures that they are "your own." When we come to think of it the Lord is right, our money is never really our own. It never becomes part of us. We have it in our pockets, stored in some safe place like a bank, or invested in property or business; it is never really a part of us. And we are constantly paying it out—always handing it over to some other person. We own it only for a little while, sometimes the briefest kind of a while. And at the last we do not own it at all. We die, and that very instant every dollar you had belongs even legally to somebody else. Even the richest millionaire in the world does not take one penny of his wealth over into the other world. Money—there is no money over there. And soon, oh, so soon

you will be there!—Now think of that other wealth which the Lord calls “your own.” It belongs so completely to you that it literally becomes part of yourself. It is the new life in Christ, which when you die will shine in heaven forever with unspeakable splendor. It is the joy and happiness, the glory and honor which is yours as a child of God, and which after death will be made eternally perfect. That is the true riches—money? why, it is literally nothing compared with it. The essential thing for you as a member of Christ’s church is to see this, to see it so clearly and truly that your whole life will thereby be lifted up and changed for the better.

Thus, by your constantly making the right estimate of your money, putting it way down where it really belongs, as compared with the true wealth, and putting the true wealth away up where it really does belong—your church-membership will be made more and more what it ought to be. For your membership in the church is to be for you the Lord’s admission to all this true and eternal wealth.

2. This estimate, however, of which we have been speaking is not to be merely a theoretical thing with you and me; it is to be so genuine and real that we will also *use our money aright*. Again, not as the world uses it, but as Christ who gave it to us bids us, he who would commit also the wealth of heaven to our hands. And so indeed our money will be an aid in our church-membership.

This right use is when ever and always we remain masters of our money, instead of letting it become our master, when we make money our slave, instead of letting it enslave us. One of the great delusions of men is that they think they are the masters of their money when they are not. Look at them—money literally buys them. They lie for money, cheat for money, break every commandment of God for money, violate their own consciences for money. So Judas sold his soul to the devil for thirty pieces of silver. The money consideration, earthly advantage, position and place—these are the things that count with men. When these call to them they no longer hear the voice of Jesus, the confession and doctrine of the church, the call of the true wealth from above. They are the slaves of mammon.

But some of them are very cunning—they think they can serve both God and mammon at the same time. Secretly they love money and earthly wealth, and yet they try at the same time to love God, Christ, and the church. They belong to church, but their heart is where the money is. Such were the old Pharisees, who when they heard what Christ said in our text scoffed at him. They were covetous, yet had the appearance of being the most sanctified people of their nation. But Christ tells us, the

thing, tried so often, cannot possibly be done. "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." It is either—or. Give your heart to God, and then use your money as he bids you; or go on and love your money, with God far from your soul. Your life tells the tale. Open it to God and his holy Word, even if it cost you all your money. Stay true to him and his teaching, no matter what you must lose in the way of money or what money stands for. Keep the distinction clearly before your soul, and by God's grace meet every test as it comes to you. Then will your membership in the church thrive, and you will get out of it more than any amount of money can possibly buy.

For remember that what the Lord here says is most certainly true: for every church-member the way he uses his money and earthly wealth is a test. God makes it such a test. He gives us money to see whether we will use it faithfully as he bids us. If we do, then he has ready for us the far higher wealth. If we do not, if we are unfaithful to him in the small money wealth he gives us, then it is plain he cannot use us for the heavenly treasures he has ready for us above. Did you know that you are being tested day by day through your money? Well, you are. How much are you ready to spend for your body, its comfort and its pleasure, and how much for your soul? That tells the story. Does it hurt you when God shows you how you can build his kingdom on earth by the aid of your money, bringing men into it and keeping them there? would you rather keep your money and use it for other things? Well, that again tells the story. Now God indeed wants you and yours to live in this world, and therefore he is so generous to nearly all of us, giving us a rich abundance. But he gives us enough to do far more, to help the needy for his sake, to build and extend his church here at home and elsewhere. O what golden opportunities! Let us open our eyes and see them; let us hasten while we live to grasp them. They are our test. Faithful in doing God's will with our money in this poor life, we shall be advanced up yonder to have and to hold forever the true riches. Does your heart desire that advancement? See, the way is open. Your membership in the church opens it for you. Serve God with these his earthly gifts, serve him aright. He will do the rest—far beyond what you now are able even to think.

And thus will your money be an aid in your church-membership, one of the means by which you may make your membership here an apprenticeship for your membership in the church above,

II.

By estimating our money aright and by using it accordingly we can make it an aid in our church-membership. But there are church-members who fail in this. Therefore we need the warning that our money never dare become a detriment to our church-membership.

Some, of course, see no great loss when their membership in the church suffers. Throw a fortune into their lap, and they would gladly stay away from church for a whole year. You have read about the princesses ready to change their faith and religion in order to marry a king. Surely, you have despised them for such an act. Your membership in the church means your faith, your confession of Christ's saving truth, the true way to heaven open for you in that truth. It means your sure hope of heaven, and your comfort, peace, assurance, and joy as you wend your way to heaven. Shall "that which is least," this bit of earthly money, ever damage and hurt your membership in the church and all these supreme interests involved in it? Your one answer ought to be: Nothing on earth shall ever hurt it, and my little trifle of money—that least of all! Oh, that we could all live up to this the only true principle! Money gone, how little is gone? But my membership among God's saints—if that were gone, then indeed all would be gone!

1. Now the greatest detriment to any man's membership in the church of Christ, as far as money is concerned, is *covetousness*. St. Luke writes that the Pharisees were covetous; he really uses the word which means "loving money," and that shows at once what covetousness is. Of all sins this is the most insidious. A man may be in it and not even realize it. A Catholic priest once stated that his people came to him and confessed all sorts of grave and terrible sins in the confessional, but in all the years of his experience never a member of his church confessed that he was covetous. We may well believe it. No wonder, then, that there is a special commandment: "Thou shalt not covet!" and that again and again both Christ and his apostles warn us against this sin. The love of money is the root of all evil. This sin belongs together with idolatry, adultery, and the worst of crimes. The world indeed does not put it there, nor did the Pharisees, but God does, and that shows us that the love of money and earthly wealth take all the spiritual life out of a man's membership in the church. To love money and to serve it means that at heart we no longer love and serve God.

How may we detect this sin and weed it out in time, if it should begin its secret work in our hearts? Only by the help of Christ and his Word. Here the Pharisees made their terrible

mistake, and many others have followed them in it. When Jesus warned his disciples against the love of mammon the Pharisees scoffed at him. Then the Lord pointed out their folly: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men." Lying in this deadly sin they paid no attention to what Christ said, they pronounced themselves clear and free, and accepted the verdict of men who were as blind as they were and never saw their covetousness and what it meant. And yet how clearly God spoke to them. He sent them John the Baptist, who preached so mightily against sin and called for repentance; he sent them his own Son who did the same thing, only more effectively still. Many men listened; Christ tells us that they pressed into the kingdom. But these covetous Pharisees remained as they were. We have Christ and all his Word to-day. Oh, let us heed him, examine our hearts in the light of his Word, and the moment we find that we think too much and make too much of money and earthly things, let us bow in repentance before the throne of grace, and instead of justifying ourselves, taking shelter behind some excuse, or satisfying ourselves with the good opinion men may have of us, let us not rest until the Lord himself absolves and justifies us in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When thus we clear our hearts of covetousness, then will our money, no matter how much of it we may have, cease to be a damage to our church-membership, and we may rejoice in the promise of our heavenly inheritance in Christ.

2. All this may be said in another way, in one which brings out the positive side. Christ himself points us to those who press into his kingdom; they are the ones we must join. With them we must *live in the light of God's eternal Word*. That will keep us safe in the church in spite of our money and earthly wealth.

The mistake of men is that they look too much at this world, and too little at God and his Word. Men, and the ways of men, and the opinions of men seem very real to most people, God seems far away and his Word has a distant, unreal sound to them. They may hear it indeed, and yet let it slip off from their hearts, instead of making it a power in their lives. But hear what Christ says: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the Law to fall." The Old Test. was written in the Hebrew language, and the letters in that language have little projections which distinguish those letters from others. Now Christ says, so firm and solid is God's Word that not even one little mark of one letter of that Word shall fall away, so that the word and thought it helps to express shall not be fulfilled. The heavens may fall, sun, moon and stars vanish, the earth disappear, but not one particle of God's Word.

Now draw the conclusion yourself in regard to men who like the Pharisees of old disregard that Word of God and shape their lives without it, yea contrary to it. The heavens indeed shall fall, and the earth pass away. And all who proudly, boldly lift themselves up now in their own thoughts and ways shall be brought to judgment at last. Here in God's Word that judgment is written. Do you know what the sentence is? It is in our text: "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." What do men esteem? Their own wisdom, and what it tells them in regard to earthly wealth and all it is able to offer. "Money talks," they say, and many of them know the language of money best of all. They laugh at Christ and what his Word says to the contrary. Poor, blind fools! When now they go where no money can follow them, then what will be their support and stay? Eternal night will swallow them up. For what God abominates will be forever cast out from his sight.

If we know and believe this, really believe it, we will cease shaping our lives as so many around us do. Our one thought will be God, his ever-enduring Word, the way it directs that our lives should go. We may lose money by it, but we will gain heaven by such a loss. Moreover, we will be very particular, about that Word, just as Christ here teaches us. If God will not let one tittle of it fall, then we dare not ignore or set aside a single statement in it. Every word of God counts, and you must make it count for you. A supreme satisfaction goes with this living in accord with the Word. Then we know God is with us, his blessing is over us. Men may scoff at us, as they did at Christ, God's commendation makes up for that. Our money will show that we are led by the Word. The God we love and his work, the Savior we follow and his church, the brethren we are associated with and their need—all these will receive our money. The world, its pleasures and frivolities, its sinful attractions and poisonous allurements, its vanities and displays, its deceptions and falsehoods—no, these will not get our money. As children of God and members of his church we know an investment that will bring us an incalculable rate of interest. Christ says that whatsoever we do unto one of the least of his brethren we do unto him, and he will acknowledge it as so done, on the great day of judgment.

Thus again our money, even if we have great wealth, will not be a detriment to us. We will rise above it and live not for money or anything merely earthly, but for God, for Christ, and for the eternal world which already beckons us.

This is the substance of Christ's sermon on money for us the members of his church. Do we need it? We certainly do. May his Spirit help us to heed it.

OUTLINES.

The structure of the sermon will be governed largely by the analysis we make of the text and its thought. With that analysis before us the question will be, from what dominating point of view we desire to group and present the material secured. We may analyze into three parts: v. 10-12 sets over against each other in three statements money and the true wealth, and this by using the idea of faithfulness, and the idea of a test in the lower, in order to determine our admittance to the higher; v. 13 sets God and mammon over against each other, and uses the idea of serving the one or the other, it being impossible to serve both; v. 14-17 sets the opinion, word, and verdict of men over against those of God expressed in his Word, and it does this so as to intimate the sure condemnation of the covetous Pharisees, while showing how repentant sinners are absolved. We may summarize all these elements under the theme: Christ's instruction regarding our money: He sets our money over against the true riches—He sets mammon over against God—He sets the judgment of men over against that of the Word.—The main features of the text are so closely related to each other that we may draw our theme from any one of the chief parts of the text. Thus we may use the idea of faithfulness: Christian faithfulness in the use of money: It elevates God above mammon—It places the true riches above the transient—It puts the justification of God's Word above that of men.—“Ye cannot serve God and mammon”: The two are contrary—So is their service—So is their ultimate reward.

A Man and his Money.

That means:

1. *A test as to his faithfulness.*
2. *An alternative as to his service.*
3. *A decision as to his final judgment.*

“No Man can Serve Two Masters.”

1. *Many try it, and always fail.*
2. *Let us cease trying, and serve God alone.*

The Test to which our Money Puts Us.

1. *There is a test as to what we think of our money as compared with our heavenly wealth.*
 2. *There is a test as to whether we really serve God or stoop to the service of money.*
 3. *There is a test as to whether we bow to the verdict of men or to the judgment of the Word.*
-

God's Word and our Money.

1. *It puts the right estimate upon it.*
 2. *It shows us the right use to make of it.*
 3. *It pronounces the right judgment in regard to it.*
-

THE TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

John 6, 37-40.

The last sub-cycle of the after-Trinity series of texts deals with the last things. The four texts here concerned bring us first of all the promise of the resurrection; call on us to watch and be ever ready; warn us not to delay; and finally reveal God to us as the God, not of the dead, but of the living. Lest this sub-cycle be curtailed unduly whenever a number of after-Trinity Sundays fall away in any one church year, the preacher should make his selections far enough in advance to omit a text here and there from the other sub-cycles, so as to gain sufficient room for several of these last texts.

Our present text is from the great discourse on the Bread of Life delivered in Capernaum the day after the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 on the other side of the Lake. Jesus has told the people who witnessed that miracle and then followed him across the Lake that the trouble is wholly with them in not realizing what that miracle revealed and in thus not desiring the meat that endures to eternal life. As far as the Father and Jesus are concerned all is ready for their salvation, and they may be assured that Jesus will bar no one out who comes to him. And this also these men are to know that the good and gracious will of the Father will be duly carried out — Jesus will carry it out, down to the final consummation when he will raise up all true believers on the last day. Our text, then, speaks of *eternal life* as it reaches its consummation in *the resurrection*. — Both in Jerusalem and in Galilee opposition had arisen against Jesus. To those in Jerusalem Jesus had to say:

"Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life," 5, 40. Now he says to these Galileans: "I said unto you, that ye have seen me, and yet believe not," 6, 36. Then follows our text:

6, 37. All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

Men refuse to come to Jesus in faith; they find this or that to object to in him and his work. The Jews in particular failed to obtain from him the sign they thought they had a right to demand. Will not then the work of Jesus fail, and will not its failure show that he could not have been the true Messiah? Let no man worry about that. Jesus is not like a man operating alone as best he can with his human wisdom and strength. He tells the Jews plainly who is behind him, and how therefore his work will reach its glorious goal without the least question. The Savior's words are another attempt if possible to break down the barriers of unbelief in his hearers. Our text begins with an *asydeton*, which seems to mark a slight pause, after which verses 37-40 were spoken in one strain.—**All that which the Father giveth me** uses the neuter singular. It combines all the individuals meant in one grand mass, and is thus stronger than if the masculine *πάντες*, "all men" were used. John uses this significant neuter repeatedly, cf. 3, 6; 6, 39; 1 Jno. 5, 4; etc. There is a side to this matter of believing which these hearers of Jesus were not thinking of. Faith is not in the power of man to bestow or withhold at pleasure; it is God alone who works faith. This Jesus brings to view by saying: all that "which the Father giveth me." In faith a giving on the part of the Father, a giving unto Jesus his Son, takes place. But it would be a great mistake to imagine that there is a fixed class or number, chosen by an absolute decree of predestination, and that those thus mysteriously chosen are given by the Father through faith to Jesus, these and none other.

