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Homiletics: Outlines on the Standard Gospel Series

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HOMILETICS

Outlines on the Standard Gospel Series

(Except for the extended study of the text for the Third Sunday after Trinity, which is by the Rev. Robert H. Smith, Chappaqua, N. Y., the outlines which follow were abstracted and translated from C. F. W. Walther's *Evangelien-Postille* by Prof. Alex W. Guebert, St. Louis, Mo. The notes on the "Hymn of the Week" are by Arno Klausmeier, St. Louis, Mo.)

THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 14:16-24

Nothing but love moved God to create all things, visible and invisible. The chief beneficiary of this love is man, whom God created in His own image and who was to enjoy God forever. Though sin robbed man of the image of God and closed the door of heaven, God's Son opened heaven's door for redeemed sinners (cf. John 14:6; 10:9; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor. 15:22-24a, 28). There is but one kingdom of God in this world and in the next. He who wants to enter the heavenly kingdom dare not remain a mere stranger in Christ's kingdom here. All of us have frequently heard the invitation to come and live in that kingdom, but have we always taken that invitation seriously? In the Gospel for today Christ compares the call into His kingdom of grace with an invitation to a banquet. In order that each one of us may not let anything stand in our way to enter this kingdom, let us consider this question:

*Why Should We Let Neither the World
Nor Sin Keep Us from Entering
Christ's Kingdom?*

- I. Why should we not let the world keep us out?
- II. Why should we not let sin keep us out?

I

A. When Christ came to His own people and invited them to receive the offer of reconciliation, grace, righteousness, life, salvation, and the open heaven, they rejected the invitation (vv. 15-20). The world interested them more than Christ.

B. This is still the case today. Many reject Christ's invitation now because they are engrossed in the interests of the world. They cannot tear themselves away from business, pleasure, or fame. They fail to see any gain in following Christ. For them life in Christ's kingdom would be a miserable existence.

C. It is foolish to let the things of this world keep one out of Christ's kingdom. The world ultimately can offer nothing but worry, fear, and death. Its fondest hopes end in futility.

D. Christ's kingdom is not what many people suppose it is. It does not embitter one's life, nor does it burden anyone with arduous labor. To him who forsakes the world it brings righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It introduces God as a friendly Father, who forgives sin, eliminates worries, richly and daily cares for and restores body and soul. He who forsakes the world glories in the words of Ps. 84:1, 2, 11 and joyfully confesses the words of St. Paul in Phil. 3:7, 8a.

E. If the children of the world do not want to accept Christ's invitation, let them give heed to His warning in vv. 21a, 24. Whoever despises Christ's gracious table here will find no table spread for him in heaven. The friendly Christ, who is inviting men to His banquet now, will on Judgment Day be the angry Judge of all who refuse His invitation now, because they prefer worldly

goods and worldly friends. For them there will be no mercy. Instead of eating the Bread of life they shall eat the bread of sorrow. Instead of drinking the cup of grace they shall drink the cup of wrath. Instead of enjoying heaven they shall wail in hell.

II

A. As long as a man does not understand the meaning of the words "I am a sinner," he will suppose that he does not need Christ's kingdom of grace, or that his own righteousness is good enough before God, or that the kingdom of Christ is not worth forsaking the world. Even when by the grace of God and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit a man sees what God can and must demand, he does not have the courage to believe that Christ is his Redeemer from sin. He supposes that Christ cannot receive such a great sinner and that He expects him to improve and cleanse himself before he can be accepted.

B. Christ sets matters straight in vv. 21-23 of the text. When the Jews rejected His invitation, He offered His Gospel to the poor and the heathen. A man may be spiritually blind, unclean, destitute of good works, far removed from God, despised of men, yet he need not be lost. The door to the kingdom of grace is open to him. This is the assurance Christ offers.

C. There is no reason why anyone should let the world or sin keep him out of Christ's kingdom. Rejoice that by the grace of God you recognize yourselves to be sinners and believe that Christ has accepted you. He is calling you (v. 17b) and is urging His servants to "compel you to come in." Do not listen to your heart, nor to the Law, nor to anything else that would deter you. Hear only the invitation of Christ. When He speaks, fears and doubts vanish. His call, "Come, for all things are ready," is your guarantee that you will receive grace.

The Hymn of the Week: "Awake, Thou Spirit, Who Didst Fire," *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 494.

