

Concordia Theological Monthly



D E C E M B E R • 1 9 5 6

HOMILETICS

Sermon Outlines on the Ranke Epistles

NEW YEAR

1 PETER 2:1-10

New Year's Day something of a dead center. We are so very conscious of the past and dreadfully aware of the prospects of an unknown future. Many attempts have been made and are made to forget or to remember, to stimulate eagerness or to drown apprehension. For the Christian no better question can be found than Paul's, uttered from the dust of repentance and voiced to the Jesus who had shown mercy upon him: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" If the entire text cannot be read before the sermon, it is desirable to read it all, or at least vv. 9 and 10, perhaps at just this point after the introduction has been developed.

Faith for 1957: We Are the Lord's

I. The past—especially 1956.

- A. Implicit in v. 1 is judgment, for if these things need to be laid aside, then they formed a real part of our life.
- B. They must be laid aside if v. 3 is an expression of reality for us and we have tasted that the Lord is gracious.
- C. They can be laid aside in the power of that Lord who is gracious.

Note: The entire development here calls for a genuine appraisal of self with all the masks and the disguises of New Year's Eve stripped off. If repentance is called for, it means judgment upon what we are; if we are in need of forgiveness, it means that we pronounce damnable what can be cleansed only by grace.

II. The future—especially 1957.

- A. Let our first step and all our steps be a coming to the Lord whom we know and believe as gracious (vv. 3, 4).
- B. Let us come as newborn babes (v. 2), newborn by grace with all the past forgiven and thus hungry for the future of God. The future for the Christian can mean nothing but growth,

away from what he is in himself and toward what God is and God wants. This growth is achieved by God through the milk that is His Word.

- C. Let us view the new year as an opportunity for the service of God (v. 5). Here we must develop what God would make of us in expression, after He has made us what we are in fact by faith in Christ Jesus.
1. By the declaration of God we are what vv. 9 and 10 say of us by the mercy of God.
 2. 1957 is opportunity from God to "show forth the praises of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light," to be in very fact and expression what faith believes God declares and regards us.

Note: While this does not provide the motivation, it nevertheless should be the heart of the sermon. All these momentous statements of God show what He regards us to be, what He declares us to be. That means that we really are these, and everything else that we appear is still a sham, the cocoon in which we are still hidden. But in the declaration of God is also the power to show forth or reveal what we believe of ourselves on the basis of His declaring us that.

III. The Lord whose we are by faith and whom we glorify in faith.

- A. The Living Stone, or the Stone that gives Life, because He is so set of God (v. 4). This is the Son of God, the only Savior, because God regards Him alone as "able to save to the uttermost."
- B. He is the Savior of them that believe (vv. 6-8). Faith alone gives Him the glory that is His due, and faith alone builds on Him as the Foundation set by God and into Him as the Head of the arch that holds it all together. Unbelief is still the basic disobedience because it rejects God's Stone of Salvation.
- C. Jesus is the calling of God out of darkness into His marvelous light; Jesus is the Maker of a no-people into the people of God; Jesus is the Merciful where before there was no mercy (vv. 9, 10).

Note: Without this section the sermon is dead. This is the declaration by God of what we are, and this is the motive for being what God says. This is the power of God unto salvation, the presenting of Jesus for all that He is here held out.

Conclusion: In Christ we belong to God. St. Paul assures us that "nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord." That is the faith with which we can enter a new year, because it means that the sins of 1956 could not change God's love for us. Nor will 1957 be able to separate us from God any more than 1956. In the eyes of God, in Christ, we are the Lord's. By the faith which believes God, be then what you are for 1957.

Minneapolis, Minn.

WILLIAM BUEGE

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

ROMANS 3:23-31 (read especially v. 29)

If you ask the average citizen the meaning of Epiphany, you will draw a blank stare. The same question directed to the average Protestant churchgoer will bring a similar reaction. Perhaps there will be a fumbling for some words about the story of the Wise Men. Many people cannot pronounce the word "Epiphany," much less spell it. A thorough study of this text in conjunction with the Epiphany theme will point up our task for today and tomorrow.

Epiphany means manifestation, chosen because the theme of this day emphasizes that Christ brought light to all men. The Gospel is not for Jews alone, but for all—Jews and Gentiles, black and white, rich and poor, young and old. No one is excluded from God's gracious work in Christ.

