

*B*raman

Foundation of Charities



Central Bridge
United Methodist Church

The Sermons of Richard W. Braman Vol. 16

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Love Thy Neighbor

Let us give thanks to God for the life and work of the Rev. Braman. Richard born in Aug. of 1929 wrote and delivered over 360 sermons in which this volume contains the beginning of his preaching and writing. Although, not born to a particularly spiritually or religious family he wrote in his memories of a calling to serve the Lord at an early age of 18. He married his wife Gladys in 1948. Mrs. Braman was saved at the age of 14. She began to pray for Richard and in 1955 Richard had a conversion experience in 1955 as the result of a Rev. Graham crusade. His first sermon called "A Conversion Experience" speaks volumes of his personal conversion.

Rev. Braman began a home Correspondence course through the United Methodist Church in 1956. He worked on his studies for several years until ordained in 1962. He continued to study the Correspondence course in addition to many Cokebury publications until his passing



The Rev. Braman was a writer of Evangelism. He felt strongly that all his sermons and writing should be directed by scripture or several scriptures. As you read his sermons this will become evident. His style was direct and to the point.

Richard believed that Jesus Christ was Gods only son and that who ever believed in Him shall have eternal life. In fact John 3:16 was his favorite Bible verse. He preached not only in the Fultonham United Church, but also in two churches in Ohio: South Harpersfield United Church and the United Methodist Church in Cork, Oh.

As you read these sermons may the Holy Spirit continue to guide your path and may the Grace of our Lord continue to bless your life and your families' lives. If you have never had the experience of realizing Jesus as your personal Savior just ask him to come in your heart and He will. Let us thank God for the life of the Rev. Richard Braman and give praise and thanksgiving.

**In Christ,
The Braman Foundation**

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Get Out of My Way

Scripture: Matthew 16: 21-28

The text is chosen from Matthew 16: 24; “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”.

There is no place for cheap talk or compromising attitude in the Christian position. He who would seek a way of easy ideals must go elsewhere. The very first chapter of history of Christianity was written in the blood of the Son of God, and pale ink can never record the story of those who follow in his train.

First all, I love the daring life of Christianity. Its compelled fearlessness before every wrong thing. Its unfaltering espousal of every righteous thing. Here stand the true virtue and real braveries of life. The highest conduct human life has ever worked out has been along the route of our Christian profession. Let all trivial matters get out of the way.

Jesus did not depart from God in drawing near to them. Therefore, they could come near to God in drawing near to him. The deepest agony in Christ’s passion was the pain of giving such forgiveness. To love purity and to love adulterers, to love kindness and to love the unkind, to love generosity and to love the covetous, to love God and to love sinners that is the innermost secret of Calvary.

Secondly, the conspiracy of all the powers of the Christian faith has unlocked the greatness of the soul’s conduct. Here is where men and women have discovered the divinest meaning of human heroics. This challenge has opened the full appreciation of the supreme disasters and difficulties of living. It has urged the oft-flagging sides of endeavor to nobler conquests. At the alters of Christian purpose, have been kindled the finest fires of noblest espousals, the sublimest loves, the most compelling ambitions. Here have been visioned, the beckoning portals of eternal hope. Out-of-the-way all trivial things! We are in step with the highest best.

We must preach for verdict. We are not in the pulpit to please the fancy. We are not there even to inform the mind, or to disturb the emotions, or to sway the judgment. These are only preparations along the journey. Our ultimate object is to move the will, to set it on another course to increase its pace, and to make it sing in “the ways of God’s commandments.” We are therefore to bring the will of men into tune with the will of God, in order that God’s statutes may become their songs.

The signs of our times are not overcharged with assurance. The crime waves, discontented youth, an ennui in our literature, despair in our society, unbelief in our schools, skepticism in our culture, selfishness in our endeavors, and an extended list of problematic situations in urgent demand, a genuine revival of uncompromising, courageous, daring in life. Mankind has always needed, but never more than now, something that will set into the farthest flung endeavor the genuine strain of triumphant. It is to be found in the frank challenge of our Lord as he shouldered his own great task and bade us to follow him. It clarifies

our way. It distinguishes our duty. It emphasizes reality. It concentrates effort. It makes us strong to deal in the proper perspective with any of the base or things of life that are out of proportion, and have caused the tragedies of so much of our living. The soul possessed of a calm Christian conviction and purpose will brook no interference in its eager duty for any small thing. It drives straight. Out of my way! I must live nobly if I hold this faith. Give me my cross. I will not shirk it.

To follow Christ means different things to different men. All have not the same needs, the same task, the same power possibilities. To Sam has meant the work of evangelism. Matthew 4:19 says, “follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

To follow Christ has meant to some great hero deeds. “The noble army of martyrs praise him”, who has called them to places of peril and suffering, and has held them true through the fire and on the cross.

To follow Christ may not bring to you a call as evangelist or martyr. How can you follow Christ in everyday duties, “the trivial mind, the common task?” Is it not possible to have a new spirit which shall glorify the common place? The Saint can still be a saint among his pots and kettles. “Holiness into the Lord” may be written on “bells of horses”, or the ledgers of the office, or the furnaces of the mills, or the shelves of the shop.

“I will” is no word for man. There is a far diviner one, “I ought.” Bow passion to reason, reason to conscience, and conscience to God, and then be as resolute and determined as you choose.

There is some timely advice. If you are impatient, sit down quietly and talk with Job. If you are a little strong-headed, go and see Moses. If you are getting weak-kneed, take a long look at Elijah. If there is no song in your heart, listen to David. If you are a policy man, read Daniel. If you are getting sordid, spend some time with Isaiah. If you feel neglected, ask the beloved disciple to please place his arm around you. If your faith is slackening, read Paul. If you feel indifferent, watch James. If you have lost sight of the future, climb again, the stairs of Revelation and view a new, the Promised land.”

Revelation 3:20 says, “behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Holman Hunt has put an immortal meaning on canvas in his painting, “The Light of the World.” God in the person of Jesus Christ is portrayed as knocking at a closed door. Jesus is clothed in the royal robe of a king and the white robe of a priest. He is both at one and the same time the door is covered with vines, indicating that it is not been used lately. The latchstring is on the inside, showing that few are welcome. But the most important thing about the picture is not there. The person behind the door is the center of the picture. Christ is after that person. That person is you. Hunt has made the picture eternal because no single generation of persons is represented by the character within the door. Each generation must decide for itself whether it shall open the door or keep God waiting there.

The knocking on that door is for the church. Many are the churches which have entirely shut God out. Some churches have become so filled up with the activity and that organization. They cannot hear the knocking of God at their doors for the sound of their running machinery. God stands at the door of our churches, not so much with a message delivered to Amos, Jose, and other prophets, but with a message for us who live today. The church which claims to follow him, is not immune from the necessity to open the door and let him in.

The knocking is for the church members, too. Many persons, having become church members, have settled down in a dull routine of daily affairs, which is quite removed from the still small voice of God. The formality of religion has become a part of their lives, but they care not for the idea that they can practice the presence of God and thereby make the spiritual quality of their lives much more vital. God is waiting for every Church member to know him personally.

The knocking is also for sinners who have never known the glory of the saving health of our God. God gives an encouraging word to those who have walked since crimson path. By opening the door to God, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." We are blindly grasping a way through the darkness and confusion of this world. However, our condition is not hopeless because there is one who has willed that we may see. God has sent one who came to proclaim that God is searching for each human soul.

Fourthly, the supreme way of Christ was the way of the cross. His supreme contribution to this world was his hardest struggle. He wrote his lasting message in the red of his own blood. He actually made his living, influential by dying. "Take your cross and follow me," is the divine challenge that carries compulsion in the exemplar companionship of him who thus calls us. None of us who dared respond, can expect to meet it with any cheap conduct. Out of the way must be our resolute clearance to all compromise. In the name of him who loved us and gave his life for us and who challenges us to follow in his steps, let us deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow. It matters not whence such loyalty may lead. Destination is not the noblest impulse. Obedience is the test. Out of my way! My first business as a Christian.

You take a weight, or a plumb-bob and fascinate it to the end of a string-and that's a plumb line. It is used by builders, architects, brick layers, to true up a wall or the side of the building.

Tower of Pisa is famous because it's "out-of-plumb" as we say. Now the word, P-L-U-M-B comes from the Latin word 'plumbum', meaning lead. Our word "plumber" and the trade of plumbing come from the use of lead in the lead pipes, lead solder, and lead caulking. In ancient times, the book of Amos reveals, lead was the heaviest metal known and was used for plumb bobs. That's where the plumb line gets its name.

Now you, boys and girls can have an interesting time with a plumb line. You can hold it up against a fence or a wall, or a building and you can tell right away if that building is trued up; if it will stand for years or if it's liable to fall. Even if the naked eye can see no flaw, the plumb line will reveal the truth.

Well, in a very real sense, Jesus is the great plumb line of mankind. By using Jesus' life, his teachings, his standard of truth and conduct, we are able to judge the goodness or falsity of what we call human character. All by ourselves, we are apt to consider that "selfishness is the best policy" and that there is nothing wrong with telling lies or stealing so long as we don't get caught. But when we chart our behavior and measure the value of our conduct by the purity, integrity, and goodness of Jesus' life on earth, when we square up our plans and purposes by the plumb line of his mind and heart and character, then we can see where we are leaning away from the goodness and integrity of which God made each of us capable.

But you may ask why we should take a young Jew who lived 19 ½ centuries ago in and out of the way corner of the Roman Empire as the standard and pattern of human conduct today? To understand why we do this, let's look again at the plumb line. What makes a plumb line so accurate a measure? What gives it authority and validity and judgment? Well, it's nothing you can see with your eyes, but it is something very real, as every child knows who has ever fallen down. It is gravity! Gravity pulls the plumb bob so that it is perfectly aligned with the exact center of the Earth. It always comes to rest, pointed straight at the invisible but nonetheless real location.

And this provides a very good explanation for the honor and worship and alliance that we give Jesus of Nazareth.

For Jesus was more completely oriented to do the invisible but actual power and person of God than any other mortal who has ever lived. In his life and teaching, Jesus pointed reliably to the direction a man's life would take when it was truly trued up with God. So, if we want to judge the value of any man or woman, alive or dead, if we want to discern greatness of human character or determine the relative great worth, and beauty of some human deed, Jesus is our standard of judgment. He is our plumb line to God.

We cannot afford to compromise our Christian principles. We have been sitting on the fence long enough. Now is the time to let everyone know we truly believe what we say we are, and that is, true followers of Jesus Christ. Let us deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus Christ. Indeed, we should say "get out of my way", my first business is Christian.

Living with Questions That Cannot Be Answered

Scripture: Hebrews 10:32-39; 11:1-3

The text is chosen from Matthew 27:46; “My God, my God, why?”

What is faith? Faith is not a blind thing, for faith begins with knowledge. This knowledge we can acquire by reading God’s word.

Faith is not a spectacular thing, for faith believes facts of which it is sure. We can be sure of God by reading his word.

Faith is not an impractical thing, for faith, trusts and stakes its destiny upon the truth of revelation. Once God reveals himself to us. We have faith that will give us strength and guidance to face all of life.

First of all, the man of faith knows how to ask questions. He doesn’t necessarily know all the answers, but he dares to ask the bigger questions. A man of faith is a person who is asking the ultimate questions about life, which is the anteroom to any religious faith.

To ask the ultimate questions of life is disturbing and painful. We would rather stay on the more practical plane of life. Perhaps some of the answers we received we would not like and therefore we hesitate to ask the proper ones.

The man who asked questions – real, genuine, provocative, questions - may be closer to faith than the man who thinks he has all the answers, because the man who keeps asking, does not take God for granted. He does not commit the sin of indifference. When we become indifferent to life and how to live it, then we have lost touch with God for God has no time or place for the person who doesn’t care.

When we ask the big questions and are not content with the little answers, we open the door for God to reveal himself to us. If God accepted the Cross, with a dull resignation, we might question his faith. But when he cried, “My God, why?” The question revealed how near God was, it was the deepest question man can ask.

Isaiah 30:15 says, “For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall you be saved, and quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.”

The children of Israel were in grave danger from a mighty enemy. An alliance with Pharaoh in Egypt seemed their only safety. But this was not God’s will for them. He wanted them to repent of their sins and trust in him, and he would defend them. It was never his will that his people should turn to Egypt for help. So he sent the prophet Isaiah with a glorious assurance. How may the prophet’s words help us to find peace and poise?

We may be assured that we are the children of God, born anew through his Holy Spirit and the Word of his truth.

We may be assured that God watches over us with infinite love.

We may be assured that God has a purpose for our lives.

We may be assured that God knows the way through every difficulty.

Secondly, the man of faith knows how to live with questions that cannot be answered.

Honesty, humility, and a sizable dose of skepticism do not exclude a person from faith. On the contrary, they are prerequisite for faith. Faith is not knowing all the answers; it is living, courageously and affirmatively in the presence of questions that do not have a satisfying answer. "In some way, faith in the love of God, as it meets the cruelties of life, and the apparent callousness of the universe deepens perplexity. The materialist, who has no room for God and his outlook has no problem of this kind. His trouble is not perplexity, but despair. So, the man who genuinely believes in God may be more perplexed at times. His perplexity is a sign of faith. Precisely we ask "why"? because we believe in the love of God, in the meaning of the universe. A man who believes in neither doesn't have to ask questions at all."

W.R. Seegart, in "Songs in the Night" records a conversation with an old Norwegian sailor. While they were talking of some of the dark and bitter experiences of life, the old man began to speak of a watchspring. "Suppose, he said, "that during the heating, rolling, and hammering, the steel cried out, "You are killing me!" It would have met that the steel did not know what was in store for it. Finally, it became a watchspring, a delicate thing, but having as fine a purpose as a piece of steel could ever wish for." "So, you see; continue the old sailor, "the trials of life may be meant to make us better and to fit us for greater purposes of living. That's the way I look at it, and I always try to get some good out of my stories."

The man of faith constantly quarrels with the universe and he keeps asking "why?" In religion, the answer might not come in the form of an intellectual explanation, but it may come in an insight, a confrontation that is so deep that the precise answer is not so important. There is a quiet understanding that defies comprehension because in the realm of being it is not a matter of problems being solved, but of a mystery to be proved. Faith always has the quality of probing, seeking, and often finding.

Who actually tells us that all our problems are to be and can be solved? Perhaps the unsolved state of these problems is of more importance to God than their solution, for it may serve to call attention to the fall of man into the divine redemption. Perhaps the problems of men are so completely and wrongly formulated that they really are unsolvable.

I believe we can find the answers to many of the problems in our lives by reading and studying God's

word.

The word of God must be experienced. The word speaks with so much more authenticity, if it has entered into our experience and become bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. Every one of us has had the experience of reading the Bible, reading it, and rereading it, and then all of a sudden finding it come alive. Why? Because somehow it has spoken. They used to say it has spoken to our condition. It has come alive where we live; it is no longer simply the dead tracing of black pigment upon white parchment. It is now a vibrant, determining, inspiring, crucifying, living fact of our own experience.

The Word must be expounded. We are busy about that all the time in church work. We are setting our expositions of the Word. The Word has to be explained, its background in ancient religions practice clarified, and the subtleties of meaning which it contains expounded. Do you think I just I am just talking only about preachers? I am talking about all of us, priest and prophets, as every Christian believer. We may carry around the Word within us, deep within memory, and never make known to another the place it occupies in our lives. The Word must be expounded, it must be clarified, its meaning must be explicated, so that we and those about us know what we are talking about.

