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HOMILETICS

SERVICE THEMES AND TEXTS FOR SEPTEMBER

Sept. 2	15 S. a. Tr.	1 Kings 17:8-16	God's Unfailing Help
Sept. 9	16 S. a. Tr.	Job 5:17-26	God's Help for Every Trial
Sept. 16	17 S. a. Tr.	Ps. 75:4-7	Forsake Self-Righteousness
Sept. 23	18 S. a. Tr.	2 Chron. 1:7-12	The Supreme Importance of God's Gift of Himself
Sept. 30	19 S. a. Tr.	Ps. 32:1-7	The Greatest Gift: Forgiveness

Sermon Study on 2 Chron. 1:7-12 for the Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity

The eighteenth Sunday after Trinity closes the third cycle of the Trinity season. During the first three cycles of the Trinity season we studied the Church on earth and its relationship to God. During the final cycle of this season we shall study the heavenly congregation. Though Scripturally there is little difference between the two, our thinking, bound by the limitations of time and space, can do little better than conceive of them as two distinct phases of God's gift of life. So, between the seventeenth and nineteenth Sundays after Trinity, there comes a natural break for re-emphasis and review of the lessons treated during the first three cycles.

From Trinity I to V we discussed the theme "Entrance into the Church." From Trinity VI to XI we talked of "The Spiritual Aspects of Life in the Church." From Trinity XII to XVIII we discuss "The Practical Aspects of Life in the Church" — how the spiritual aspects manifest themselves in lives of love and service. (Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, p. 482.)

Reviewing the previous lessons, we recall the love of God that has made us His sons and the obligations that have been placed on us as the sons of God. We recall the love of the Father, who sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might receive the adoption of sons. We remember the fatherly kindness of God, who sent His Spirit that He might bear witness to our spirit that we are the sons of God. Our review includes the facts about Jesus, who as our Redeemer paid the greatest price that could be paid

for our freedom — He laid down His life for us, His friends. We re-emphasize the love of the Spirit of God, who has condescended to dwell in us and make our bodies His temples. We also recall our obligations of love and service to our Father: to walk in newness of life; led by the Spirit, to live as sons of God; to continually remember that the wages of sin still is death; not to tempt God nor murmur against Him; to take God's way of escape in temptation and take heed to ourselves lest we fall; not to receive the grace of God in vain; having our sufficiency from God, to live as able servants of His; to remember the Law is not against, but in accord with, the promise of God; to walk in the Spirit that we might not fulfill the lusts of the flesh; to bear one another's burdens; to be filled with all the fullness of God; to walk worthy of our vocation.

As we remember the greatness of God's grace and our inability to live the kind of life expected of us as His sons, our prayer will only partly correspond to St. Paul's prayer of thanksgiving as it is given in our Epistle lesson this morning. We will thank God for the grace which is given us in Christ Jesus, but the rest of our prayer will not be thanksgiving, but a petition that we be "enriched by Him in all utterance and in all knowledge" that the testimony of Christ be more fully confirmed in us. Our text gives us the answer to that prayer.

Context: 2 Chron. 1:1-6. — Solomon, chosen by God and designated by David to be his successor, has become king of Israel (1 Chron. 22:9-10; 23:1). After some trouble, Solomon overcomes his enemies and secures his throne (1 Kings 1—2). Solomon knew that it was by God's will and strength that his purpose was accomplished (1 Kings 2:24). He determined to hold a festival of national thanksgiving to God for having established him and for giving peace to the land. Though he was accustomed to sacrifice and burn incense in various high places (1 Kings 3:3), he determined to go to Gibeon for this sacrifice. It was there that the tabernacle and altar stood. He called together the elders, the representatives of the people, and they went to Gibeon for the thanksgiving sacrifice.

