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TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY
AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 5:1-9

One of our most vital concerns is the state of our health. We put an enormous amount of energy and resources into this concern. Christians have too often forgotten this vital concern and turned this whole area of life over to the healing professions. They have forgotten that "sickness and health" are closely related issues of life. Our Lord Jesus did not make this mistake. The Holy Bible does not ignore this concern. Today's text shows us that Jesus, the divine Redeemer, has power to heal sickness as well as to forgive sin. The topic for today is

Sickness and Sin

I. *Sickness is clearly related to sin*

A. Sickness is clearly related to sin. There is one all-pervading force of evil in the world. It includes sickness as well as what we usually think of when we speak of "sin." Sicknesses are among the "wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:10 — today's Epistle). Cp. the Book of Job. In John 5:14 Jesus' first words to the healed man after this miracle were "Sin no more." Cp. Mark 2:5, Jesus' first words to the paralytic lowered through the roof. Modern psychiatrists have been forced to recognize the relationship between sickness and sin. The tragedy of suicide usually clearly illustrates it.

B. Sickness is the result of sin. The Bible's first mention of pain comes in God's curse upon man after the original fall into sin (Gen. 3:16). Cp. Old Testament incidents in which God directly punished sin with sickness; St. Paul's strange association of illness with the rejection of the incarnation and the real presence (1 Cor. 11:29,

30). In the General Confession we admit that we deserve "temporal" as well as "eternal" punishment for our sin (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, p. 16). Nevertheless, be careful about associating specific illnesses with specific sins (John 9:1-3). The amount and kind of evil in a person's life, including sickness, is usually a mystery. We can't say that the man of the text was sick for 38 years because he had been an especially terrible sinner in his youth.

C. Sin is the worst sickness. We can, in a real sense, call sin the most total sickness. Hymn 149:2 speaks of sin as an "infection" and refers to the "leprosy of sin." The Augsburg Confession, Art. II, calls original sin a "disease." Define sin. It is a total disruption of God's good creation, not merely a series of separate "naughty deeds." It involves body, mind, and soul. The sickness of a person born an idiot does not consist merely in surface symptoms, such as the inability to form connected speech or to avoid the common dangers of life. It reaches far below to a tragically undeveloped brain. Sin is the most basic sickness. In Is. 1:5, 6, the prophet defines sin in terms of bodily sickness.

D. Sickness and sin both are the concern of the divine Redeemer. Cp. Jesus' many miracles of healing, also His frequent association of sickness and sin. List a few of these for the worshippers. Today's text is a typical example. Jesus' life clearly shows the relationship between sickness and sin.

II. *Jesus, the divine Redeemer, has power to heal sickness as well as to forgive sin*

A. Jesus died on the cross to solve the evil of sickness for us as well as other manifestations of sin. Jesus grappled with and

made atonement for the total sickness of sin on the cross. Perhaps this explains in part the mystery of God's choice of an incarnation and the pain of a physical crucifixion for His only-begotten Son. The key passage is Is. 53:5: "Upon Him was the chastisement that made us *whole*, and with His stripes we are *healed*." (RSV)

B. Jesus can heal sickness. We believe v. 9 of the text. Christ still performs miracles of healing though He often uses "natural" channels for His miraculous power, such as doctors, medicines, surgery, etc. However, He can still and sometimes does operate above and beyond these normal channels. Cp. the pastor's sickroom experiences with prayer. That people like Oral Roberts have distorted and exploited prayer for divine healing is no reason why we should neglect this grace. (James 5:13-15)

C. Jesus can forgive sin. The positive connection between healing and forgiveness is just as close as the negative connection between sickness and sin (James 5:15). The church must neglect neither prayer for healing nor the absolution. We must know that Christ operates with His power in both instances.

D. Jesus can make the whole person whole. The church should follow Jesus in her concern for the whole person. The physical expression of Christ's total sacrifice in the crucifixion given us in the blessed Sacrament ties us into this truth. We receive the body and blood of a Savior who gave His body and blood out of a concern for our whole person. (Rev. 22:2; Ps. 103:1-3)

E. Only the baptized, forgiven, and believing child of God is really a healthy person. This thesis is derived from today's text, and this entire subject as treated in the Holy Bible. Real health must include a healthy faith. This total health is a constant goal and ideal for the Christian struggling in an imperfect world. Christ in His risen and glorified body after Easter encourages us

to know that perfect health will be ours by that Christ, who was the "First Fruit" of our redemption.