The Gospel for the day, the Great Supper, suggests a hymn which "is indeed the first mission hymn of the German-speaking evangelical church" (Otto Michaelis). Its author, Karl Heinrich von Bogatsky, a descendant of Hungarian nobility, was born Sept. 7, 1690, in Hansdorf, Lower Silesia. His father intended that he pursue a military career, and Karl already at 14 became a page in the court of Sachsen-Weissenfels. When his final attempt to have Karl enter the army failed (doubtless because of the youth's poor constitution and chronic ill health), his father disowned him. He had earlier found a patron in Count Henry XXIV of Reuss-Köstritz, who subsidized his studies in law at the University of Jena. After attending the *Erbauungsstunden* of August Hermann Francke in Halle, Karl decided "to offer himself totally to the Lord." He began theological studies in addition to the legal at the Halle University. Although he was never healthy enough to serve a parish, his ministrations to the nobility and his writings were highly valued. His close connection with the Pietistic missionary endeavors of the Halle missionary society is apparent in this hymn. Von Bogatsky died June 15, 1774, in Halle, where he had served the Franckean orphanage.

Of the 14 original stanzas, published in 1750 in *Die Übung der Gottseligkeit in allerley Geistlichen Liedern*, stanzas 1, 3, 5, and 7 make up the cento in our hymnal. The translation is an altered form of Catherine Winkworth's 1855 *Lyra Germanica* Englishing.

The tune *All' Ehr' und Lob*, although not the melody intended for the text by Bogatsky, fits the words well. By an anonymous composer, it first appeared in the 1541 Strassburg *Kirchengesangbuch*.

THE THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 15:1-10

By Robert H. Smith

The dean of Harvard Divinity School in his commencement address to the graduates of Princeton Theological Seminary a year ago accused the churches and all institutionalized religion of being stuffy, crusty, and unbending. Almost daily some prominent person takes the churches to task for being out of step and out of tune in this modern jet and rocket age. The church is described as the most conservative of all social institutions, the least likely to adapt to new conditions. Churchgoing folks are the most respectable, the most easily shocked, and the least progressive and imaginative people in the world. At least this is the image currently splattered over page and stage and screen. Furthermore, sociological studies have been made to show that particular denominations cater or appeal to particular strata of our society, that congregations and denominations are largely homogenized and do not bring into one body all segments of society.

Such accusations are exaggerations. But the fact that they are made so often and with such insistence is probably a signal that there is a tendency today toward taming and domesticating Christ and God. Somewhere Dorothy Sayers comments that we moderns have clipped the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified Him meek and mild, and recommended Him as a fit companion for pale pastors and pious old ladies.

The Christian Gospel is the most disturbing and unhinging message in the world. The lessons for the third Sunday after Trinity paint Jesus as totally unconventional. His behavior was atrocious — always running around with the wrong crowd, being seen in the wrong places. And His teaching was downright shocking, if not blasphemous, to His contemporaries.

I

Vv. 1, 2. It was the habit of sinners and outcasts to gather about (ἦσαν ἐγγιζόντες) Jesus because He had words they longed to hear (cf. Luke 5:29-32). It was the habit also of Pharisees and scribes to gather about Jesus, but they came because they suspected His piety and His teaching. The sinners rejoice, and the Pharisees murmur incessantly among themselves, διεγόγγυζον. (Cf. Luke 19:7)

To upright and religious people who were clamoring to be called His followers, to the eager multitudes pressing close upon this new religious Teacher in the hope of catching some pearl of wisdom or of seeing Him do tricks, Jesus spoke blunt, rude words and told them to count the cost. (Luke 14:25-35)

But then, more scandalous still, Jesus turned to downtrodden rabble and rubble — men held in contempt by the pious — folks who even despised themselves, conscious of their guilt and sin. The masses of the people were ignorant and negligent in the performance of Jewish religious obligations. Since uncleanness was communicable, the punctilious sought scrupulously to avoid even indirect and involuntary contact with "the people of the land."

This unwholesome attitude resulted in complacency and self-righteousness on the part of scribes and Pharisees. As observants of prescriptions they believed they were especially dear to God. And it issued in a censoriousness toward the nonobservant, who were often regarded as deserving the disapprobation of God. (See G. F. Moore, *Judaism* [Cambridge, Mass., 1927], II, 156 to 161)

But instead of avoiding contact with unclean persons Jesus consciously breaks with accepted precept and practice and welcomes (προσδέχεται) such people. He had table fellowship (συνεσθίει, cf. Luke 5:29) with them and spoke words of sharp rebuke to

the religious, but words of profound hope and joy to the lost.