The Word of God must be exemplified. We must practice It. We must put it to work so completely in our lives that its pattern of living, its strength of impact, and its demands become apparent in our behavior. To exemplify means to give example of, to take the precepts and give it life in action. Such as the meaning of incarnation.

Such was the incarnation in the case of him who walked the Galilean roadways. Christ was able to incarnate in himself, his flesh, his word, his deed, his attitude all that man in his understanding of God has missed. We who follow can say with certainty, "Truly this was the Son of God;" with the gospel writer, here was one in whom, "The word was made flesh"; and with the faithful through the centuries, into whose mortal hands this immortal treasure has been entrusted, that we, in our lives and actions, are "allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel." We must exemplify the word of God in daily, living language.

Thirdly, the man of faith tries to be a part of the answer.

Perhaps the truth, here is that God is not going to give all the answers to us, but he will answer through us. "It is not some religious act which makes a Christian what he is, but participation in the suffering of God in the life of the world."

Some people who say "Our Father" on Sunday, go around the rest of the week acting like orphans.

Are you living by the things you do know? Are we taking refuge saying, "But there are so many things I don't know." Or are we ready to commit our lives to the flashes of certainty and be a living answer? The Cross meant the acceptance of suffering without knowing the reason for it. The Cross meant saying, "My

God, why?, and with the same breath, saying, “Into thy hands I commend my spirit.” No wonder George Matheson wrote, “Son of man, whenever I doubt of life, I think of thee.”

The power of faith resides in a story of a God who brings us into his life and his concerns and into his suffering. He draws us into his life so fully and into his concerns so deeply that we no longer ask merely the question; we ask to take our part. We dare to live in answering response because we know of God’s love in a cross outside a city wall.

The Lord has need of each one of us, whether we think so, or not, and even though we cannot find answers to questions we seek the Lord still wants us and is seeking us. In Matthew 21:3, we read; “The Lord hath need of them.”

Years ago, there sat in a Sunday school class in a mission church in England a little girl. She was lame and not very strong. Her family was poor and large, and because she could do little to help, she was made to feel that she was not wanted. Under her shabby jacket she carried a heavy heart.

On the wall of the mission, there hung a colored picture. It showed two disciples of the Master loosening the colt from the place where he was tied and saying to some questioning bystanders, “The Lord hath need of him.” Earnestly, this pale-faced child looked at the picture. Such a little animal, not big and fine, but one rather shabby-looking, yet the King had need of him.

Suddenly, like a great wave of light, a thought filled her mind. It took definite form. “Christ once needed a little donkey. I am not much good, but maybe he needs me, too. I’ll do whatever he says.”

With this thought held firmly in mind, she found a new joy in her life. Her troubles began to fade. Her heart grew light. In a strange fashion, friends appeared. An opportunity to get an education was offered her, and she accepted.

She became one of England’s most noted missionaries, Jane Shipman. Through her work thousands came to know the King who needed a little donkey.

Regardless, of how little talent we think we have, or our social standing in the world, or our material wealth, the Lord has need of each one of us.

Let us put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. When we do, we will have questions and even sometimes doubts, but the answers won’t really be our concern because as Christians we know and believe that truly Jesus Christ is our guide and strength in all of life. Don’t have doubts. Join the group that knows and believes.

Bought and Brought from Bondage by the Blessed Blood

Scripture: Hebrew 9:11-22

The text is chosen from Revelation 5:9; “Thou wast slain, and hath redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

Colossians 1:14; “We have redemption through his blood.”

The word “blessed” blossoms like a rose and fragrant flower in the garden of the scriptures. It shines like a radiant star in the Bible firmament. It sounds for like the sweet voice of an angel angelic and holy lullaby.

Genesis 14:20; says, “And blessed it be the God most high, who has delivered your enemies into your hand!”

Psalms 118:14 reads, “The Lord lives; and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation.”

John 12:13 reads; “So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, “Hosanna! Blessed be he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the king of Israel.”

And there are many other verses in the Bible, using the word “Blessed”. But for more reasons than all men ever had to use these “blesseds” do all men everywhere have cause to say “Blessed be the blood of Christ.” The blood of Christ is blessed blood because it is holy, precious, cleansing, redeeming, divine blood.

We may become a generation of spiritual castaways, a generation to whom Christ is no longer a living power. Possessors of all the benefits of the grace of God, in health, in education, in freedom, and in material advantages, we may not know him. We who once were nigh unto God by the blood of Christ may become a far off. That reversal can only end in disaster, though it take 100 years. For no nation or civilization has yet endured, which forgot all for which “the blood of Christ, stands. I doubt if our nation is going to be an exception. As a people we have drawn away from God and we are drawing our children away from him. I do not believe we can exist without God and it’s about time we come back to God before we have gone too far and it’s too late to turn back.

But why can we appropriately call the blood of Christ “blessed blood”?

Because it has power to affect a reconciliation between sinners and God.

Because it gives surprising proof of the love of God to sinners.

Because it shows how God can destroy the enmity that is natural to the unrenewed heart by his magnanimous, pardoning love.

Because it shows how the interest of all sinners was aimed at in the death of Christ.

Because it proves that Jesus took our place to die for our sins that we might not have to die for them, and proves that Jesus stood before God, with all our sins upon himself that we, through faith in him, might stand before God with none of our sins upon ourselves.

Charles H. Spurgeon taught his students for the ministry, “measure yourself by the Cross and see how high you stand.” By the standards of the Cross, people rather than things will be our chief concern. Truth and righteousness will be more important than expediency in determining our policies in our actions as Christians. The will of God will take precedence, overall lesser loyalties, if we truly take seriously the Lordship of Christ, which is so richly earned at the cross.

First of all – the blood “drawn from Immanuel’s veins” is blessed blood because it is “redemptive” blood.

Redemption means “to deliver by payment of a price” or “state of being freed by payment of a ransom or price.” That is what Jesus Christ did through his shed blood. His own “precious blood” is the price he paid for our redemption from sin. Christ died for our sakes, so our sins could be forgiven for all time. This is the sacrifice Christ made for our sakes, a debt we can never fully repay.

The blood of Jesus Christ is the key and center of redemption. It has power to redeem. Everything concerning salvation depends on it. Just as there is no life for the arm, severed by the body, so there is no redemption from sin apart from the blood.

Act 28:20 says; “take heed to yourselves into all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord, which he obtained with his own blood.”

Colossians 1:13–14 reads, “He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Second, the precious blood of Jesus Christ is the blessed blood because it is “introductory blood.”

It has power to introduce us to God.

Ephesians 2:13 reads, “But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ.”

It confers not only with status, but with the confident assurance of access.

Hebrews 10:19-20 reads, “Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way, which he opened for us through the curtain, that is through his

flesh.”

All blood-cleansed souls have a right to come to God at any time, in any place, and in any circumstances, and to present all their wants and wishes before the great King in the confident assurance that the God of the whole earth will grant them audience and will reply to them.

Eternal love, which, just because it is love, had always been giving itself in service for humanity, revealed once and for all its true nature by coming among man in personal form, and dying on a Cross. “God offers his own life, as the pledge that the evil can only be undone by the way of suffering and surrender.” If we want to know what God is like, let us look at Jesus Christ. In him we see God’s nature, see into the very heart of God; and most clearly when we see Jesus on the Cross. “It is nothing unto you, all ye that passed by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.”

Third, the blood which was shed by Jesus on Calvary’s cross is blessed blood because it is atoning blood.

The Bible teaches that blood is life: Leviticus 17:11 reads; “For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it for you upon the altar to make atonement for your soul; for it is the blood that makes atonement, by reason of the life.”

Peace with God is the result of the removal of the thing which caused the estrangement. That thing is sin.

Isaiah 59:2 says; “But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you so that he does not hear.”

Jesus Christ by his death, and the blood of his Cross has removed sin, have taken it away and having made propitiation for the sins of the world.

John 1:29 reads; “The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold the Lamb of God”, who takes away the sins of the world.” 1 John 2:1-2 reads: “My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous; and he is expiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Peace with God is the fruit of reconciliation. And Christ, by his blood, shedding death, has laid the bases for reconciliation, so that now the world is being sought by the ambassadors of Christ to be reconciled to God.

II Corinthians 5:18-20 says; “All this is from God, who through Christ, reconciled us to himself, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and trusting to us the message of reconciliation. So, we are ambassadors for Christ; God making his appeal through us.

Fourth, the blood of Christ is blessed blood because it is “victorious” blood.

The blood of Christ has power to make us victors over sin and “that old serpent called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world” and is known as the “accuser of our brethren”.

Revelation 12:9–10 reads; “And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world. He was thrown down to the Earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I have heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “now the salvation and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, and has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.”

People now victims, even longtime victims of “the world and the flesh and the devil,” can become victims, even “more than conquerors,” since the blood of the Lamb takes away all our fresh stains. The remarkable power of the precious blood of Jesus, cleanses us from sin and brings peace to a troubled and torturing conscious.

Fifth, the blood of Jesus is blessed blood because it is ‘argumentative’ blood. The blood of Christ “who though he were a Son, learned obedience by the things which he suffered, becoming the author of eternal salvation,” has power to supply argument in itself that grants sinners salvation. The blood of Christ supplies an argument to God himself for justifying you- justification being that judicial act of God, whereby he just declares righteous the sinner who believes in Jesus Christ, God himself looking upon you as though you had never sinned, as though you had always been “the righteousness of God.”

Sixth, the blood of Jesus Christ is blessed blood because it is inspirational blood.

How his holy blood should inspire us to purity.

How his sacrificial blood should inspire us to unselfishness.

How his divine blood should inspire us to righteousness!

How his precious blood should inspire us to greatness.

The dogwood tree is one of our favorite flowering trees. In the early spring time, the buds enlarge, and soon the delicate cross-shaped petals spring out. In the southern mountains, whole sides of the hill may be white with the blooming of the flowering dogwood trees. The dogwood trees grow slowly, and whenever it is transplanted from its natural setting, it must be done with care if it is to survive in a new place. The flowering dogwood is a favorite model for pictures of artists.

The story is told that at the time of the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. The dogwood tree was the

size and strength of the oak tree, and not the delicate tree we know. The dogwood was so strong and so straight that it was used as the Cross. To be used for such a cruel purpose, distressed the tree and it spoke out saying: “Strong man came and took me, and made me into a Cross, and upon me Jesus hangs. I did not wish this.”

Jesus heard the distress of the tree and spoke: “Because of your regret and because of your pity for your suffering, never again will the dogwood tree grow large enough to be used as a cross.

From now on the trees will be slender and delicate, twisted, and bent so as to wear no burden. Also, it’s blossom shall be in the form of cross—two short and two long pedals. In the center of the outer edge of each pedal, there will be nail prints, brown with rust and stained with red, and in the center of the flower will be a crown of thorns, and all who see it will remember.”

And when we look at the dogwood tree and see, it’s petals today, we see that this is so. Jesus has words, too, for all those who work against his will; “Father forgive them.” These can be words of understanding and comfort for us when we are injured by the hasty word or the unkind action of others. The hurt and the scar may remain in our lives and in our memory; but when we forgive others, as Jesus asked his Father to do, and he asks us to do, then hurts are turned into blossoms in his name.

Let us also remember the suffering, and the supreme sacrifice, our Lord has made for us so that our sins can be forgiven, and so we can have eternal life with our Father in heaven.

Here He Comes (Palm Sunday)

Scripture: Luke 19:29-48

The text is chosen from Luke 19:38; “Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord!”

Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem was not much of a parade compared to modern parades, but it did cause quite a stir in the crowded city. Jesus rode on a donkey, while children sang praises and threw flowers, and his followers lay down a carpet made of palm branches. In our own language, the text might be rendered, “Here he comes!”

Matthew 21:8 says; “Others cut branches from the trees and spread them in the way.

Palm Sunday is meant to remind us of what happened when Jesus rode into Jerusalem as a conquering King, a few days before his death. John and, his Gospel tells us, especially that palm branches were used.

In the East, there was great regard for the palm. It grows straight as a pillar with a beautiful diadem of leafy branches crowning its top. It keeps green summer and winter. It bears fruits abundantly in old age. Its branches seemed the most fitting to celebrate the homecoming of a conqueror.

People were already coming in great numbers for the feast, and it was these, rather than the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who welcome Jesus as King triumphant. There was something about Jesus that made them glad and hopeful and enthusiastic. They spread in his path choice branches of the palm. If you would join the people who welcome him as King, you must bring, not any branch or any leaf on the roadsides, but the best of all within your reach.

That was not all the people were not satisfied to bring dried and faded branches, but they cut branches from the growing trees. Have you got something new to give to Jesus on Palm Sunday? Fresh things, fresh obedience, fresh courage? Should not Jesus, our savior and king, have the freshest thoughts and prayers and songs from you?

As you sing “Hosanna to the Son of David,” think of some new way of showing your love to him. Spread branches in his way, green branches from the living tree, branches of palm Knisley cut, for he is a great conqueror, the greatest the world has ever seen.

But then and now questions are raised about Jesus is coming.

First of all, who comes here, friend or foe? It makes all the difference in the world who comes.

A prophet perhaps? This was the answer of Harrod, who considered Jesus to be the reincarnation of John the Baptist. There was no doubt that Jesus was a prophet, who preached the truth with forth rightness,

denounced evil fearlessly, and spoke with an authority, such as none other ever had among the world's prophets, Jesus is above them all.

Perhaps he was an impostor. This was the answer of the religious leaders, who were offended when they heard hosannas and saw the crowd following him. John 12:19 says, "The Pharisees then said to one another, you see that you can do nothing; look, the world has gone after him."

Maybe Jesus was a miracle man. This was the answer of the common people. In the crowd were those who had been touched by Jesus' healing power. But Jesus never wanted to be accepted as a miracle worker. Are we Christians because we want to do something no one else can do for us?

Jesus was the Messiah. This was the answer of Peter, who said this as recorded in Matthew 16:16; "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Here in Jesus is the fulfillment of the ages and the one who is to save the world and establish a kingdom of righteousness. Those who see Jesus as the divine son of God and Savior come to this inevitable conclusion. No other answer properly explains him.

Jesus has many lovers of his kingdom of heaven, but he has few bearers of his Cross. Many deserve his consolation, but you deserve his tribulation. He finds as many fellows at eating and drinking, but few that will be with him in his abstinence and fasting. All men would joy with Christ, but they that love Jesus purely for himself, and not for their own profit bless him as a heartily in temptation and tribulation, and in all the other adversaries they do in time of consolation. And if he never sends them, consolation, yet would they always lie him and praise him.

Second, how does Jesus come?

Jesus came to Jerusalem to offer himself as his people's leader and Savior, but the week that began with triumph, ended in tragedy. Why? The people were expecting his advent in terms of the cataclysmic spectacular, but he came in a meek, humble, and plain way. Nothing about him or his company suggests that he might be the promised Messiah.

How does Jesus come to us today? Many people feel they do not yet have Jesus because they have not had a religious experience in terms of a vision, a voice, or an emotional appeal. But in most cases, Jesus does not usually come that way. To most people, as to the two Emmaus disciples, he came in an ordinary, common and simple way.

Matthew 21:9 reads; "And the crowds that went before him, and those that followed him shouted, "Hosana to the son of David! Blessed it is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" On Palm Sunday Jesus shows us how social change will take place. Jesus leads a crowd of people in a street demonstration to call the people's attention to the issue at stake and to bring things to ahead. Jesus' march was peaceful. No one was hurt or killed; no windows were broken or buildings burned. There was a flood

of tears when Jesus looked over the city. Following the example of Jesus, the apostles in their own day, turned the world upside down by preaching the Gospel and by practicing the power of love and without violence. How does Jesus' way accomplish social change?