Delmar, N. Y. HAROLD W. SCHEIBERT

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 8:27-39

(This is a long text, but a neat one; actually vv. 26 and 40 also belong to it. In this wealth of detail it is important to keep the audience on a main track. The Gospel for the day might suggest the accent on the greatness of the thanksgiving of the person who has been rescued. Taking the cue from the "fellowship of the Gospel" of the Epistle, this outline stresses the rescued sharing in the act of rescue. Vv. 37-40 may be read from the pulpit.)

This colorful story describes

The Chain Reaction of Rescue

The Christian church is the company of rescued people; the word for "church" etymologically meant an assembly called out of the surrounding mass. The rescuer is Jesus, "for He shall save His people from their sins." His rescue operates through a chain reaction; let us learn today to take our place in it.

I. *Christ rescues*

A. The text dramatizes the dreadful estate of the lost: forsaken, having devils, without clothes, dwelling among the tombs. So were we all once. So we find ourselves willing to be again, too often (1 John 2:15-17; Gal. 5:17).

B. Jesus rescues. The devils recognized Him before the people did (v. 28). Jesus rescues from their bondage, their affinity for human beings (v. 31). By Jesus God rescues His people from the kingdom of the devil and puts them into the kingdom of His Son. (Col. 1:13)

C. Christ rescued in the days of His flesh, text; climaxing His work on the cross, Himself bruised and dead, that He might give

life; manacled in death that we too might die to sin and rise with Him. (Rom. 6: 3 ff.)

II. *Christ rescues for witness*

A. Christ's rescue works a change, and this change means that the changed man witnesses. Over and over again a thing happens which people can see (vv. 34, 36, 38). The witness is not merely that a change occurred but also that God did it. (V. 39; Luke 24: 44-48)

B. This witness results in contrasting after-effects. Some reject with fear, others rejoice, and still others rejoicing tell the story on (text; 2 Cor. 2:14-17). For God Himself is speaking to the world through it. (John 16:7-13)

C. We tend to slight our witness because the initial rescue pales. Hence to keep the witness fresh we have to keep on remembering Him who rescued and the rescue which He made good in us. The rescued person wanted to go along (v. 38). We seek to help one another remember; "this do in remembrance of Me."

III. *Christ rescues for the fellowship of witness*

A. Jesus did not leave the rescued man to withdraw into an elite of the rescued, but He sent him back into his own house and city. (V. 39)

B. Again: what we tell in our own house and city is never merely: "I no longer live in a tomb; I now wear clothing; I now have no devil." But we say, "Look what God has done to me!" This means refreshing again and again God's act of grace within us through which He does His great work; "comfort one another with these things."

C. Where our telling is brisk and we are vivid signals of the great deed of God in rescuing us, the neighborhood and countryside gets stirred up. "He published throughout the whole city" (v. 39). When Jesus got to the other side of the lake again, the

word that had rocked the Gadarenes (v. 37) had now turned the people of Capernaum into a welcoming community (v. 40). In God's scheme the Gospel is the lifeline of rescue, and the Gospel is to fall on open ears, people who are waiting. But they are to be conditioned to this waiting and listening—by us who show that we have been rescued.

Have you been rescued? Already in this service you have said a number of times that you have been. Are you ready to say it when you get out of that door? The rescued mariner may look spent, beaten, wearied, but he is thankful to the rescuer and anxious that his sodden companion find the lifeline too.

RICHARD R. CAEMMERER

St. Louis, Mo.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

JOHN 7:1-13

"I would die for you" is the greatest expression of love. Our Lord Himself said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Confirmation pledge: "suffer all, even death, rather than. . ." What about the challenge to die? Are we prepared for it? Is it always the best? Does the Christian life embrace other things, not so dramatic, but just as necessary?

A Time to Die—and a Time to Live

I. *Accept the responsibility to die for God*

A. The Savior was ready to die for man when the time came.

1. He drew the hatred of the world for preaching and living righteously (v. 7). Dying, in the Christian sense, is always associated with the world's hatred . . . undeserved hatred (John 15:18 ff.; 1 Peter 2:20 ff.). World cannot accept righteousness. Hatred despises, rejects, persecutes, kills, e. g., a high school or college student

who attempts to be righteous; hatred by "world," sometimes even by "Christian" society.