To the pious of the first century it seemed that birds of a feather flock together and that you can tell a man by the company he keeps. And Jesus was keeping the worst possible kind of company.

V.3. In this and the following parable Jesus answers the Pharisaic murmuring. He talks about the loss of property and the pain it occasions, even when the loss is not very great. People ordinarily put themselves out to recover what they lose.

V.4. The sheep and the shepherd (cf. Matt. 18:12-14; John 10:11 ff.). To the shepherd who knows his sheep by name, each and every single one is precious, and he is solicitous for them individually and without exception.

At this point a quotation from the Jewish scholar, Claude Montefiore, has become a convention with commentators on Luke's Gospel. Montefiore wrote: "The virtues of repentance are gloriously praised in the Rabbinical literature, but this direct search for, and appeal to, the sinner are new and moving notes of high import and significance. The good shepherd, who searches for the lost sheep . . . is a new figure." (*The Synoptic Gospels*, II, 520, 521)

Vv. 5, 6. When the lost is found, after considerable pains, joy replaces former anguish. And joy is enlarged by being shared. (Cf. Luke 1:58)

V.7. This is a parable about the Last Judgment. Jesus says not that there *is* joy but that there *will be* (ἔσται, but see γίνεται in v.10) joy. What happens on earth in relation to the invitation of Jesus will be ratified in heaven at the Great Assize.

Vv. 8-10. The same teaching is repeated in another brief parable. The shepherd is replaced by a woman, the wandering sheep by the inanimate coin. But to press the distinctions is unwarranted. Both parables

have the same pattern: losing, seeking, finding, rejoicing with the neighbors. Both parables are a stinging rebuke to the sullen Pharisees for refusing to rejoice with Jesus. And in both stories Jesus is declaring that these lost ones — sinners and tax collectors — are His own property.

II

Jesus in this pericope styles Himself a shepherd. In New Testament times earthly shepherds were objects of undisguised contempt. The rabbis were genuinely puzzled that God should ever have been called a shepherd. A Midrash on Psalm 23 exclaims, "No job in the world is so despised as that of shepherd." When Jesus lived, shepherds as a class were hated as cordially as tax collectors. The rabbis, as religious teachers in all ages have done, drew up lists of ungodly professions to be avoided by the devout. Shepherding appears high on every one of those lists. The official religious teachers of Israel despised shepherds as notorious robbers, cheats, and liars.

In Jesus' day shepherds were second-class citizens, stripped of certain legal rights enjoyed by other law-abiding folks. No shepherd, for example, was eligible to serve as a witness in a court case.

Besides this literal sense there was a metaphorical use of shepherd current in the ancient Near East. In Egypt and Mesopotamia "shepherd" was a common designation for kings and gods, who gathered their people, ruled them well, and provided for them. And in Greece since the time of Homer the ruler was called "shepherd of the people" (ποιμήν λαῶν).

The Old Testament used the title of Shepherd for Yahweh, but very sparingly (only in Gen. 48:15; 49:24; Ps. 23:1; Ps. 80:1). The language of shepherding is used elsewhere, of course. It expressed very neatly the fact that God alone was Israel's Hope and Protection. (See Jeremias, ποιμήν, *The*

ologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament [Stuttgart, 1959], VI, 484 ff.)

In view of the widespread ancient usage it is surprising that the Old Testament never uses the title "Shepherd" of any of her kings. The only one besides God to whom the Old Testament grants the name of shepherd is the future Davidic king, the Messiah. He will be Israel's true and faithful Shepherd. The prophet Ezekiel says: "And I will set up over them one shepherd, My Servant David, and He shall feed them; He shall feed them and be their Shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My Servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken." (Ezek. 34:23 f.)

In this parable, therefore, Jesus is deliberately provocative. He does not simply offer a pastoral description of God's tender and limitless love for each straying individual. The story says more than this. For the really attentive in his audience Jesus is making the indirect assertion that the promised Davidide, the Messiah, has come. Jesus is saying, "I am fulfilling the promise made through Ezekiel six centuries ago."

But this is a parable not only of the Messiah but also of the Messianic people. If the Pharisees and other righteous men could only let God be God and bow the head before the grace of God in Jesus Christ, they would have welcomed Jesus and rejoiced that their King, and the King of tax collector and sinner, too, had finally arrived. They would have been glad that the sinners, the unrighteous, the lost, had been reclaimed and restored to the people of God. (Because the parable is also about fellowship its use in Matt. 18:12-14 is not so different from its use in Luke.)