A similar mistake is to imagine that a certain class of people in some way or other is better to begin with than the rest, or in some way of themselves act better than the rest when Jesus comes to them, and that thus these, and not the rest, are given to Jesus. Note the present tense in the verb "giveth"; it is general—giveth at any time, and thus reaches down to the present moment. The verb is forward and thus has the emphasis. It is the giving of the Father which is the vital thing. But this act of his dare never be dissociated from God's universal grace, from the universal means of grace, and from the efficacious power of grace revealed to us when these means accomplish their purpose. What the Explanation of the Third Article of the Creed predicts of the Holy Ghost is here ascribed to the Father. The Father gives by his gracious enkindling of faith in men's hearts; hence those who obdurately resist his grace, spurn his means, and in the face of them harden themselves in unbelief, by their own guilt shut themselves out from the Father's giving. Jesus himself explains the Father's giving in this sense in v. 44, where instead of the verb "give" he uses the verb "draw." We may say the Father gives by drawing men to Jesus, i. e., through the means of grace.—All such come to Jesus. The future tense **will come** is relative to the present act of giving; the coming is the result of the giving and drawing. But *ἔξει* is not quite the same as would be the verb *ἐλεύσεται*. In the former there is less the idea of activity on the part of those who come, and more simply the idea of their getting to Jesus. And this matches the neuter form of the subject—they get to Jesus by being brought to him through a higher power, i. e., divine grace and its divine means.—Now Jesus is in absolute accord with the Father, for, as the word Father suggests, Jesus is the Son. Hence he declares: **and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.** Now he uses the masculine participle, and therefore the verb *ἔρχομαι*, active coming. Thus we have

the complement to the other verb. Men are not carried like a dead thing to Jesus; the Father so works upon their will that this itself wills and thus of its own volition and without coercion comes to Jesus. The present participle denotes the quality of the person described. To come thus to Jesus is to believe in Jesus; it is the coming of the soul, produced by the divine power and influence. — Jesus says that “in no wise” will he cast him out. The Greek has *οὐ μὴ* with the aorist subjunctive, one of the strongest forms of negation for a future act. Jesus, who is in absolute harmony with his Father, could not possibly think of casting out a man who comes to him. The idea in “out” is put strongly, lying both in the compound verb and in the added adverb; and “out” = outside of Jesus’ followers, outside therefore of his Messianic kingdom. It is an utter impossibility for Jesus to act counter to his Father; both are at one in all that pertains to our salvation. Let no Galilean suppose for a moment that Jesus, by refusing the sign demanded, or by any of his words or acts, is putting up bars and obstacles contrary to God and his will. The only bars thus put up are those raised by wicked unbelief, and they are as contrary to Jesus as they are to his Father. — This agreement of Jesus as the Son with the Father he now states in the directest way, adding, in two declarations, the sum and substance of the divine will with which Jesus agrees.

38. For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. 39. And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

The emphasis in v. 38 is on the purpose clause, which therefore has the negative thought beside the positive. But we must not slight the main statement: **I am come down from heaven.** The perfect tense implies a past act of coming resulting in his presence now before his hearers: he has come, and so now is here.

The Ego or person here speaking has come "from heaven," down to the earth. The preposition used means that he left heaven to be here on earth. In the clearest, simplest, most matter-of-fact way Jesus asserts his heavenly origin, his oneness with the Father in heaven. John's Gospel is full of these testimonies. How Jesus came down from heaven he does not state, but standing there in bodily form before his hearers, the great fact of the Incarnation ought to have been plain to anyone. — But the purpose of this wonderful coming is the main thing: **not to do mine own will.** The possessive adjective is added by means of the Greek article, making the idea of "mine own" strong. How could Jesus, God's Son from heaven, have a will different from that of his Father, i. e., a will with volitions conflicting with those of the Father? It is impossible. — Against this strong negative is set an equally strong positive: **but the will of him that sent me.** We might translate this substantivized aorist participle: "my Sender." John reports how constantly Jesus referred to his Sender. This aorist signifies one past act of sending: "he who did send me." So Jesus came on a mission, and that mission was to perform his Sender's will, i. e., to execute what his Father willed. Having come thus how could Jesus set aside that will, and will something else? Again — impossible. But note the implication for his hearers who refused to accept Jesus thus sent, and opposed themselves to the will he was executing. How plain that thereby they were acting contrary to the Father's will, opposing and fighting against God himself. By making this so plain and emphasizing the simple facts as they stood Jesus is warning his hearers against their wicked unbelief, he is calling them again and again unto faith. When asked to prove himself thus sent he pointed to the witness of the Scriptures and of his works, cf. 5, 30, etc., note v. 36. — All this is made most highly effective by now clearly stating the substance of the Father's will: **And this is the will of him**

that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing etc. The *δέ* is copulative, to be translated with "and" or "now." The *ἵνα* is sub-final, giving the contents of God's will. We have once more the neuter: "that which he hath given me," only now the perfect tense, which signifies a past act of giving with a present result. This neuter embraces all those men now belonging to Jesus as the Father's gift to him. We may stop with those believing in Jesus at the time he spoke these words, but just as the previous *δίδωσιν* is general, referring to all time, so we may take this perfect *δέδωκεν* as also general; it would then take in as already given to Jesus all believers of all time. The fruit of Jesus' saving work is thus clearly before his eyes from the very beginning. In the mind of God and Christ there is no uncertainty about those who in all ages are truly Christ's own. — Now the will of God is that Jesus **should lose nothing** of all that is thus given him. There is an anacoluthon in the construction: "all that which he hath given me," an accusative, followed loosely by *ἐξ αὐτοῦ* = "of it." The sense is that Jesus should omit nothing to preserve and keep as his own those given him by the Father. And this will of the Father Jesus is only too glad to execute. He has omitted nothing for our salvation. Every act of his is in the direction of our salvation. The verb *ἀπόλλυμι* is occasionally used in the sense of "lose," and the tense here is properly the aorist subjunctive. Cf. 17, 12; 18, 9. The thought, of course, is not, that once a soul comes to faith it cannot possibly be lost again. There is no irresistible preservation. Look at the *si modo* in the F. C. article XI, 21. Some do fall away, but never by any neglect, omission, or other fault of Jesus. — The negative thought ("lose nothing") thus expressed is followed by the positive: **but should raise it up at the last day**, 5, 29; 11, 24. Not to lose = to keep, and that forever; and this naturally includes the final, crowning act of our Savior — our resurrection and glorification.

Then indeed our salvation will be absolutely complete. The verb is the future indicative, which in the Greek of this period must not surprise us after *iva*, especially in a second verb. It ought not to be necessary to say that Jesus can mean only the body when he speaks about raising up that which the Father has given him. Yet skepticism has tried to assail the Scripture proof for this part of the great Christian hope. The soul cannot be raised up. Only speculation will play with the idea of a germ of life in our bodies, which germ alone shall be raised up at the last day. Paul's figure of the wheat in 1 Cor. 15 dare not thus be pressed. The entire body of Jesus was raised up and glorified; even his wounds appeared in the glorified body. So the bodies of certain of the saints arose in connection with Christ's death—not merely the life-germs in their bodies. Enoch and Elijah were carried bodily into heaven. And so the proof goes on. As an act of omnipotence the resurrection, like the creation in the first place, is utterly beyond our powers of conception. The Scriptures know of only one resurrection, and that is to take place **at the last day**. That is surely a specific date, and the Lord repeats it in the following verse. That upsets the dreams of chiliasts with their double resurrection, one a thousand years ahead of the last day, and one on the last day. Not till the final day comes will the great act take place, but then without fail. The trumpet will sound, all the graves be opened, and all that slept in them will come forth to the last great judgment. In our passage, however, Jesus speaks only of the blessed resurrection of his saints.

40. For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

So important is this matter of the good and gracious will of the Father and its certain execution by Jesus, that he explains more fully what this will really is. This is the force of *γάρ*—a restatement for fuller ex-

planation. The clause with *iva* is the same as before. But now we have a definition of the neuter "that which he hath given me"; it is **every one that beholdeth the Son, and believeth on him**. The Father gives and draws; the result is that men behold the Son and believe. Note that "behold" is more than merely to "see"; it is used of great and wonderful objects, upon which the attention is riveted and continues so. But the two verbs are really descriptive of one act, involving the intellect which by beholding aright recognizes truly, and the heart or will which in that moment of true recognition trusts. There is a universal note in the term "every one." No matter who it is that beholds and believes, he shall have life. In order to behold, something must be brought before our vision, and in order to believe or trust, something must come to us and enkindle such trust. There is not the least trace of synergism behind these verbs. — Jesus does not say that it is God's will for us to behold thus and believe. His thought leaps at once to the real goal, which is that every believer **should have eternal life**, and so he touches the path leading to that goal only lightly in passing, by referring to our beholding and believing. Yet he who desires the end must necessarily desire also the means, and in this way we may say that Jesus intimates it as the Father's will that we behold and believe. We now see what is meant by Jesus not losing us — "eternal life" is to be ours. This *ζωή* is the principle or substance itself called life. It consists in our union and communion with God through Christ. This "life" no temporal death can harm; it serenely passes unscathed through the dissolution of soul and body. Our English does not give us the force of the Greek tense. "Should have" life might mean in the hereafter, but the Greek present subjunctive is durative — as a result of beholding and believing at once the continued possession of eternal life follows, and this is the blessed will of the

Father. Every believer has this life now; he lives spiritually in Christ Jesus, and we see in him the activities and manifestations of this life. No man can see even his bodily life as such, but we all see the manifestations which show the bodily life present, and are able to distinguish when death ends this life—for the bodily life in its present form is transient. Similarly the spiritual, eternal life—we do not see it itself, but its acts, motions, the symptoms of its presence. Only this life is to be permanent, passing over into the other world.—Now it is Jesus who mediates this life and makes it ours. For this he came from the eternal home of true life into our spiritually dead world, to be a fountain of true life for us and make us spiritually alive. By faith we are joined to him and thus live in the new life. Therefore also it is Jesus who shall bring this life of ours, which we now have by faith in him, to its full and complete fruition: **and I will raise him up at the last day.** This is more than a mere repetition. In v. 39 the resurrection is said to be the will of the Father; in v. 40 it is the sure promise of the Son. Jesus will thus carry out the Father's will in raising us from the dead. The *ἐγώ* has the second emphasis, the first being on the verb itself: and UPRaise him will I. Our present life in Christ is thus to be fully revealed, perfectly manifested, all its powers fully asserted. That life will then shine forth in body and soul alike in undimmed heavenly splendor. This raising up is a mighty act of Jesus' omnipotence, promised to occur "at the last day." For this final consummation we now live. It is our hope and in anticipation our joy. It is not like the baseless, groundless expectations of worldly men; it rests on the will of the Father himself, on the mediation of Jesus his Son, and is made everlastingly sure for us by the Son's promise. He lives, and we shall live also.

SERMON.

We are approaching the end of the present church year. The mention of the approaching end, even though it be only that of another year of grace, might sound to some like a sad thing, but the end to which the grace of God is leading us is the very opposite of sadness. Even the old prophet Zechariah, looking ahead to the end of all things, declared: "It shall come to pass that at evening time it shall be light." In our text the Savior himself substantiates this prophecy, for he gives us the most wonderful promise concerning the end. It is full of light indeed, the light of eternal joy and happiness. This promise of his is to make the end of the church year a joyous thing for us all, joyous because it holds out for us at the end of our lives, and at the end of all things when the last great day arrives, the greatest and most glorious hope. What is this promise—this hope? It is the crowning feature of the entire revelation of God. Once, and then again a second time, the Lord declares concerning every one who comes to him and believes in him: "I will raise him up at the last day." This is the glorious end which we are approaching, which we are especially to contemplate now as we draw near the end of the church year—our resurrection and glorification at the last great day. Indeed, this is

The Crowning Promise:

"I will Raise him up at the Last Day."

For it crowns God's whole plan of salvation—Christ's entire work of grace in us—and thus it crowns us now with hope, and will crown us at last with eternal joy.

I.

The right way to think of the resurrection promised us by Christ is to connect it with *the whole plan of God for our salvation*. It is the crowning part of that plan, the last step which is to complete the whole glorious work. This is the way Christ speaks of it when most solemnly he assures us that he himself will raise us up at the last great day.

Skeptics and scoffers like to single out the resurrection promised us, and to attack it as an impossible thing. When you and I die what will become of our bodies? They will be turned to dust and ashes. Some perish in fire, their bodies are burned up, perhaps so completely that no trace of them can be found. Some are lost at sea. The monsters of the deep devour them. Even those laid in the grave, eventually as the centuries pass, disappear

completely. What has become of the millions that have died in past ages? Their bodies have returned to the elements; they have vanished so utterly that no man on earth is able to find a trace of the vast majority of them. These are the things skeptics point to, and then draw the conclusion that a resurrection such as Jesus promises us is nothing but an empty dream. There can be no resurrection, they say.

The trouble with the skeptic is that he leaves out the main thing connected with our resurrection. He leaves out God and his whole plan of salvation. To be sure, if he is left out, if his saving purpose in Christ Jesus is annulled, then indeed to speak of a blessed resurrection at the last day would be folly. But now the folly is to leave him out, to deny his purpose and grace, to reject the promise made to us by him through his Son, our Savior. The moment these get the place in our hearts which they ought to have, not only will all denial of the resurrection, all doubt of it disappear, but this resurrection itself will appear as the crown and capstone of all God's saving plan. And it is thus that the Savior tells us himself: "This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." The good and gracious will of our heavenly Father is our salvation, resurrection, and glorification at the end of time. That will of his will be triumphantly carried out. For a second time Jesus says: "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." Let those who will, deny these mighty words and put a dark, hideous blank where Christ puts a glorious golden hope. The Father's wondrous plan of salvation ending with the crowning promise of the resurrection is infinitely more satisfying than anything the dismal ignorance of unbelief and skepticism is able to offer us.

Ours is a blessed Father in heaven. By his omnipotent power he called all things into being and created us to be his children forever. When, however, we turned from him by sin he made his great plan to restore and save us. He would send his own Son to atone for our sin and guilt with his blood. He would call all men to believe and trust in that Son and his atoning blood. He would give to the Son, as the Son's own, all who thus believe in him, that they may be his forever. Not one of them should he lose. And to make them completely and forever his own the Son himself is to lift them up to be with him where he is in eternal glory forever. That, in brief, is the great purpose and plan of God. We know from the Scriptures how much of it has already been carried out. God's Son has died for us, salvation is won for us. We know too how the rest of this plan of

God is being carried out now, for the Gospel of life and salvation resounds through the world, and every man who comes to Jesus is in no wise cast out.

Now in this great plan there shines at the very end of it the crowning promise of our blessed resurrection. Our salvation is not to be a partial thing, it is to be perfect and complete. The God who made us with body and soul has planned to save us soul and body. When death comes to us, separating soul and body, the soul cleansed by Christ's blood is to be lifted at once into the blessedness of heaven. The body shall not be lost. It shall turn again, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, but only to sleep thus till the great hour of God comes. Then his own Son is to call these mortal bodies back into life, clothe them with immortality, and take them also into the heavenly joys prepared for us. Christ himself tells us the great plan: "that of all that which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming," Jesus declares, "in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Then will the work of salvation be complete—body and soul reunited and restored to perfect holiness, made glorious like the body and soul of Jesus himself, dwelling thus with Jesus in heavenly blessedness forever.

What a wonderful plan! Every part of it divine. And not the least of it this crowning part, our resurrection.