Text: 2 Chron. 1:7-12; cf. 1 Kings 3:5-14. — "In that night, God was seen by Solomon, and He said to him: Ask what I shall give to you" (v.7). The appearance occurred in the night after

the sacrifice. 1 Kings tells us that it was in a dream. It is worthy of note that the appearance occurred in a setting of worship in the manner and the place that God had ordained.

From a homiletical viewpoint it is not beneficial to discuss the complicated details of this dream or of God's revelations through this means. We might note that God Himself mentions this as one means of communication (Num. 12:6) and that the historicity of this dream is all the more amply attested by its being placed in two historical books. The preaching value of the text is found only in the setting, the request, and its answer.

V. 8: "And Solomon said to God: Now You have done with David, my father, great mercy, and You have caused me to rule in his stead. Now, Yahweh God, Your word with David, my father, will be confirmed, because You have caused me to rule a people numerous as the dust of the earth." God's *chesed* is shown to David in this, that He has kept His promise to David.

2 Sam. 7:11b-16. Also the Lord telleth thee that He will make thee an house. And when thy days be fulfilled and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy Seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and I will stablish the throne of His kingdom forever. And I will be His Father, and He shall be My Son. If He commit iniquity, I will chasten Him with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men. But My mercy shall not depart away from Him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee; thy throne shall be established forever. Cf. 1 Chron. 17:10-15.

1 Kings tells us that David had received this kindness from God, because, unlike Saul, he walked before God in truth, righteousness, and uprightness of heart. It was Solomon's desire to live like his father so that the promise would be continued to his children (v.9). Since Solomon was sure that his position had been established by God, he now asks God for the ability to fulfill the duties of his office. "Now wisdom and knowledge give to me, and let me go out before this people, and let me come in, for who will judge this Your great people?" (V. 10.)

The preaching value of the text centers in this request. We must understand it to know exactly what was requested by Solomon and

given by God. Though Solomon does not explain his request here, he has given us an excellent description of "wisdom and knowledge" in the Book of Proverbs.

"Wisdom; the wisdom of God addressing men. It includes all the revelations of Himself which God has made to men. And since these are all made through Christ, who spoke before His advent by the prophets, and afterwards by the apostles, we may say that wisdom speaks here as the eternal Word, who is the only revealer of God to men." (*Concordia Bible with Notes*, comment on Prov. 1:20.)

This Word, even when it is presented to us in literary form, is never static or dead. It is a creative, activating force which enters into men to produce knowledge, i. e., the ability to know, perceive, receive, and exercise this wisdom and understanding, i. e., the ability to act wisely.

Prov. 3:19-20: The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens. By His knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Prov. 8:22-31 [Wisdom is speaking]: The Lord possessed Me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth, while as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there. When He set a compass upon the face of the depth; when He established the clouds above; when He strengthened the fountains of the deep; when He gave to the sea His decree that the waters should not pass His commandment; when He appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by Him as One brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and My delights were with the sons of men. (Listed as a parallel passage for John 1:2 in Nestle's Greek New Testament.)

Prov. 2:6: For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

Prov. 1:23 [Wisdom speaking]: Turn you at My reproof. Behold, I will pour out My Spirit unto you; I will make known My words unto you. Cf. John 16:8-13.

Wisdom, as Solomon describes it, is the eternal, powerful Word. It brings to man the one necessity imposed upon God's people: "The fear of the Lord." Cp. Ex. 20:3.

Prov. 1:7: The fear of the Lord is the beginning [the first thing] of wisdom.

Prov. 9:10: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Prov. 15:33: The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom; and before honor is humility.

Prov. 8:13: The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Cp. Job 28:28: Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

Because wisdom brings to us a reverence for God that moves us to hate evil, it leads us to live righteously.

Prov. 2:10-12: When wisdom entereth into thine heart and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee: to deliver thee from the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things. V. 20: That thou mayest walk in the way of good men and keep the paths of the righteous.

Prov. 4:11-12: I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy step shall not be straitened; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble. V. 18: But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Prov. 14:16: A wise man feareth and departeth from evil.

