

# The Assistant Pastor

October, 1941

## A Golden Opportunity

For over a year now Pastor Oesleby has been preaching the word in New Hampton. Each month he has sent a report of his work to the Home Mission Board which called him and which has supported him, and those reports have shown that conditions are favorable for the organization of a congregation. On the recommendation, therefore, of the Home Mission Board Pastor Oesleby has called on the people in New Hampton to speak to them personally about the matter, and on Sunday, October 26th, I preached a sermon at New Hampton which sought to bring the guidance of God's word to assist the people in making their decision in this important matter. Then on the evening of the same day a meeting was held in the Legion Hall to which all those were invited who were interested. Pastor Oesleby and I led the discussion, calling attention to the facts that must be considered in deciding whether or not to organize a congregation. It was finally decided to present the matter to the Saude and Jerico congregations and ask them for their counsel in the matter.

It goes without saying that this matter is of the greatest concern to the Saude and Jerico congregations. They would, of course, lose a few members, but the home congregations would have the privilege of sponsoring a daughter congregation, and of doing a blessed thing in the furthering of God's kingdom on earth. Because of the importance of this matter, I am taking this issue of the Assistant Pastor to present to the people at Saude and Jerico the whole situation as it stands at New Hampton. Because I believe it will help you to determine what course ought to be followed, I am printing the sermon preached at New Hampton, together with the main part of the discussion that was held at the evening meeting last Sunday in the Legion Hall.

On November 14th, Friday evening, at 8 o'clock, the joint meeting of the Saude and Jerico congregations requested by the New Hampton people will be held in the Jerico Church. I want to address this urgent appeal to all the voters of both congregations that they be present at this meeting. Please do not think to yourselves that since you live here in the country this matter is of no concern to you. The work in New Hampton can not be carried out without your good will and support. I have in mind to present to the home congregations and to the people in New Hampton a plan whereby the congregation in New Hampton can be organized, and whereby the Saude and Jerico congregations will also be benefited. Please do not fail to be present.

N. S. Tjernagel.



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### "YE ARE A PECULIAR PEOPLE"

1 Pet. 2:9

Sermon delivered at New Hampton October 25, 1941

In Christ Jesus, dearly beloved Christian friends: I have come here today to speak to you who have been attending services at the New Hampton Mission. Most of you are members of the Saude and Jerico congregations, and as such I have a God-given responsibility toward you as the called Pastor of the congregations to which you belong. It is the duty and pleasure of a Pastor to lead and guide his people on the basis of God's Word, and it is with that in mind that I am here this morning.

For over a year now the Word of God has been preached to you in this Hall under the sponsorship of the Home Mission Board. It called Rev. Oesleby and has given him his living while he has been here. During that time the Missionary Pastor has preached the Word faithfully, he has administered the Sacraments, has called on the sick, has officiated at weddings and has performed all the usual offices of the Holy Ministry. He has organized and met with a Ladies' Aid and a Young People's Society. Throughout there has been a splendid spirit of cooperation between you and him; indeed in all, looking back over the past year there have been present all the earmarks and signs of a thriving congregation in New Hampton. Now Pastor Oesleby comes to you and urges that it would be to your advantage, and at the same time a blessing to others, that this group of people organize formally into a congregation. You are perplexed, I know. You feel a pardonable loyalty to the congregations in which many of you have been baptized and confirmed. But at the same time you realize that for one reason or another you have moved from the communities in which your churches are located. What ought you to do?

Let us look to God's Word for guidance in this important problem that faces us. St. Peter says: **"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."** In these words the Apostle is talking to Christians and about Christians. Peter is speaking to you in this portion of Holy Scripture. When he says, **"YE ARE A PECULIAR PEOPLE,"** he is telling (I) What you are, and (II) what you ought to do.

#### I

Consider first his description of Christians; his description of this group of believers whom I am now addressing.

(1) He says, "Ye are a chosen generation." He is showing the contrast, the difference between Christians and unbelievers, between the children of the world and the children of God. Even as in the Old Testament God had chosen the Jewish nation to be His own particular people, so now dear hearers He has chosen you. You have not chosen Him. It is by His grace and love that you have become

believers. Yes, before the foundations of the world were laid, he had chosen you. You are, as compared with the children of darkness, something special, something set apart. You have been elected by God to occupy the position which you now hold, you have been chosen by Him to be His children. Who of you here will not say, "What a privilege that I should have been chosen."

(2) The Apostle says, "Ye are a royal priesthood." In the Old Testament God had said to His people, "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." Think of it, a kingdom of priests; but that is just what you are, dear friends, a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood. You are no ordinary people who may be content merely to hear the Word; God has made you a priesthood, with all the responsibility that attaches to priesthood. In the very last Book of the Bible, John speaks of Jesus "that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." There can be no mistaking Peter's meaning. You are privileged to be a witness of the truth before all men, you are divinely commissioned to bring the Gospel to this world of darkness.