Jesus's way is the way of humility. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey to symbolize to all that he was a humble man. If there is going to be a change in modern society, all men must become humble. Our problem is pride, and pride causes violence.

Jesus's way is the way of patience. He did not expect to change the world overnight. He taught that the kingdom was like a seed which takes time to develop, grow, and produce fruit. He referred to the kingdom as leaven that takes the night to permeate the dough. Though it sometimes comes slowly, the kingdom is inevitable. Change requires education, due process of law, and an issue, and an interchange in the hearts of men practice is needed for God's words to take effect.

Jesus's way is the way of love. He entered Jerusalem as a personification of love. "The King of love my Shepherd is." He did not lead a crowd of people into the city to make demands. He could have used mob pressure to demand economic justice, higher wages, and better housing, but instead he gave the people his service, his love, even himself as the Messiah.

Thirdly, why does Jesus come? He comes to rule men by the power of love. He uses the method of humble persuasion. He demonstrates his love by suffering and sacrifice.

He comes to rule, not to rule over a class within a nation, or a nation among the nations, or race among the races, but rather he comes to rule the world, even as he does not desire to rule merely a part of a man's heart.

He comes to save the world. He knows man was helplessly caught in his own trap of sin. Jesus came to do what man could not do for himself. Man cannot save himself. Jesus did this by dying on the Cross.

What a glorious fourfold partnership Jesus offers freely to all who will accept it.

First, he offers communion. He says "Come on to me." In oneness of spirit, we are invited to respond to him who opens his heart to us.

Second, he offers sharing. He says, "Take my yoke up on you." We are invited to share his inheritance, his mission, and his eternal triumph.

Third, he offers knowledge. He says, "learn of me." Jesus will teach us how to serve with cheerfulness, to endure with courage, to achieve with humility, and to advance with hope.

Fourth, he offers contentment. Jesus said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am in, therewith be

content.” This does not mean, fatalism or despair, but the settled peace of faith.

Fourth, to whom does Jesus Christ come?

He came to his own nation, but his own received him not. On this Palm Sunday Jesus would come to America. Will America accept Jesus Christ?

Jesus comes to households, even as he came to the home of Zacheus. What a difference resulted when Zacheus took Jesus into his house! Salvation came to that house. Does your home need love and understanding in the place of hatred and bitterness? Yes, it most certainly does and it most certainly needs Jesus Christ.

Jesus comes to the very door of your heart. Will you permit him to enter? You have to answer this question for yourself. Christ awaits your answer.

Understanding the Cross (Maundy Thursday)

Scripture: John 19:12-22

The text is chosen from I Corinthians 11:24-25; “And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.”

If Christ’s Cross were only the story of a man, hanging on a cross beam of wood, giving his life for what he deeply believed, any good newspaper reporter could tell the story in a few paragraphs. However, the finest of Christian scholarship, experience, and insight for 20 centuries have not been able to fathom the depths of the Cross. In an effort to do so, great scholars and saints of the church have developed at least five theories of what Jesus did on his Cross. There is mighty truth in each of them, and material to illustrate or substantiate each of them is found in the Gospels. I am sure if each of us were to study the same subject, the Cross would mean different things to each of us and each of us would obtain a slightly different theory or meaning from Jesus’ death on the Cross.

First of all, we have the ransom theory. In Mark 10:45 Jesus said, “For the son of man also came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” The penitent thief only asked to be “remembered”, but Jesus assured the poor fellow that he “would be with him.” To know Christ’s living presence, his resources, guidance, and companionship, under any in all circumstances, anywhere and everywhere that is the greatest, if not, the only, security and freedom this earth knows. Standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has set us free means to get from this living presence of Jesus, the power to do what we ought to do. Freedom is not the right to do what one pleases that generally means slavery of some kind. Freedom means achievement. A free man is one who is ready to be and capable of being the free instrument of the eternal—the mind, heart, and life through which Christ can think, love and act. To be the set free is to be “ransom” indeed.

Secondly, we have the governmental theory. Nothing so interferes with the government and life of men as the presence of evil in personal life and social relationships. We all know this from what happens in government when politicians are crooked, when they do things for their own personal benefit. It cost us plenty when such people gain control and power over our government. In our own personal lives, we do not like to deal with another person that is crooked or dishonest. We cannot trust them, and we become suspicious of all their actions. Jesus’s greatest gift to us is not his personal perfection alone, but the way he handles the power and presence of evil in every man’s life. He rules from the Cross. The cross literally decreases the amount of evil in the world and makes human government of men more possible.

Thirdly, we have the moral theory. The cross causes men to enlarge their “beliefs” and “loves”. Remember what Jesus said on that cross and consider the moral influence of his example. Nothing short of a Christ, who set the example of suffering, as the Christian way of dealing with human problems would inspire men

to suffer for what they believe. If we really stand our ground on what we believe, we too will have to suffer, perhaps not in death, but in popularity, so-called friends, and ridicule. But if we truly believe what we say, we believe there is no other way.

Fourth, we have the substitutionary theory. His critics cried, "If thou be the king of Jews, save thy self," but Jesus couldn't save himself and us. Surely Barabbas said: "He died for me. He is taking my place." That is the way every penitent heart must feel. We can say, "Christ died for me, he gave his life for my sake. It was Jesus in place of me."

Fifth, we have the reconciliation theory. II Corinthians 5:19 says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and trusting us the message of reconciliation." John 12:32 reads, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself."

The Cross was the magnet by which God drew man back to his fellowship and purpose. Jesus draws men to himself through the pulling power of the Cross, and so reconciles men and God. God never needed to be reconciled. For he loves men forever; but man is the prodigal, and the Cross draws him back to the Father's heart.

So you see there are many meanings in the Cross where Jesus died. I believe all of them fit and give us something to think about.

When we come to our Lord's table, we are prone to think not so much of reception as of action; not so much of what God is doing for us as of what we are doing for God. We affirm our faith. We declare our allegiance. We renew our vows. We remember our Lord. We do something. We are properly reminded that before the Christian needs an outlet for action, he needs an inlet for reception. Symbolically, before we are asked to do, we are asked to take. We came first of all to receive spiritual blessings. The center is not in us and in our dedication. It is in God and his gift.

If worshipers are wrong to think of God's supper chiefly as a place where we do something, they are equally wrong in thinking of it as a place from which we can depart without an added consecration, which must first have its fruit in different deeds. "Here we offer and present unto thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, which is a reasonable service." The service of communion is properly completed, having received grace to restore our souls, we go from the church to the world to witness. The power of redeemed lives in redemptive service. God's saving power is not indeed dependent upon the deeds of man, but the deeds of man may have a share, even a necessary share in the redemptive process may we truly find his presence here as we come to his table and partake of the elements this night.

The Shock of Easter

Scripture: John 20:1-25

The text is chosen from John 20:25; “So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them; unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and placed my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.’ ”

Sometimes life tumbles in, even for very small children. A little girl stands in the aisle of a department store, crying and screaming. Only this has happened – her mother has been attracted to a display in another aisle. But the person of the little girl consists of herself and another, her mother. The person had been split. What might be called the love-link had been broken. Fear became dominant. There are cries and saw screams. The mother comes and speaks her name, “Nancy”. One word restores the love-link; one word cast out fear; one word subdues the screams and drives away the tears. The word is the little girl’s name.

Things go all to pieces for teenage boys and girls. Difficulties pile up. Decisions are hard to make. Sometimes a person feels mean inside. No one seems to understand. A person cannot stand alone, and yet old love-links seem to be outgrown. Fears arise in the heart. And then comes a day when the father says, “John.” Or mother says, “Jane.” Or a man whom you admire puts his hand upon your shoulder and speaks your name so that it thrills you to the ends of your toes. Everything is all right now.

The disciples of Jesus were in despair. Fear was making cowards of them. Their hopes had been shattered. They had seen their Master die on the Cross. All was lost.

They had not been themselves, alone. Their persons were themselves plus him. As Paul said later, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” They were bound together. Now the link was broken. Fear and delusion and despair rained in their hearts.

And then one of the women in the morning went to the garden where the master was buried. As she lingered, she heard a voice. And the voice spoke her name, “Mary.” The Christ was alive. It was his voice. The first Easter day had dawned and ever since that day the living Christ has been calling men and women and boys and girls by their names. The love-link with Christ makes them greater persons. Fear is driven from the hearts. He names our names. I suppose that is the greatest reason why we are so joyous at Easter. Mary! John! Peter! Thomas! When life tumbles in, it is wonderful to hear him speak your name.

In our text, Thomas is speaking to the other disciples who have just come with the news. Christ has risen. He would not believe that Jesus had risen unless he had proof. Easter came as a shock, but certainly a good one and a most welcome one for his disciples. A resurrection was the last thing the doubting and disbelieving disciples looked for. Easter was and still is God’s way of shocking men into the hard realities of his unusual love. God’s way of dealing with loss, mankind and doubting disciples are always strange to

man's ways. Isaiah 55:8–9 reads, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

First of all, God's love for you and me is a shocking love. He gave his son to die for his enemies. He emptied heaven of his dearest treasure, so that we poor sinners might be rich in him who became poor for our sakes.

Secondly, God's rescuing love is shocking because “I cannot, by my own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.”

He woos and wins me from rebellion against him to faith which rejoices to do his will.

He awakens me from spiritual death and gives me newness of life in baptism.

He keeps me alive in Christ, even though I may want to fall back into the sleep of death.

Indeed, God does rescue us from dying eternally. Whenever we are down and out, so to speak, God is there to go give us a lift. With God at our sides, we cannot die, we cannot give up, for he gives us the lift we need in all of life.

Thirdly, God's shocking love actually intrudes itself into my life, on each and every occasion. He loves me in my tears and my laughter, in my sorrows and my joy, in my failures and my successes. God simply will not let me go. Jeremiah 31:3 reads, “The Lord appeared to him from afar. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, I have continued my faithfulness to you.”

Fourth, God's love shocks me most when I am emptied of my strength, overpowered by my weakness, and stripped of my vain pride. I shake my fist at him when things go wrong, and he leads me to understand that, as I read from Romans 8:28; “All things work together for good to them that love God.”

Sometimes things happen in our lives and we cannot see why they happen the way they did, but in the end, everything does work out for the best and we usually see this in the end.

Fifth – what is so shocking about the love of God is that he loves me!

He knows me better than I know myself and yet he loves me. Every thought I have he knows instantly.

He hates sin and would have every reason to cast me aside and yet, he tells me as we read in John 6:37; “Him that come to me I will in no wise cast out.” Regardless of how we have sunk, if we open our heart and life to God, he will accept us. We have to be willing to make the first move.

He observes my pettiness, selfishness, and greed, and still, he loves me. God really does know each of us better than we know ourselves he knows our weaknesses and sins, but in spite of this, he still loves us.

Sixth - should it be strange if Christians behave shockingly different, if they have a sense of values which dismay their unbelieving friends and neighbors, if they deal with one another, not as the good or the bad but as the forgiven? Christians, persons who have truly accepted Jesus Christ in their lives do act different. They treat other people differently. This is what and how Jesus Christ has taught us how to act and how to live our lives.

Should it shock Christians to honor our God with lives saturated with his love in a way that causes the world to say, "Behold, how they love one another."

There is a word we often hear on Easter. That word is "hallelujah." Sunday after Sunday, you may not hear that word at all, but on Easter, you hear it often.

Let me tell you something about this word "hallelujah."

Easter is a very special day because on the day our thoughts turned to God and to Jesus Christ and to the wonder and beauty of the world God has created for us.

On the way to this sunrise service, we watched quietly as the sun appeared at the eastern horizon. Soon light flooded the entire earth as far as you could see.

What did you see? The sky, trees, grass, birds, and so many other things God has given for our enjoyment.

Often, we do not even notice how beautiful the world is. But when we do, we want to thank God for all of the beauty he has given us.

Many centuries ago, the people did not call our Lord by the name "God." "Indeed, they used a word from their own language, "Yahweh."

When the people saw all the beauty which God, or Yahweh, had created, they wanted to thank him. So, they would say, "Hail Yahweh."

After much time had passed, the people in their prayers shortened the name "Yahweh" to "Yah", in the same way we shorten the name Joseph to Joe. People then said "Hail, Yah", and eventually these two words became one word and our very special Easter word "hallelujah."

On Easter, we say hallelujah because we want to thank God for the beautiful green world in which we live and particularly for the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Easter did come as a shock for those who were there, but it should be no shock to us today. We know and believe as Christians what happened on that first Easter. We are thankful because we now are assured to eternal life with God, our father. Let Christ come into your heart now and enjoy the blessed life of all Christians around the world.

Tremendous Consequences

Scripture: Matthew 28

The text is chosen from I Corinthians 15:20; “ But now is Christ risen from the dead.”

Easter is the story of a Presence. Those who looked for Jesus in the grave are rebuked by the angel’s words, “Why seek the living among the dead?” They are on the right quest, but they are looking in the wrong place. The Ministry of Jesus continues as he walks the road again with the disciples.

This speaks to us of the immense vitality in goodness, a vitality that cannot be halted by death, nor crushed by evil, nor overwhelmed by circumstance.

The power of going on belongs to goodness and to God. The things that contradict goodness and God possess themselves the secret of decay. The Visitor, with the power of God in his spirit, faced the world’s worst, and overcame it, and in doing so he transformed everything.

Easter is the story of a Person.

The record of the appearances following the resurrection of Jesus, tell of a person meeting with friends, recognition and restored friendship, and continuing deeds of thoughtfulness and kindness.

Jesus is a person, living on, ministering to his friends, even on the time when his earthly life came to an end. What Christ was, he is, and we can still know him as a person.

Multitude of Christians can give testimony that the living Christ stands by to keep us at our best and to make us ashamed when we live at something less than our best. The power of his resurrection can lift life to new level levels.

Easter is the story, not only of a Person, but also of an Eternal Person.

In his life, death, and resurrection, is revealed the mighty power of God. God is the hero of the Easter story. With one great deed, he struck off the shackles of death and gave his Son the glory of life and freedom forever.

The wonderful thing about the risen Christ is that he can be everybody’s contemporary. He is the living Lord for every age and every people. No longer limited or circumscribed by geography or time, now he walks every road with every man who will turn to him in faith.

Easter is the story of the Savior of the world.

It is the world's Savior who makes the road to Emmaus the road to Eternity. He gives to every man's life its true meaning. The great prayer of Paul, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection," is a prayer that life may take on its proper meaning and dimension.

If the Easter power can come into our life to lift us above discouragement, depression, and disenchantment, and give to us bigness of enterprise and newness to finer deeds, then it will be accomplishing that which God intends.

The living Christ will give to us his grace according to our needs bringing light to our minds and encouragement to our hearts and strength to our spirits, if we will give him a chance. Easter has transforming power for all who walk and talk "in the way" with the ever- living Christ.

What is Easter? Easter is many things. It is a sleeping sentinel waking to find that the corpse he has been guarding has disappeared. It is Mary Magdalene, bewildered, standing with her arms full of spices, but with nobody to anoint. It is a young man in white uttering the greatest words of hope ever spoken to men: "He is risen!" It is a breathless sprint to the cemetery by John and Peter. It is a conversation that burns during an afternoon walk on a road leading to Emmaus. It is a prayer meeting in the upper room, suddenly broken up by the entrance of the Savior. It is 1000 Church bells in 1000 cities. It is a day vibrant with faith, song, and worship around the world. It is a new light in the eyes of a discouraged pastor as he sees a full church before him. It is ribbons and sweetmeats in the simplicity of a Christian orphanage in Korea. It is the glorious divergence of a butterfly from a cocoon. And, of course, Easter is flowers.