It is the church's task to proclaim God's work of redemption to all. In Paul's day that was a new task for an old church. In our day there are new methods and techniques to accomplish the 1,900-year-old task of proclaiming the Redeemer.

Proclaim God's Word of Redemption to All

I. Man's need is universal.

A. All have sinned (v. 23).

1. This fact cannot be emphasized too much. Consciousness of sin and awareness of the need for forgiveness are vital for all.
2. There is danger that we become calloused to the old phrases and common Scripture proofs we have heard so often. "There is not a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not." "All we like sheep have gone astray." (Also Ps. 53:3; Ps. 130:3; Prov. 20:9; 1 John 1:8; Rom. 3:10.) The message of these words must convict and condemn us.

B. Sin places all under condemnation (v.23).

1. We fall short of God's glory. What glory we miss! It is the glory of connection with Jesus.
2. We miss the mark set by the Law. The Law can never make us righteous. It is not the Law's power to declare us just.

II. God's answer is universal.

A. God meets our hopeless situation with Christ.

1. We are not hopelessly lost under verdict of "guilty." The redemption or ransoming is through Christ; He paid for us (vv. 24, 25).
2. It is the answer of grace, wholly unmerited. A just God must be satisfied. He can be satisfied only by grace.
3. God's answer must be accepted by faith. There is no justification for the unbeliever.
4. This faith does not originate in man, but is a gift of God (vv. 27, 28). God is the cause of the act. He is the Author of grace, the Giver of faith.
5. Repeatedly the text says that all is without Law and works. It is through faith and faith alone. These are opposites, mutually exclusive. It is either or. The church stands or falls on this doctrine—faith alone. It is the burden of our witness as we proclaim the Redeemer.
6. "His righteousness" is the subject of this entire Epistle. It is mentioned also in our text (vv. 25, 26).
7. There was pardon for Old Testament sinners through Christ's blood, but the task of proclaiming it was not as clear-cut.
8. Since this is God's answer, there is no room for boasting on our part. Humility and repentance are still basic for Christians.

B. The Law is not abolished by this opportunity for all to be saved through faith, but it is strengthened (vv. 30, 31).

C. No national restrictions apply to the message. It must be proclaimed to all.

1. There is only one God. He made all, redeems all, and sanctifies all (v. 29).

2. To the Jews it was a revolutionary thought that God wanted to save Gentiles. Like many Christians today, they had not caught the Epiphany spirit. It was a new task for them.

The emphasis of Epiphany is for missions. The message of this text must be proclaimed in all the world. P. R. stands for public relations. The public relations task is to *proclaim* the Redeemer.

Of the 2,500 million people in the world, approximately 1,600 million are without Christ and the message of our text. We are told that 500 million have not once heard the name of Christ. In the world as a whole the unchurched and non-Christian population is growing more rapidly than the church population. God make us aware! Give us a sense of urgency! Let us labor while it is day,—the night cometh when no man can work.

Baltimore, Md.

GEORGE H. SOMMERMEYER

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

ROMANS 4:16-25

“Faith is a many-splendored thing.” A recent popular song used these words of erotic love. They characterize far better the miraculous divine thing we speak of as faith, for through them we tap the largess of God. The Syro-Phoenician woman saw it open the door of healing to her daughter. The Centurion found in it the source of his servant’s deliverance from a mortal sickness. The woman with an issue of blood knew its healing in her tired body. Would you have God’s power made manifest in your life? Then let faith give it to you. You will agree:

“Faith Is a Many-Splendored Thing”

I. Splendid in what it is.

- A. A Catholic priest once told a woman whose husband was feared shot down off the China coast to have faith. I don’t know how he meant it, but she understood it in this sense: to have courage. Strength in self. Inner power. Many today understand it so. Self-reliance. Or a quasi-dependence on a Higher Being to grant us what *we* want. Lacks true humility, dependence on Divine Wisdom and seems to be largely a determination to make God’s will comply with ours. This isn’t true faith as Scripture knows it.
- B. God’s promises are the basis. Abraham. “Seed” shall be the agent of blessing for all men. Note: Abraham not materialistic,

but completely spiritual. Salvation for men was his hope. Promises of God were yea and amen to him. God's Word Gospel.