2. He gladly laid down His life at the time as a redemptive act. This was an act of the Lord's will. "He set His face to go up to Jerusalem. . . . No man takes My life from Me, I lay it down." To Pilate: "No power at all unless given you from above." His determination at Gethsemane, at Calvary. All of this "when the fullness of the time was come."

B. God may call on His people to suffer martyrdom.

1. It may not be cowardice to try to avoid martyrdom (v. 13). Were these people cowards? Many of them were not committed to Christ. Only a committed person can suffer martyrdom sincerely. Was anything to be gained by martyrdom just then? If so, what? Fear is not an admirable quality at any time, but needless and heedless death is no virtue either.

2. Testimony of lips and life may demand martyrdom. This was true in the life of most of the apostles; early Christians. Modern martyrs during World War II and presently. Prospect for martyrdom of American Christians is dim presently. We may not be called on for this kind of testimony. Are we ready? Story of early church father. A student asked him if he had faith enough to die for Christ. Next day, after night of prayer and self-examination, the answer came: "No; but God isn't asking me to die for Him today. If tomorrow He does, tomorrow He will supply the faith and strength so that I can."

II. *Accept the responsibility to live for God*

A. Our Lord accepted the responsibility to live for God.

1. He placed value on the work He was doing and worked tirelessly to perform it (v. 1). "I must work the works of Him who sent Me." He traveled, taught, worked, tirelessly and zealously.

2. He placed value on His life and did not endanger it needlessly (vv. 1, 4, 10). On a number of occasions our Lord preserved His life and escaped from His persecutors. Even for a good purpose (to prove His Messiahship) He counted the cost. This was not cowardice. He was living for God and for us. His time was not come for death. For this reason He went secretly to Jerusalem.

B. God has placed a responsibility on us to live for Him.

1. Seize every opportunity to learn of God (vv. 3-5). Instead of sending Him away, His brethren should have listened and learned. Part of living for God is learning of God: means of grace, Bible classes, teaching others.

2. Seize every opportunity to testify of Christ (vv. 6, 7, 12). Our time is always here for all these things, especially to follow Christ. "Now is the accepted time" also to testify of Him. Those who were persuaded of Christ testified of Him. The Lord directs His family to do this.

3. Seize every opportunity to worship God (v. 8). Jesus encouraged their worship on this occasion. They were to go even though He said He would not accompany them.

Conclusion: God supplies power by the indwelling Christ to live and die for Him. We are not always called upon to die for Him, but we are to live for Him. This time is always here. Sometimes not as dramatic, but always necessary to live for God. This is our mission today.

Wheat Ridge, Colo. EDWARD MAY

THANKSGIVING DAY

MATT. 6:1-4

It may seem strange on the Day of Thanksgiving to have a sermon text on almsgiving. It seems almost like a preacher's trick to get in yet another money sermon by dragging in this text by the hair on a day when Thanksgiving is observed in an effulgence of food,

football, and family get-togethers. Even the Sermon on the Mount should not cover every occasion. People really expect a predictable sermon on why we ought to be thankful because we never had it so good, plus a warning to be properly thankful lest the Communists come and take it away. The only tangible token of giving at Thanksgiving is the reminder of the undernourished, the displaced, and the underprivileged by Lutheran World Relief, which garners much of its budget of mercy on this day. Some congregations also use this day to get contributions for a "poor fund," or if they are properly organized according to synodical specifications, for their more dignified and euphemistic "welfare committee." But this text talks point-blank about giving, without even the note of thanks. It assumes that the hearers are already givers, that they do not need additional appeals or motivation, and that their greatest danger is smugness and showiness in their giving. At least, that seemed to be the kind of audience to which Jesus first addressed these words. What kind hears them today, when the preacher (and financial officers) find the problem to be getting more money rather than toning down the generous givers?

The Giving of Thanks

I. "*Beware of practicing your piety before men*" (v. 1)

A. The important qualifying phrase "in order to be seen by them." There is nothing wrong in practicing our piety before men. This can be a Christian witness. But there is something wrong in piety for effect. There is always a suspicion of hypocrisy when one makes too much of his religion. The man who makes much of how humble he is is probably proud. The one who boasts of his great faith is probably talking loud to cover up a basic inadequacy of faith. The mother who reminds her children how much she sacrificed for them probably fears losing

her domination over them. And the over-pious man may actually be an Elmer Gantry! "The Piety of the Potomac" was the phrase used by the political opposition in a skeptical reaction to the cabinet's prayer meetings before sessions. Alexander Pope said:
He who builds a church to God and not to fame
Will never mark the marble with his name.