What tremendous consequences follow in the wake of the mightiest event in history." First of all, as a result, there arose the greatest institution of humanity, the Church militant, and triumphant. That church was born the other side of the empty tomb. The one incontestable result of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the emergence of the Christian Church. After that, the message and ministry of the Church was Jesus and the Resurrection.

Something wonderful happened on that first Easter, which lifted the gates of empires off their hinges and turned the stream of civilization into new channels.

Something happened, which gave a new date to time and a new dimension to the human soul.

Something happened, which has left the Church alive in the world as one of the greatest powers of good, and that for more than 1900 years.

Secondly, as a result, the believing Christian is freed from cynicism and defeat, and his life has become a sacred trust and a magnificent adventure.

This needs to be said in our day when so many people must be reckoned among the living dead. Remember,

you do not need to die in order to be dead, nor do you need to be translated to experience the quality of life which is eternal. Christians have within them the witness of life eternal. Colossians 3:1 reads; “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.”

If Christ be not risen from the dead, then nothing matters and the connotations of our larger life become worthless obstacles. If this life is all there is, if there is no judgment in which “the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed”, and if no Infinite Accountant shall balance the moral accounts and there is no eternity to which we bring our much or our little - than why all the tears and the self-denial and sacrifice that go into the building of Christian character? There really wouldn’t be any purpose or reason for this earthly life if we had no eternal life to look forward to with God.

But if, as our divine faith teaches, and as humanity’s greatest hearts have believed and taught, this life is a training ground and a vestibule for larger, ample life, and if we must sometime look into the searching eyes of that one who gave himself for us, the just for the unjust, that is different. Ethics and morality become implemented with spiritual significance. Then immortality is not only a gift, but also an achievement.

Without what Lorado Taft called the “hint of eternity,” the witness of the church pales and fails, missionary zeal and giving decline, the redemptive urge forsakes preaching, and democracy loses its foundations. Individual lives become purposeless and meaningless.

Easter means God’s evaluation of life. Apart from faith in personal immortality, which the gospel teaches, we clutch an empty husk. If in this life only, we have hope of Jesus Christ, we are of all men the most miserable.

In the Gospel of John 20:28 we read, “Thomas answered and said unto him, ‘My Lord and My God.’” Thomas made a discovery. What are the results which flow from this discovery? Three results are evident. They are found in the experiences of all who share his discovery.

Devotion. Thomas fell in worship at the feet of Jesus, for in him he had discovered God. We also will fall at the feet of Jesus and we must if we hope to discover God for ourselves.

Dedication. In that morning, Jesus Christ passed from the circumference of Thomas’s life to the very center. Life for this man, hitherto plagued and tortured by doubts, now had a purpose. Does your life have a purpose? It will when and if you discover your Lord. Your doubts and fears will vanish when Christ becomes real to you.

Deliverance. Doubts, fears, anxieties, all left the man in this mighty moment of his experience. He faced the future with confidence as well as with purpose. What a feeling of security, you can have with Christ at your side and this is what Easter is all about.

Thirdly, as a result of what happened on that first Easter day, death is defeated. The Christ of Christianity

could not be beholden of death. Midnight gloom gives away to radiant morn. He who faced life at its worst emerges as the Universal Conqueror with the keys of death and hell swaying at his girdle. "The head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory now." Jesus Christ has risen from the dead.

Easter brings to us the awareness that death is grief and life is long.

Apostolic Christianity scoffed at death because it believed that, once and for all Christ had destroyed its power. II Timothy 2:11 reads; "The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we shall also live with him."

Shame on us, modern Christians, if after these centuries, we have less heroism, if we apologize for, rather than confidently proclaim, our faith, and if in this present Armageddon, we tremble and sorrow as "those who have no hope."

I Thessalonians 4:13 reads; "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no Hope."

Our Christian faith is a resurrection faith. Our Lord is a loving Lord, who feared sin and death, and laid these grim specters low. A resurrection faith is by its own nature unconquerable. Christ lives within you and within me when we have truly accepted him and into our lives as our personal Lord and Savior.

Let the Church Triumphant, then put the bugle to her lips and sound reveille. The arms which were stretched on the Cross are uplifted this morning with the Easter welcome: "All Hail! All Hail!"

The important question concerning the Resurrection is whether Jesus Christ is alive in the 20th century. A vivid sense of Jesus in our lives today will convince the world as to the truth of the Resurrection more than lengthy arguments and learned discourses.

Instead of talking about Christianity, let us start living it. Let us show others what we believe. By the way we live our daily lives. Let Jesus Christ come into your hearts now. Indeed Christ has risen from the dead and is in you and in me.

The Dawn of Another Day

Scripture: John 21:1-14

The text is chosen from Deuteronomy 31:6; “For it is the Lord your God, who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.”

In our scripture reading this morning, there was a boatload of men on the sea of Galilee. They were cold. They were hungry, for they had been out all night fishing. They were unhappy because “that night they caught nothing.” But just at daybreak, they saw a figure moving about on the shore. Presently a familiar voice called out and they recognized the voice. His presence there and his personal interest in these men put another look up upon the entire situation. The presence of the Divine Spirit in this troubled, bewildered, disappointed world of ours, put a new meaning into it. Our problem is, we do not want to take time to let God speak to us, to show us the way. We are too busy doing things for ourselves and not being concerned about the rest of the world. But we certainly ought to start considering what is happening around us.

First of all-Jesus’ first word to those men was one of a friendly interest: “Children, have you any meat?” ...have you caught anything?

He knew their hunger, the weariness, the unhappiness in that boat. He also knows the same about our lives right now. The people who think that the Lord of life does not concern himself with these bodily necessities of ours had better read through their Bibles again.

How much it means that there is Someone, not far from anyone of us, who knows and cares! How much it means to have Someone standing by not with scorn for our weakness, but with words of friendly interest in their life, as our text indicates. The Lord of life stood there on the shore; he is always there. The eyes of Divine Love looked out upon the troubled sea of human life to show what daylight might bring. “The dawn of another day”-how many people are anxiously looking for it.

A man who was being driven in a wagon through a dense forest in the black of night asked the driver how he could see to guide his team. The driver replied, “By the path in the sky.” There above the narrow lane between the treetops was a starry pathway. The highway of a life in Christ may be as “the path in the sky” for the weak and the strong alike.

Colossians 3:1 reads, “If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above.”

Paul knew from experience that one can rise with Christ to newness of life.

This meant to Paul that the cares of this earthly life did not defeat us.

It meant to Paul that we are to seek for those things that are above our everyday, selfish levels.

It meant for Paul rising triumphantly with Christ to the joys of eternal fellowship with Christ, the Redeemer.

Secondly, the one who stood there met the needs of these discouraged men. Jesus said, “cast the net on the right side of the boat.” He knew where to fish and how to fish. When they drew the net to land, there was a fire kindled by his hands, with fish, broiling, and bread toasting on the coals. Jesus said unto them, “come and dine.”

That divine readiness to help us with our physical problems reaches a long way. But his ministry did not stop there. Man does not live by bread and fish alone. The master knew that heart and soul have their needs. When he had fed those men, he said, “Simon- lovest thou me?” He would restore a satisfying relationship between himself and that feeble impulsive man who had fallen down. The man’s whole future would turn upon his at that point.

It’s the same way today. If we as Christ missionaries and disciples, go into a country where the people are starving and start telling them only about their spiritual needs, we wouldn’t get very far. But if we can bring help for their physical needs and show them that if their spiritual needs are met their physical needs will come a lot easier. We have to help the people where their real needs are.

Jesus said, “lovest thou”? There is no other joy like love in this world, and without it there would be no joy in the world to come. It would not be very worthwhile to live if we did not love people.

I John 4:16 says, “So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God abides in him.” It is true if God is really in us, it will show forth and rub off on those around us. The same love God shows towards us, we will show towards others.

When those seven men had declared anew their loyalty to Christ, it was the dawn of a new day. When those men had eaten the bread and fish which he gave them and had assured him of their love, they faced the future with their heads up. They felt that henceforth their lives would be “hid with Christ in God.” He had met their deeper needs.

Lawrence of Arabia told an Arab companion of the discoveries of modern astronomy. “Yes, it is time,” replied the Arab with simple confidence. “The foreigner looks through his wonder-glass and beholds millions of stars and that is all. And he is proud of his knowledge. The Arab looks up and sees only a few stars, but behind the stars, he sees God.”

I Peter 2:21 reads, “Because God also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.”

We do not profess to be perfect, but our Leader is perfect.

We do not profess to be examples for others to imitate, but our Leader is the great example.

We do not profess to understand God's way completely, but our Leader understands all things.

We know only that our Leader has called us to follow him, and where he has gone, we may go also without fear.

Thirdly-Jesus gave those men something definite to do.

Jesus knew full well the futility of any generous impulse, which does not speedily find expression in wholesome action. Impulse precedes action, but the good impulse functions properly only where it is uttered in some form of useful effort. John 13:17 says, "If you know these things, happily are ye if ye do them." If you love me, do something about it. Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep. Tend my sheep.

Jesus wants us to do something to more or less prove our love for him.

The men who had fished all night without catching anything were sent out to become "fishers of men." They were to use the skill and patience they had acquired in that familiar occupation for higher ends.

Jesus sent them out to teach the nations what he had taught them. To make disciples of the nations as he had made disciples of them, and to baptize the nations into a richer sense of the divine helplessness, and into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Here was work, cut out for them, and laid ready to their hands. He promised them his guidance and cooperation as we read in Matthew 28:20, "Lo, I am with you always, (in that high task) even to the end of the world."

And this is what Christ wants us to do. First to accept him into our own lives and live our lives the way he has instructed us and then to go out into our world and teach others the same message. This is how Christianity has spread down through the centuries and it is how it will continue to be spread in the future.

Emerson said, "Hitch your wagon to a star." One can see in these six words, the summary of human achievement and everlasting inspiration to the future races of men. From Socrates, to our day, every forward step has been taken by mankind through revolving centuries, every advance of humanity towards the ultimate goal, has been led by some valiant dreamer, whose eyes were fixed upon the dawn. Moses, with dying eyes, saw a star that blazed in the Promised Land; the radiance of an eternal star led three Wise men to the manger in Bethlehem; Columbus pruned his faith in the dawn of a new day; Kepler, announcing the laws of the unchanging spheres; Newton, watching the apple fall, each looked beyond and into the future. We too can look beyond and into the future and see peace upon the Earth. All people living together in peace and harmony because Christ has become the main and center part of their lives. This is our aim and goal as Christians.

Fourthly - here in that scene by the lake we find the three basic interest of human life.

- (1) Something to eat; food, books, pictures, music, friends, the great outdoors, which feed and satisfy, strengthen and enrich the inner life.
- (2) Something to do: tasks worthy of our best powers, where we work out our salvation, knowing that God is working in us to accomplish his good pleasure.
- (3) Something to love: worthy recipients of the best our hearts can offer, answering back in terms of affection.
- (4) “Now abide of these three”: something to put into one’s life, some way of expressing one’s life, and someone to cherish within the heart.

It is said that many years ago, I don’t know just how many, but so many I really ought to begin. “Once upon a time” – the fishes noticed that the crabs always walked sideways, and they were very disturbed by this. “Why”, they said, “should all of us, the herring and the cod and the perch, and the salmon and the rest, swim straight ahead and the crabs go sideways?”

After a long discussion, they decided to start a Sunday school for baby crabs and teach them to walk straight.

When the next Sunday came, the baby crabs also came, and they had a wonderful time, marching, drilling, and learning to walk straight. As they returned to their homes, each walking as straight as could be, they promised to return the following Sunday.

Well, when the following Sunday came, the baby crabs came also-walking sideways.

The poor fish were so disappointed because they would have to begin their work all over again. So, they marched and drilled the baby crabs as they had done the first week. And the baby crabs went home again, each walking as straightest could be.

The third Sunday they came again sideways once more! So it went on for many weeks. Every Sunday they went home happy and front ways, but they came back sad and sideways.

After a long discussion, the fish decided to give up Sunday school for baby crabs. And the reason they gave was this. “It’s no good walking front ways on Sundays if you walk sideways all the week.”

Now that is my story. I am not going to dwell on the meaning of it for I’m sure you have figured it out already. But I would like to say that coming to church on Sunday, acting like a Christian is no good if we do not live our lives and practice Christianity the rest of the week. Christ gave his life that our sins might be forgiven. He rose from the dead so we can be assured of eternal life with our Father. He set the example. It’s up to us to follow him. Through his resurrection we do have the dawning of another day. Let us take

advantage of it.

Making Life Finer

Scripture: Psalm 16

The text is chosen from Psalm 16:11; “Thou wilt show me the path of life.”

Christian youth of the world are determined to “get somewhere”. Our Christian faith has both the “know how” and the “can do”. It shows the way to make life finer and offers the power for the tremendous task.

The Christian faith is the deepest wisdom of the ages because it’s centers in the revelation of God himself. Our faith in Christ helps us to come to know God personally.

It is concerned with the most significantly important work of human history, the building of the Kingdom of God. This is what, we as Christians, are working toward.

It relies upon the highest help humanity knows, the power of the Almighty. Without God’s help, our aims and purposes in life would be helpless and useless. When Christian young people today say, “God, make life finer,” what will it mean?

First of all, it will mean sound planning. This is a primary trait of intelligence. The intelligent person plans life wisely. He knows that the major plan must be sound or the minor plans will fail. However, man needs to discover the Maker’s plan and design, for God created us for his purposes. Christian youth want God to point him to his place of usefulness and to guide him in the development and use of his talents. Sound planning done under the leadership of God’s ever-present Spirit is basically important if life is to be finer.

Where do you find God’s purpose? You will find it shining already in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

You will find it in Christ, who fed the hungry, for it is still God’s purpose that all people should have enough and to share. You will find it in Christ, who blessed little children, for it is still God’s purpose that the child should be set in the midst— in education, in politics, in social life. You will find it in the Christ, who faced the darkest insult, scorn, loneliness, and agony in order to open the way of life to men.

Secondly – it will mean wise choices. False choices may appear wise and beguiling at the moment, but tomorrow’s honors are for what is honorable today. Youth must learn to have the long look when making choices. Religion helps to form standards and clarify judgments in making choices. It adds power for deciding when decisions are significant. Nine-tenths of being wise is being wise in time. Our Christian faith is an accurate significant sign post pointing the way. “Character is the momentum we gain from past acts of choices.” To learn to make wise choices in the light of Christ spirit is essential if we are to make life finer.

The youth of today certainly need some kind of inner guidance because they can go down the wrong path without even knowing it. They need guidance in choosing their friends and companions. Temptations are

greater than ever and I believe Jesus Christ is the only one that can do that guiding.

We who are living today are thinking the thoughts that will become the things and circumstances of tomorrow. What kind of thoughts are we thinking? Every human being has to make his choice. It is either for right thinking or it is wrong thinking. Man is in a mood of shifting outlooks. Think wisely and well. Your thoughts are important to your country and its way of life.

Thirdly-we will need patient thoroughness if we and our children are going to make life finer. Faithfulness in every today and in every job of every day is essential to worthwhile success. Patient, persistent, and thorough work is the only way of achievement. Especially is this true in the realms of ideas and ideals. Never give up. Never give in. Someone defined education as “What you remember after you have forgotten what you learned in school.” If we learned how to tackle a task with patient thoroughness, we have mastered one of life’s great secrets of successful living.