As we contemplate it, how the foolish doubts of skepticism vanish! Shall not the great God who made heaven and earth out of nothing be able to remake and restore one of his many creatures. We who believe in creation cannot for a moment doubt the promise of the resurrection. Shall not the God who sent his own Son into our flesh and made him man, be able to do this other thing, call us back to life and clothe us with glory and blessedness? And again, shall not the God who raised up his own Son and glorified him for our salvation do for us too what he has promised, give us, both body and soul, by the resurrection at the last day to his Son who bought us with his blood? Take all these mighty things together, and the crowning promise in which they end will appear as what it really is—the fitting conclusion to it all. Of course, it is all incomprehensible; no human mind can fathom it. But this last part no more than any other part. All that we can do is to open our poor hearts and let the blessedness which God has prepared for us enter in and fill us with its light and joy.

II.

The first thing for us to do is to view our resurrection in connection with God's great plan of salvation. Then, however we must view it also in connection with *Christ's entire work of grace in us*. And again we will see that Christ's declaration: "I will raise him up at the last day," is the crown of all the promises he has left us.

The thing most necessary for us to understand here is the inwardness of Christ's saving work as it is now being done in our hearts. The Savior comes to us now by means of his Gospel. There, as Jesus himself tells us, we are to see him, to see him as he really is, as the eternal Son of God made flesh for our sakes, as the Lamb of God slain for our sins, as our eternal King and Lord, in whose hands are the keys of hell and death. We are to see him thus in order to believe on him. And that means that we bow at his feet in complete confidence and trust, letting him take all our sins away by his heavenly pardon, letting him make us the children of God and heirs of salvation. But mark now what the Savior says—thus to see and believe in our Lord is to have everlasting life. "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlasting life." The work of Christ's grace in us is to make us spiritually alive. It is only another way of saying the same thing, that by faith we become the children of God, that by faith we are regenerated, reborn, passed from death unto life. To lie in sin and guilt unforgiven is to be dead spiritually, shut out from the eternal fountain of life; to escape from sin and guilt by divine forgiveness is to be brought back to the heavenly fountain of life, and thus to have life. And this is the great work of Christ's grace in us to give us spiritual life again.

Everlasting life is ours now by faith in Christ. The Savior's word does not mean that we are to wait till the last day, or till we die, before we obtain everlasting life. Most solemnly Jesus assures us: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." John 5, 24. And we who have this life know that we have it. Of course, the spiritual life itself can be seen with our eyes no more than can the bodily life itself be seen. But all the evidences of its presence can be seen. A man's heart beats, he breathes, he eats, walks, talks, works, does a thousand things—we know he has bodily life. Another lies cold and stiff, and decay begins to disintegrate his body—we know he is dead. So the life we now have by faith in Christ. A man loves to think of Christ, comes to hear his Word, inwardly clings to it and rejoices in it,

tries earnestly to do what it says, prays to Christ, is strengthened by his Sacrament, and in a thousand ways shows that Christ is in his heart—that man is spiritually alive; he has everlasting life, he has it now. Another spurns the Word and Sacraments, neither prays to Christ nor regards what he says—that man is spiritually dead. Now the great work of Christ to-day is to bring us all to this spiritual life and to keep and strengthen us in it, thus delivering us from spiritual death and its dread results.

You will see now this blessed work of grace in us most naturally and fittingly culminates in our resurrection at the last day. We who live now by faith shall live for evermore. All sin shall be swept out from our bodies and souls, every trace of the old death in which once we lay, and in a glorious sinless, heavenly world, made perfectly to fit that world, we shall dwell forever.

Think not that everlasting life is only for the soul. God made the body as well as the soul, and the soul to live in the body. And now he uses our body as well as our soul to give us spiritual life. With these bodily ears we hear Christ's Word, with these mouths of ours we receive his holy Sacrament, as also Baptism is applied to our bodies. These bodily eyes read the Word; these bodily tongues confess Christ's name and pray to him; these hands are folded in prayer, these knees bent low, these heads bowed, these feet running the way of his commandments. In fact all our members are enlisted to do the Savior's will, all of them drawn from sin to do the works of grace and righteousness. The love of Christ is to constrain them all. No wonder, then, that St. Paul calls our bodies the temple of God, he dwelling in them and using them for his gracious purpose. It is utterly false to think of the body God has so wonderfully made and endowed as a base thing, to be left in sin and death, while the soul alone is made pure and filled with life. Christ's salvation is complete, it includes our mortal bodies, bestowing upon them also a blessed immortality.

How this will be finally completed Jesus tells us in his promise of the resurrection. The day shall come when he will call our bodies from the dust of the grave, raise them in heavenly glory, reunite them with our souls, and thus make us to dwell with him in heaven. Let no man ask why the Lord has chosen this way to crown and complete his work, and not some other way. He alone knows how to do his work, and that is enough for every humble child of his. It pleased him to take the old patriarch Enoch bodily to heaven, and to carry the prophet Elijah up bodily in a fiery chariot. But for us there is the great promise of the resurrection. Christ's own body was raised, and we are to follow in the same path. In fact, the beginning has already been made, for certain of the Old Test. saints of God were raised from their

graves at the time of Christ's own resurrection; they appeared unto many at Jerusalem to reveal the omnipotent power of Christ, and are now in the glory of heaven.

This, then, is how we are to think of our coming resurrection. It is the crowning promise of Christ, since it crowns and completes his work of grace in us.

III.

But there follows a mighty conclusion from all this: This crowning promise of Christ *crowns us now with hope, and will crown us at last with eternal joy.*

Time flies, and we are all hastening to the end of our earthly lives. One by one we are laid in the grave; it is the house that awaits us all. But look at this promise of Christ—it writes the golden word HOPE over every believer's grave. We die indeed, but we shall rise again in glory. "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? . . . But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" We mourn indeed when we bury our loved ones, but not as they who have no hope. They only rest from their labors, they sleep in Jesus. That rest and sleep, untroubled and sweet, awaits us also when the Lord calls us at last. Oh, how many of God's faithful children have closed their eyes gladly when the hour came for them, even praying that the Lord would hasten it! This is what the Lord's crowning promise does for us. Who would not gladly lie down to this sleep when he knows the heavenly awakening that will follow it?

But here see what unbelief would do. It would cancel this promise of Christ, blot out the hope he gives us, put darkness and a black, impenetrable shadow over every Christian grave. What a despicable thing to do, what a damnable thing! The very thing God tries to save us from, the very thing he gave his Son to free us from, these apostles of unbelief would keep us in and fasten us in to all eternity. You and I must realize what is at stake. Let no man take thy crown!—this crown of heavenly hope in the Savior's final promise.

As he crowns us now with hope, so he will crown us at last with eternal joy. Who will describe that last great day when the Lord will redeem his promise? Human imagination is all too weak. The holy apostle tells us that we shall be like unto the Savior, our glorious bodies like his most glorious body. The

Lord himself says that we shall be like the angels of God. They are bodiless indeed, but as they are fitted for the glories of heaven and endowed with most wonderful heavenly powers, so shall we be, including our glorified bodies. Such is the supreme joy that awaits us. Let it cast its radiance now already into your lives. All the glories of the sun in the heavens, the splendor of the clouds at sunset, the colors of the bow which God has set in the skies, will utterly be outdone when the saints of God rise to glory at the last great day.

"Arrayed in glorious grace
 Shall these vile bodies shine;
 And every shape and every face
 Look heavenly and divine.

These lively hopes we owe
 To Jesus' dying love;
 We would adore his grace below,
 And sing his power above."

OUTLINES.

The cardinal points in the text are *life—the resurrection—and the grace that calls to both*. The sermon may be built accordingly: Christ, and the hope of the resurrection: He calls us to himself—he gives us spiritual life—and thus he assures us of our blessed resurrection at the last day.—We may lift to prominence what Jesus says of believing on him, by making our theme: The way to a blessed resurrection: it is the way of Christ's redemption—of his gracious call in the Gospel—of the faith and life he makes ours—and thus the goal will be reached at last.—This is a text on the distinctive Christian *hope*, and it would be well to make the sermon turn on this pivot, contrasting our hope with the hopelessness of unbelief, and the false hopes which are used to cover this hopelessness. Theme: Our hope that Christ will raise us up at the last day: A glorious hope indeed—a sure and certain hope—a hope that satisfies and lifts us up.

"I Believe in the Resurrection of the Body."

Consider:

1. *The substance of this article of faith.*
2. *The ground on which this article of faith rests.*
3. *The consolation and hope which this article of faith affords.*

The Comfort which Christ Offers us in the Promise of the Resurrection.

1. *His promise is glorious—and that fills us with comfort and joy.*
 2. *His promise is sure—and that fills us with comfort and confidence.*
-

Phil. 3, 11: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Our Assurance of a Blessed Resurrection at the Last Day.

1. *It involves our coming to Christ by faith—he will cast no one out.*
 2. *It involves our belonging to Christ—it is the Father's will that he lose nothing of that which is given him.*
 3. *It involves our possession of everlasting life—for this life has the promise that Jesus will raise us up at the last day.*
-

Live in the Light of the Resurrection at the Last Day.

1. *Let the call to come draw you, that you may go toward this goal.*
 2. *Let the grace to believe be effective in you, that you may draw nearer day by day to this goal.*
 3. *Let the life everlasting be your dearest treasure, that nothing may ever turn you from this goal.*
 4. *Let the glorious promise of Christ fill you with joy, that its fulfilment may bring you beyond question to this goal.*
-

Mark 13, 32-37.

Three times this second eschatological text calls to us to *watch*, and thus to be ready for Christ's return. All the other statements of the text, such as the revelation concerning the Father alone knowing the hour of the end, the little parable of the man sojourning in another country, support the admonition. Our text is the final portion of Mark's report on the great discourse concerning the end, delivered by Jesus in answer to the questioning of four of his disciples on the Mount of Olives Tuesday before his death, after he had left the Temple for good. While he spake the words of this discourse, across the intervening valley of the brook Kidron the city lay spread out, and the Temple with its white marble sanctuary and its gold-tipped ornaments rose glistening in the light of the setting sun. The first portion of this great discourse we have used for the Second Sunday in Advent, namely Matthew's version, 24, 1-14. Now the conclusion as Mark gives it.

32. But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. 33. Take heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is.

The δέ takes up the point on which Jesus had been specifically questioned, v. 4: "*when* these things are all about to be accomplished?" The answer is that the when is not revealed, or known except to the Father. — **Of that day** refers to the last great day; the final day of the world, which Zech. 14, 6, etc., describes as entirely different from any other day. The Greek demonstrative used points to a definite remote day. — Jesus adds: **or that hour**, and in contrast with "day" we might

be inclined to take "hour" in the sense of a more specific point of time. "Day," then, would mean the more general period of the end, and "hour" the specific point of the end. But *ᾠpa* is used extensively in the sense of time, and thus fits the idea of a more general period than "day," and we must take it thus in our passage. This is strengthened by the parallel in Matthew which omits the Greek article. Zahn makes it the period in which the "day" shall fall, the "when" of the end.—Now both of the wider period, and of the date of the "day" itself **knoweth no one**, no person. And how this is meant we see by what follows: **not even the angels in heaven**, who are with God and thus know many things, and who as the highest creatures in heaven are endowed with very superior knowledge; yet this piece of knowledge is hidden from them, revealing one of their marked limitations.—More remarkable still is the addition: **neither the Son**. This must mean the Son according to his human nature, not the Son as he is one in the divine essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit. "Accordingly this not knowing the day and the hour of the judgment on the part of the Son, Matth. 24, 36, Mark 16, 32 can be referred only to the not knowing of his humanity. As we have come to understand that the divine attributes, communicated to his humanity by virtue of its oneness with the divinity, and possessed by him also in the state of humiliation, showed themselves as operative in him only for the purposes of his Messianic office—so also we know why the knowing of the day of judgment was not imparted to him. For the day and the hour of the judgment were not to be revealed to the church, and are hidden from her to the present day. In the contrary case he would have known them; in fact it is stated as a remarkable thing that he does not know them, for this not knowing of the Son is in the relation of a climax to the not knowing of the angels, since his knowledge exceeds theirs, i. e., since as the knowing of the Son of God it is an absolute

knowing, which only in this case is not actually imparted to his humanity." Philippi, *Glaubenslehre* IV, 422, etc. Perhaps it is well to remark also that in any statement concerning the person of Jesus, whether something divine or something human is predicated of him, the Scriptures freely use human or divine designations for his person. So here the divine name "the Son," although the predicate speaks of a limitation regarding his human nature. There is no subordination of the Son as the Son, or according to his divine nature, to the Father. Chiliasts refer our passage, not to the end of the world and the final judgment, but to the point of time ushering in the millennium; in this way they evade the force of what Jesus says. Others, like the Adventists, and "time-setters" generally, by figuring out what they think the exact date of the end, or the events ushering it in, annul and contradict our passage. — **But the Father**, in his divine omniscience from which absolutely nothing is hid or can be hid, he knows both the day and the hour when the world will be ripe for the judgment. In no stronger way could Jesus have warned us against the presumption of ourselves trying to discover the date of the end. If the omniscient God alone knows, and not even the angels and the Son as he walked on earth, then let us never search out what is divinely withheld. All who try it nevertheless will not only fail utterly, but sin presumptuously against God.* — Instead of trying to determine the date of the end other occupation calls us: **Take heed, watch and pray.** The tenses are all present imperatives for continuous

* Missionary Fjeldstedt reports that the Jews in the East expected the Millennium to begin in 1810; Western Jews, with the learned Abarbanel, in the year 1466; Whiston in 1776; Jurieu in 1785; Bengel in 1836; Miller (Adventist) in 1843; Sander in 1847; Schmucker in 1848; the author of the *Periods of the Christian Church* in 1879-1887; others in 1866, 1868, 1880, etc. All these expected the end a thousand years later. Cf. Graebner, *Prophecy and the War*, 39, etc., and G. Seyffarth, *Chiliasm Critically Examined*, 1, etc.

action. So few texts omit "and pray" that these words ought to be retained. The first imperative really goes together with the other two, introducing them, hence there is no connective after βλέπετε: see to it — watch; see to it — pray! To these two activities our attention is to be given. — **Watch** really means etymologically to seek after sleep (vainly), to be sleepless. We are to keep our eyes open, to look about and keep observing, not to be caught unawares. In substance this means that we are to have open eyes for all the signs of the coming of Christ, and our hearts are constantly to expect his coming. — **And pray** is frequently combined in Scripture with the injunction to watch. The word signifies prayer as devotion to God. We are to have our hearts directed Godward, honoring and worshipping him, looking to him to keep and bless us. Such is our great duty all during this period of waiting which "the Father hath set within his own authority," Acts 1, 7. — The reason for this bidding Jesus himself states: **for ye know not when the time is.** The word for "time" here = *Zeitpunkt*, time in a qualitative sense, the point of time or special time for some certain act or work. Here, of course, the time of the judgment is meant. It may come at any time as far as our determining goes. The only sensible thing to do, then, is to be ready at any moment. Only the spirit of the gambler would put off this readiness, or omit it at any time. Moreover, no man can expect to get ready by efforts of his own at a moment's notice, after having gone on unready, indifferent, sleeping.