(3) St. Peter goes still further; he says; "You are an holy nation." Surely not one among you would call himself holy. Each one of you knows his own weaknesses, knows how often he has fallen into sin, how pitifully short he has fallen of keeping the ten commandments. But though you can by no means call yourselves holy, God does actually call you holy. And as you know, it is the holiness of Christ, the righteousness of the Savior that has become your possession. God imputed your sins to Christ, and acquitted you of the guilt and punishment of your sin, so that He regards you in Christ as though you had never sinned. Yes, you are holy, but it is a holiness procured for you, and given to you at the price of Christ's very life. The fact remains. You **are** holy in the sight of God, because of, and for the sake of Christ.

(4) Finally we are told, "Ye are a peculiar people." This, in the words already read, God had long before said to His people in the Old Testament. "Ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people." Yes, it is true, you are the people of God's possession; you are a people set apart. You are the people of His purchasing. St. Paul speaks of Jesus "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people." Even in the Old Testament, the children of God are frequently spoken of as a people whom He had purchased. Psalm 74 speaks of "the congregation which thou hast purchased of old." Those references become all the more clear in the New Testament where we learn of Jesus Christ who has purchased and won us from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil. We are in truth the people of God's possession, a peculiar people, a people set apart from the children of the world.

Thus does St. Peter describe you, dear friends; a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation a peculiar people.



## II

You have heard how Peter describes you; now mark well what you ought to do. He says, "Ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness and into his marvellous light." In other words, you have a commission, you have something to do. This is made plain also by the Apostle Paul who says, "He gave Himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, **zealous of good works.**"

Having learned what we are, and knowing the light of the Gospel into which we have been brought, we shall surely not fail to praise God, nor shall we fail in being zealous of good works. And our most eloquent praise will consist in our fulfillment of our commission as Christians to "preach the Gospel to every creature." Obedience to the law will find its fulfillment in our love for God and charity toward our neighbor.

The number of you who have been gathered about God's Word here is comparatively small, but for all that, opportunity is very definitely knocking at your door now. You are being given an opportunity to thank God for choosing you out of darkness into His marvellous light. And that opportunity consists in this that you are now enabled to establish a congregation so that your neighbor here may hear the Gospel and be brought out of the darkness of ignorance and unbelief into the marvellous light of truth. You are a royal priesthood. Now there is given you the opportunity to serve God directly in your priesthood by a joint ministry of the Word rendered through the permanent establishment of a church here which will preach nothing but the plain and clear word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The work that has been so well begun here cannot continue without your active support. Your support may involve some sacrifices. You may be called upon to contribute more generously than has been necessary where you formerly held membership. Perhaps you feel a strong attachment to the congregations at Saude and Jerico which have been your church home in the past. But whatever sacrifices you may make in this way will surely be attended by far greater blessings. Who can say how many souls will be added to the kingdom of God through the establishment of a sound Lutheran congregation in New Hampton? And who can deny that you will make the best provision for the welfare of your own souls in New Hampton by establishing a congregation here where so many of you have made your homes?

Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." God grant that you may follow the course that is pleasing to Him. Amen.

### Can a Congregation be Established in New Hampton?

Our first thought will be that it would be a very small congregation, and that is true when we make comparison with the home congregations at Saude and Jerico. But if you would study the figures in

the Synodical Report for 1941 you would find that one third of the congregations and preaching stations in the Synod are smaller than the membership we could hope for in New Hampton. So the New Hampton congregation would be far from being the smallest congregation in the Synod.

What is the membership we may hope for? That question can not be answered exactly, of course, but there are certain figures that will guide us in making an estimate. There are nine members of the Saude Congregation, and forty nine members of the Jerico Congregation living in New Hampton. In addition there are nearly a dozen families, representing thirty one persons who have attended services and shown an interest in the work that has been done. Some of these people have formerly belonged to one or the other of our congregations, while some have had or still have connections with other Lutheran churches. Adding the three figures cited we have a total of eighty nine persons which constitutes the possible membership at the present time. Mission congregations are usually established with a much smaller possible membership than that.

What financial support can be expected of the people in New Hampton if a congregation is organized? That question can not be answered exactly either, but again we have figures which will guide us. During the period of one year, members of the Saude and Jerico congregations contributed \$164.50 to the support of their home congregations. In addition to that Sunday collections and gifts to Pastor Oesleby amounted to \$263.06. This amount added to the previous figure makes a total of \$427.56 that the New Hampton people contributed for church purposes (not including Synod offerings) during the period of one year. That amount would go a long ways toward supporting a Pastor in New Hampton.

Can a congregation be established in New Hampton? So far as the number of persons who might be expected to join is concerned, and so far as the anticipated support that they might give is concerned, we must surely answer the question with a "yes."