If our learning succeeds only in making us wealthy or famous, our studying has not been of the fullest benefit; but if it enables us to be a higher service to God and man, it is worth all the years of effort it has cost us. One of life’s greatest satisfaction is the feeling that we have helped another person in some way.

I’m sure you have heard of educated fools who are of no benefit to anyone, including themselves. All education does not come from a book. We learn from others experiences. We can learn how to live our lives from God’s Word, which is perhaps the most valuable book we can read. By prayer to God and by listening for his guidance and directions in our lives, we can add to our education which will be of benefit, to us and those around us.

Fourthly-we will need high courage. Only high courage will give Christian youth the daring adventuresomeness to Christianize our industrial, economic, political, and social life. “The continent of human cooperation has not been explored. Its treasures are still unknown even to make the church completely Christian in all its ways calls for courage and doing such as Jesus showed when he faced the backward, looking religionists of his day. God meets those who are willing to move out toward a better tomorrow, for there is where he is going.

In one of our cities, there is a department store, which is divided by an intersecting street. Between the separated establishments are two connecting passage ways. One of them joins basement with basement. The exchange that goes on through the tunnel is a matter of kitchen utensils, remnants, and bargain sales. But high above there is a bridge joining the upper stories. Here back-and-forth, pass the choices wears in the whole establishment; silverwork, brocaded velvets, perfumes, and tapestries. If the passage way between our life and that of some other beyond the basement level, what can we do but exchange the cheap shopworn wears of every day? Such traffic becomes inevitably dull, mechanical performances. People are not invigorated or and enthused by trading basement goods. If, however, there be a bridge which joins heart to heart upon the uppermost levels, so that the real treasures of existence can be passed to and fro,

that interchange takes on an unfading freshness, and is unfailingly, joyous and inspiring. Jesus Christ will help us to raise our level of living, even our thinking to things in life that really matter and are important.

In II Samuel, we read about David. At the very height of his career, at the moment of success, when power and risk are in his possession, David demonstrates that he is morally incompetent and falls flat on his face. He was a good shepherd; he was a skilled musician; he proved himself to be a good organizer; he was a brave soldier. But when power and wealth came to him, he showed marked incompetency and irresponsibility. The severest test of character is not on the field of struggle, work, or danger. The real test comes when men are past the stage of battle and have in their possession, power and riches.

How directly this principal speaks to our present age! It has been nearly 3 millennium since the times of David. The progress of the centuries has put power and wealth into our hands. The most serious question for our time is this: Do we have moral competency sufficient to use the power and wealth of the 20th century to the glory of God and the good of man? How can we achieve a moral competency for the living of these days?

Thank you to be morally competent one must attain a unified personality with a clear vision of the right.

Jesus was never confused or pressed with a sense of uncertainty. He was never found “halting between two opinions”, but he had achieved a state of mind in which his will was identified with the will of his heavenly Father. Acquiring this state of mind cost him dearly. He was conscious of the will of God for his life involving complete loyalty to the moral right and suffering and eventual death on the Cross. There were no tensions within his soul. He was a unified personality, a “one-directional person.”

Becoming a unified person is always costly. Few people are willing to pay the price today for such a state of mind before one can have a self that is morally adequate to these things, one must pass through a soul struggle that will identify the self with a will of God.

To be morally competent one must have an informed and disciplined mind.

In The Temptations of Jesus, it is clear that he was never caught off guard. It is significant that he met each temptation with a relevant scripture verse. The childhood and youth of Jesus had been concerned with the learning of the Old Testament. Jesus was mindful of the great truths set forth in the law and the prophets. Moreover, he had anticipated the temptations and was ready to meet them with his own moral armor and spiritual skill. Jesus could be said to be educated for life. He had studied the great moral and spiritual experiences of the past and set forth in the prophets. He had disciplined and prepared himself for all that life had to offer.

This preparing of youth, for the moral struggles of life is an aspect of popular education that is overlooked or neglected. But nothing is so important and meaningful to your life and mine has to be morally informed

and prepared for temptation.

To be morally competent one must understand that God is the source and basis of moral right.

Modern man has been told that it is expedient to do right, that “honesty pays”, that one must be good to be socially approved, and that one should be righteous in life for health’s sake. These are all valid reasons, but they are not adequate. The one good and sufficient reason is that this is God’s world and we are God’s people, and if we are to be at home in the world and fulfill our destiny and purpose in life, we must share the righteousness of God and fulfill his expectations.

Morality is not custom or conventionality or taboo. It is the rule and way of God for us. The roots of morality are set in eternal reality.

At the moment of greatest privilege and power, David proved himself morally incompetent; but this strong Son of God stands firm in the will of the heavenly Father and encounters all that evil can hurl against him because he understood the moral problems of life; because his mind was made up to do the Will of God and because he knew that his peace and fulfillment of his life was in the Will of God.

Fifthly - if we are to help to make life finer, we must have devotion to things that matter. In the Library of Congress there is a statue of religion, on which are inscribed the words of the prophet Micah taken from chapter 6:8; “What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God.” Not in pride and power, but with deep humility, we are to strive to root out injustice and to show our delight in deeds of kindness as we keep comradeship with God himself. Here is where on our unselfish devotion to things that matter most spring into life and deed. Christian youth stand in array, not for battle with arms, but rather guarded in full armor of God to fight for peace, truth, justice, joy, and the spiritual well-being of the land. Truly, our Christian young people are the stout defenses of our country. They are the walls that keep out tyranny, hate, lustful power, and atheistic materialism. Their lives are the individual stones for the building of a New World, strong, sound and safe. They will make life finer - in the spirit and in the company of Jesus Christ. Let us adults come alongside them, to give them our support.

When Faith Falters

Scripture: Psalm 77

The text is chosen from Psalm 77:7-9; “Will, the Lord spurn forever, and never again be favorable? Has his steadfast love forever ceased? Are his promises at an end for all time? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has he in anger shut up his compassion?”

These words should be familiar to most of us. When something happens in our lives the first thing we say is, “God, why did you let this happen to me?”

The most common reason why faith falters is the one we see in the experience of the psalmist: the occurrences of some tragic event that contradicts or challenges the promises of faith.

Paul’s ancestral faith faltered before the steady witness of the early Christians, particularly the stoning of Stephen. He was forced to rethink it, and it simply did not stand up under the ordeal.

The early church was puzzled by the crucifixion of Christ. For half a century after this had happened, it looked like a defeat, and Christians were forced to do some of their steadfast, thinking about it in order to fit it into the pattern of Christian victory. Wouldn’t we be puzzled if we suddenly saw our leader and Lord hanging on a cross?

For in our own lives, the death of a loved one or the defeat of our nation or cause can force our faith to falter. We begin to doubt and wonder why such things happen or God allows them to happen. All such events raised doubts about the accuracy of traditional beliefs in the love and the goodness of God. I think it is safe to say that faith is faltering all over the world today because of the tragic and unpredictable character of events. We wonder about the many thousands of persons being killed in Vietnam. We would wonder about the riots of college students and others. We wonder about the drug situation in our country and around the world. We wonder about the alcohol problem facing us right now. We wonder about the moral problems of unmarried boys and girls living together as men and wife. No wonder our faith is faltering.

Secondly - faith faults in the discovery, that traditional religious ideas no longer fit over new experiences. This is the biggest and most frequent reason we get from young people today. This has happened to everyone in some form or the other. And it does not happen once; it will happen many times. The very nature of life makes it almost inescapable. This is no new experience for our religious tradition. Two of the great heroes of early Christianity, Paul and Origin, went through the twilight period of faltering doubt on their way to a greater faith for themselves and for those who were to come after them. Each had been born and nurtured in one tradition and had found that that tradition was seriously challenged by the new Christian faith. It could not have been an easy struggle for them to modify the old and accept the new, but

both did it.

We need strength to endure some of the situations we faced today, just as others have in the past.

As a result of the election of 1862, the North repudiated Lincoln. It did not believe in his policies and his leadership. Lincoln's support in Congress was almost nothing. A Republican caucus demanded that Lincoln dismiss his entire cabinet. He was in the depths of utter despair. But when the committee returned the next day, they found a new Lincoln who had wrestled with God through the night until victory dawned. No longer was the tall president, hesitant and uncertain. Now he was sure and confident. He had come out of his dark valley into the light. Now, with courage, he stood by his cause as a lone oak stands against the gale. "And Lincoln was the Lord of his event."

Thirdly – when faith falls, what do we do? What can we do?

Although our first and strongest temptation is to retreat from the challenge to an earlier and stronger position, we have no real alternative to moving steadily ahead through the clouds of lowering doubt, suffering, and hardship in search of an even greater faith than we have ever known. The only answer to faltering faith is to study it by advancing through the doubts that challenge it to an even greater faith.

When a farmer advertises for a hired hand, a young man answered the ad. "Can you run a tractor?" asked the farmer in the interview. "No" said the young man. "Did you ever run a milking machine?" "No". Well, what can you do?" "I can sleep when the wind blows."

The farmer did not think that this was much of a recommendation, but he needed help badly and so he hired the young man.

One night, a terrible storm awakened the farmer. He went to the hired hand's room and found him sleeping soundly. The worried farmer did not have the heart to awaken him, so he went out to see what he could do to make the building and animals safe. Much to his surprise, the doors of all the barns were closed and tightly bolted. "Aha," he thought, "I'm sure he didn't tie the straw down." But he was wrong: the straw was securely covered with a tarpaulin. As the farmer went back into the house, he recalled with the hired hand had said the day he had come to work: "I can sleep when the wind blows."

The story is not told to encourage you to sleep through the crisis' of life that come your way, but rather to say that we must place our trust in God and prepare ourselves for the coming of these crisis'.

It is easier for us to grow up our energies for this move ahead if we recall for a moment, our indebtedness to those experiences when faith faltered. We owe most of the Old Testament to men whose faith faltered, not once, but many times, as they experienced or recalled the tragedies and defeat in Hebrew history. We owe the New Testament to men whose faith in ancestral ideas faltered before the challenge of Christian

ideas and experiences. We owe the Reformation to men whose faith under severe challenge pushed beyond the inadequate system of thought and institutions in which they had been reared to more adequate ones that they passed on to us.

Some mischievous boys overheard a very old and very needy Christian woman praying for a loaf of bread. As a joke, they bought a loaf, placed it inside her cottage door when she was not looking, and hid themselves. Later, she told them of the wonderful way that God had provided for her need. The boys laughed. "Why, that wasn't God. We brought that loaf." The old woman was unshaken. "I don't care if the devil brought it," she said, "God sent it."

There is a definite need for hope in our lives today we need hope for each day.

If you face each day, with a buoyant spirit, it makes you happier yourself, it causes you to do your work in better frame of mind and, therefore, more wholeheartedly and more successful. But it must be a hope inspired by Christian Faith.

You cannot foresee what any day may bring in the home, the office, the shop. If you go in a dark mood to the day's work, something is almost certain to go wrong. But go in the spirit of hope, knowing that your heavenly Father has you in his keeping and will help you to make each day, a day of duty incredibly done, with a cheerful countenance, wholesome conversation and quiet trust.

Begin the day with God and take him with you in the daily round and that will fix your mind on the sunnier possibilities and save your life from frustrations and defeat. It is a great and liberating thing as you face each day to "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost," and so subserve life's greatest purposes.

We need help in the building of our characters.

We can all be great in character, in moral and spiritual attainment. We can all be truly Christian. No matter what sinful habit has tightened its grip upon us, there is still hope for us. And every generation, and in every land, the power of Christ has been seen in changing the lives of men and women.

Christ can do these wonders with one of us and make us all over, if we surrender our ourselves to him. Christ alone is your hope if you want to triumph over sin and grow in Christ- like character, blessed and a blessing in your day and generation.

We need hope for the future of the world. Only hope can save us here.

Take your stand with the ancient prophets who were emphatically men of hope. They saw all the evil in the world, but in spite of it, they never allowed hope to vanish away. They took the attitude because they

were so sure of the wisdom, the goodness, and the power of God.

The New Testament stakes the same hopeful and expected note. Its last book sees “a new heaven” in the future. Jesus Christ taught his disciples to pray, “thy Kingdom come”. Jesus was the greatest optimist the world has ever known, and in the world unseen, he directs the course of history according to his purpose. Let us take our stand with him and work with him, the captain of our salvation, knowing that humanity is moving forward to the new glad day that will fulfill the glowing descriptions of the prophets and the seers.

So, we do have something to rely on when our faith faults, and that is the hope Christ has promised us.

Fourthly - let us remember when our faith faults in the business of living, as it will, that God’s steady hand is on our shoulder, leading us to an even greater thing.

One of the precious privileges of each generation is to examine its heritage. Each generation has the responsibility of being as fair to the generation to come as it tries to be to those who have gone before. Go through your heritage as you would your attic on a moving day. And as you go through the heritage, I bid you keep, strengthen, and augment, that which is useful; modify and discard what is not.

A friend of mine, whom we will call Mr. Smith, has many people who come to him for counsel and advice. One day, he and a lawyer friend, whom we will call Mr. Brown, stop downtown for coffee and a roll. It must have been several years ago, because when they got the check, Mr. Smith’s bill was only \$15. The waitress, however, made a mistake on Mr. Brown’s check and charged him only a nickel, even though he had coffee and a roll, too, just like Mr. Smith.

When lawyer Brown got his check and saw the amount, he quickly turned it over on the table in front of him and went on talking. Mr. Smith noticed the mistake, but said nothing.

When they were ready to leave, Mr. Brown was the first at the cashier’s counter. He paid his Nickel and walked out. Mr. Smith paid his \$15 and followed him.

Several months later, another man was talking to Mr. Smith about an estate. A member of this man’s family had died, leaving a considerable amount of property and money. The services of a lawyer were needed to settle the estate. Since a lot of property was involved, the fee for the lawyer, who got the job would amount to several thousand dollars.

The friend said to Mr. Smith, “I’ve been thinking about giving the job to Mr. Brown. What do you know about him? Mr. Smith thought a moment and then said simply, “I don’t believe I should give it to him if I were you.”

Mr. Smith’s advice was followed. Mr. Brown lost the case and the large fee that went with it.

And the reason? As Mr. Smith put it to me, “a man who would be dishonest for a dime cannot be trusted with a large sum of money.”

One day, Jesus told the story to show how important it is to be honest and dependable in little things. We know it as the parable of the talents. To a man who had been honest with a relatively small amount of money, the judge said, “you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much.”

We need to keep the church hard at the task of being the church! Of being that which holds a high standard alongside personal and social life, measuring the worth of whatever we are and do by the Kingdom of God itself.

And when you falter in the task and find yourself asking, “Will the Lord cast off forever?” Remember then the necessity of moving straight ahead toward a greater faith, knowing you will be sustained by the God of the universe. Let us listen, and we shall hear the answer as given by those who have gone before us. “Yea, and greater than that.” Your faith will falter at a times, but when it does let Christ give you the lift you need and when you come back, your faith will be stronger than ever before.

Knowing the Will of God

Scripture: John 4:27-38

The text is chosen from John 4:34; “Jesus saith unto them, my work is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”

Perhaps if more of us knew the will of God in our lives, we would act differently and live our lives differently. Perhaps if we would take enough time to listen to God, we would find out what he wants us to do. If we could understand and really know the will of God in our lives as Jesus did, our lives would be entirely different and our world would be a different place in which to live.

First of all, we have the inclusive life purpose.

In our text, we have in brief compass, the life purpose of Jesus.