God rejoices at the righteousness of good and pious men (Luke 15:7). But when they become enamored of their goodness, and fault God for calling others, when they believe that sinful men are beneath their notice and not worthy of fellowship or

concern, when they murmur instead of rejoicing at God's free mercy, they set themselves against that God whom they claim to serve as faithful sons. Instead of rejoicing in God's righteousness they rejoice in their own and turn their backs on the strange righteousness of God.

III

It is God's will that there be one flock and one Shepherd (John 10:16). God alone will judge and make distinctions among the sheep (Ezek. 34:17-22). But the Pharisee in our own heart keeps rearing his head, and the old Adam is constantly busy. The Christian easily—some say more easily than the non-Christian—falls into the habit of making distinctions and of erecting barriers between himself and lesser beings. In the words of C. S. Lewis' *Screwtape*, the Christian goes to church, "sees the local grocer with rather an oily expression on his face bustling up to offer him a shiny little book containing a liturgy which neither of them understands. . . . When he gets to his pew and looks around he sees just that selection of his neighbours whom he has hitherto avoided." He looks about and sees not the body of Christ but an assortment of double chins and odd clothes, women who sing off pitch and men whose shoes squeak. (C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*, ch. 2)

When Jesus denounced the segregation practiced by the Pharisees, He denounced segregation of every brand—social, esthetic, ethnic, intellectual, and racial. That the church learns the lesson only slowly and with pain is seen in the momentous struggle over Jew and Gentile in the primitive church, the bitterness between white and black in the contemporary church, the social stratification in nearly every church.

Men like to pick and choose whom they will call brother. But the deed of Jesus, who came to seek and save all the lost, makes every man who believes in Jesus

a brother. To respect a brother and separate from fellowship with him is to fly in the face of the heavenly verdict.

"Jesus Sinners Doth Receive"

- I. In their blindness and snobbish self-righteousness men discriminate and choose their friends and call it God's will.
- II. Jesus declares that He, who spent Himself in loving search for the unloved and the unlovable, is the Messiah and long-expected Shepherd.
- III. The good man who boggles at God's mercy to the sinner is toying with his own life.
- IV. The goal of Jesus' work is a varied fellowship of believers, who have this in common, that they joyously accept His invitation and live by His grace.

The Hymn of the Week: "In Thee Alone, O Christ, My Lord," *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 319.

Amid the trials and temptations mentioned in the Epistle for the day the Christian turns to the God who, according to the Holy Gospel, seeks each lost individual and is the only "Protector of all that trust in [Him]." Both the Gospel's stress on repentance and the Epistle's warning are echoed in Johannes Schneesing's fine hymn. Born in Frankfurt-am-Main, Schneesing began preaching Reformation doctrines while assistant to Johann Langenhayn, pastor of St. Margaret's in Gotha. He later moved to Freimar, where in the records of the 1534 Visitation he is described as a "learned, diligent, pious, and godly man." He died there in 1567. This hymn, the only one that can be ascribed to him with certainty (although Johann Kulp dispute's Schneesing's authorship), appeared in broadsheet in 1540 or 1541, and it was included in the 1542 Magdeburg *Gesangbuch*. There is some evidence that Schneesing wrote it for insertion

into the 1542 Magdeburg *Kirchenordnung*, and in 1545 it was included by Luther in the *Babstsche Gesangbuch*. The original included a doxological stanza as well. Our translation is from Arthur T. Russell's 1851 *Psalms and Hymns*.

The melody has been traced to a broadsheet which appeared in Wittenberg, probably in 1541. The *Babstsche Gesangbuch* of 1545 uses it as well. The composer is unknown, though it has been ascribed both to Schneesing and to Konrad Hubert, who is also sometimes credited with the text. Our hymnal unfortunately does not retain the original rhythmic version, substituting a Bach harmonization, probably adapted from the closing chorale of *Cantata 33* for the 13th Sunday after Trinity.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY
AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 6:36-42

Christ's warning against judging and condemning (v. 37a) is frequently hurled against men who attack false religious views and defend the truth of God's Word. Christ is not forbidding that kind of judging and condemning (cf. Mark 16:16; Is. 5:20; Ezek. 3:17, 18; Is. 56:10). Christ wants laymen as well as preachers to reject and condemn false teaching and ungodly living (cf. Matt. 7:15; Eph. 5:11). Christ, the prophets, the apostles, and the early Christians set a good example for us to follow (cf. Gal. 1:9; 2 John 10; Rev. 2:2a). These Bible passages make it clear that Christ is pointing His warning against a wrong kind of judging and condemning, the kind that slashes right and left without love, without mercy. That is why Christ begins our text with the words, "Be merciful," etc. These words indicate the kind of attitude we should have toward our neighbor. Let us therefore examine the text and find the answer to the question:

What Should Move the Christian to Exercise Mercy Against His Erring, Sinning Neighbor?