34. *It is as when a man, sojourning in another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, to each one his work, commanded also the porter to watch.* 35. **Watch therefore: for ye know not when the lord of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping.** 37. **And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.**

The Italics in the English indicate how our translators fill out to make the sentence formally complete. It would be enough, however, even in English to translate merely: "Like a man, sojourning," etc. The parable includes verse 35, only here a touch of the interpretation is woven into the parabolic imagery. V. 37 indicates that the parable, as also what immediately precedes it, was addressed to the Twelve, for v. 37 extends to all that Jesus said at first to the Twelve only. This makes the point of the parable **the porter**, not the servants generally plus the porter as also merely a servant. The structure of the parable reveals this, for only with the porter have we a finite verb, and only he is directly bidden to watch. All the rest, then, is merely descriptive of **a man**, like whom and whose action is Jesus and what he does. Even though all the emphasis falls on the porter, and one might be content with drawing the parallel between him and the apostles, yet we cannot but see that all the rest of the parable, with its secondary notes, truly images the situation of the reality as it existed when Jesus spoke. — He himself is pictured by the man, **sojourning in another country**, which is just one word in Greek: away from his people; away from home. It is a true picture of the entire period since the ascension of Jesus—he is in heaven, his visible presence removed from his household, the church on earth. — This is brought out more closely by the addition: **having left his house**. The "house" images the church on earth, which is Christ's own even though he is not visibly present in it now. — Another aorist participle adds yet another vital line to the imagery of this "man": **and (having) given authority to his servants, to each one his work**. This is how he left, assigning to each servant his special duty. We must note the two words "authority" and "work." The former signifies the right and the power to do a thing, and the latter the labor connected with this authority. So we are all servants now in Christ's house-

hold, and as such there is bestowed upon us as a right, privilege, distinction, and honor some task we are to perform, and the ability to perform it. We are not to loaf, to idle, to sleep, but to exert ourselves in "work" for our Lord. But we are not to consider this a burden, like an unwilling slave bent on shirking his task. To have the place of a servant in Christ's house is a high and blessed right, and we are always to consider it thus. — In a general way this, of course, includes also "the porter." But we see at once that he is singled out and named in a special way. There is for him the finite verb, added loosely with "and," and his special work is clearly named: as a man **commanded also the porter to watch.** We may recall the *θυρωρός* in John 10, 3, who has more than the mere function of opening and shutting the door of the fold in which the sheep are kept at night. His duty is really to have charge of the whole fold, and in our passage charge of the whole house. He is "to watch" for the entire house and all its servants. So also Acts 20, 28 uses the word "overseers," "bishops." The porter, then, is to picture to us the apostles and their successors, the Christian pastors. They keep the door of the church, opening only to those who have the right to enter. And the duty commanded to them is **to watch**, which means to watch for the Lord's return, to be ready for his coming at any time. The *ἵνα* is sub-final, giving the contents of the command left with the porter.

V. 35. Again the reason is given by the Lord for this command to the porter to watch. The Lord, however, goes beyond the picture now and adds a touch of interpretation. Who is meant by the porter we see from the second person plural now employed: **Watch therefore: for ye know not when the Lord of the house cometh.** This focusses the parable upon the watching. The verb is different, however; where before we had: "be sleepless!" we now have; "be awake!" giving us the positive instead of the negative idea. There is no

question whatever as to the coming of the master of the house, but none of the watchers knows when he will come. That means, he may come at any moment: **whether at even**, between the hours of 6-9, the first watch of the night; **or at midnight**, from 9-12, the second watch; **or at cockcrow**, from 12-3, the third watch; **or in the morning**, the fourth watch, from 3-6. The first and the last of these time designations are mere adverbs; the third is the regular genitive of time within; the second, however, is an adverbial accusative, more like the adverb preceding it (R. 495), hence not intended for duration. It is striking to hear only the four watches of the night mentioned as the time during which the lord of the house may be expected. Wohlenberg thinks that this is merely a feature of the imagery. But that cannot be—since a man away from his people may come home during the day as well as during the night, in fact, he would be most likely to travel by day, and so arrive before nightfall. No, this is no mere incidental touch. The formal mention of all the four watches of the night also shuts that out. In v. 35 we have seen that Jesus begins to interpret the imagery used in v. 34. That interpretation continues in the mention of the four watches. Jesus here uses a modification of the original picture, as he does that repeatedly in both his parabolic and other comparisons. A man going into another country might come home during the day as well as during the night. But this man, whom Jesus has in mind, namely himself, will come back only during the night. That is the modification of the imagery. The whole period from the ascension to the judgment is pictured now, in a sort of independent way, by the figure of the night with its four watches. The porter must be awake all along.—He dare not think that because the night has just begun he may catch a little sleep, since his master will not arrive at once: **lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping**. That adverb “suddenly,” while here fitting the drowsing

porter, who would indeed think the arrival sudden if caught asleep, is really also interpretative, for we are told in direct language that Jesus will come suddenly. "Whom ye seek shall *suddenly* come to his temple," Mal. 3, 1. "As *the lightning* cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be," Matth. 24, 27. "As *a snare* shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth," Luké 21, 35. Even we who know that the Lord is coming and who constantly keep ready for it by watching, when at last the day arrives, will find it to be sudden. For with all the signs we have, not then when *we* may think the time is now come, will he come, but at a time when, as far as we and our thoughts are concerned, we will feel quite sure he will not yet come. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour *as ye think not* the Son of man cometh," Matth. 24, 44. Very likely that is why Jesus in our passage pictures his coming as occurring in one of the watches of the night. But this helps us to understand the real purpose of the signs of the end. This is not to help us in any way to determine, even approximately, the date of the end. They who think so abuse these signs. The signs are to keep us ever ready in expecting the Lord's coming *at any moment*, then too, and perhaps then most, when *we* might think, even from the signs, that the hour is not yet quite at hand. — **Find you sleeping** means: find you unready to receive him. What is meant we see in that other parable, where instead of sleeping we hear of the evil servant smiting his fellow servants, gorging himself with meat and drink, and thus discovered cut asunder, thrown out with the hypocrites, where there is howling and gnashing of teeth. More nearly like our parable is the sleeping of the foolish virgins who will be shut out from the wedding. To sleep, then, means to be without faith, to take worldly ease and pleasure, to neglect the things necessary for our own salvation as ministers of the church and for the salva-

tion of those committed to our trust. It is a capital crime for a soldier in time of war to sleep while on guard. Even more fatal is the sleeping of the preacher during these days of watching and waiting for our Lord.—And now the warning and admonition of Jesus is made general. We have heard of the other servants, each with his authority and work. The Lord has kept them in mind, though he had to say to his apostles first of all: **Watch! And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.** They too are to keep awake as the night of waiting goes on, each busy in his place with the task assigned him. They may not sleep, thinking that the porter will do the watching. For sleeping in their case also would mean unreadiness, lack of faith, giving themselves to worldliness, and the like. Only they who watch are ready for Christ's return, their eyes open in faith, looking and longing for the promised day of final and complete deliverance for all his faithful servants.

SERMON.

Will the world stand forever? Some may think so, some may say they do not know. The Christian knows. Just as the Lord has told us in his Word when and how the world came into existence, so also he has told us when and how it will come to an end. The world will not stand forever. It will end at the last day when the Lord will return from heaven in glory, raise all the dead, transform all the living, and judge both the living and dead.

But in connection with the end of the world so clearly and fully foretold in Scripture there is one thing we would all like to know—just *when* will the Lord come—just *when* will the last day arrive? Already the twelve disciples of Christ asked him this question, and they received an answer, but not the one they desired or perhaps expected. Men have asked the same question since; but every effort to learn more than Jesus first told the Twelve has been in vain. We have the answer we need, but it leaves unanswered *the great question*

When?

When? When will the last day come? When will Christ return and judge the world? How long is it yet, since all these centuries have already passed?

Many indeed are altogether unconcerned about this question. They do not trouble themselves even about the end of their own lives—how then would they think of the end of the world? They think they have more necessary and profitable things to attend to. And so they live on, and never ask seriously: When?

But among Christian people the question concerning the end of all earthly things has often caused great concern. A morbid interest in it takes hold of some and carries them beyond the line of safety. They persuade themselves that in some way, if one studied the Bible minutely enough, the exact or at least approximate date for the end can indeed be found. And so they begin to combine various prophetic passages from the Bible, calculate the times and the seasons, build up more or less complex deductions, with the result that they finally think they know at least how many years it will yet be till the end. Of the many who have made these foolish attempts we may recall William Miller in our own country. This Adventist declared in 1831 that Christ would return and the earth be destroyed in the year 1843. When this date passed, still others were fixed, but all proved utterly false. Nearly all who make such attempts believe in the so-called millennium, the old Jewish dream that Christ will come a thousand years before the end to establish a great earthly kingdom here below, making his church reign in triumph and glory over all her opponents. But every time they have figured out when this millennium would begin, they too have failed. We know why. In the first place there will be no millennium; as the end draws nearer tribulations will increase, the forces of Antichrist will grow more haughty and blatant, till at last Christ comes and ends all by his great judgment on the last day. In the second place—Christ himself has most solemnly assured us that no man knows or can know the end.

Here in our text he declares: "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Again he says: "Ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning." Just before his ascension to heaven he told the disciples the same thing: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Here, then, in the clearest and directest way is the answer of Christ himself to the great question: When? The answer is: **No man**

knows. There will be an end indeed, but the time of the end is absolutely hidden from us all.

Think of that a moment, and realize what it means. Ever since Christ walked on earth this has been the answer to the question: When will the end be? God has left us all alike in this regard. The apostles knew no more about the date of the end than we. Only one thing we know—up till the present day the end has not yet come. That the apostles could not know, since they all died in the first century. But as regards the future before them, it was exactly like the future before us—the end might come to-morrow.—This teaches us also in regard to the signs of the end. Christ himself has told us of these signs, how they all announce the coming of the end. But that is all they do—they tell us most positively that the end awaits us all. That is what must be kept before our eyes. If thus we walk in the light of the end, all is well.

As for the rest let us abide humbly by the Savior's Word. How can we know what even the angels in heaven cannot know? what even the Lord Jesus when he walked as man on earth was content not to know? God will send the end when the world is ready for it. Let us leave to his power and authority what he has reserved unto himself.

II.

The certainty of the coming end, together with the uncertainty of the day when that end shall come, mean much to us.

It would be a mistake for us to think, since no man can possibly know the date of the end therefore we need not concern ourselves about it. That would be dangerous indifference. Or, if we should think, because the end has not yet come in all these years, therefore most likely it will not come in any way soon now, at least not as long as we may yet live. That would be dangerous security. All such conclusions regarding the end are false, misleading, the suggestions of the devil, not the conclusions Christ would have us draw.

Since the end may come at any time, so many signs already having announced it, other signs still proclaiming it, the one right and proper conclusion for us to draw is that we must be in constant readiness for it. Jesus makes it plain by means of a little parable. Here is a man who has gone from home, leaving each of his servants with work to do, and the keeper of his place to be ready to receive his master at any moment when he shall return. The master may come in the evening, from six to nine o'clock, which was called the first watch of the night; or during the second watch, from nine o'clock to twelve; or in the third, at the cockcrow, from twelve o'clock till three; or later still,

in the morning watch, from three o'clock till six. With absolutely no intimation at what hour the master would return, how foolish would that keeper be to put off his making ready for his master, to let the servants idle and leave their tasks undone, to sleep at ease thinking the master will not come yet for several hours, or to carouse and carry on wildly, expecting to make ready afterwards? You know the strange fatality about such blind securiey — almost invariably the unexpected happens in such cases — the master comes while they who ought to be ready to welcome him with everything beautifully done as he ordered, are least expecting him. In fact, the Lord has told us that his coming at the end of the world will be just like that for all the careless, indifferent, and secure. Suddenly he will come, in the very hour when they will think he could not possibly come as yet. What plainer warning do we want? Be ready, be ready always; then, no matter when he comes, all will be well with you.

And if you ask what is meant by such readiness on our part for the great end when the Lord shall return, Christ himself gives you the clearest kind of an answer. "Take heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is." Twice more in our brief text the Lord repeats the word "watch": "Watch ye therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh"—"And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch!" Here is the second part of the Lord's answer to the great question: When? *No man knows—therefore watch always.* Never fail to note this second part, for this part we really need most of all.

To watch means to look for the Lord so as to be ready instantly to receive him at his coming. That, of course, means to look for him in faith and trust, for only they who constantly cling to him as their Savior are really ready for his coming. Faith is the essential thing. But this must be real faith, not one which names his blood and righteousness with the lips, and then goes and denies that blood and righteousness by sinful practices, sinful associations, sinful neglect. Watch in true faith, that in all your life you may ever be ready to meet the Lord, no matter what the moment may be.—If your heart grows heavy at this word, as you recall your imperfections and sins, then remember that the Lord himself added another word to the watching he enjoins upon us—watch and pray. Turn your heart to God and your Savior, and he will help and bless you. Jesus himself said, the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak, and then again he said: Watch and pray! He who prays is drawn away from sin, joined inwardly to his Lord and Master, and thus aided most mightily in making ready to receive him.

All are to watch thus, prayer aiding them, but there is a difference. Some are like the apostles, whom the Lord in his little parable pictures to us by the porter or doorkeeper of his house; others are like the servants in that house, each with his task assigned. That means that some are pastors, teachers, and guides for others in the church. Their responsibility is especially great. St. Paul calls them overseers, whose duty it is to nourish the faith of those committed to their care. They are watchmen on Zion's walls. Oh, that all might be watchmen indeed, none of them dumb dogs—calling out and warning God's people against every danger, rousing the sleeping and careless, shaking up the indifferent and secure! Woe unto the pastor who sleeps at his post, but blessed he who watches faithfully and keeps himself and all his flock in readiness for the Lord!—But all are to watch, every believer called as a servant in the household of his church. This responsibility of watching we cannot shift even upon our pastors. You must believe and keep your heart turned toward heaven—no man can do it for you. You must exercise your faith in good works doing your Lord's will at home in your family, in your business and labor, among your associates in the world and among your brethren in the church. No man can do these works for you. Use your pastor to aid you thus in faith and Christian living, but if ever he should fail you, you have your Lord still and your Lord's Word. By his help watch and thus be ever ready for his coming.

III.

One more part of the Lord's answer to the great question: When? remains. In addition to the admonition to watch always, we need it as the final warning.

The Lord uses two different words when he calls to us to "watch," although in our English translation the difference is not brought out. To watch means to be without sleep, and it means likewise to be wide awake. You will note also how the Lord speaks of his coming as occurring in one of the watches of the night. He pictures to us this whole time of waiting for his coming as so many long hours of the night. What is the danger thus implied? It is that we who are called to watch and thus be ready for the Lord's coming grow drowsy and fall asleep. In fact the Lord himself names this danger: "Watch—lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping." So we take this as the last part of the answer Christ makes to our question: When? *No man knows—therefore watch always—lest the Lord find us sleeping.* Spiritual sleep is the great hindrance to our readiness. It is a danger which besets even those who were at one time fully

awake. Even if now your faith is bright and strong, be on your guard, lest after all you be lulled to sleep, and the Lord find you so.

If Christ should come at this moment to wind up the affairs of men, if in this hour the sign of the Son of man should appear in the heavens, his countless angel hosts burst from the sky, his great white throne of judgment shine above us brighter and more effulgent than a thousand suns—how would he find many who are called Christians and who even call themselves so—how would he find them in this hour? Alas, not in the churches, praising God's grace, worshipping the Savior's name, receiving the heavenly impulses of his Spirit! Some are idling coldly and indifferently at home; some are chasing pleasure far from the church and its worship; some are dreaming, planning, working earthly things, thinking that the heavenly may be safely put off. All these are sleeping spiritually. If found thus by the Lord at last, they will be cast out, as he tells us, with the hypocrites, where there is howling and gnashing of teeth. Thank God, you are here now in his house! But your mere presence here, even if it be very regular, is not enough. Your heart must be here, your soul anchored in Christ, your faith resting on him and his Word. And that not only while you are here, but always, whether you work or play, whether you rest or wake, whether you are at home or away.