The driving power of Jesus’s life comes to the foreground. We have to eat to live, but the main driving power of life is not food. We need food, of course, but man does not live by bread alone. Hence, we see Jesus, tired, and hungry, but we also see him confronted with work, which needs to be done. And for the sheer joy of work, fatigue and hunger were banished. How many of us today would let our stomachs go because we really enjoyed our work so much and it needed to be done immediately?

There is a perfect uniting between the will of the Father and the will of the Son. The Father’s will was not imposed upon him; it was the Father’s will which inspired him. He sought the will of God so wholeheartedly that it became second nature to him; Yea, even sharper than that, it became his nature. Jesus could say with the deepest satisfaction as we read in John’s Gospel chapter 8:29; “I do always those things that please him.” How many of us always do the things that we definitely know please God? Very few, I’m sure. We are more interested in doing the things that please us first, then if we have time, we will consider God.

God has a purpose for every life. We may not always be aware of it, but God, nevertheless, does have a purpose for us. Not every life fulfills the purpose which God has given it. Just as it is possible to “miss the boat”, so it is also possible to miss the “boat of life” – the purpose which God has intended for all.

The way we are going, in this country and around the world, we are going to miss the boat of life. Talk about people worshiping idols, why we have more idols to worship today than ever the Hebrew people of old could even think of existing. We worship money, leisure time, prestige, popularity, our homes, our position in society, material possessions; the list could go on and on. As long as we do not please God first in our lives; as long as God is not the center of our lives, we will never come to know him. We will never know what his will is for us. Perhaps we will even go through life, grasping in the dark and never find our place in the world or the next period.

God has built countless bridges to men's minds, but he has placed one limitation upon himself: he doesn't cross the last drawbridge into our minds until we invite him. It is a drawbridge which we open and close from within the castle of our souls. Don't ask me why; I don't know. I suppose it is because he wants his sons to have free will. Whatever the reason God's final problem in bridge building is to get past the portal of our own minds. It's up to us whether we invite God into our lives or not. But I believe without him we are poor lost souls, with him we are conquerors.

Secondly – we have the will of God as the standard of life.

The will of God is not a calamity which must be accepted, like the “act of God” referred to in many legal documents. It is the challenge of God to us that something needs to be done. The only proper response for us to make is to answer readily, “thy will be done and be done by me.” The will of God as the standard of life indicates we are not driven by circumstances, but we are led by God. Our lives may be and should be directed by God. We are to line in obedience to him, not to please ourselves, but to please God.

If we accept that as our standard, we enter into the fellowship of Jesus. In his circle, he includes everyone who makes it the dominant purpose of his life to glorify God by doing his will. Words must be backed up by action or they are of no avail. Matthew 7:21 says, “Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord; shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” We have to more than say it with our lips, we have to live our lives as though we believed it.

Let us suppose that a man dies and goes to heaven, which means simply to a full enjoyment of the presence of God. How did he go to heaven? Why was he admitted to be with God? And answering the other question, how can a man become justified with God?

By a natural right and inheritance. He goes to heaven, for the simple reason that he is a man and inheritance all the possibilities of human life. Man deserves acceptance with God just as he deserves the privilege of breathing the air which is necessary for his physical life.

Stripped of its philosophy and poetry, this is the doctrine of the universalist. This position aside from the flat contradictions of scripture that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, will not even satisfy the objectives of our reason. Before you convince me that I shall get to heaven, I must know how. My belief is founded on knowledge. To say that a man goes to heaven because he is a man gives me no answer as to how.

A man can become justified with God by superiority of character. This man agrees that to send all men to heaven, as they are would only reproduce the conditions of this world, and that heaven would be simply this world on a larger and more durable scale.

Only those will go to heaven, who deserve to go. And when you ask him who deserves to go, he replies that that must be determined by character. Only those who have a good character will be justified and admitted to heaven. Character of men cannot always be determined. Our means of knowledge are so incomplete and fail. But God, the All-Knowing, and the All-Seeing, would labor under no such difficulty. Because he is God, he knows just how good or bad a man's character is.

Yet, even granting that God could or would choose out for salvation, those men who had reached a certain standard of character, would this be reasonable or even just method of procedure? If I am to be saved because I have attained into a certain degree of excellence in character, how will I ever know whether or not I have reached that passing point? Only the day of final destiny would reveal it and until then, instead of having a fearless assurance of salvation, I must wait in unrest and anxiety.

Man can become justified with God by the free pardon of God.

God in his mercy pardons our iniquity, but does that make me just and hence fit for heaven? I may be pardoned, but is a pardoned man a just man? Or an innocent man?

The sinner must be pardoned before he gets to heaven, but that is not all, nor is it the transaction or the change which fits him for heaven and the fellowship with God.

Man can really become justified with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

The extremity of man is the opportunity of God. The standard of acceptance with God must be established by God himself. And God has established that standard – nothing short of righteousness. To be justified with God, we must be worthy of justification, that is, we must satisfy the demands of God. I must be righteous, if not of myself, then buy another, and that other is God. Yet the best of men and of saints have been the first to confess their cold unfitness and unworthiness, and to subscribe themselves the chief of sinners.

An unjust man does not deserve justification, but if any man can justify him, it must be God. Here, we come to the great answer of Christianity. "It is God that justifies us." Upon the rock of Christ, he builds his church, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it. The ground of our acceptance with God is the acceptability of Christ. He takes my sins and I take his righteousness, and I am accepted in the beloved, that is, in Christ. This I believe is the will of God for each of our lives and certainly the standard we should live by. There is a great sustaining power derived from a full consciousness of doing "always those things that pleases him." When Jesus entered the garden of Gethsemane so exhausted that he was weary even unto death, he found new strength as he gained clarity through prayer of what God expected of him. The consciousness of doing God's will sustained him. As he looked death squarely in the eye, he could say, confidently, "Into the hands I commend my spirit."

There are some wise sayings by Calvin Coolidge, which I believe can be applied to our world today.

“We do not need more national development; we need more spiritual development. We do not need more intellectual power; we need more spiritual power. We do not need more knowledge; we need more character. We do not need more law; we need more religion. We do not need more of these things that are seen; we need more of the things that are unseen.”

Thirdly – we have the way we know the will of God.

We get our start in the religious life when others tell us about God. We know enough to take the first step. As we take that step, the second becomes clear to us. In the Gospel of John, chapter 7:17 Jesus said, “If any man will do his will, he shall know.” We learn to know God’s will as we obey him. We learn as we follow instructions, which isn’t easy for some of us.

It is never impossible to do God’s will, because God never ask the impossible of us.

No one will deny that there is much confusion in this complicated world. We are all affected by it. No one can look down the corridor of time and see his whole life laid out before him. Nor do we need to have such knowledge. To do God’s will, we must do the first thing at hand, and the second becomes more clearly understood. We learned to know God’s will more fully as we act on the part of his will already known. If we refuse to do the will of God, already known to us, the gateway of truth is closed to us.

Matthew 5:9 says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

A small girl rushed home from Sunday school and said excitedly to her mother, “Mother, I have become God’s child.”

“What do you mean, dear?”, inquired the mother.

“I made peace,” she replied. Her face beamed as though she had achieved a great victory. “Betty said Suzy was naughty, but I didn’t tell Suzy what Betty said. If I had, there would have been an awful big fuss. So, I am a peacemaker, aren’t I Mother?”

“Yes, you certainly are,” agreed the mother. “You are a peacemaker, and if you are a peacemaker, you are as you may say, a child of God.”

I’m sure we agreed that this is God’s will for each of us, to be peacemakers, and every one of us can take a lesson from this little girl.

The people who talk much about the difficulty of knowing the will of God often fail to give the clarity

that is necessary because they hesitate to take the step-by-step procedures, which obedience requires of us. The obedience of faith is not a way of talking but a way of walking. As we walk, we learn to know God's will more fully. Step-by-step the way opens before us. And in doing God's will we find our deepest satisfaction.

I know personally from my own life that God does reveal his will to us. Take time to listen to him. Even more important take time to ask God before you take the next step. He will tell you. He will guide you. The satisfaction will be the deepest you have ever felt in your life.

Prevenient Goodness

Scripture: Psalm 21

The text is chosen from the 21st Psalm, verse 3; “Thou preventist him with the blessings of goodness.

The word ‘prevent’ here has no suggestion of hindering. It means to anticipate or go before. It is that assurance of a foreseeing power, of a footstep, and they figure on ahead, which quieted and cheered the psalmist soul and helped him to be brave against the morrow.

The sadness knew that God was behind him in the subtle inner weaving of the past.

He knew that God was with him in the present, invisible, yet nearer than his breathing.

To get at the core of God at his greatest, a man must first get into the core of himself at his least.

But the psalmist also knew of the path he should have to tread. Tomorrow was being shaped by hands divine today. God is not only with us as we journey, but God is also before us as we journey.

The final joy is not how fascinating God is, but how fascinating we are to him. He is worried about us, touched by our problems, tender to our every need. This is something that is too good to be true! No man is lost in the huge shuffle of heavenly bodies. Each of us is somehow wrapped around God’s little finger.

In the 146th, Psalm verses 7–10 reads; “The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous.

The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. The Lord will reign forever; thy God, O Zion, to all generations.”

To Jesus, God was already in tomorrow. No new days dawned ever brought him a step near to the edge of the love of God.

First of all, God is with us at the beginning of life.

When we were born, we came into a world that was prepared.

Isaiah 45:18 says, “For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (he is God!), Who formed the Earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it a chaos, he found it to be uninhabited!): “I am the Lord, and there is no other.”

Not unto an unprepared world is the little infant flung. Nature ,for millenniums, has been preparing for the very hour.

Does the newborn child need to be clothed? Sheep have been pasturing upon the hills.

Does the newborn child need to be fed? Mysterious changes have been preparing food.

Does the newborn child need to be warmed? Unnumbered centuries ago, the leaves were falling with the sunshine in them that today we might have summer on the hearts.

We were born into a society that was prepared. Life parishes without a right environment, and an environment contains a thousand yesterdays. If you are to give a child a good education, you must begin 100 years before the child is born. We are all aristocrats and born into a heritage.

We were born into a home that was prepared. Love has been very busy with its welcome. Prayers go heavenward with a new intensity, fountains of tenderness are opened up, and God is near and his hand more wonderful. All the future has been a different music. Home is a type of heaven, a prepared place for a prepared people.

Secondly, God is with us at the progress of life, as we advanced in it from stage to stage. Every step we take, we feel more certainty that someone has been ordering an advance. Hope is just got a little way ahead, kindling the lamps and leveling the path.

Think of the surprise of life – it's unexpected and unlooked-for element. Our joys surprise us like birds upon the wing, flashing upon us, suddenly and strangely.

There is an element of surprise in our temptations, and half their power is their unexpectedness.

There is an old story of a man who had been the victim of a strong drink, but who had reformed and apparently was the conqueror of his evil habit. However, when he drove into town, he returned to hitch his horse at the post in front of the town saloon. Eventually, he fell into the old way again. Had he had a healthy fear of temptation he would have changed his hitching post. That's the way it is with many of us. We have reformed from some sinful habits only to fall back into the same trap again because we have not learned to avoid these pit falls of life.

In our sorrow, there's always something of which we find no replica, something that is ours and ours alone.

All that fine adjustment of experience, as we advance to it, from stage to stage, is a witness to the watchful heart and the preparatory handiwork of God.

Think of the cravings of our life – those longings that beset us as we journey.

The measurement of life is what it hungers for. When we are young, we hunger for adventure; when we

are old, we hunger for repose. When we are foolish, we want to conquer worlds; when we are wise, we want to conquer self. When we are children, it is fame we covet; when we are taught a little, we begin to see how it is better to be faithful than to be famous. Our life is measured not by what we win; our life is measured by the things we strive for.

Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

The season is here again when you boys and girls will see people bringing out their lawnmowers and cutting their grass once more. In fact, you older children may even be able to help.

I haven't seen, but perhaps you have, a special kind of lawnmower. A friend of mine told me about this machine, which was invented only a short while ago. All you have to do is to steer the lawnmower until you have cut a path in the grass all around the edge of your lawn. From there on the mower will run by itself. And automatic feeler built into this machine, steers it until the entire lawn is cut. Certainly, this is a wonderful way to mow the lawn, don't you agree?

I believe that people are something like this machine. God has given us a built-in feeler, too, which we call the conscious. When we are very small children, our parents and teachers guide us a great deal of the time, showing us where to go and what to do. Then we get older, our conscious tells us what is right and wrong, and we can guide ourselves. This is what it means to grow up as a Christian. Remember these words from the book of Proverbs,” Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

How grown-up are we? Can other people depend on us to be good Christians even when nobody is watching over us?

As a man deepens, so his longing deepens till they reach to the infinite and eternal. As these cravings, alter and rise from the transient to the enduring, God is ever there before us with his prepared answer to our quest. We come to pray for pardon, peace, and unbroken fellowship with God. All that, in Jesus Christ, our Lord, has made ready for us long ago.

Thirdly, God is definitely at the end of life. Thou goest before us into the dark alley. John 14:2–3 reads, “In my father's house are many rooms; if were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you may also be.”

Heaven is man's native place, prepared for him from the foundations of the world. Within that Kingdom, all made ready, there is to be the individual touch. “I go to prepare a place for you.”

Of what kind that preparation is, eye has not seen, an ear hath never heard. All we know is that we shall be at home and shall be welcomed by familiar hands. If here the preparation is so wonderful that wants for the little child when it is born, how much more wonderful shall it be when dying? We are born into the glory? If love has been busy, making ready here, shall love not also be making ready there? It is all our Father's house of many rooms, and we bought pass from one into the other.

Indeed, we shall all reap according to the seed we sow. You can expect to reap more than you have sown because it is the very principle of seed to increase.

Hosea 8:7 says, "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads, it shall yield no meal; if it were to yield, aliens would devour it." Galatians 6:7–8 reads, "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

Our acts indeed multiply the results in the same way that crop seeds do after a farmer sows them. There is a Spanish proverb, which says, "Sow a thought and reap an act; sow an act and reap a habit; sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny."

Life itself is a seed time for each of us. It may truly be said of all men, "They have sown." Yet the prudent man stops to reflect and puts the question: "What will the harvest be?" It is an important question, for the harvest invariably yields fruit of the seed sown and more than sown.

You can expect to reap more than you have sown because others reap with you.

Romans 14:7 says, "None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself."

As we live out our days, our lives affect others for good and evil. It might not be so bad if we reaped alone, but that mother and father, that wife and family, or those business partners reap along with us.

Does not the alcoholic cause his wife and children to reap a bitter harvest? What shall we say about the harvest of a broken home that affects every member of it? My deeds and attributes may be carried forth in my children, my friends, and my neighbors, to be reproduced through them for good or evil. Harvest has a way of multiplying, whether they'd be healthy or rotten.

You can expect to reap more than you have sown because it takes a longer time to reap.

Consider the length of time, One reaps either the effects of an ill-directed, or dissipated life, or the blessings of a godly life.

Look at the length of the time, one spends brooding with a smitten conscious over a matter of stealing or lying, or the mistreatment of a fellow human being. Contrast this with the peace of mind of one who speaks and lives the truth and who deals honestly with his neighbor, knowing the forgiveness of God.

The Beatitudes show that we can reap a magnificent harvest simply by doing what God wants.

This great truth of saving and reaping is the answer to one whose life is given over to selfish and evil pursuits. It gives him reason enough to change the direction of his life by repenting of sin and accepting Jesus Christ as his Savior.