He should be moved by

- I. The mercy of God which he is enjoying
- II. The severe retribution which awaits him
- III. His own sins which still beset him

I

A. A criminal justly sentenced for his misdeeds and about to be executed but set free unexpectedly will not mercilessly turn against his liberator. Neither will a drowning man exhibit a hostile spirit against the person who rescued him from certain death. Every Christian knows he is what he is because God has been and is merciful to him. Seeing what God's mercy has done for him, he cannot but be merciful to his erring, sinning neighbor. (V. 36)

B. To be a Christian and to be merciful go hand in hand. A man may be weak in Christian knowledge, in overcoming the world, in taming his temper, in confidence, etc., and yet be a believer in Christ. But if he is unmerciful, the mercy of God has not yet gripped his heart. When God's mercy touches a man's heart, a covetous Zacchaeus gives half of his wealth to the poor, and a persecuting Saul becomes a minister of God's mercy and reconciliation.

C. A Christian knows that because of God's mercy toward him he cannot be merciless, unforgiving, and hardhearted toward a fellow sinner. He knows how ceaselessly he needs God's mercy. Therefore there is a tenderness in his heart that will not let him hurt an erring, sinning neighbor. Though he may slip at times, he cries out to God for more mercy and earnestly watches his evil heart.

D. If, then, you are a Christian, you will be merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful.

II

A. Vv. 37 and 38 give us another reason why we should be merciful toward our sin-

ning, erring neighbor. Christ does not want us to believe that we earn His mercy by being merciful to our neighbor. He wants us to see that if we show no mercy to others after we have received mercy from Him, we have no faith and no forgiveness of sins. For God cannot forgive our sins if a neighbor of ours can justly accuse us of mercilessness. He must treat us as we treat the neighbor.

B. Do you want forgiveness for your sins? Forgive the neighbor. Do you want to face Judgment Day fearlessly? Speak well of your neighbor, and put the best construction on everything he says and does. Do you want to escape condemnation? Do not condemn the neighbor. Do you want God to give you all things that are good for your body and soul? Show mercy to your neighbor in need, and help him by counseling him, by giving him money, by sharing your goods with him. Remember, God is anxious to forgive you all sins you have committed against Him. But if you should continue to be unmerciful toward your neighbor in spite of God's goodness to you, He will take all His grace away from you and become your enemy again. Do press vv. 37c, 38a, and 36 deeply into your mind!

III

A. In vv. 39-42 Christ is trying to make you see that your own sins are another reason why you should be merciful to your neighbor. Some of the harshest critics of the faults of others are themselves exceedingly great sinners. The godless world gloats inordinately over the sins of Christians. A heterodox man gleefully magnifies the sins of the orthodox. These critics fail to recognize the beam in their own eyes. Christians also are beset by many sins. Daily they must bear in mind Ps. 130:3; 143:2, and the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer. They are righteous before God only because they have faith in Christ. Without that faith, God would condemn them together with all other unbelievers.

B. If you are conscious of the fact that you are a sinner, let this be an incentive to you to be merciful to your neighbor. You may indeed see a number of sins in your neighbor. But examine yourself honestly. You will undoubtedly find a thousand other sins that put you to shame. Should not this fact move you to be merciful to your neighbor?

C. Remember John 13:35. Do we all have this mark of a true Christian? Oh, repent and pray God to turn your loveless heart into a heart filled with love and mercy toward the neighbor! May God grant this and save us all through Christ.

The Hymn of the Week: "Creator Spirit, by Whose Aid," *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 236.