"Wake, arise!" the voice is calling;

The watchman's voice on quick ear falling:

"Jerusalem awake, arise!

For the midnight hour is fleeting!"

Sometimes men lull themselves asleep with the notion that the end will most likely not come during their lives anymore. Things move so regularly from day to day that they feel perfectly at ease on this account, and this preaching and telling them that the end may come at any time leaves them without making much impression. The result, then, is spiritual carelessness and indifference, if not actual false security; in a word, they are sleeping. Let all such note two things. In the first place, the end will come when even those most earnestly looking for it are not expecting it; it will come as a tremendous, overwhelming surprise. In the second place, even if the end should not come till after your death, your death may come any day. Many a man starts a day as he has perhaps started a thousand others, and that day proves his last. That means, as he was that day, that day when unexpectedly death caught him, so will the Lord find him at the last great day. If you die before the last great day, then as you

die so you will be on that day. Ah, how many would be found different then, if now they really believed this simple truth!

Away then with this deadening, deadly slumber of the soul! Hear the Lord's call: "Watch . . . lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping."

"Up, my soul, gird thee with power!
 Watch! to prayer betake thee;
 Lest the sudden evil hour
 Unawares o'ertake thee.
 Satan's prey
 Soon are they,
 Who, with best endeavor,
 Watch not, pray not ever."

Always will men ask this question concerning the end—when? There is only one true answer. It is that no man knows, that therefore we must watch always, lest we be found asleep. Impress that answer aright upon your hearts and lives, then will you be ready for the end.

OUTLINES.

Some texts have one grand avenue leading into them, and all who enter must go that way. Others are crossed by many thoroughfares, any one of which takes us through. Ours is a text of the latter kind. We may take the word "Watch!" standing out so prominently; or the fuller admonition: "Take ye heed, watch and pray!" or the allied thought: "Will the Lord find you sleeping?" or the assurance: "No man knoweth!" or the expressive clause: "When the Master of the house cometh," and still other themes will be left. If we single out the second: "Take ye heed, watch and pray!" we may divide as follows: Watch with prayer for the Lord's return—Pray with watching that you may ever be ready.—Or the last: "When the Master of the house cometh": What an hour of consternation for those who sleep!—What a day of joy for those who watch and pray!

"Watchman, what of the Night? Watchman, what of the Night?"

(Is. 21, 11.)

1. *It is wearing on.*
2. *Our duty is ever the same.*
3. *Our hope shall be fulfilled.*

The Porter and the Other Servants of the Lord.

1. *They must wait.*
 2. *They must watch.*
 3. *They must put away sleep.*
 4. *They will rejoice at last.*
-

"But of that Day and that Hour Knoweth no Man."

1. *The fact.*
 2. *The danger connected with the fact.*
 3. *The duty arising from that danger.*
 4. *The blessedness resulting from that duty rightly done.*
-

Will the Lord Find You Sleeping?

1. *Wearied by his delay?*
 2. *Yielding to your weakness?*
 3. *Deaf to his warning?*
 4. *Unready for his reception?*
-

THE TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Luke 13, 23-30.

The heading for this text might be the tragic cry: Too late! It is a warning for those who could come, but would not, and then try too late to enter the door already closed for good. The whole text is a mighty *warning not to let the day of grace pass unused.*

There seems to be no chronological connection with what precedes. V. 22 reports that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem teaching from town to town as he journeyed. But Luke does not say where Jesus is at this moment, nor does he add any other details. Yet we see easily how the substance of what Luke reports fits the previous record. Jesus had just now likened his kingdom to a grain of mustard seed and to a handful of leaven; his following at the time was indeed small. He had had reason enough to complain at the unbelief of his people, and of its future too he had spoken in tragic terms. One might, therefore, well ask whether but few would be saved. An answer was needed like the one Jesus gave. For the situation is ever the same — multitudes going the way of destruction, few following Jesus in living faith.

13, 23. And one said unto him, Lord, are they few that be saved?

It is the question, not the person of the questioner, which is important, hence the indefinite reference: **one**, a certain person. He seems to have been one of the multitudes that had listened to Jesus. As to his motive for asking thus we are left uninformed; his question is chiefly the occasion for the following instructive and warning reply. Some think that the man was more

inquisitive than anxious about his own salvation; others leave it open whether he was moved by a desire for knowledge or by a troubled heart. The reply of Jesus is our only cue. That implies that the question is faulty, but one which touches a point on which all men must be properly informed and warned. So Jesus addresses, not the questioner alone, but all who were at hand at the time, and he answers, not the question as put, but as he desires to utilize it, he knowing his hearers' need better than the man's question brought it to view. Let us say, then, that the previous words of Jesus had moved the heart and thought of this questioner to some extent, and from this inner stirring of his soul he makes bold to ask as he does. — The emphasis is on **few**, which is the predicate, namely few in number as compared with those not saved. And the subject is **they that he saved**, they that are being saved, i. e., in the act of being carried to safety in the kingdom of God. The man's thought apparently is that the number is small, and that this is the teaching of Jesus also. We must also acknowledge that the man's supposition is right, and that the reply of Jesus, while not stating in so many words that the saved are few in number, nevertheless amounts to this in substance.

24. And he said unto them, Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able. 25. When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are.

The man received far more of an answer than he probably expected, but it is one addressed to all those present, giving him as well as all of them what they needed to know, and withholding what foolish inquisitiveness might desire. Our Formula of Concord says: "With this revealed will of God we should con-

cern ourselves, and should follow and study it, because the Holy Ghost, through the Word whereby he calls us, bestows to this end grace, power, and ability, and we should not attempt to scrutinize the abyss of God's hidden predestination, as it is written in Luke 13, 24, where to one who asks: 'Lord, are there few that be saved?' Christ answers: 'Strive,' etc." 655, 33. The opening part of Jesus' answer amounts to this: whether few or many be saved, let your concern be that *you* may be saved: **Strive to enter in by the narrow door.** The language is figurative. The kingdom of God is conceived as a house, entrance to which is obtained through a door, and this door is narrow. We are not to strive to push the door open; it is open to begin with, but after a time it is shut and locked. So while the door is open we are to enter and let nothing deter us. The striving has to do with the narrowness of the door; it is not easy to push through because of this narrowness. Why Jesus pictured the door as narrow is easy to see; this portrays the *μετάνοια* or repentance by which we enter Christ's kingdom. Besser puts it well: "Only bent low, made quite small, disrobed of all righteousness of our own, and wholly willing to have the coat of the flesh removed from us down to the last rag, can one get through." That helps us to understand the striving. The verb refers to the athletic contests, in which competitors strove for victory; and we have the English derivative "to agonize." We are to exert ourselves to the utmost by true repentance to enter the kingdom. This striving is the very opposite of cold indifference, of careless ease, of false security. Moreover, we must strive to get through the narrow door, all other striving, directed at some other place, is in vain. But is this not a contradiction to the doctrine that man is spiritually dead, hence cannot strive; and that we cannot by our own reason or strength come to Jesus Christ and believe in him? The striving here meant is not that of man's corrupt natural powers —

they never would or could strive to enter that narrow door. It is the striving caused by the Law and the Gospel when these come to operate upon and in the heart, moving it mightily. The Scriptures are full of urgings to men still without faith, just as the Law and the Gospel in all the world go out to those still far from God. The idea never is that man's dead powers are able to move and save him, but the very Word itself offers what it demands, bestows what it requires, brings those it calls to come. "Strive!" says Jesus, and in the very saying of his words there was the narrow door open to receive, and the power to produce the striving we call repentance. So Jesus bids us: Believe! and in doing so does all that any man needs in order actually to believe.—A warning follows. It is best to place a comma after v. 24, and to read v. 25 as a continuation. The sense is: Strive to enter, for the door will be shut at last, and then many will try in vain to enter, finding themselves barred out forever. **For many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.** It would certainly be a misreading of these words to make them say that not all who strive as Jesus bids will succeed. Nor is there a hint here that many will strive in some wrong manner or other, failing thus of success. No; these "many" are those who turn a deaf ear to Jesus, as did his own people. They let the time of grace when the narrow door is open pass by. They do not like this narrow door. Then too late they wake up to find themselves shut out. Observe the future tenses: "shall seek," "shall not be able." If wrong or vain striving really to enter the narrow door were meant, why these future tenses? Jesus' own hearers, and previous hearers of his, would certainly also have to be included. These tenses point forward to the time when the door shall be shut. Therefore also we have the verb "seek" here, and not "strive" as at first.—They seek too late, namely **when once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door.** The fol-

lowing dialog makes plain that this "master of the house" is Jesus himself. He is pictured as sitting in the house, waiting for us to come in, the door standing open to admit us. The imagery is stripped of all but the most essential features. Thus we cannot say, as some do, that a feast is in progress and men are bidden to come and partake of it. The sole idea is that unless we get into the kingdom while we may we shall be barred out. As regards the feast that is hinted at only in v. 29, and takes place only after the door is finally shut. The point of our passage is the passing of the day of grace. We have it again in the parable of the Virgins. The door will be shut at the last day. But it closes also when for any nation, or any individual the patience and longsuffering of God comes to an end. This shutting of the door belongs to the secret counsel of God, to his inscrutable judgments upon the unbelief and obduracy of men. Either God removes the Gospel entirely from those who thus despise it, or its presence only plunges them deeper into their guilt. "The Gospel has its course, and runs from one city to another; to-day it is here, to-morrow in another place, just as a down-pour passes, and now rains here, now in another place, and makes the land moist and fruitful." Erl. ed. of Luther, 48, 186; and 191: "This he told the Jews, but it helped nothing; and it will be the same with all the work-righteous, when faith is lost. For what the Jews got, that we too will get. The world will not be helped, it does not believe, I am almost weary of it; but on my own account and on account of a few godly people I must preach, otherwise it is in vain. People will not believe, but learn by experience. Thus too the Jews did. Christ, God's Son, came himself, then his apostles, and warned them; but they would not believe. So also Germany must go on and take the consequences. Thus it will come upon us, nothing will do, we want to learn by experience." — What Jesus now adds is a figurative description of the judgment scene on the last .

day: **and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord open to us.** Many who now despise the open door would only be too glad to have that door admit them when at last it is closed. The imagery deals with those who had the Gospel, but scorned it, thinking they would be saved without it. Zahn finely combines the "many" with which Jesus begins and the second person "ye" with which he continues, translating the sense thus: "Many (and who knows how many also of you) will be unable, in spite of all their efforts, to enter the door of the house from the moment on when the master is risen and has closed the door, and you then begin to stand outside," etc. Christ's own description of the judgment in Matth. 25, 31, etc., is the best direct exposition we have. Those barred out are barred, because they came too late. The shutting of the door is the judgment. Their knocking and crying: Lord, open to us! is an attempt to evade the judgment and escape its doom too late. They who would not enter the open door, cannot and shall enter the closed door.—The judgment of the closed door is confirmed: **and he shall answer and say to you, I know you not whence ye are.** In the last judgment, which is public and open the great Judge will justify his sentence publicly before all angels and men. This constant teaching of Scripture is repeated in the dialog of our parable. In Matth. 7, 23 we read: "I never knew (ἐγνων) you," never recognized you as my own. In our passage we have οἶδα, denying a knowledge of whence these men are. The latter, however, is part of the imagery; they are treated as utter strangers, *Landstreicher*, miserable tramps, who have no claim or right to enter the owner's house. This figurative language approximates the reality very closely.

V. 26. But Jesus intends his parable especially for the Jews who rejected him; therefore he adds another touch to the picture: **then shall ye begin to say, We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in**

our streets. In spite of the somewhat better textual authority for ἀρξήσθε, an aorist subjunctive, the reading ἀρξέσθε, a simple future tense, must be preferred; the subjunctive seems to be only a repetition of this form from v. 25. What these men say to the master of the house is significant for what they are compelled to omit. They cannot say that when Jesus lived and taught in their midst they heeded and followed him. This is the very thing they had not done. Outward acquaintance is all they dare truthfully urge. The imagery is strained in order to add this touch, for Jesus here used the reality instead of a portion of the figure. He is concerned chiefly about being understood, and surely this statement was understood by his Jewish hearers. — So also the answer: **and he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are,** keeps the figure; but what follows is direct language dropping the figure: **depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.** Not by pointing Jesus to his having lived and taught among them here on earth can these Jews alter or invalidate his sentence that he does not know them whence they are. For this knowing has to do with something less superficial and more profound. So the former statement is emphatically confirmed: **I tell you, etc.** But this affirmation receives the strongest kind of proof: **depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.** The door once shut remains so, and to question the verdict of the Judge only establishes the sentence more fully as utterly just and right. What the closed door pictures the words “depart from me” state directly. Comp. Matth. 7, 23; 25, 41. Both the closed door and the word depart signify final, eternal rejection and separation. The apparent eagerness of these men to enter the door now must not be misconceived. Jesus bares the cold fact in the case when now he justifies their rejection, calling them “all ye workers of iniquity.” In Matth. 7, 23 we have ἀνομία, lawlessness, in our passage ἀδικία, wrong, injustice. In one way, then, Jesus does know these men

and whence they are. If they insist, this will be told them. But it only confirms the statement that Jesus does not know them to acknowledge them, to act friendly toward them. What friendly knowledge of lawlessness and iniquity can Jesus have, he who is our lawful, righteous Judge? Can there be any affinity, any mutual understanding or attraction between him and men like this? They lack the fruits of true repentance (cf. 3, 8), obedience to the words of Jesus which they heard from him (6, 46 and 49). Sin has been dearer to them than salvation, and the chief sin, unbelief, by which the unrighteous harden themselves in unrighteousness, they loved most of all. Nor is there any change now, for they are contrary to the Judge even now, presuming that he will act contrary to his own given word of grace, and will admit them into heaven without the repentance they have spurned. So also the rich man in hell contradicted Abraham to the last: "Nay, father Abraham!" and presumed that a new and novel way of salvation should be invented for his five brothers, thereby secretly charging that if something like that had been done for him while he lived, instead of the plan of grace, he would not have landed in hell. In applying this section to ourselves let us remember that as once Jesus walked familiarly in the streets of Jerusalem and other Jewish cities, so now his Word, the Bible, makes him familiar in almost every house, but largely with the same result — deaf ears, obdurate hearts, lives taken up with other things.

28. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast forth without. 29. And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. 30. And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.