No one can live a Christian life until he becomes a Christian. We become Christians by taking Christ into our hearts as Savior and Lord. The man who receives him, really and truly receives him, begins a new life. His life is therefore lived for God and his glory, and immediately he begins to reap the benefits of such living.

Without God, nothing is wise or strong or worth doing. To live unto God is the only wise sowing.

Indeed, God is always with us no matter where we go or what we do. Let him come into your life. Make him the center of your life and see the difference it makes in your life.

Five Barley Loaves

Scripture: Psalm 21

The text is chosen from John 6:9; “There is a lad who have five barley loaves.”

It goes without saying that the lad’s lunch was packed by his mother. We shall consider those barley loaves as the symbol of other good things that a mother might give to her child.

Every boy ought to have something to give the Christ. Every mother of a boy ought to make sure that he has something to give.

Jesus taught; “it is more blessed to give than receive.” Especially this is when we can really give of ourselves. Many people give, but they don’t want to be bothered to give of themselves. If mothers can get across to their children, a small part of the giving of themselves they give to their families, we certainly wouldn’t not have to be concerned about the next generation and what will happen to this world.

When we really have something to give, the sequence will be striking as it was with five barley loaves. The barley loaves were received from the lad’s mother; they were given to Jesus; they were blessed by the mother; they were distributed to a multitude.

When the barley loaves were blessed, they became Sacramento. They became the visible means of invisible grace. They became the carrying agent of the Symphony and love of Christ. How wonderful for the mother to give that which the Lord can use as a sacrament! What can satisfy the hunger of a multitude?

Dream of what may be done through a mother’s gift to her child. Recall Lincoln’s words: “all that I am or hoped to be I owed to my angel mother.” I’m sure there are many of us who could utter the same words.

Proverbs 31:28 says; “Her children rise up, and call her blessed.”

A woman does not become a mother, in the best sense, by the physical fact of child bearing. The good wife and mother described in the last chapter of Proverbs was industrious, farsighted, charitable, provider, and cheerful. But I think those are not the real reasons why her husband praised her, and why her children rose up to call her blessed. Here are some things which I think made her a worthy woman.

She was wise enough to teach with kindness and speak the word of faith. Many people are intelligent enough, but they are not wise enough to teach and trust others. Especially today, a mother needs something extra, something more powerful than anything on earth, to help and guide her in raising her children. She needs the direction and guidance of Jesus Christ. She has to have a faith that is unshakable.

This mother in Proverbs was loving enough to enforce the law of discipline. Easy requirements do not

suggest affection; they reveal indifference. Children never respect parents if they are allowed to grow up without a sense of moral structure of life. Regardless of what anyone says, I believe parents must have discipline. These are certain rules that have to be followed. If, as adults, we try to be one of the gang and go along with whatever is going on, that's exactly how we are going to be treated. Our children will not have respect for us unless we insist on certain standards of conduct.

This mother was also good enough to interpret the love of God. Most mothers do this without even knowing they are doing it. If mothers can get the same kind of love across to their children as God has shown towards us, it will be a life-long embellishment in the heart of the children.

Using the figure of the barley loaves, let us name five things which a good mother might give to her child.

First, we have a sense of law and order. This includes a sense of truth. It can be woven into the fabric of life so that it does not become harsh discipline, but acceptable to the child, and is something which makes home a happy place to be. That child is blessed indeed, who carries out into life, the honor and rectitude and self-control, which come from the emphasis of both natural and moral law in the home. Young people need guidance and direction in their lives and they are looking to us parents for it and this is where it should come from.

Secondly, we have reverence of life.

With this will come the keeping of the Golden Rule, (Do unto others as you would have others do unto you,) an unselfish spirit such as the lad displayed in giving up his lunch, a sympathetic nature, kindness, and the ability to put oneself in the place of another. There is much opportunity given in the ordinary pursuits of the home to bestow this gift upon the children.

Doesn't it really boil down to the kind of example we as parents set for our children by the way we live our lives. If they see us cheat others or if they see that we are dishonest, how can we expect them to be honest. If we show concern for others, they too will naturally grow up to be concerned for others. And these examples if set, do not have to be great big deals. It is the little examples we set that really count and we are being watched constantly by them.

Thirdly, a good mother might give to her child an appreciation of values.

When William Lynn Phelps was about to leave a home, where he had been a boarder through the summer, a girl in the family thanked him for showing them the sunsets. Though these people had lived there many years they had never really been aware of the beauty round about them. The appreciation of beauty is a wonderful barley loaf to give a child.

Indeed, the same could be said for those live in this beautiful valley. How many of us really do appreciate

it and realize what God has given us? Those who do, can pass this appreciation on to their children.

Our children soon know and realize what things we really place value on and that's why as parents it is important for us to place high values on the right things in life. Those things which are of God should be closest to our hearts and minds because God has given them to us. Those who do, can pass this appreciation onto their children.

Our children soon know and realize what things we really place value on and that's why as parents it's important for us to place the high values on the right things in life. Those things which are of God should be closest to our hearts and minds because God has given them to us. Material possessions can be acquired by money, but God's gifts are freely given to us.

Where is a child to acquire a true appreciation of education, work, books, music, literature, wealth, etc., if not from the parents?

True appreciation is accompanied by a spirit of Thanksgiving. Do we thank God for this valley in which we live? Do we thank him for the air? We breathe? Take time to think of these things and thank God for them. When we do our appreciation grows and also that of our children.

Fourthly, a good mother might give her child an ideal of character.

Goodness which is seen, meditated upon, appreciated, set up as a goal, becoming a purpose, has tremendous dynamic in a child's life. It generally is the gift from both parents.

Character really is the description of a person's qualities and the special way in which any person feels, thanks, and eats. Did you ever stop to think as parents, what a tremendous influence we have on the building of our children's character? The way we mold their thinking, their acting, their feeling, will be maintained by them for the rest of their lives. The kind of characters, we as parents possess, has a lot to do with the molding of our children's character. Just think what a negative attitude on a person's past can do. It can cause that person to always be miserable, to always be mad at something and to always have a bleak, black outlook on everything. Is this the way we want our children to be? Is this the way we want to be? We need to be positive about everything. We need to look at the good side of everything regardless of how tragic or bleak. We need to be positive like Jesus Christ. He can help us to be that way.

Fifthly, a good mother might give to her child a good knowledge of God.

When Albert was a little boy, he was always in trouble for being untidy. His great mop of unruly hair was a particular source of trouble.

"Oh dear, Albert," his mother would say, "I don't know how God will be able to love a boy who lets his

hair look like that. God doesn't like untidy boys."

And Albert began to think it must be true. God could not love him.

As Albert was growing up, his aunt took him to art galleries. He liked these visits and spent happy hours looking at the pictures.

One day, Albert stayed even longer than usual. It was one particular picture that fascinated him, and his aunt just could not get him away.

It was a picture of Jesus and his disciples.

And it was the disciple on Jesus's left with the great mop of unruly hair that held his gaze.

"Who is that disciple", asked Albert, "the one with a mop of hair?"

"Why, its John", his aunt replied.

"But John was that disciple that Jesus loved," said Albert.

"Yes, he was," said his aunt.

Albert Schweitzer looked at his aunt and said firmly, "Well, if Jesus could love a man with hair like that, he must be able to love me!"

And, of course, Jesus did.

In one of his books, John Galsworthy reports young Jolyn's question to his father: "Do you believe in God, Dad? I've never really known."

One can easily guess that in Joyln's home there was no religion, religious conversation, no Bible reading, no family prayers, no sense of the presence of God, no church interest or loyalty. And yet the greatest need of the child was to know God. There is deep hunger in the soul of the child for this barley loaf.

How that lad in our scripture reading this morning, must have rushed home with his amazing story! That teacher had fed everybody – hundreds and hundreds of people with his lunch. There were basketfuls left over. Did he bring her any of those leftover pieces? Probably, he never thought of it. But what treasure he brought her to her heart! Her loaves, her everyday loaves, passed through his hands and fed thousands of people who could ever have imagined anything so wonderful?

The Son of God still repeats that miracle with every day things given to us; the use of words – common place tasks, – small talents – fragments of time. We certainly cannot expect anything back from God until we have given something to him. When we do this, we have the principles of the farmer, sewing seed and reaping a harvest.

There are lads all about us needing five loaves of education, training, love – which they take to the Son of God for his blessing, and then give to needy multitudes. Are we giving them the five loaves they need?

Mothers give this kind of training to their children and so I believe it is fitting and right that we should honor our mothers on this their special day. And we pray that God shall bless them in the responsibilities and duties as mothers.

There is no more uplifting feeling than to see one child, now grown to manhood or womanhood, facing the task of life, completely, adequately, gallantly in a Christian spirit, and to know that you had something to do with equipping them for their lives ahead. Let us also remember that even though the mother is with the children the greatest share of time, fathers still have responsibility and influence on the children too. Wouldn't you say that it is a joint effort? I believe it is and I believe that all parents need the help and guidance of God to do a good job. May God bless us in our endeavor.

Power to Witness for Christ

Scripture: Acts 1:1-14

The text is chosen from Acts 1:8; “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses.”

Read your Bible with an open eye. It will seem incredible to you that the church could owe so much to the power of the Holy Spirit and yet today miss so tragically that power. Here you discover that the power of the Holy Spirit has been at work since before time itself.

The Spirit roamed over the dark face of the waters before creation and brought water out of chaos.

The Spirit spoke through the prophets and in a sense, put them in a vise, compelling them to cry out that which they would humanly never have said.

The Spirit, the Bible says, was at work in the coming of Christ into the world. He cleansed a fragment of flesh for God’s coming. He descended upon the human Jesus at his baptism. He led him into the wilderness and brought him back full of power into Galilee. On the threshold of his ministry, Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” Later he cast out demons by the same Spirit. “Through the eternal Spirit, he offered himself without blemish.” You cannot miss the Spirit’s, magnificent, enabling, and empowering work if you read your Bible.

Whenever we think of the Great Commission, we usually think of the familiar words in Mark 16:15 or in Matthew 28:19. The same commission is given, although in slightly different words, in Acts 1:8.

It is important to know the principal difference in these two ways of expressing the same idea. In Matthew and in Mark, what is commanded is basically a human venture simply “you go”. In Acts it is basically a divine venture – the disciples are to wait for empowerment from on high, and then, after they have received the visitation of the Holy Spirit they are to witness. In Acts, the action of the divine proceeds, the action of the human. Surely this is the way Jesus would have sent his followers out: not simply in their own strength. “Go,” – but in divine strength, haven’t waited “for the promise of the Father.”

How can we go out in witness, that is tell others of Jesus Christ and what he has done in our lives, if we ourselves have never had an experience to talk about. We have to receive Christ into our life first before we can hope to tell others of him.

This is Pentecost Sunday in the Christian Church, which marks the beginning of the Christian Church by the disciples, receiving the power of the Holy Spirit into their lives. The difference between the Easter joy and the joy of Pentecost was that the latter became a permanent possession of the disciples of Jesus Christ.

First of all - the church in weakness is always a church which is confused and hesitant about the Holy Spirit. It is a church which does not talk about, pray for, nor depend upon the Holy Spirit.

The Church has had her greatest moments of witness, has come nearest to fulfilling her commission when she was most concerned about the Spirit, when she knew what the Spirit was, and knew her need of the Spirit, when, in fact, she was a Spirit-seeking, Spirit-lead, Spirit-filled community.

Note that the Samaritan Christians, converted by Philip, had been baptized, but they were fully recognized as Christians only when Peter and John prayed for them to receive the Spirit and laid their hands upon them so that they received the Spirit.

When Paul came to Ephesus, he found some disciples who had believed and been baptized. He asked, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit?” They replied that they had not even heard that there was a Holy Spirit. So, Paul re-baptized them and laid hands upon them, and the Holy Spirit “came on them”. They were fully Christian.

Possessing or being possessed by the Holy Spirit was the absolutely indispensable and determinative characteristic of the church and its members, but lacking the Holy Spirit, we do not have the power to witness for Christ as we could and would and should.

I wonder what our excuse is today? We cannot say we have never heard of the Holy Spirit for indeed we have. But how many of us have actually received the Holy Spirit into our lives? Do not say I don’t know because when it comes, you will know you will have power to do things that formally to you were impossible. Your whole life will be different as it was for the first disciples.

Secondly – the Holy Spirit basically is power. The most noticeable word or idea attached to and connected with the mention of the Spirit in the New Testament is that of power and no place shows this more clearly than Acts 1:8.

Whether an individual possesses such a more-than-human power or not really determines whether he is Christian or not, or if the Christian does not have access to resources of strength and energy beyond what are available to non-Christian people, of what value is his Christianity? How can we gain some of this fortification? By coming to God’s house and worshipping him.

“Why should I go to church?” A little girl asked her grandfather.

He was silent for a moment then he asked her: “Tell me, has the piano tuner been here yet? You said the piano needed tuning.”

“No, I am still waiting,” she replied. “The piano certainly needs tuning. My practicing last night was just

awful.”

“Well, you see,” grandfather said, “our “souls are like that of a fine musical instrument. The strings become slack and out of tune very quickly. They, too, must be tuned from time to time.”

“What do you mean, grandfather?”

And he replied, “All strings: goodness, faith, courage, generosity, reverence, love – all grow less vibrant within us. Sometimes this happens without our even knowing it. But when we hear the Gospel proclaimed at church, we see how we have lost tune. We are tuned up once more to what is the true pitch. But the tuning may not last, and so it is good to go regularly to church to keep our souls in tune.”

So, we can accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, but it doesn’t stop there. That is just the first step. From then on we worship God regularly in his house. We study his word. We have quiet times regularly so we can talk with God. We have fellowship with other Christians. We witness to others for Christ.

If the church does not have the ability to lay hold in wisdom, motivation, and power beyond what other organizations, institutions, and fellowships possess, and what respect is the church radically different from any other society among men?

The church has to be more than a social club or otherwise it is meaningless to our lives. And since we are at church, it’s up to us to make sure it is more than a social organization.

Where there is such power beyond the merely human, there is real Christianity. The operation of that divine power in the individual and in the church, we call the action of the Holy Spirit.

The personal influence of the master still here bears upon us in the latest age. A divine discontent, invades our souls, and, even in the midst of all the satisfactions which this earth can give, makes mere enjoyment base. Everywhere we see him, where the throne of pleasure seeker is thickest, where the manifold music of the world is most clearly heard. He fills our visions - Victim, Master, Judge, Eternal King. Still man will rise at his call to dare and suffer and die for him. He remains the one magnet of magnanimous service, which does not lose its virtue with the passing ages and the change of conditions. This 20th century will witness many changes and departures. Institutions which seem now to stand firmly will crumble and fall; in- calculable changes will re-order society. It would be an excessive expectation to hope that the creed and churches of Christendom will hold their own without alterations and transformations unimaginably great. There will be one exception to this general rule. The personal influence of Jesus Christ will continue still to shape characters and to inspire conduct.”

Thirdly - from where does such power come? How is it obtained? It cannot be of human origin, something manufactured in and of ourselves, for then it would be, after all, only human and not “more than human.”

Its source must be from without; it must come from above; it is surely the gift promised by the heavenly father. And it is, therefore, not something which is worked for, but something which is waited for. It is not something achieved, but something received. It is not something we build or create; it is something we pray for. Prayer is the means we must use; prayer proceeds the coming of the Spirit in power.