The day's Epistle, with its reference to the "firstfruits of the Spirit," is doubtless the reason for appointing this to be sung on the Fourth Sunday after Trinity. The original hymn, *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, can be found in manuscripts dating back to the 11th century, but the authorship is uncertain. Quite possible authors include Gregory the Great and Rhabanus Maurus; less likely authors are Notker Balbulus and Charlemagne. *Come, Holy Ghost, Creator Blest* (LH 233), the hymn of the week for Pentecost, is another form of the same hymn. The original included six stanzas, with a variety of doxologies added as the seventh in various localities. Some early manuscripts add another stanza between the fifth and sixth, but this is a later addition. The translation by John Dryden, which appeared in *Miscellaneous Poems*, Part III (1693), is altered in our hymnal by omitting the original stanzas three, four, and five. After inclusion in John Wesley's *Psalms and Hymns* of 1741 it has gained wide circulation, but always in its abbreviated form.

For comments on the tune *Alp Ebr und Lob* see the notes for the Second Sunday after Trinity.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

LUKE 5:1-11

When the Holy Spirit makes a person a Christian, all the thoughts, desires, words, and actions of that person are centered in Christ. His faith at first may be weak, yet his whole attitude is new. No one can be a perfect Christian in this life. Certain sins make this impossible. Anyone who willfully commits sins and defends them, who contradicts God's Word in any point, who refuses to forgive his neighbor, who engages in shady business deals, cannot be a true Christian, though he may try to live as a saint. If Christianity is real, it reveals itself in a man in all the circumstances of his life, particularly in his daily work. The Gospel for today clearly points out to us that our daily work indicates whether we are true Christians or not. Let me therefore talk to you on

Our Daily Work a Test of Our Christianity

- I. It reveals who is a Christian, or how and why a Christian works
- II. It reveals who is a non-Christian, or how and why a non-Christian works

I

A. Our text shows us Peter the fisherman at work. He had labored industriously all night without any results. Yet he is not discouraged. In the morning he and his companions are busy washing and mending nets with no thought of wanting to make a living in some other way.

B. Industriousness alone is not the distinguishing mark between the Christian and the non-Christian. Busy as Peter was with his work, he immediately laid his nets down when Christ called him to preach. A little while later he forsook everything and followed Christ. A true Christian does not let his daily work enslave him. He sets Christ's call to follow Him above His daily work. He loses no opportunity to nourish his soul.

Busy as he may be in earning a living, he always finds time for meditation, prayer, and worship.

C. When Peter let his net down at the direction of Christ, he took no credit for the huge catch. He humbly admitted that he did not deserve this blessing of Christ (v. 8). Such humility is the mark of a true Christian. He knows that his own labor, industry, and wisdom accomplish very little. He puts all his trust in God and asks Him to bless his labor and industry. He permits no success in his earthly calling to wedge him away from Christ.

D. Peter's answer (v. 5) and Christ's words (v. 4) show why Peter labored as a fisherman. It was not greed, or ambition, or mere joy in working that drove Peter to fish. God's Word or command motivated him (v. 5b). Every true Christian works because God has ordained that he shall work (Gen. 3:19). Christians daily speak the words of Peter (v. 5b) whether their work is noble or apparently ignoble. Whatever their work is, they know it will please God. They work for the glory of God and the good of the neighbor.

II

A. Daily work is a test which also reveals the non-Christian. Many people suppose they are true Christians because they are so industrious at their work. They work long hours; they endure much abuse; they shortchange no one; they are charitable; they live clean lives. Therefore they believe they deserve a place in heaven.

B. But all these people are blind. They do not know what true Christianity is. God has indeed ordained that all men shall work and earn their daily bread (2 Thess. 3:10-12; Eph. 4:28). But a man is not a Christian merely because he is a conscientious, hard worker.

C. A man can be a hard worker and yet be a non-Christian. Many people live only

for their jobs. They become so engrossed in bread, butter, home, and family that God, prayer, worship play only a little or no role at all in their lives. Even if they should read their Bible now and then and attend divine service occasionally, earthly considerations far outweigh the spiritual. Such people are working their way into eternal ruin. If you should find yourself among these people, let the words of Christ in Mark 8:36,37 wake you up. Do not postpone repentance. "Seek the Lord while He may be found." (Is. 55:6)

D. It is also necessary for us to consider the reason why most people work. For most of them love of God and love toward the neighbor do not enter the picture. Some work because necessity drives them. Employers and employees give and take services, buy and sell, to satisfy self-interest. Others are driven by greed. They chase after money, real estate, big business. They have no time for the poor and destitute. A third group is dominated by ambition. All workers are prone to this sin, but it is particularly an occupational hazard of professionals. They worship at the altar of art and the results of their research. They have no time for God. A fourth group works because of an intense love for work. They declare they could not live without working. But before God such work is sin. It does not grow out of obedience toward God or love toward the neighbor.