The parable is dropped, the dread reality is presented bare. Compare Matth. 25, 30 for the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity on the weeping and gnashing of teeth. The adverb **there** refers to a definite place, namely hell, to which also the command to depart from Jesus points. — **When** covers the whole situation from the point of time. The form $\delta\psi\sigma\theta\epsilon$ (better supported than $\delta\psi\epsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon$) is probably a late aorist form (subjunctive) rather than the Byzantine future subjunctive, R. 324. We must take together what these men then **shall see**, for it is the contrast that shall be so painful to them. In the verb "shall see" there lingers the thought of the parable with its closed door separating forever those within from those without. Jesus speaks of these things in a human way, just as he does in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Let us not press his words by drawing doubtful literal conclusions. One thing is certain — the damned shall know of the salvation of the blessed, and also that they might have had that salvation. Moreover, remembering that in our text Jesus is really describing the judgment day, we cannot but take it that then those cast out will see the others who are within. — Speaking to Jews Jesus puts first the patriarchs of whom they were so proud, but whose faith they would not follow: **Abraham**, the father of the faithful, **and Isaac, and Jacob**. But he adds: **and all the prophets**. These too belonged to the Jews, lifting them up far above all the Gentiles. Alas, how did they treat them? and when Jesus named them now, how were their words concerning the Messiah perverted by the Jews then listening to Jesus! There is a tragic note here which we should not miss: like these their forefathers, the patriarchs and prophets, should have been their descendants whom Jesus was addressing, and like them they should have entered the door of the kingdom, but they would not. — So on the day of judgment they shall see the patriarchs and prophets **in the kingdom of God**, which the house with its door in the

parable has pictured to us. We may say the kingdom here is the kingdom of glory, heaven. Yet the term is general. All these were in the kingdom already in this life, and so remain in it forever. We must not think of the kingdom as an organization like that of an earthly realm. The kingdom is where the heavenly King Christ Jesus exercises his power of grace. It is here now wherever the Gospel is preached, and it will be hereafter where the Gospel promises are fulfilled. Thus the King makes the kingdom — he alone. Its place is where he puts forth his grace unto salvation. That grace will, of course, draw many unto him, and these are "in the kingdom of God," i. e., which belongs to God in the supreme sense. The full revelation regarding those in this kingdom, and those *outside* of it will come on the day of judgment; then all men shall indeed *see*. — To the unbelieving Jews Jesus says: ye shall see **your-selves cast forth without**. Of course, this participle does not continue the figure of the door used above, nor is it necessary to stress the verb *action*, when evidently the effect and ultimate *result* is the thing stressed. The only thing we may say is that the Jews imagined they were in the kingdom, or that outwardly while they lived on earth they were in it. What it means to be "without," or outside, has already been said. — But more poignant still will be the situation. The Jews took it for granted that the patriarchs and prophets would be in heaven, but to see also so many of the Gentiles there, the people whom they utterly scorned, and themselves, the very children of Abraham shut out, this will be the climax of their astonishment. Yet prophetically the great Judge tells them in advance: **And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, from the four corners and very ends of the earth, and Matthew adds that these shall be "many."** These **shall sit down in the kingdom of God**, as Matthew tells us, together with the patriarchs. This description is figurative, picturing what shall take place on the day

of judgment. We can hardly say that the original parable is here brought in again; it is an extension, a new turn, one recalling the King's Son's Wedding. To come and sit down means really to recline, namely upon the couches on which the guests reposed while partaking of the feast. This adds the note of joy and bliss in heaven, and from this the unbelieving Jews will be shut out. Heaven is too exalted and wonderful to be described in direct language, figures and images must suffice, but these are so rich and high that our hearts leap with joy at what they promise. The heavenly feast shall be "in the kingdom of God," where all that God's grace has prepared for us shall be showered upon us, and nothing whatever reserved as now for a future day. — What Jesus has thus said he corroborated by a striking statement repeatedly utilized by him. **And behold**, in harmony with what has been said, and yet strange indeed and unexpected from our human standpoint and reasoning, **there are last etc.** The accent shows that the Greek for "behold" is an interjection, no longer a verb. Quite frequently the **first** and the **last** are taken to be those who enter the kingdom first or last. Besser for instance says of the latter: "A kindly word, consoling for the late-comers of the eleventh hour, the followers of the pardoned malefactor." But this is a mistake. There is an evident play on the words, calling on us to mark the sense in which they are used. The statement is a *maschal*, its meaning open to those only who have the key. **There are last** = men far from the kingdom, the means of grace, etc. Yet they **shall be first**, by the grace of God they shall enter that kingdom. Humanly speaking we would not expect it, but the event proves it to be a fact. **And there are first** = men close to the kingdom and the means of grace, like the Jews, Rom. 9, 4, etc. As compared with the condition of the Gentiles the Jews were certainly first. "First" is more favored, "last" is less favored. And yet these first **shall be last** = never get into the king-

dom at all, "last" in this tragic sense. Again, who would have expected it? So first and last are used one time with a present tense, of present condition, having or not having the means of grace; and a second time with a future verb, of the day of judgment, of being in or being outside of the kingdom. There are people who have all the means of salvation at hand, but fail to use them, and thus are lost; and there are others destitute of all these means in the beginning, who the moment they get them use them faithfully, and thus are saved. The fact is beyond dispute, and the fact is here used as a warning: "It is to frighten the greatest saints," Luther. The very advantages we enjoy are to be our warning. Not for having them alone shall we be saved, but for faithfully using them. It is God's blessing now that in a manner we are first at this time; may we be first also at that day. For note well how Jesus words this *maschal*: "There are last . . . and there are first," some, many perhaps of each sort, but *not all*. Some first now shall be first also then; and some last now shall be last also then.

SERMON. *used 1925*

The end of the church year always reminds us of the approaching end of the world and of the mighty judgment with which it shall close. The world is full of people who have no time to think of these things. The trouble, however, is that they do not want to think of them—it is thus that they find no time. Every one of them will find time at last, namely when the end and the great judgment to come overtake them; then they will indeed think of these things—but we do not envy their thoughts—for then it will be too late. Moses of old prayed in the 90th Psalm: "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." The answer to that prayer Christ would grant us to-day.

Here in our text he shows us the end and the judgment to come. He weaves into his words a parable, a simple yet a striking illustration, one intended to make us realize **the grace we have now**, to bring home to us **the judgment coming at last**, and thus to impress upon us **the warning con-**

tained in both. The center of the illustration, on which turns all that Christ here tells us in warning, is *the door*. The kingdom of God is like a house to which entrance may be gained by one door alone, and that door is narrow. And the great judgment to come is like the moment when the master of the house rises, and shuts the door to, not to open it again. On that door, then, we must fix our attention—it is

The Door that Will be Shut.

I.

Once it was open, for only so can the Lord say that when the great hour comes he himself will rise up and shut it forever. This very day the door is still open, the door that will be shut. In that door the Lord pictures first of all **the grace we now have**. Oh, that we might heed what he says, make use of the grace we now have, enter the door ere it is shut, and thus meet the great coming judgment with confidence and joy!

One of the many people listening long to the teaching of Jesus, and noting what he said of the unbelief of so many, finally took courage to ask him the question: "Lord, are there few that be saved?" The man had heard aright: "Many are called, but few are chosen." The people of God are "a little flock" as compared with the many who travel the broad way that leads to destruction. But questions like this must be asked in the right way, namely so that we do not speculate about other people, those who will be saved in the end and those who will be lost, but take careful heed to ourselves. Few indeed there are that are being saved; let us be sure that we use the grace of God now in the time of grace and while the door of his kingdom is open, that we may be among those few. Did the man who asked the question of Jesus think of that? Whether he did or not, that is what Jesus impressed upon him in his answer, that is what to-day he impresses anew upon you and me.

The door that will be shut is open now. Strive to enter in now before it is shut and the time is too late!

Think of *the grace* that is pictured to us in that *still open door*. The blessed kingdom of God has come down to us poor sinners. God's Son himself brought it down when he came to earth as our Savior. And there is an entrance-way to that kingdom, made especially for you and me. It is the grace and pardon of Christ through his atonement for our sins on the cross. Jesus himself is the door, Jesus slain for our sins, raised again for our justification. Here he is in his Holy Word, like an open door to admit us into the favor of God and thus into eternal joy and

blessedness. For poor sinners lost in sin and far from God what unspeakable grace to have the very door of heaven set right in their path, opened to receive them, yea to take them in!

But look at this grace again and the door by which it is pictured here. That door is narrow, and therefore Jesus bids us strive to enter in. It had to be narrow, for there are many things it must shut out since they are unfit for the pure house of Christ's kingdom. You cannot cart your sins through this door, they would defile the kingdom. The proud works which men set up to earn their own salvation cannot pass this door—it is too narrow for them, they would be nothing but a mass of rubbish and filthy rags in the beautiful house of the kingdom. Your own wisdom is too high to push through this low and narrow portal, and in the presence of God it would be nothing but folly and foolishness, unfit for his kingdom. None of your excuses for careless living, your love of money and worldly pleasure, your desire to stand well with worldly men, your compromises of truth and righteousness, your unwillingness to let loose of secret sins—none of all these and other things like them will pass that door of grace. They would outrage God, his anger would consume them and the men that brought them—but they are all barred out. For this very reason the door is narrow—God wants it so.

See now why so many people come and look at the door, and then pass by on the other side. That door—no, they think they can find a wider one! In fact, there are preachers who tell them there are wider doors. Yes, there are wider doors—only the place they lead to is not the kingdom and heaven. Broad is the gate, and wide is the way, Jesus himself says; but while others persuade themselves that it leads to God, Jesus tells us the truth, it leads to destruction. Be not mislead by those who scorn the narrow door of God's grace in Christ Jesus; only such a door can save us. Therefore strive to enter in!

This shows us the other part of *the grace* that is ours now—we are able to enter this still open door. This is the assurance that lies in the Lord's call to strive. In all the world he would be the last one to say to us: Strive! when such striving would not take us in. What does he mean when he says: Strive! He has told us again and again, and so have his holy prophets and apostles. Strive means repent; strive means to be sorry for our sins and believe in Jesus Christ. He that believeth shall be saved. Therefore also let us note well that strive does not mean strive with your own strength, but even as Jesus does in this text of ours, so always where he sets the door of the kingdom before us, he himself with his Word, light, power, grace, and help comes to enable us to strive. No man can say he cannot repent when Jesus shows him his sins; no man can say he cannot believe when

Jesus is there to lead him to faith. That is the very grace vouchsafed to us in this open door that by Christ's power we may strive to enter and quickly succeed. Our flesh indeed, our old sinful nature, our habit of careless indifference, our old worldly associations—these indeed would hold us back. Against these Christ calls on us to strive, by his call enabling us to conquer. Thank God for all this grace! Instead of leaving us to our fate, here is the door, and here is the ability to enter.

Thousands have entered. Jesus points us to the patriarchs of old, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets. These have led the way, and who will count all those from the four corners of the earth, from the east and west, from the north and south, all during these glorious New Test. times, who made that open door their refuge and are now safe within its narrow portal? If the former seem great and wonderful people to you, and you might think you could not equal them, remember that after all they were nothing but poor sinners like yourself; and then there are these others from all over the earth—thousands of them benighted heathen at first, worshippers of idols, dupes of superstition, slaves of lust. Yet they repented when the open door came to them, continued in repentance, attained eternal glory at last. Join their ranks, and having joined remain. God's grace, ample for them, is ample also for you.

II.

But mark, the door of grace open now will be shut in the end. That shutting of the door brings home to us **the judgment coming at last**. It calls to us to enter now, for the day will come when it will be too late.

Jesus describes that day to us: "for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able, when once the master of the house is risen up and hath shut the door to, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us! and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are." That is a picture of the great day of judgment to come.

On that day many things will have a different look from what they have to thousands to-day. Heaven?—why people think it is far away, so faint and dim they really cannot see it. Make sure of heaven?—why that seems to bring nothing, they would rather make sure of a few real things in this life. The door to heaven in Christ and repentance?—that seems so unattractive, especially to let go so many sins they love, to crucify the flesh and its lusts, to take up the cross and follow Christ; in some way they think they will be able to reach heaven without all that. But

lo, the change on the last great day! What then when the life here on earth has faded like a vapor, when the world with all its lusts has passed away like a phantom, when the only realities left will be the shining bulwarks of heaven, the yawning pit of hell, and the poor soul naked before its eternal Judge to receive its final sentence? And the door of grace will be shut—shut for evermore! Then, yes then, many, only too many, will cry for heaven, beg for one moment's opening of the door, implore the Christ who then is their Judge. Heaven—oh, how real, how delightful, how entrancing it will look then! Getting into heaven—then it will be absolutely the one and only thing that counts. And hell—the hell they once mocked at, swore by perhaps, heeded as little as they heeded heaven—when then its terrors reach out at them, how will they fight to escape it, but, alas, too late. That is what the door shut at last means. He who will shut it knows. Take to heart what he says of the terrible day of judgment!

He means us especially, who now bear the Christian name, who have the Bible and the church and know what is in them, or can easily know. When the door is shut and the judgment comes Jesus pictures the impenitent and unbelieving Jews to us, how they shall say to the Lord who tells them he knows them not: "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets." Do you see why the Lord adds this in his picture of judgment? Yes indeed, he himself sat at table with some of these Jews when he dwelt as our Savior on earth, and they stood around him day after day when he did his gracious teaching in their streets. But see, this is all they are able to say on the day of judgment. They dare not say: Lord, we believed thee; we took to heart thy words, we became thy disciples. That would be a lie, and no lies will be told on the day of judgment. Who will stand beside these Jews when they confess the grace they have had, but will be unable to say that they used it? Why, all those Christians of to-day who have the Bible, but do not read it; who have the church, but do not attend it; who know about Christ, and do not believe and follow him. And all those who for a few cents could buy the Bible, but spend those pennies for something else; who walk by the church, but never join it and use it; who let their ears hear that precious name Christ, but make sure that it does not get into their hearts. From the lips of the great Judge all these will hear his sentence confirmed: "I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity!" When Christ graciously called and invited them they spurned him as a stranger; how can they claim to be his now? When he came to save them, they ordered him to depart; how can they expect to be received by him now? Iniquity?—what greater iniquity can there be than to reject God's Son, in-

sult his love and grace by scorning it, and then in the end demand of him as a reward of this abominable treatment that he once more open the door he has closed to let them in! No, my friends, there is only one place for those who have Christ and yet will not have him; it is where there "shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Once the door is shut, no man more may enter. When Christ shuts it, then the judgment begins. They who have entered with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophets of old, and all Christ's saints, will be within. Angels will deck the heavenly feast for them. They will eat of the fruit of the tree of life and drink of the fountain of eternal joy. The rest will be cast out forever. Between the two the door then will be shut. On which side of that door will *you* be? On that side where now you place yourself.

III.

Thus the door that will be shut, pointing to the grace we now have, and to the judgment coming at last, holds up before you to-day **the warning contained in both**. Christ sums it up for you in one striking sentence: "And behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last."

Thank God, there are last which shall be first—thousands of poor souls in the night of heathen darkness, but the grace of God is brought to them, and they are saved. What a glorious work for us to help send out now the Gospel and earnest mission workers to make these last first, that coming from afar they too may be of those who sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God at the great feast of joy. Some of these lost are in our own cities, slaves of sin and vice, perhaps born in depraved surroundings and reared away from every holy influence. What a blessed work to reach out with the Gospel also to these, that though they are last they too may become first!