B. Our national Thanksgiving Day is subject to the devil's methodology of corrupting a good idea and a laudable tradition into a day of national hypocrisy. On this day all those who do not thank God are hypocrites, and for a change all the hypocrites are not in church. But we who are here are also in danger of hypocrisy, of practicing our piety before men to be seen by them, and of eating our Thanksgiving dinner with a certain sense of smugness that by simply going to church we are doing all that the Lord and the President require of us. In this light our Lord's own text should penetrate and shatter a mere *pro forma* piety on this day.

II. *The giving of thanks is the giving of alms*

A. We celebrate this day because God, our Creator and Preserver, has given the necessities of life to us. It is a day for the cultivation of appreciation. It is a day to say thanks to God and to count our blessings instead of telling Him once again what we still want.

B. It is a day when in Christian churches we again focus on the cross of Christ as God's supreme act of self-giving for the reconciliation and atonement of the world.

C. From both of these acts, creation and redemption, both the old and the New Testament conclude that we should give because God gives. This is a consistent Biblical principle. Our giving is a response to God's giving. It is not a giving to elicit a response, a pat on the back, or a merit. It is simply a response on the part of those who have fallen into God's rhythm of love, giving, and

sacrifice. This response is motivated by God's great love to us and is prompted by the Holy Spirit. It is a sign of sanctification, of God's work in us in response to God's work for us.

D. Lest this become merely theoretical, philosophical, and psychological, we talk about alms.

E. Alms are gifts for the poor. Alms are therefore different from regular church contributions. Alms may be "conscience money." We often give alms to ease our conscience for living so well when so many have so little to live on. "The poor we have always with us," even in the era of the welfare state. The plight of the West Virginia coal miner, the Puerto Rican migrant worker, the Negro in the black ghettos of our cities, and the unbelievable poverty in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and parts of South America stings our consciences if we ever turn from the TV westerns to documentaries to find out what is really happening in the world. The wonder is that we are stirred from our complacency to give alms at all. The sure tip-off on our attitudes comes in any local welfare case, when we tend to want to investigate to see if people are "deserving" of our bag of groceries or pair of shoes for the kids. If the father is an unemployable and shiftless alcoholic, watch the alms get shut off in the frozen faucet of generosity. And watch how

we crow when we do some measly good thing which will barely keep a needy family with complex problems in food or fuel for a week. But this kind of giving is what our Lord means by alms. Thanksgiving means giving alms to the unworthy and not letting your right hand know what the left hand is doing, as a sign that we know what it means to live under God's bounty and grace. For God gives sunshine and rain to the evil and the good without discrimination, and Christ died for all, believer and unbeliever alike. Who dares to love as God loves, to give as God gives, and to save as God saves? Only those who have caught the spirit of Christ. And those only know how really to celebrate Thanksgiving.

F. So you've come to church to give thanks today. You haven't given thanks yet. Make it a point now to go out and give alms — to a needy family, to the community chest (Luther inaugurated the idea), to Lutheran World Relief, to a welfare agency — without fanfare or strings attached. Do it with a spirit of thankfulness for what God has done for you. Don't let your right hand know what your left hand is doing, don't look for praise, and don't tell anybody about it. You'll have the finest Thanksgiving ever.

Chicago, Ill.

WAYNE SAFFEN

*Outline on the Old Testament Eisenach Series**

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

JER. 31:31-34

Happy New Year! Not premature before Jan. 1. Mean it sincerely. For this is the first day of the church's New Year! And the Scripture before us reminds us there's

A New Covenant for the New Year

I. *It's an astonishing agreement*

See that in the word "Behold!" A big word in this chapter. Cf. vv. 27, 28, 38.

Astonishing promises! Something big is on the way. Recall the words of Isaiah to a trembling, terrified Ahaz (Is. 7:14) because of his advancing enemies, Syria and Israel. The birth of that Baby in Bethlehem should mean death for all your fears — fear of God's wrath for your sins, fear of this life's disasters and the next life's burning torment, fear of death and devil and hell. Yes, the word "Behold!"

* A complete list of the texts of this series was given in the July issue, p. 437.

is a big Bible word. Tells us something astonishing is coming. And that's why our text begins with "Behold!" For this is a fantastic agreement.