E. Would to God that all would repent and believe in Christ who realize that they have been pushing their lives toward a wrong, destructive goal! Remember, Christ is calling you away from the world into His service! Leave everything as Peter did, and follow Christ! You will not regret it. Here Christ gives His followers everything they need. Finally He takes them to Himself in heaven. (Rev. 14:13)

The Hymn of the Week: "Come, Follow Me,

the Savior Spake," *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 421.

The Holy Gospel's call to follow Christ and the inevitable cost of discipleship, the suffering "for righteousness' sake" mentioned in the Epistle, and the Epistle's admonition to brotherly love are all echoed in the hymn. The author, Johann Scheffler (Angelus Silesius), was born in 1624 in Breslau, as the son of a Polish nobleman who had fled his native land to avoid persecution as a Lutheran. After graduation from St. Elisabeth's Gymnasium in Breslau, Scheffler studied medicine in Strassburg, Leyden, and Padua. He was appointed private physician to Duke Sylvius Nimrod of Württemberg-Oels in 1649 and in 1654 honorary court physician to Emperor Ferdinand III. During his student days in Holland Scheffler became acquainted with the works of the mystic Jakob Böhme. While in the service of the duke he disagreed with the court preacher, Christoph Freitag, and when the latter refused permission to publish his hymns in 1652, Scheffler left for Breslau. Here he studied the works of the German mystic Tauler and the medieval mystics. In 1653 he espoused Roman Catholicism, taking the name *Angelus* on his confirmation. In 1661 he became a Franciscan monk; ordained at Neisse, Silesia, he later went to Breslau, where he died in 1677. *The Lutheran Hymnal* includes three other of Scheffler's many hymns. *Come, Follow Me* first appeared in six stanzas in *Heilige Seelenlust*, 1668; our hymnal omits two stanzas and adds stanza four, which appeared anonymously in *Geistliche Lieder und Lobgesänge* in 1695. The translation, slightly altered, was prepared by Charles W. Schaeffer for the 1912 *Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book*.

The melody, possibly based on an earlier one of Bartholomäus Gesius, was written by Johann Hermann Schein (1586—1630), who succeeded Seth Calvisius as *Kantor* at St. Thomas' Church in Leipzig. Together

with Schütz (who composed a motet for Schein's funeral) and Samuel Scheidt, Schein belongs to "the three great Ss" of Lutheran church music. The tune *Mach's mit mir, Gott* was written for the funeral of Mrs. Kaspar Werner in 1628. It has since become one of the most treasured melodies both in Lutheran and in Roman Catholic circles in Germany.

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

MATT. 5:20-26

God did not create man a sinner and then command him to work his way up to freedom and salvation. God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:27a, 31a). God was pleased with man, and man rejoiced in his God. There was no room for any fear or sorrow in man's heart. But man rebelled against God, fell into sin, darkness, death, and destruction, and brought misery and ruin upon all his posterity. It would have been infinitely sad if what had been lost could not have been restored. The God of infinite love opened up a way of righteousness that leads us back to the righteousness of which sin had robbed us. On the basis of the Gospel for today I want to talk to you about

The Only Righteousness That Opens Heaven for Us

I shall show you

- I. What this righteousness is
- II. How we may obtain it
- III. How we can be certain that this righteousness is ours

I

A. Many ideas crowd into a man's mind when he thinks about the ways by which to reach heaven. One man supposes a morally clean life is the answer. Another thinks earnest religiosity centering in prayer and in fellowship with Christians solves the problem. A third sees the way clear by avoid-

ing overt sins and vices. A fourth, a devotee of vice, is sure that if he does some good in spite of his flagrant life, nothing can keep him out of heaven. Most people look to the Law and feel that a partial observance of its requirements is sufficient to guarantee them peace in eternity.

B. But Christ's words in v. 20 knock the props from under all these suppositions. Vv. 21 and 22 show the high, wide, and deep requirements of the Law. It is not satisfied with an outward observance. The Law is spiritual. It demands a flawless, 100 percent righteousness of the heart. Christ emphasizes this in the word "for" in v. 20, pointing back to vv. 17-19. "The least" in v. 19 means zero.