But while we say these things let us think of ourselves. Compared with people like this we surely belong to those who must be called first. Perhaps from our very infancy on the grace of God in his church, in his Word and Sacrament, in holy, Christian influence, has been over us like the very benediction of heaven. Not late in life only, or for a brief hour merely, but always we have known the door of salvation in Christ Jesus. Yes, we are first. But let this word of the Savior sink into your hearts: "There are first which shall be last!" To have God's grace so near constantly may make us think that already is enough. To have all these riches of salvation spread out before us may make us feel that this already makes us rich. A man may live next door

to the church; that will not save him. He may see thousands who live miles away come and be saved, and even be very glad of it, but even that will not save him. A secret danger goes with great spiritual advantages because of our deceptive hearts. We glory in these advantages, and fail to use them aright, while men with far less to glory in zealously use what they have, and thus attain what more easily we could and should have attained, but after all allowed to slip from us. The Jews, once favored by grace above all nations, were cast out in judgment in the end. Gentiles, heathen people, came to take their place. Take the warning home to yourself.

Remember the door that will be shut! Woe to those who are then without! Even if they sat long on its threshold, they will be lost. Blessed are they who enter while its portal is open in grace! Behold, grace and judgment thus once more set before you. God keep you in that grace, and deliver you from judgment.

OUTLINES.

The order of thought in the text is such that it may be followed in the outline of the sermon. Theme: How the Lord answers the question about few being saved: He gives his answer a personal turn—He adds a warning from those not saved—He intensifies that warning (v. 26-28a)—He draws us by showing us the company of the saved. We may use the question itself: "Are there few that be saved?" and in answer point to those who are saved; those who might and should be, yet are not; and to our own selves.—The substance of the text may serve in formulating the theme; Jesus is picturing to us the day of judgment and its tragic features. Theme: Let the day of judgment warn you! (1) Then the door of grace, open so long, will be shut forever. (2) Those who did not enter will knock and call in vain. (3) Do you want to be among them?—The final word of the text is suggestive: Christ's word concerning the first and the last: those first and those last now—those last and those first then—and how we should take warning now, that we may not be disappointed then.

"Strive to Enter in at the Strait Gate!"

1. *While it is open.*
2. *Ere it be closed.*
3. *And you be barred out.*

The Portal which Leads into the Kingdom.

1. *It is open for all, therefore enter!*
2. *It is narrow, therefore strive!*
3. *It is found of few, therefore look to thyself!*
4. *It will be closed, therefore hasten!*

— Naumann.

**The Right Answer to the Question whether Few will
be Saved.**

1. *Rejoice, for the portal is open to all!*
2. *Strive, for the portal is narrow!*
3. *Hasten, for the portal will presently be closed!*

“Lord, Lord, Open unto Us!”

1. *A vain cry.*
 2. *A self-condemning cry.*
 3. *A cry recorded in advance for our warning.*
-

THE TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Matth. 22, 23-33.

Our God is a God, not of the dead, but of the living. This is the final word for the end of the church year. It directs our eyes to *God and the blessed in heaven*. This Sunday is used in many sections as a memorial day for the sainted dead, and then is called the *Totenfest*. Note well—for the sainted dead, for the church has nothing to do with the rest. Our text lends itself also to this idea. Its essential thought is the upward look in firm faith, sure hope, joyous expectation.

22, 23. On that day there came to him Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection: and they asked him, **24.** saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. **25.** Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first married and deceased, and having no seed left his wife unto his brother; **26.** in like manner the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. **27.** And after them all the woman died. **28.** In the resurrection therefore whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.

The Sanhedrists were bringing their heavy artillery against Jesus in order in some way to discredit him. But there were two parties, the particularists, the Pharisees, self-constituted guardians of the Law, affecting great show of piety, and the Sadducees, rich, powerful, very influential, though a minority, counting among them the family and connection of the high priest, freethinkers and loose livers. Often clashing

with the Pharisees, and often deferring to them because of the populace, they still made common cause with them against Jesus, for he was as much averse to their way of thinking and living, as he was to that of their opponents, the Pharisees. Jesus had just sent the Pharisees away in miserable defeat. **On that day**, anxious to try their hand and to outdo their old opponents and thus put them in the shade, **came to him Sadducees**, most likely Sanhedrists, a company of them, taking the greater courage from their number against this one man Jesus. The high priest Caiaphas was hardly one¹ of them, nor Annas, for these were so prominent that they would have been named by the evangelists. — Zahn thinks that the addition: **which say that there is no resurrection**, is meant not merely to inform us as to their doctrine, in order that we may understand the question they propound to Jesus; that it really states in a summary way what the Sadducees claimed and maintained in the presence of Jesus, for in v. 31 Jesus refers to the question of the resurrection as if this had been discussed. But this is hardly convincing, even if we grant Zahn's presumption that the Jewish readers Matthew has in mind knew the doctrine of the Sadducees sufficiently. Instead of assuming that we have only a part of the encounter with the Sadducees in Matthew's record, we prefer to think that we have all of it. Just as the Pharisees had done, so now the Sadducees. Among themselves they study out what they mean to ask Jesus, veiling their real purpose and intent. They want to take Jesus at disadvantage; he is not to see all that is involved in the question asked of him; he is to answer with one or the other point hidden from him. Thus he is to be caught in his own words. The situation before us is not that the Sadducees brought up openly the question of the resurrection, telling Jesus they did not believe the resurrection possible, and then using the argument of v. 24. No; from their former disputes with the Pharisees they select a sharp

weapon which they had frequently used triumphantly against the Pharisees. They think it will upset Jesus also, catching him on one of the two edges they conceived this weapon to have. They never dreamed that Jesus would strike the flat side of their blade and snap it off at the very handle. As regards the skepticism of the Sadducees we must remember that this denied not only the resurrection of the dead, but also the existence of angels and spirits in general. Acts 23, 8. We need not ask what then they did with the Scriptures; we see it in the question put to Jesus in our text. It is the old trick of taking out of the Scriptures what one thinks he can use, ignoring the rest, or modifying it by interpreting it away. More should be said. Commentators and theologians often claim that the resurrection was not clearly taught in the Old Test. and hence not clearly apprehended and fully believed by the Jews. An examination of the facts refutes this completely. Abraham believed God could raise his son from the dead, even if he slew him in sacrifice. The Pharisees according to Acts 23, 8 believed the resurrection. Between these two terminals there is a mass of detailed evidence which shows that the Jews had and accepted the clear revelation of the doctrine of the resurrection.

V. 24, etc. Now the trap is sprung. The haughty, supercilious Sadducees use no polite introduction, as did the hypocritical Pharisees, v. 16. Josephus reports their coarseness in manners, comp. John 11, 49, Judica Sunday. So all they say in address is **Master** — Teacher. What a poor teacher he was they now mean to show. — They now restate, without quoting directly, what **Moses said**, Deut. 25, 5, etc.: **If a man die etc.** The verb used in the statement: **his brother shall marry**, is interpreted in the margin of the R. V.: "shall perform the duty of a husband's brother to his wife," *sich beschwœgern*, marry as kinsman. The future tense is for the legal command. — The purpose of this arrangement is mentioned: **and raise up seed unto his brother.**

Deut. 25, 6 makes this plain. Leaving no issue the dead brother's line would be extinct. To avoid this the first-born from the second marriage was to count as the child and heir of the dead brother. The "seed" to be raised up refers not to any and all children of the second marriage, but to the firstborn only and to his entry in the genealogical records as the child and heir of the man dead.—Now the case the Sadducees wish to present. Meyer thinks it was mythical, a mere invention; but these men say directly: **Now there were with us seven brethren, etc.,** and then they detail the story as a fact. Jesus too treats it as such, there is no charge of falsification. It is wrong to call even the Sadducees liars without evidence, and we have none against them here. Moreover, while they tell of seven brothers, the real question they propose would be intact with only two brothers involved, and such marriages, one unmarried brother taking his dead brother's childless wife, were quite common among the Jews. The case of seven is used only to bring out the highest degree of complication in the end. In v. 25 ἀφῆκεν is the first aorist of ἀφίημι. The death of the woman is included in order to transfer all the persons concerned into the other world, and thus to show more effectively and directly the absurdity of anything like a resurrection from the dead: **In the resurrection therefore,** assuming that there is such a thing, **whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.** The thing was simple enough in this life, for brother after brother died, and she was wife to each successively. But how in the life to come, when she would meet there all seven together? The Sadducees imagined that there could be only two answers, if the resurrection were a fact: the woman would then have to be the wife of all seven brothers together—a monstrous situation, intolerable already in this life, and surely more so in the life to come; or she would have to be the wife only of one of the seven—of which one? and why of that one and not of some

other? The word "likewise," as we see from Luke's version of this narrative, means that the woman died childless, which cuts off any possible solution like this: she must be counted the wife of the last brother by whom she had a child. With seven holding equal legal claim, how can six be set aside? The case ends again in an impossible situation. Hence the Sadducees feel sure that there is no resurrection, that this old Jewish regulation proves it, that no man is able to overthrow this proof. Either horn of the dilemma will impale Jesus, and he cannot — they think — escape taking the one or the other. Cunning trap indeed! Many a poor Pharisee had been caught in it and made a laughing-stock by these shrewd Sadducees. They would add Jesus to their victims.

29. But Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. 30. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven.

The threatening bubble has exploded — it was only a bubble. Both verbs are finite and therefore of equal weight: **answered and said unto them.** At once Jesus penetrates to the bottom of the thing the Sadducees have in mind, to their denial of the resurrection. **Ye do err** means: the conclusion you think you must draw from Moses' command and this case of seven brothers is utterly false. It does not follow. Your thinking it does follow only proves your own blindness: **not knowing the scriptures.** But this ignorance is not excusable, it is wilful, guilty. By misusing Scripture statements, and drawing unwarranted and false conclusions from them, these men are trying to overthrow the plain teaching of Scripture. This is guilty ignorance. The command of Moses involved no conclusion like the one the Sadducees drew. A false premise had to be added secretly in order to gain that false conclusion, namely this that in the other world the same conditions will prevail as hold good in this world. But this is not the

case, as all Scripture testifies. Augustine: "Our eyes see as much in the Scriptures as they die to this world; but as much as they live to this world so much they do not see." — The second root of the Sadducees' error is their, not knowing **the power of God** in attempting to deny the resurrection. The point here is not power to raise the dead, but, assuming that there is a resurrection, God's power in regard to those whom he raises, imagining that all God would be able to do would be to make men like once they were in this life. What a pitiful conception the Sadducees had of God and his power and the world to come! That was the product of their blindness, not of the revelation God had placed in their hands. Men argue with Scripture passages in the same wooden way to-day; the fault is theirs alone. The knowledge and enlightenment they might have they will not receive. — After pointing out the fundamental error of the Sadducees Jesus takes up their marriage problem. Instead of giving one of the only two answers these men thought possible, Jesus gives a totally different answer. The whole problem the Sadducees had invented crumples up and fades into nothing: **For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage.** "Marry" is said of men, "given in marriage" of women. The parallel in Luke shows that Jesus is speaking of the resurrection unto life, of the condition in heaven. The entire arrangement of sex, marriage, childbirth, and any laws pertaining to these, is for this life only, not for the life to come. That the Sadducees might have known from the Scriptures — they are told now. But this difference between our present life and the one to come does not mean that our bodies will be discarded. Jesus says purposely: **in the resurrection,** which means in the act of the resurrection, when the resurrection takes place. Our bodies will be raised to glory, but that will lift them above everything like marriage. — **But are as angels in heaven,** Jesus who came from heaven adds. He does more than refute

his opponents, he instructs them, and us all besides. The blessed are not to be angels, but *as* angels, whose abode is with God in heaven; and this likeness is not one restricted to their souls, but including their bodies. We shall be "as angels" in respect to sex and marriage, i. e., our bodily part. "Just as the children of the resurrection no longer die, so also they no longer need marriage to replenish the race." — Besser. "Where there is no dying, there is also no succession of children." — Augustine. As the number of the angels is complete and fixed, so will be that of the children of God in the resurrection. This already is enough to establish the likeness between the angels and saints. But we may add that our bodies will be lifted up above the narrow limitations of matter as it is at present; they will be made perfect instruments of the spirit, to accord in all things with the glorious conditions of the world to come. Reinhard, Meyer, Kurtz and others imagine that our likeness to the angels involves the corporeity of the angels. This old idea assumes an ethereal, firelike body for the angels, but the Scriptures know of the angels only as *πνεύματα*, spirits, and use this term in many connections as the opposite of all that is bodily or material. Compare Philippi, *Glaubensl.* II, 296, etc., for a fuller discussion. Our passage carries no implication of any bodily form of angels; when they appear unto men they are given a form in which to be visible to us, just as Jehovah assumed such a form in the theophanies.

31. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, 32. I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. 33. And when the multitudes heard it, they were astonished at his teaching.

Jesus might have closed the refutation at this point, but the Sadducees had appealed to the Scriptures. The Scriptures *are* the true court of appeal. What they really say Jesus now reveals in a striking manner. He

unmasks one of the hidden Scripture batteries, delivering a volley the more crushing since it comes from an unexpected quarter. It has been said that Jesus might have used stronger Scripture passages than Ex. 3, 6 or its parallels, for instance Dan. 12, 2. Some conclude that Jesus confined himself to the Pentateuch, since the Sadducees really held only to this. The latter rests on too slender proof to be a safe assumption. More likely Jesus used the proof he did because it involves that we make a deduction. The Sadducees had made a deduction, but a false one, one which lay not in Moses' words but in a supposition the Sadducees inserted beneath those divine words. Jesus shows how we may indeed draw deductions from Scripture statements — we must keep strictly to what actually lies in those statements and not go one inch beyond. — **But as touching the resurrection of the dead** focusses the following proof on this vital point: the dead shall come back to life again; only nothing is said about the wicked dead here. Other passages tell us they shall be raised also, but unto eternal shame and misery, being made like the evil angels. — **Have ye not read etc.**, recalls, with a touch of surprise, what of course these men had often read, superficially, thoughtlessly, without seeing what lay in the words, just beneath the surface. — **Spoken unto you** Jesus says, making the word to be quoted a personal communication to these men, as it and every other word is to all who hear and read. And this is spoken **by God** himself directly and personally, a revelation of himself in grace and mercy, and thus on a higher level than any of the legal regulations Moses was led to communicate to the Jews for the period of the old covenant only. Those legal regulations no longer bind us, but this revelation of God concerning himself stands for all time, a light and comfort to every believing soul. — Now the quotation thus effectively introduced: **I am the God of Abraham, etc.** The Jews all gloried in this name and title of God, for it connected God with them as children

of the patriarchs, it spoke of the covenant making that connection, it was the seal on that covenant guaranteeing all the promises contained therein. That included the resurrection. — Without a connecting word, thus in an emphatic and telling way Jesus lifts up the cover and shows what lies underneath: **God is not (the God) of the dead, but of the living.** The commentators to a great extent disappoint us in explaining this word of Christ. Take Meyer who sees the patriarch's down in *scheol*, alive down there, and hence to be brought out, and thus destined to be raised from the dead. These ideas are about as dark as the shadows of *scheol*. Are the bodies of the patriarchs in *scheol* too, alive down there? Strange resurrection, this coming forth of the living (bodies? or only souls?) out of *scheol*! Other commentators speak of the patriarchs as living, thus God being the God "of the living"; but how this necessitates the resurrection does not appear. Could not God be the God of the living if the *souls* of the patriarchs were alive with him in glory, no matter if their *bodies* were lost forever? It only misleads to talk of "the dead" (the patriarchs) as not "absolute dead men, non-existent men," and on the other hand of "the living" merely as partaking of eternal life, etc. We must keep to the *bodies* of the patriarchs, and these are *dead* now; and Jesus proves to us that these *dead bodies* shall rise again. To admit their souls as alive with God, and nothing more, would have strengthened the Sadducees in their notion that a resurrection of dead bodies is impossible. All these clouds disappear if we hold fast that if the patriarch's *bodies* remain in the grave forever, then God is the God of "dead men," νεκρῶν. Then death is not conquered. Then the covenant and promise has failed. Then redemption has failed. Then death is stronger than God. No; God is the God of "living men," ζώντων. Death has had its death-blow. When God's saints die they are not dead, but only sleep. The proof is the resurrection; then God wakes them from slumber.