### Why Should a Congregation be Organized in New Hampton?

That question deserves an answer too. The present, as well as the former Pastor of the Saude and Jerico congregations have been deeply concerned about those people who have moved to New Hampton. A few of them have continued to attend services in their home churches regularly. But as you all know, most of them have come to church more and more seldom. Some were present a half dozen times or less each year at our services. They were being removed farther and farther from the church. Many were obliged to be absent from services because they had no automobile to take them. Some who had cars were tempted to stay away because of the distance. It was impossible to give the children in New Hampton the care and instruction they need. To state the case bluntly the souls of our people in New Hampton were endangered by the fact that they had no church which they could attend conveniently. And it has happened too, that our members have been lost to other churches in New Hampton. Some of our people had drifted



away from us so that they did not belong to any church at all. And it goes without saying that very few of our people in town were able to take a part in the activities of the congregations at home. So it must be clear that for the sakes of our own people in New Hampton, a congregation is badly needed there.

Also it is likely that in the future more of our people will be moving to New Hampton. It will be an incentive and a blessing to them to know that they will find a church there which they can attend.

But in addition to providing for our own, there are prospects of being able to secure many who now have no church, many who do not know the way to salvation. They too need a church in New Hampton.

#### **What is the Principal Obstacle in the Way of Establishing a Congregation in New Hampton?**

Many of our people in New Hampton have been baptized, confirmed, and brought up in their home churches at Saude and Jerico. Therefore it is most natural that they have a very strong affection for the country congregations. They helped build our fine churches at Saude and Jerico and there is a most intimate bond of fellowship between them and their old friends in the country. Because of this we are not at all surprised that some of them are somewhat reluctant to give up their memberships at Saude and Jerico in order to join a congregation in New Hampton.

Yet we are obliged to recognize that circumstances over which we often have no control will influence our decisions and conduct in life. We know that wherever Abraham went, in his long journeying, he always erected an altar at which he and his people worshipped the Lord. We never find him thinking that his place of worship was some distant place where he had dwelt before.

Marriages between members of our two congregations frequently occur. And such marriages always present a circumstance where one or the other of the married couple must give up their membership in their church and join that of husband or wife.

And so circumstances have arisen for many of our people which have made it desirable for them to live in New Hampton, and most of them are prepared, despite their loyalty to their former congregations, to join the new congregation to be established there.

#### **What Can the Saude and Jerico Congregations Do to Help Establish a Congregation in New Hampton?**

There is a feeling on the part of some of our people in New Hampton that the home congregations would look with disfavor upon the establishment of a congregation, and that the people in the country would regard it as disloyal that some of their fellow members asked for a release so as to join the new congregation. Therefore the first thing that the home congregations could do to help would be to urge cheerfully that all those in New Hampton join the new daughter-congregation.

Then the thought has come to some of the people in New Hampton that they would forfeit their right

to the use of their home churches and cemeteries in case of deaths occurring among them. The home congregations could help those in New Hampton by being willing to cooperate in those matters.

But above all, the people in New Hampton will be helped through the good will of the memberships of the home congregations. Such a venture is not likely to succeed unless there is a spirit of cooperation between mother and daughter congregations.

#### **Why Should the People of Saude and Jerico Lutheran Churches Cooperate in the Establishment of a Congregation in New Hampton?**

Some of you may think to yourselves that this is the concern of the people of New Hampton, and that we ought not take any part in it. But it is our affair. The people in New Hampton who are now in need of a church are our people. We cannot escape responsibility and concern for them. And the unchurched in New Hampton are our neighbor. We have a God-given duty over against them too. They are a Lazarus at our door. They are our neighbors, and we have an opportunity now to be a Good Samaritan toward them.

It is an unusual opportunity that is being given us. We hear sermons on mission activity, and mission opportunities. Well, here is a golden opportunity to be congregations that are eager to accept the chance to do missionary service to our own people, and to our neighbors in New Hampton. Here is a chance to make ourselves "doers of the word and not hearers only."

I made a diligent effort to show the people in New Hampton through the sermon printed in this issue of the Assistant Pastor that since, according to God's Word, they are a "Kingdom of priests," they should eagerly grasp this mission opportunity. And I now offer that same sermon to you as a guide in answering for you the question whether or not we should cooperate in establishing this daughter congregation in New Hampton.

It is not often that a parish has such an opportunity as God has given us now. Let us forget our own personal interests, but rather ask, "How will the kingdom of God be best served in this matter?" Your answer to that question should determine the course that you will follow as a congregation.

#### **What is the Purpose of the Joint Meeting of the Saude and Jerico Congregations to be Held in the Jerico Church at 8 P. M., Friday, November 14th?**

This meeting is called that the whole matter may be discussed in a friendly spirit among us all, and so there may be an understanding between us as to our joint responsibilities. It is called to discuss the method of procedure in establishing the new congregation.

At this meeting I shall present to the people of New Hampton and the Saude and Jerico congregations a plan whereby the establishment of a congregation in New Hampton can be financed without imposing an unfair burden on anyone.

Matters of far-reaching importance will be presented to the voters of the Saude and Jerico congregations. I appeal to you most earnestly that you come to this meeting.