And in living righteously we find the life we are seeking.

Prov. 1:33: Whoso hearkeneth unto Me shall dwell safely and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Prov. 2:7-8: He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous; He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment and preserveth the way of His saints.

Prov. 3:16-18: Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her; and happy is everyone that retaineth her.

Prov. 3:21-26, 34: My son . . . keep sound wisdom and discretion. So shall they be life unto thy soul and grace to thy neck.

Then thou shalt walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble. When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet. Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh. For the Lord shall be thy Confidence and shall keep thy foot from being taken. . . . He giveth grace unto the lowly. The wise shall inherit glory.

Cf. Prov. 4:8-9, 22; 8:21, 35; Whoso findeth Me findeth life, 36; 13:14-15; 16:22; 19:8, 20; 24:13-14.

Wisdom gave Solomon the ability to do his work.

Prov. 8:15-16: By Me kings reign and princes decree justice; by Me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.

Hence, for Solomon it was the greatest treasure in life — his one wish from God.

Prov. 2:4-5: If thou seekest for her as silver and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then thou shalt understand the fear of the Lord.

Prov. 3:13-15: Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Cf. Prov. 8:10-11; 16:16.

Vv. 11-12: "And God said to Solomon: Since this was in your heart and not did you ask riches and wealth [property, especially cattle] and glory and the soul of your haters, and even many days not have you asked, but you have asked for you wisdom and knowledge with which you may rule my people over whom I have caused you to reign, wisdom and knowledge is given to you, and riches and wealth and honor I will give to you, which not was it so to the kings which were before you, and after you not will it be so."

God was pleased with Solomon's request, because he asked for the thing that God had commanded should be the mainstay of Israel's kings, God's Word.

A close study of Solomon's life (recorded 1 Kings 3—11; 2 Chron. 1—9) will show that these historians are evaluating Solomon's life on the basis of God's revelations concerning kings (Deut. 17:14-20). The fact that his earlier life is evaluated on that

basis is proof to me that at first his life was lived on the basis of that revelation.

Deut. 17:14-20: When thou art come into the land. . . . Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord, thy God, shall choose. . . . And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this Law in a book out of that which is before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord, his God, to keep all the words of this Law and these statutes to do them.

God granted to Solomon his request. He gave ability to rule.

1 Kings 3:16-28: The decision of Solomon concerning the child claimed by two mothers.

1 Kings 6: The building of the Temple.

1 Kings 10:1-13: The visit of the queen of Sheba.

1 Chronicles 6: The blessings and prayer at the dedication of the Temple. Cf. Deuteronomy 4—5.

Solomon played the part of the fool later on only because he departed from that Word.

Deut. 17:16-17: Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away.

1 Kings 11:1-4: But king Solomon loved many strange women. . . . For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods.

Solomon's request, because it was in accord with God's will, was granted. By the power of God he ruled God's people wisely and well for many years. Only when he considered other things as a greater treasure than God's Word, did he fall.

Because Solomon chose wisdom, he can be a pattern for us. For it is not only to kings that God has said: "My Word shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life," but He has given the same command to us all. And He gives to each of us our chance daily, saying: "Ask what I shall give unto thee." If our request is: "Lord, give us wisdom and knowledge that we may do the tasks you have given us to do," God's answer to us is: "Wisdom and knowledge are given unto thee." In that wisdom and knowledge, counting it our greatest treasure, never departing from it, we shall find the life we are seeking.

OUTLINE

Theme: The Desire That Turns Living into Life

1. The Task
 - A. Solomon's, vv. 8-9
 - B. Ours: Given in past two cycles of Trinity season
2. The Request
 - A. Solomon's, v. 10
 - B. Ours. For complete guidance from God through His, Word
3. God's Answer
 - A. To Solomon, vv. 11-12
 - B. To us. That the desire of our heart will be granted

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