A half-victory over death is inconceivable; for an enemy half beaten is thereby acknowledged as still unbeaten. When Jesus says: **but of the living**, he means the *bodies* of the patriarchs. Philippi, VI, 89: "If this referred only to the life of the blessed in heaven, the objection of the Sadducees would not be refuted. Therefore it follows that only by the bodily resurrection does God attest himself as the God of the living, and that the blessedness of the soul, as only a relative and partial overcoming of death, really does not deserve this name." Just as Christ's bodily resurrection was absolutely necessary as the crowning point of his victory over sin, death, and the devil, so that without it the victory would not have been achieved, so also our resurrection—if Christ's work fall short of that, the whole work is insufficient. That is—this work as the Scriptures reveal it; not as we ourselves in our own speculations might design a work of salvation for a Christ of our own planning. The precious dust of God's saints looks to our eyes indeed like other dust, *dead* dust; in reality God, Christ, heavenly power is over and in that dust—it is *living* dust, we shall see it live in glory forever.—No wonder that when the **multitudes**, the pilgrims at Jerusalem, heard this overwhelming proof of the resurrection they **were astonished at his teaching**. But faith is better than astonishment. God grant us faith!

SERMON.

For the last Sunday in the church year we want a text that gives us a glimpse of heaven. As the year ends, so life will end, time will end—then what shall there be for us? Nothing, says unbelief. We cannot be certain, says doubt. Do not ask, says fear. Who cares? say thousands in the world, what we want is this life. But our Lord Jesus Christ says: Ye shall be "as the angels of God in heaven." A glorious *revelation*—let it fill us with light; a golden *hope*—let it support us in life and death: a wondrous *cause for gratitude and joy*—we can ask and think of no more.

Look then beyond this narrow mortal veil. What is the vision the Savior opens for us?

We shall be Like the Angels of God.

I.

All through the Scriptures there is a shining procession of God's holy angels. They are the morning stars that sang together when God formed the earth and set the heavenly bodies in array. One of them with flaming sword guarded the gates of paradise when man fell into sin and had to leave his blissful home. But lo, they accompanied Jehovah when he came to Abraham with the promise of blessing for all the nations of the world. They passed up and down the golden ladder Jacob saw in his dream as a picture of Christ, the way, the truth, and the life. Mighty and wonderful are the deeds we are told they did all through those ages of preparation for the coming of our redemption. "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his Word!" Thus David praised God for the work of his angels. And then when the Son of God finally came to reopen the heavenly paradise for us, how they sang in multitudes from the open sky over Bethlehem's fields that wondrous night, how they ministered unto Jesus after the first battle with the Tempter, how they opened the empty tomb after the Lord's resurrection and announced his victory to men, and again at the Lord's ascension made known the coming of his glorious return. It is all our salvation, not theirs, for they never fell, but from beginning to end they delight, they aid in it, for it glorified God. Even now invisibly as ministering spirits they come to minister unto us who are the heirs of salvation. Their hands bear aloft God's saints to Abraham's bosom, and when the end of all things comes, and the great day of judgment, all the angels of God shall be there to place us at Christ's right hand and lead us into the golden city above. Wondrous indeed is what the Scriptures tell us of the angels of God.

There were skeptics among the Jews who did not believe in angels. The Sadducees, a Jewish party of rich, worldly, haughty men, put themselves above God's holy Word. As they denied the existence of these heavenly beings, so also they denied that there would be a resurrection of the dead. They mocked at the very idea. They built up arguments against it. So sure were they in their unbelief that they tried one of their arguments against Jesus. Then it was that the Savior for a brief moment drew the curtain aside and gave us a glimpse of heaven and of how we shall be when we reach heaven at last. He who came from heaven, and knows all that is in heaven made this revelation to us of our

future state in heaven: Ye shall be "as the angels of God in heaven." That means our resurrection and glorification. Christ himself declares it; yea, he shows us that God himself promises it, for he is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob. Long dead are these ancient patriarchs with whom God made the covenant he fulfilled in Christ and Christ's work. But God is not the God of the dead, he is the God of the living. Those dead shall rise again, shall be made like the angels in heaven, and with them all who died as they did, believing and trusting in God's salvation.

What a **glorious revelation**—let it fill us with light. God's angels are deathless. Never a touch of weakness or decay in them, never the least change as when we grow old. Eternal youth is theirs, perfection of strength and beauty. The light and life of God is in them, wholly and completely in them. So are the angels in heaven; and so says Christ shall we be in the resurrection. All the imperfections which now drag us down shall be swept away forever, what is mortal in us now shall put on immortality, death shall be swallowed up in everlasting victory.

The angels of God are in a heavenly existence, far transcending all that we know on earth. Here there is heat and cold, hunger and thirst, weariness and pain—the angels are infinitely above all these, and we shall be like them. Here there are earthly relations and conditions, among them marriage, homes for the rearing of children, and all that goes with our common physical life, its various functions and temporal needs. The angels are in a vastly higher state, where none of these earthly ways of life could possibly apply, and that higher state with its absolute purity, excellence, and joy we shall reach at last when this our flesh is made like unto Christ's own body through the resurrection of the dead.

The angels of God are in heavenly bliss. Faintly we see this happiness of theirs when we read how they shout for joy, how they delight to do God's will, and how they stand in the light of his presence. That beatific bliss shall be ours. We too will sing in those heavenly harmonies, we too respond in every fiber to all those nameless beauties and pleasures that God has in store for us. He who dreams that there he will miss something he now loves, only shows that he is failing to grasp what Christ here reveals when he says, we shall be as the angels of God. Away with these earthly thoughts! Come into the light of Christ's revelation, and you too will sing with the holy hymnist:

"Jerusalem the golden!
 With milk and honey blest,
 Beneath thy contemplation
 Sink heart and voice oppressed.
 I know not, O I know not
 What joys await us there,
 What radiancy of glory,
 What bliss beyond compare!"

II.

The revelation which Jesus makes of our future state, telling us that we shall be "as the angels of God," carries with it a blessed purpose.

Sad enough is our state in this present life, anything but angel-like. A thousand limitations hedge us in. Even though inventions and new discoveries have extended human power, how narrow is the extension. The old burdens are left, the old sorrows depress, the old pains and griefs remain. And time carries us toward the end. On earth everything ends, must end. A year may seem long, a life, an age—but end it must and pass utterly away. Thoughtless, brainless indifference may care nothing about it all, but Christian hearts feel the burden of it. Hear it from the lips of Moses: "Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withereth. . . . We spend our years as a tale that is told." Ps. 90.

How men can live on from day to day with nothing but this prospect before them, passes my understanding. What?—only strength growing less, burdens growing greater, and then a fading out altogether—the end—a handful of dust and ashes—and the soul, who knows, perhaps it fades out too like this its shell, the body? Can man with a rational mind really sit down to such blank hopelessness?

No; at least most men cannot and do not. They must have hope, and so they proceed to invent some sort of hope for themselves. They paint for themselves an hereafter such as they would fancy, and then tell themselves this will be their lot in eternity. No question about it—they just feel sure it will be thus. Like Mohammed who thought of heaven mostly as a beautiful harem; or the American Indians who dreamed of the long hereafter as a great happy hunting ground; or wise old Socrates among the ancient Greeks who thought of Elysium as a place where he could meet the worthies of past days and go on philosophizing with them like he once did on earth. Yes these are hopes; but like nuts

without meat, like gaudy flowers that never turn to fruit. Like the painted clouds at evening—when the night comes they are gone, all is black. Hope may spring eternal in the breast, but fulfillment, a hope that comes true, with never a doubt about it—that is quite another thing.

It is indeed. But Jesus Christ here opens it for us, plants it into our hearts, **the golden hope** he himself will fulfill. He who created the angels, and the heavens, their abode, who made us likewise, to be the companions of angels, and God's own children, he who came to earth to rectify our sin, lift us out of our death, he declares that we shall at last be "as the angels of God in heaven," for he himself will make us so. How? By the resurrection from the dead; by the omnipotent power of God which shall work that resurrection, unite again soul and body sundered by death, and lift them both glorified into glory and deathless, blissful heavenly life. Here is a hope different from all the hopes that are man-made. God, Christ, all the angels and powers of God are behind it. There is no possibility for it to fail.

But when we reach out to it, a hand is laid upon us, a voice cries: Stay! The same folly that sets up dreams in men's brains, dreams of a hope that is no hope, challenges God himself and his eternal promise of hope, and declares that *this* must be a dream, that it cannot be true. Double is the deception—the false is called true, the true, the eternally true, false. Angels? why, these Sadducees never saw one—how can we be made like them? Their grand procession through the Scriptures, where the eyes of faith can see them daily, they wipe out as so much myth and fable. And the resurrection? why, who ever saw the dust of death become alive again? Science never heard of such a thing, and these Sadducees old and new are great on science. They even go farther. With their thick eyes of flesh they look into the Bible, they find a passage here and there, put their own ideas on top of it, and lo, again they prove, at least to their satisfaction, that the very idea of a resurrection is nothing but a hoax. See what they did in our text. They found a case where seven brothers had married the same woman as one after another died. Whose wife would she be in the other world, if there should be such a thing as a resurrection? Those seven successive husbands of one wife made them smile at the idea of a resurrection. Men put their own blind suppositions, reasons, and deductions into God's everlasting Word, and thus they kill the hope they might have, they pervert and falsify it, and try to rob us in the same way.

But no, they shall not rob us. This hope of Christ that reaches up to heaven, the angels of God, and the blessed presence

of God himself, we will press to our bosoms, hold in our hearts, make our support in life and death. Others may want their heaven for a day and a year in this life; we want a heaven like that of the angels that lasts forever. Others may want a heaven of flesh and fleshly joys, sin-stained, curse-laden; ours shall be the heaven of the white purity of the angels, and of the inexpressible joys that radiate from God. As earthly days fade like grass and the shadows of the end grow longer before the night of death, this hope shall grow brighter and brighter within us, until God's own angels come to carry us away, those angels whom we shall be made like unto at last.

III.

This wondrous revelation of Jesus, this golden hope to light us upward must be one thing more.

Jesus had skeptic Sadducees before him when he told of the saints being made like the angels of God. They would not believe the Son, even as they had not believed the Father. But surely the apostles were also there, and they believed. Many of the guests at the Jewish feast in Jerusalem at this time also heard, and Matthew tells us they were greatly astonished. Any man who lets Jesus plant this hope of the resurrection and an angel-like heavenly existence in all eternity into his heart, will certainly be a changed man. Not only that his life will grow constantly brighter—the more he realizes what the hope is that he has, the more will he give way to gratitude and joy.

We poor mortals to be lifted so high! We miserable sinners to be cleansed thus body and soul, made the very companions of angels, and set into the presence of God! How can it possibly be? It is the infinite love and mercy of God. It is the boundless compassion of Jesus Christ who died himself and rose again, that we dying might be raised by the power of his redemption. Oh, that we all might think of these things aright, take in all their immensity and heavenliness, and let it lift our hearts to God! Here is **cause for gratitude and joy** so great we can ask and think of no more, it will last to all eternity. Let us not wait till the last trumpet sounds and all these glories of the resurrection begin, before we raise our hearts in happy thanks to God—as if we doubted at first, and had to wait and see to be sure. That is dishonor to him whose love and gifts exceed all that we can think. No; every day and hour of our present lives must shine with joyful gratitude—the gratitude of love and confession, of loyalty and obedience, of happy anticipation and sure and certain hope. How would a poor beggar feel, what would he say and do, if he learned from the court itself that

he had fallen heir to millions, and at a specified time would enter on the inheritance? What are transient, fleeting, fading millions to the treasures and glories that God himself holds for us when we shall be "as the angels in heaven"? True heirs of this heavenly heritage are bound to show they are such, and the sum of their showing it will be this holy gratitude and joy.

In heaven itself, when we have attained the resurrection and stand angel-like in glory with the angels of God before his wondrous throne, gratitude and joy will be the substance of all our praise. What sweeter and more delightful sensations could there possibly be? St. John was granted a vision of it: "A throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats; and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. . . . And the four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy. O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. . . . And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.*" Rev. ch. 4 and 5. That heavenly host we are to join, their gratitude and joy shall be ours.

And when within that lovely Paradise
At last I safely dwell,
From out my soul what songs of bliss shall rise,
What joy my lips shall tell,
While holy saints are singing
Hosannas o'er and o'er,
Pure hallelujahs ringing
Around me evermore.

Innumerable choirs before the shining throne
With harp and trumpet raise
Glad notes, till heaven's vast halls vibrate the tone
Of their melodious praise.
And all its host rejoices,
And all its blessed throng
Unite their myriad voices
In one eternal song!"

OUTLINES.

We want this text for the glory that is in it. The Twenty-Fourth Sunday after Trinity promises the resurrection and connects it with all God's saving plan, our present text proves the resurrection and shows what a heavenly existence it will bring us to. The argument of the Sadducees is but a very minor thing for the sermon, the chief stress must be on the words of Jesus and the vision they open for us. We may, therefore, build the sermon on any one of these three words: "as touching the resurrection of the dead"—"as the angels of God in heaven"—"not the God of the dead, but of the living." Enter which gate you prefer, you will be in the heart of the text. Theme: How Jesus describes the resurrection life to us: It transcends everything earthly—it is angel-like in glory and exaltation—it is the final gift of God's grace and power in us.—The sermon given above is pivoted on the statement regarding the angels.—On the third word we might have a theme like this: Hold fast your hope in the God of the living! See what that hope is—think how it is assailed—weigh what is means to have it—then cling to it by the help of God's grace.

The Seven Men who Kept the Sadducees out of Heaven.

1. *How they darkened the Scriptures for the Sadducees.*
 2. *How Christ upsets them and drives the darkness away.*
-

Christ and the Sadducees on the Doctrine of the Resurrection.

1. *The folly of the Sadducees who deny the resurrection.* Their pride of knowledge—their perversion of Scripture—their dismal unbelief—their low, worldly lives.
 2. *The heavenly revelation of Christ who himself is the resurrection.* The truth he reveals—the light of Scripture he makes shine out for us—the hope and glory he sets before us—the faith and praise we owe him.
-

Do You Hope in the God of the Living?

1. *What it means to drop that hope.* You see it in the Sadducees, true children of this world: Earth is their only home—the pleasures and vanities of this life their only desire—eternity is set aside—death and the resurrection are met with a scoff—the Bible is turned up-side down.

2. *What it means to have it and live in the light of it.* This is what Christ shows us. Heaven is our true home—the glory of the angels our gift to come—the God of the living our support and stay.
-

We shall be as the Angels in Heaven.

1. *What shall then fall away?*
2. *What shall then begin?*

— Oostersee.

SOLI DEO GLORIA!