C. The Law forbids every sin of every description. If the Law can accuse a man of just one sin, that man is not righteous before God (cf. James 2:10; Matt. 12:36; 1 Cor. 4:5b; Rom. 7:7b; Matt. 22:37, 39; 1 Cor. 16:22; 1 John 3:15; James 4:17; Lev. 19:2b; Matt. 5:48). These Bible passages interpret Christ's words in v. 20.

D. God must demand the kind of righteousness just described. He cannot be God if He sacrifices any part of His holiness and perfection. He cannot revoke His command (Lev. 19:2b) or His curse upon the breaking of the Law. (Deut. 27:26; Gal. 3:10b)

II

A. The Law demands perfect righteousness, but it confers no power on man to attain it. St. Paul points to his own people and shows how they strove to attain righteousness through the Law but failed (cf. Gal. 3:21b; Rom. 9:31; 10:2, 3). David put no trust in his own effort (Ps. 143:2). Job and Isaiah both confess total lack of righteousness (Job 1:1; 15:14; 9:30, 31; Is. 64:6). Saints of all ages have despaired of their own righteousness. They always besought God for mercy because of their sins.

B. The only way to righteousness before God lies in faith in Christ's redemptive work. The Bible teaches this truth very clearly (cf. Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; 3:22b-24; 4:5; 3:28). Blessed are all sinners who believe in Christ as their Savior. They can challenge the Law to accuse them and joyously join Paul's triumphant words in Rom. 8:33, 34. Hallelujah!

III

A. There are certain marks which indicate whether a man has accepted this righteousness which avails before God. If a man believes in Christ, he no longer finds any merit, or comfort, or righteousness in himself. He eagerly expresses his faith in word and action without compulsion, without expecting any reward, without seeking any honor for himself. All his words and actions are an expression of thankfulness to God for giving him the righteousness that opens heaven for him.

B. As soon as a man believes in Christ, the Holy Spirit helps him recognize even the slightest imperfections and overcome them. When the Law uncovers his sin, he does not begin to fume, or deny his sin, or try to excuse himself. He pleads for forgiveness and would rather die than commit sin consciously and maliciously.

C. The words of Christ in vv. 23-25 describe the state of mind of the man who possesses the only righteousness that avails before God. He is eager to show his love for God by expressing tender love toward his neighbor. He wants to be reconciled with his neighbor as well as with God. He knows his service of God is useless as long as any neighbor can raise a just complaint against him.

D. Examine yourselves in the light of these words. Do you bring forth the fruits that must be evident if your faith is genuine? Do you like to hear about faith and grace,

but not of their fruits? Do you strain at gnats and swallow camels? Where is your fear of sin, your denial of the world, your tender conscience, your love of God's honor, your zeal to be reconciled with him who has injured you? A true Christian is still weak in this world, but are you fighting daily against sin with the help of the Holy Ghost? Heed the words of Christ in v. 26, and believe in your Savior with all your heart.

The Hymn of the Week: "All Mankind Fell in Adam's Fall," *The Lutheran Hymnal*, 369.

The stern warning of the Gospel against petty righteousness and the Epistle's implicit "first Adam and second Adam" treatment of death and life are both expressed in the hymn of the week from the pen of Lazarus Spengler (1479—1534). After meeting Luther in 1518 in Nürnberg, where Spengler was *Ratsherr*, Spengler became an ardent follower of the Reformer, defending him in 1519 by publishing a *Schutzred* which caused Johann Eck to include Spengler in

the papal bull of excommunication. In 1521 Spengler accompanied Luther to the Diet of Worms; in 1525 he, Luther, and Melancthon initiated the plans which reformed the Benedictine *Schottenkloster* into a Lutheran *Gymnasium*; he was a prime mover in the 1528 Visitation; and in 1530 he was a signatory, for his native town, of the Augsburg Confession. He was also instrumental in the formulation of the 1532 Nürnberg *Kirchenordnung*. Although he wrote quite a bit of sacred and secular verse, only two hymns are ascribed to him. "All Mankind Fell" was published in Johann Walther's 1524 Wittenberg *Chorbüchlein*, and already in 1539 it appeared in England in a translation by Miles Coverdale. The translation in our hymnal, by Matthias Loy, appeared in the 1880 Ohio Synod *Lutheran Hymnal*.

The hymn was sung to at least four different melodies. Two of these appeared with it in 1524, and in 1534 two more were linked with the text. Our hymnal uses yet another tune—*Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten*. For a discussion of this tune see *CTM*, XXXIII (February 1962), 104.