II. *This is an agreement with a people*
(v. 31)

It's with the "*house* of Israel and the *house* of Judah." God deals with the individual as a part of the body of believers. That is shown by two most prominent New Testament pictures of the church—building and body. One gets nourishment and stays alive as he is in vital fellowship with the church.

III. *This is a new agreement*

The old and the new! Best symbolized by two mountains.

A. The old is Sinai. Down God came on this mountain in fearful thunder and fire to demand from His people so recently released from Egypt perfect and perpetual obedience as a response to His saving grace. On this mountain God gave two stone tablets inscribed with His commands. "Obey these laws," thundered God, "and I will be with you and for you. Is it an agreement?" "Yes, yes," shouted all the people.

B. But they didn't keep the agreement. Even while Moses was getting God's Law, people were busy breaking it. So it was throughout the entire 40 years of wilderness journeying and later. The people failed to live according to the promises and demands of the old covenant.

C. The new covenant was made to fulfill, validate, and replace the old covenant. Like the first, it was concluded on a mountain, not a rugged, towering peak like Sinai but a little knoll situated outside Jerusalem and called Golgotha. On this mountain

1. God didn't come down: He went up—in the person of Christ, His Son—onto the ugly cross.

2. God did more than give stone tablets,

He gave His only Son, His very life for the pardon of our lawlessness.

3. The earth shook. Sinai trembled at the giving of the old covenant. Earth trembling at the giving of Christ's life, and graves of many dead saints split open. Of course! Christ is "the death of death, our foe!" Rising saints—Good Friday preview of our Lord's own Easter resurrection.

4. Now do you see the *newness* of God's new agreement? On Sinai God gave promises and demanded our obedience. On Golgotha, He actually gave His very life for the pardon of our disobedience. That is why new agreement works. Depends not on our cloudlike and dewlike holiness, here and then gone, but solely on God's forgiving love; and that is forever.

IV. *This is an agreement with people*
on the move

A. It was thus with Israel. On the move from Egypt to Palestine.

B. It is thus with us, people on the move. We are strangers, pilgrims, foreigners. Can always tell a foreigner

1. By his different speech. Is yours?

2. By his different dress. Clothes of love and holiness. Cf. today's Epistle. Off with night clothes of sin!

V. *In this new agreement, the keeping of*
the Law flows from a new heart (v. 33)

A. Old Law written on lifeless stone. The letter of the Law can only produce stone-hearted people.

B. New Law written on hearts of flesh. Cf. Ezek. 11:19, 20. Your transplanting took place in Baptism. God took out your stony heart and gave you a heart of flesh—a heart warm with love and beating with the eternal life of God and godliness.

C. Trouble is that a large part of the old heart of stone remains with its coldness and cruelty. Because of this, great heart of Christ

stopped beating on the cross and then revived again on Easter. By this death and resurrection God forgives the sins that still stem from your old stony heart of evil. May your faith in that pardon give you the strength to put the squeeze just a bit tighter on your old evil heart.

VI. *In this agreement, לא-עמי* "Not My people," once again became עמי-אפה "My people you" (v. 33; Hos. 2:25)

A. לא-עמי. Cf. Hos. 1:8.

B. עמי. Nation cast off and disowned by God has once again become עמי "My people."

C. And what does Peter write to us (1 Peter 2:10)? If God claims you as His own, what else can? Can death, devil, hell, sin, suffering?

VII. *In this agreement you shall know God* (v. 34)

This knowledge is experience. ". . . they shall know Me, for I will forgive . . . and will never remember their sin any more." Cf. Jer. 9:23, 24. Your God is an idol un-

less He's the God with deliberate amnesia, the God who will not recall your sins.

VIII. *This new agreement is sealed in blood*

A. It was thus with the old agreement. Blood of an animal over the book of the Law and over the bound people (Ex. 23: 6-8).

B. So it is in the second agreement. Cf. 1 Cor. 11:25: "blood of the new covenant." In Sacrament you remember Jesus whom God forsook on the cross that He might never remember your sins.

IX. *This new agreement is forever*

Cf. vv. 35, 36. If you can stop the heavenly bodies from shining or alter their position in the sky, then God will break this new agreement.

With such a covenant, you can stride forward into the new year with a fresh spring to your walk. For you have a new covenant for the new year.

HERBERT E. HOHENSTEIN

Richmond Heights, Mo.