C. Not easy to believe because of Sarah's age. The struggle in Abraham's heart mirrored by the words of the text: "Hope against hope," "not weak in faith," "staggered not," "strong in faith," "fully persuaded." May not be easy for us. Doubts must be overcome. Can be when we place our full reliance on the Word and not on our own reason or powers of sense and sight.

D. Our faith, like Abraham's, rests on God's promises about the Messiah now fulfilled. His death and resurrection by which salvation is secured for us and all men. This is the heart of the Gospel.

While Satan, world, and flesh attacked this ground of faith, we are to stagger not and be fully persuaded.

II. Splendored in what it does.

A. Imputes righteousness. Faith is imputed to us for righteousness. Our Substitute paid our debt for us and provided us with full and free salvation.

B. What this means. Peace and tranquillity here. Hope of heaven and the joys and eternal pleasures of hereafter with angels and saints in God's presence.

III. Splendored in the way we receive it.

A. Work for it? Buy it? Serve for it like Jacob? It is too great and we too weak for that. In fact, incapable.

B. By grace (v. 16). Freely. Out of God's unmerited goodness. Abraham didn't deserve it. The story of Abraham's life. Ur of Chaldees and worship of moon goddess.

The coward who was willing to relinquish his wife to another to save his own life. Yet God had mercy.

C. So with us. We are nothing, but still He delights to make His people those who were not a people.

D. The Word. Written v. 23. Preached and taught today in church service, Bible class, classroom, Sunday school, through individual Christian by word of mouth and life. The Visible Word, too, Baptism and Holy Communion.

- E. For all men, not for one group alone, but all the seed of Abraham. Universal salvation. The spanning of continents and seas by Gospel preachers. All nations shall call Him blessed.
- F. That God may be glorified (v. 20). The great good here and hereafter of the Redeemed.

Gratitude to God should spur us on to have and to hold, and to share with all men, near and afar off, the great and marvelous faith that is ours by God's great gift.

San Francisco, Calif.

ARTHUR C. NITZ

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

ROMANS 5:1-5

No one likes trouble. We all desire peace which means the absence of trouble to us. God allows trouble for His purposes. His people enjoy peace in the middle of trouble.

God Saves Us by Faith, Tries Our Faith in Trouble, and Gives Us Inner Peace

I. God saves us by faith (vv. 1, 2, 5 b).

- A. We need a Savior from sin, trouble, and the world. We are God's enemies. (Rom. 8:7; Ps. 51:5; Gen. 8:21; 1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 6:23.)
- B. Jesus is our Savior. Here the whole Passion should be developed briefly, particularly Paul's unique presentation in Romans 5 following our text.
- C. Faith by the Holy Spirit brings Jesus into our lives. Romans 3 and 4 are the chapters in which St. Paul presents his magnificent argument and discussion of salvation by faith alone. (Ephesians 2.)

II. God tries our faith in trouble (vv. 3, 4, 5 a).

- A. We will always have trouble in the world. Synodical Catechism cites John 15 and 16, 1 John 2 and 5 in the Christian Questions. (Matt. 10:38.) Sympathetically show the problems of people: sickness, loss of good name, death of loved ones, delinquent children.
- B. Trouble shows the quality of our hearts; e. g., it doesn't make people impatient, but proves that they are impatient. Whatever trouble finds in us — good or bad — it develops more fully.

- C. In trouble God wants to prove our faith. (Ps. 4:1; 11:5.)
God tries us in trouble in order that we may know whether we really love God for His own sake. (Ps. 139:23, 24.)
- D. God works out all things for good for the people who love Him. (Rom. 8:28.) Use example of ingredients for a cake. Separately they taste terrible, but the baked cake is delicious. (Ps. 3:3.)

III. God gives us inner peace.

- A. The peace is not worldly. (Matt. 10:34; John 16:33.) Quote from the Collect for Peace: "that peace which the world cannot give."
- B. The peace is inner.
1. When lacking this peace we have spiritual anxiety, a disturbed conscience, and mistrust toward God.
 2. This peace consists of appeased conscience and confidence in God.
- C. This peace is from the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Prince of Peace. (Is. 9:6; Eph. 2:14; 2:17; Ps. 72:7.)

