

A Series of Gospel Free Texts for the Church Year

By Irwin J. Habeck

After using a number of gospel pericopes over a span of more than two decades it struck me that some texts occurred in a number of series, although they were not assigned to the same Sunday in the church year. On the other hand, it seemed that some texts were never used. It is true that proclaiming “all the counsel of God” does not mean that the preacher must at some time or other use every portion of Scripture as a text. Some portions are not adaptable for homiletical use. The fact that all Scripture is profitable does not mean that it can be profitable only if every portion is used as the basis for a sermon. Still it seemed to me that it would be interesting to discover whether in the case of the gospels at least every portion could be used as a sermon text. Accordingly I made a list of the passages which I had not used. Some of them may occur in one or the other of the series of gospel pericopes. But in any given year the dates of the Sundays, special occasions, absence from one’s own pulpit or having a guest preacher lead to the bypassing of some texts.

Once the list of unused gospel texts had been compiled, the next step was to seek to determine where in the church year they might best be used; where, for example, there was some point of contact between a free text and the standard gospel for a given Sunday. The resulting series was used in two different congregations. Preparation was often difficult, always challenging. It was not only a matter of expounding the text but also of finding practical applications that could be drawn from it. Above all there was always the concern to keep the sermon Christ-centered. Because the attaining of these objectives in the case of some of the suggested texts is not obvious, the use of this series is not recommended to those whose preaching experience is still limited. It is hoped, however, that the experienced preacher might find their use stimulating and challenging and an aid to wholesome variety. If he is keyed up because the Lord has helped him to master a difficult assignment, his people are bound to be edified.

The theme which was used for sermons on the suggested texts is given to show one direction in which the development of the text might move. As a service to our pastors and their people this series of gospel free texts is being published at the time of the year when pastors are planning their pulpit program for the new church year.

First Sunday in Advent	Luke 11:28—The Way to a Blessed Church Year.
Second Sunday in Advent	Luke 12:41–48—Wise Stewards and the Second Advent.
Third Sunday in Advent	Luke 1:5–25—The New Testament’s Dawning.
Fourth Sunday in Advent	Luke 3:23–38—The Condescending Christ. Matthew 1:1–17—The Condescending Christ.
Christmas Day	Luke 1:26–38—Gabriel’s Christmas Message.
Sunday after Christmas	Luke 1:39–45—The First Fruits of Christmas Joy.
New Year’s Eve	Matthew 6:16–18—Close the Year with Fasting.
New Year’s Day	Matthew 16:27–28—Will the New Year Be the Last Year?
Sunday after New Year	Luke 9:57–62—Decision Demanded.
First Sunday after Epiphany	Mark 9:14–29—When Devils Yield.
Second Sunday after Epiphany	Matthew 19:1–12—The Sacredness of Marriage. Matthew 5:27–32—The Sacredness of Marriage.
Third Sunday after Epiphany	Luke 4:31–37—The Wonderful Words of Jesus.
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	Luke 1:1–4—The Abiding Epiphany.
Septuagesima	Luke 6:24–26—Solemn Woes in the Savior’s Sermon.
Sexagesima	Luke 11:37–44—How Jesus Scolded Hypocrites.
Quinquagesima	Luke 9:44–45—The Second Prediction of the Passion.
First Sunday in Lent	Matthew 11:11–15—Making the Most of Lent.
Second Sunday in Lent	Luke 22:7–13—A Glimpse of Glory Before the Passion.

Third Sunday in Lent	Matthew 12:31–37—The Unpardonable Sin.
Fourth Sunday in Lent	Luke 22:35–38—The Perfect Provider.
Fifth Sunday in Lent	John 8:37–45—Who Are Abraham’s True Children?
Sixth Sunday in Lent	John 6:53–60—The King Who Gives Life.
Good Friday	Luke 12:50—How Jesus Felt about the Cross.
Easter	Matthew 28:11–15—Who’s Afraid of Easter?
First Sunday after Easter	John 16:31–33—Peace Through the Risen Christ.
Second Sunday after Easter	John 10:31–42—The Good Shepherd’s Sheep.
Third Sunday after Easter	John 7:1–13—The Puzzling Christ.
Fourth Sunday after Easter	Matthew 19:27–30—A Dangerous Question.
Fifth Sunday after Easter	John 14:7–12—Christ’s Works and Ours.
Ascension Day	John 5:15–18—What the Ascension Seals.
Sunday after Ascension Day	John 5:40–47—Obstacles on the Road to Heaven.
Pentecost	Luke 11:13—The Precious Gift of the Spirit.
Trinity Sunday	John 6:41–46—The Gift of the Knowledge of God.
First Sunday after Trinity	John 3:16–21—The Two-Edged Sword of the Gospel.
Second Sunday after Trinity	John 9:8–23—The Problem Posed by a Miracle.
Third Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 14:34–36—The Healing Christ in Gennesaret.
	Mark 6:53–56—The Healing Christ in Gennesaret.
Fourth Sunday after Trinity	John 4:27–30—The First Samaritan Missionary.
Fifth Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 9:35–38—Pray for Laborers.
Sixth Sunday after Trinity	Mark 9:30–41—Lessons in Greatness.
Seventh Sunday after Trinity	Mark 9:42–50—“Have Salt in Yourselves.”
Eighth Sunday after Trinity	Luke 4:22–30—The Fatal Mistake of Nazareth.
Ninth Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 6:1–4—“To the Lord and Not unto Men.”
Tenth Sunday after Trinity	Luke 14:25–33—The Price of Discipleship.
Eleventh Sunday after Trinity	Luke 19:1–10—Jesus Seeks and Saves Lost Zacchaeus.
Twelfth Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 5:33–37—What Jesus Said about Swearing.
Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity	Luke 1:57–66—What Manner of Child Shall This Be?
Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity	Luke 8:1–3—The First Ladies’ Aid Society.
Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 23:29–33—Regeneration Required.
Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity	Luke 13:31–33—Christ’s Composure.
Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity	Luke 12:13–14—Christ’s Singlemindedness.
Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity	Luke 9:7–9—Be Sure about Jesus.
Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity	John 7:40–53—The Dividing Christ.
Twentieth Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 17:10–13—Hope in Hearing Elijah.
Twenty-First Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 21:23–27—When Jesus Said No.
Twenty-Second Sunday after Trinity	Matthew 18:15–20—Love’s Way with a Sinning Brother.
Twenty-Third Sunday after Trinity	John 12:42–50—The Word and the Judgment to Come.
Reformation	Matthew 23:13–22—Appreciate Your Heritage.