Maplewood, Mo.

WILLIAM E. GOERSS

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

ROMANS 8:1-11 (read vv. 3b-5)

Tomander a refugee from Communist Latvia. His relatives under Communism must work for Communism, vote for Communism, children study Communism. Tomander works for and supports free society, children study in freedom. Captives must serve captors, free men serve cause of freedom.

In religion this is true for every man. Captives of sin must serve sin and death. Free men of God pursue the works of God. Christ has won us free from sin to service of God. Lives must be bent to purposes of the Spirit.

Christ has Delivered Us over to God's Service;
We Must Pursue the Goals of the Spirit

- I. As men of the flesh we were compelled to work for sin and death.
- A. By nature we were captive to sin and death. Prisoners taken in battle (ch. 7:23). Human flesh not sinful in self, but seized by Satan, perverted to ends of evil.

- B. We had to oppose God (vv. 7, 8). "Condemnation" (v. 1).
1. Our corrupted, carnal will at enmity with God. Crossed swords. Intent and purpose ("mind," AV) of every activity to thwart God and establish evil. Hatred toward God in fact while lip service to godliness.
 2. God's Law not able to make us righteous (v. 3 a). Can command but not compel. No mastery (v. 7). Desire for obedience inevitably overruled (ch. 7:25).
- C. We brought forth the fruits of sin and death (vv. 5, 6).
1. The fruits of sin: pride, vengeance, dishonesty in business, strife, contempt for suffering (Epistle); racial and social exclusiveness, ineptitude and disinterest in face of human want and disease (Gospel).
 2. The fruits of death. Personality of despair. Knowledge of inevitable and perpetual doom. Shame and vice (Luther, Sixth Petition). Samson at the grinding wheel.
- II. Christ taking our flesh wins us free from the rule of sin and death.
- A. Christ joins the battle within our human flesh (v. 3).
1. God shows forth His Son, a man. Flesh of our flesh, yet not corrupt as we. Subject to same pressures and temptations which inevitably proved our undoing. Touches every area of our infirmity.
 2. Selects his battlefields not at random, but at those very points where we are able to grasp the meaning and hope of liberation. (Epiphany Gospels.)
- B. He condemns our condemners (v. 3). Overrules our hated rulers.
1. Disputes Satan's right to control the human will (v. 2).
 2. Is sent "for sin" (v. 3 b). In His humiliation takes that which is corrupt in our nature to Himself. Bears the thrust of our condemnation. The Cross His chosen weapon of offense. The grace of God His fortress to preserve us. "No condemnation to those in Christ Jesus" (ch. 8:1).
- C. He leads us captive to the Holy Spirit (v. 9). A basic change in our human status. A new Master, a new personality. "Captivity led captive" (Eph. 4:8). A spiritual man created.

III. Impelled by the Spirit, we pursue the works of righteousness and life.

- A. Our will is subject to the Holy Spirit, who brings it into conformity with the Law of God (vv. 4, 9).
 - 1. We serve not as prisoners, but as free men: friends of Christ (John 15:15), children of God (Rom. 8:15); goals of our Friend, aims of our family. Refugee's new pursuits.
 - 2. Body, mind (both conscious and unconscious), and social relationships now realigned to purposes of God. Christian disciplines. "Righteousness of the Law fulfilled in us" (v. 4).
- B. Our obedience is seen as we move with Christ into His battle against evil.
 - 1. The grace of God our weapon of offense.
 - 2. Disease, privation, ignorance, social perversion our chosen fields of battle. Sanctification always operative within the social context. The Church, the body of those motivated by the Spirit of Christ. "Life and peace" (v. 6) — our individual and collective efforts effective within God's plan of salvation.
 - 3. Salvation for the world our goal. World crisis viewed within our Epiphany mission offensive.
- C. Our mortal bodies strive in the Spirit beyond death to eternal life and service (vv. 10, 11). Power that tore Christ from grip of death quickens us out of corruption into life.

The man of the flesh — the man of the Spirit. Too much we are the one, too little the other. Yet I tell you, God claims you through Christ for His own, His spiritual man. Let this gospel be laughter to your soul and joy to your bones, this new week, this new life unending.

Farmington, Mich.

A. KARL BOEHMKE