The person of Jesus Christ does not belong to a remote past, it is not a product of traditions or carefully preserved legends, it is not something surrounded by a halo of mysticism. Christ, the son of God, is as much a contemporary of today's men and women as he was of those on the first day of Pentecost. His life, his teaching, his death on the cross, his shed blood, are now as the only basis of redemption, the unshakable rock on which the soul rests for salvation. God's message has not changed. His method of salvation has not varied. He has not altered the way of access for the repentant sinner to God and the Savior. The Lord is as contemporary as the solution he presents to mankind. Only Christ has the answers to man's tremendous problems. Today, as then, he is the only hope, the true light, the way, the truth, and the life. No one – whatever his religion or irreligious, state, whatever his academic prowess, his economic or social standing – can find God apart from Jesus Christ. It was the Gospel, preached by men, some of whom were considered ignorant, that produced one of the greatest commotions in history.

When I was a boy, I used to play with a reading glass, twisting, and turning it in the sunshine until the rays were caught, focused, intensified, to the degree that they set fire to paper or cloth placed beneath the glass. So it is, we may say, when God's action and power are focused in this man, they do nothing. They set fire to human lives exposed to them there. They burn away sin, they cleanse, and purify, and make new, they empower and strengthen, and they enrich and enable us. That is what we need. And that, say the Christian ages, is what happens in and through and by Jesus Christ. We are remade in the image of God. Thus Christ, as the Express Source of God, is "the first born of every creature."

Fourth - the action of the Holy Spirit is never reported in the New Testament as taking place within a single, isolated individual. It is always represented as manifesting itself, too, upon, and within a group – the disciples at Pentecost, the Samaritan Christians, the household of Cornelius, the Twelve at Ephesus, and so forth. The power of the Holy Spirit to witness to Christ comes only to the community, to the church, not to the individual Christian, except as he is a member of the church.

Basically, the Holy Spirit is related to the church. A divided, quarreling, sectarian church can hardly expect to receive, no matter how ardent its prayers, the full out outpouring of the power, which is the Holy Spirit. Only a united Church, only a genuine Christian community, following the sense of our Lord's prayer in John 17, is really for unable to receive the Spirit.

"You shall be my witnesses." We can be, we want to be; we are obligated to be. But first, we must receive power not our own, else we shall continue to muddle up the task. And before the Spirit can function expectantly to give us that power, there must be praying in a united church. Only on these conditions, can we hope to have with the early church had in such remarkable degree, the "power to witness for Christ."

Let us all accept Christ into our hearts as Savior and Lord. Let us pray continually constantly for the receiving of the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us become united together as one body in Jesus Christ. This is how our world can become a better place in which to live.

What do You Mean by Holy Trinity

Scripture: Psalm 127; Matthew 28:19

The text is chosen from Psalm 127:1; “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

How many of us actually take Almighty God into consideration in our daily lives, In our personal planning, or even in our general thinking of society and the world? Not only “in him we live, and move, and have our being” - that is, without him we should not even exist – but his will, his guidance, and his power are ultimate factors in every human situation and in every human life, whether recognized or not. Moreover, satisfactory and successful human life, either individual or social, is impossible apart from God.

II Corinthians 13:14 says, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.”

With this blessing or with one very similar to it, every service of worship ends. Perhaps you find it rather confusing – this talk of these different people, God, Jesus, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit or Ghost, who in some strange way are supposed to be the same person. Let’s see if we can discover what it means.

If I asked your Sunday school teacher, what he or she thought of you, they might say: “Tommy is a good listener. He is all ears when I am talking with him.” If I then asked him about what you are like at a Sunday school party, he might say, “he makes a terrific noise. He is always shouting and singing, and generally, having a lot to say for himself.” Then if I asked him what you are like in his house, he might say: “Tommy’s got the sharpest eyes I’ve ever seen. He notices everything and misses absolutely nothing.”

What the teacher has done is to give those descriptions of the same person-you. In three different situations he has spoken of “Tommy – the pair of ears” (in class) and “Tommy-the voice” (at the party) and “Tommy-the eyes” (in his home).

Now, it’s something like that with God. He loves us and tries to help us to live rightly in his world. He has made us to be his children, and he seeks to do all he can to help us towards friendship with him. When we speak of “God, the Father”, we are thinking of God is the one who has made us and who loves us.

When we speak of “God, the Son, Jesus Christ,” we are thinking of God as he shows himself to us in Jesus Christ, our Lord and of God as he came to earth to deliver us from sin and bring us back to himself.

When we speak of “God, the Holy Spirit”, we are thinking of God as one who helps us now, who tries to teach us to live rightly, who seeks day by day to rule and direct our conscience.

It’s the same God at work all the time in these three different ways, just as Tommy – the ears and Tommy-

the voice and Tommy - the eyes are three ways of thinking about you.

Perhaps this will help you to understand the meaning of the benediction, as it is called, which ends our service in church and to see why on Trinity Sunday we thank God for these three ways in which he has made himself known to us and shows us his love and his care.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The first Christians realized the world needed saving, changing, and being made right with God. They began with God, going out to meet men in love, in redemption, God trying to establish reconciliation and personal relationship. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Eternal breaking into time, the supernatural intersecting history, heaven coming down to earth, God living, suffering, dying, and triumphing over sin and evil.

“The Love of God.” If you have experienced God’s active, living, love getting hold of you, then you are certain of the love of God. If you had never heard of Jesus Christ in his grace, would you have thought for certain that God is a god of love? The grace of Jesus Christ guarantees the love of God beyond all shadow of doubt.

“The fellowship of the Holy Spirit”. The Holy Spirit is discovered best in fellowship. Just as God is a relationship of love – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a kind of triangular personal relationship, so we not only discover God’s love in our own hearts by the Holy Spirit, but we are united by that same Holy Spirit to other people who call Christ Lord. Christianity is a shared Fellowship of believers, all of whom are certain that they know God’s love in Jesus Christ.

First of all, this truth which we believe and have been talking about is fundamentally in the Christian conception of God.

What is the Christian conception of God? As summed up, I believe in the apostles Creed, it is that we believe in God, the Father who made us and all the world; in God, the Son who redeemed us in all mankind; and in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctified us and all the people of God.

What does this mean?

The Christian God is the creator of the universe, who made the world in all of its abundance for man made in his image, to dwell therein.

He is not a retired creator, but is continually creating wherever there is birth, life, and growth, and is striving to create a more perfect world.

He made man in his image to be perfect, even as he is perfect, but he gave man, freedom, and man in his freedom turned from God, thereby failing to measure up to his highest potentialities.

Secondly, because of man's drawing away from God, God, in his love, came in the person of his Son to save men from the hell their sin necessitates. He came to bring them into his eternal kingdom, ruled by the righteous will. In Jesus Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension, he redeemed mankind, bridging the abyss between the righteous God and erring man, making them to be one again.

Several years ago, a young man, a victim of tuberculosis, went out west, there to live in a simple cabin in hope that the mountain air and the rest from toil might restore his health. But this he was denied. When his family gathered up his few belongings, among them was a copy of the New Testament. On the inside page in his own handwriting, were the words, "I know Jesus Christ better than I know any other person."

Yes, each of us can really and truly come to know Jesus Christ better than any other person too if we will take the time to get acquainted.

Thirdly – yet still the power of evil, and the temptations of this world prove too strong for men. Consequently, by his Holy Spirit, he guides us, constantly empowering us to be holy. He strengthens, directs, and inspires. The scripture is his effort. So also, is the history of religion. The long life and action of the church in his creation.

The Holy Spirit is God working within our hearts and within the life of the church. He is the Spirit of life who brings purpose and meaning into the life through salvation.

The Holy Spirit is a convicting spirit. Whenever one becomes aware of sin in his life, you may be sure it is because the Holy Spirit is acting up upon his heart.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to reveal to us truth concerning God and the salvation he provides for us.

The Holy Spirit is a sanctifying spirit, guiding us toward greater holiness by restraining us from sin, by strengthening our resolve to do right, and by giving us the power to live as Christians should.

The Holy Spirit brought the church into being at Pentecost. In the New Testament, the church is always a company of people who have faith in Jesus Christ. The church is still being created by God when, through the Holy Spirit, he brings people into fellowship with himself and with other believers.

God's relationship to his creation has an individual application. God made me in his image, calls me to be perfect, destines me to be his son; but I am a weak and erring son, and the world, the flesh, and the devil are too strong for me. Therefore, Christ saves me from them.

He acted in my baptism where I was born a child of God, a member of Christ, and inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

He acts in absolution, and thereby I am forgiven and loosed from the chain of my repeated sins.

In the sacrament of the altar, he gives himself to me in his body and his blood, his life and love and power.

I am sanctified, helped to attain perfection, strengthened, and immortal character by the Holy Spirit, whose sevenfold gifts are made mine in confirmation.

The Holy Spirit is that indefinable imminence of God in our everyday life. It is that which we sense when we have a knotty problem, and all of a sudden, it clears up, and we see the sun breaking through the clouds. Perhaps the sun would have broken through anyway, but it helps me to remember that vital moment when God's Spirit spoke to the needs of our souls. We sometimes describe it as the inner light. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God that reveals itself to us in beauty, goodness, and truth. It is indefinable yet real, and when the Spirit fills a personality, we say that that personality is "full of grace and truth."

I am also a member of society. No man lives to himself alone. In the actual experience of men, he has revealed himself as three persons, yet one God, as a Trinity and yet a triunity. He is the Perfect, the Divine Society, "as seen, and thought, three; as seeing and thinking, one." "Perfectly attuned in thought, in feeling, and in will, what One person does, the others do also. So, God functions in this world through his society, his family, the holy church, the extension of the Incarnation, the Body of Christ, the temple and agency of the Holy Spirit.

Fourthly - the individual's relationship to God is through his Church. We are the redeemed and the redeeming society. We are earnest of his Kingdom. This ideal he sets for all mankind. John 17:21 says, "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I am in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Always theology is not merely the product of abstract human thinking, springing forth from human experience and human history. So, the thesis of our text, that where God is left out, man's efforts are doomed to failure, is supported by the history and the experience of mankind.

The tragic history of mankind is the tale of man's forgetting God.

The doctrine of the Trinity helps a Christian to remember what God looks like. Some years ago, as the story goes, the person was on a study tour in Europe for the three or four months, his small son became listless, had no appetite, and did not much care to play. Acting on a hunch, his mother took him into her lap one night and said, "Do you greatly miss your daddy?" The boy burst into tears and sobbed, "I've got the best daddy in the whole world." That night, when it was time to say his prayers, he very solemnly intoned, "Dear God, help me to remember what daddy looks like."

Let us not forget what our Heavenly Father looks like.

The gleam of a lot of Hope in human history is that God has never forgotten man.

The church's history is the tale of God's acts plus man's response. This is indeed the house built of the Lord.

What then are we called upon to do, we who know God, and are known of him, we who are call to make him known? We are called to walk worthy of the vocation, wherewith we are called.

To walk worthy is to live God centered lives, offering to him in worship the adoration which is his due. It means trusting him implicitly. Romans 8:28 reads, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose."

To walk worthy of our vocation is obviously to seek by the grace of God to live moral lives. Matthew 5:48 says, "You, therefore, must be perfect, as you're Heavenly Father is perfect."

To walk worthy means that we are to live the life of love, that is, to be concerned about and seeking to serve our fellow men. Like our blessed Lord, we are called upon not to be ministered onto, but to minister.

The Problem of Suffering

Scripture: 55:6-13

Isaiah 55:6-13

Isaiah 55:8; “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your way my ways.”

The problem of suffering has haunted humanity since the dawn of time. It is one of the incontestable facts of life. You cannot laugh it away or debate it into oblivion. Jesus never made denial of its reality. It is no respecter of persons. It thrusts the sword in the heart of the hero and the harlot, the great and inconsequential.

Humanity has always rebelled against suffering. Since first suffering, confronted life, mankind has kicked against its pricks. We do not usually submit to its christening.

Has suffering any mission? Is there any rhyme or reason for it? Has religion any response to make to those who cannot believe because of this incontestable thing called pain?

If you study the story of the Babylonian captivity, and then turn to our text for this morning, you will find that the prophet offers a certain explanation for the problem of suffering.

First of all, the explanation of suffering rest in its purpose. In this, and in succeeding chapters, the prophet elaborates upon that purpose. With a deceiving eye of one who has talked with God, the prophet looked back up on the pain and suffering of his people and maintained it had a purpose. That purpose is three-fold. (1) Sometimes punishment is punitive. As long as a right is right and wrong is wrong, man will suffer the absolute justice of suffering for transgression in incontestable and inexorable. As long as the power of choice is given to man in a moral universe and man chooses darkness instead of light, so long will be pain. Because the Hebrew people heeded not God, abandoned worship, neglected alters and disavowed heavenly loyalties, they sat in captivity in Babylon.

In the Gospel of Matthew 20: 22, Jesus says, “Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with?”

For Jesus, suffering was not a direct punishment from God for human waywardness or rebellion. It is a condition of human life, but God uses it for good ends.

Jesus overcame suffering, not by avoiding it when it came by, but voluntarily accepting it. He constantly trusted God to give him the strength he needed to endure pain and sorrow.

Jesus taught that suffering is redemptive. His own suffering was accomplished to make known to men that

God loved them.

All his life Zacchaeus had made many wrong choices. He had grown rich by cheating other people. By working for Rome, as a dishonest tax collector, he had betrayed his own people, and they hated him, and he wasn't very happy with himself.

But when Jesus called to him, right away, he wanted to make up for his wicked deeds and to pay back twice as much as he had stolen. At last, he made a right choice.

Life is a matter of choices. Little ones lead to big ones. If we try when we are small to make right choices, we will be strong enough to make bigger and more important choices later.

Why did the Zacchaeus decide to make right choices? Because he took a long thoughtful look at Jesus. If when you go home today, you make choices according to the guidance that the work of Jesus gives you, you will be happy in the same way Zacchaeus was.

(2) Sometimes suffering is disciplinary. It is one of the facts of life that men will heed in adversity what they reject in prosperity. How often it happens that God has his chance with us only in times of peril! As gold is thrown in the refiner's fire and by terrific heat brings to the surface the scum of foreign substances which may be drawn off to leave the pure gold, so sometimes through the fires of discipline and pain we come to a nobility of life. That was true of the ancient Hebrews in Babylon. The inseparable loneliness and pain of captivity restored to them their balance, and brought back to them a faith that had wavered in times of plenty.

Archibald Ratledge said, "It has been my law in life, living in the wilderness, as I do, to be out in storms a great many times. I never knew one that did not do me good. For a storm, whether it be physical or spiritual, is always a challenge, and there is something in the heart that rises up to meet it. No other kind of occasion calls it forth. Storms rend and mar; but they strengthen, they build, and they bring forth serene and changeless beauty. We are prone to lament that the world is not better. Yet the fact that it is full of trouble, affords us our only chance to spend our hearts. And it is not in times and places of peace that we find our heroes and heroines; not in ballrooms and on bathing beaches, but in the places of danger in darkness, in further trenches, their valor is found, there where men fight and die - heroes with their heads beaten in and the blood running out of their eyes. A time of prosperity is a dangerous time; the soul loafes and grow fat. Times of storm and peril are the ones that show what we are made of. Loss and grief are always life's summons to us to be great."

(3) Sometimes suffering is sacrificial. Some crosses come because we drag them into our own lives; others come because the world thrust them upon us. Somebody must always pay the price that the world may be redeemed and life made over. Hebrews 9:22 reads; "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."

In Jesus Christ, you have the incarnation of that pain. Jesus could not escape suffering and who are we that we should refuse? Matthew 16:24 reads; “Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

We are going to have suffering and pain in our lives whether we think we should or not, whether we live good Christian lives or not. How we come through this suffering and pain is up to us. We can accept it a lot better if we let Jesus Christ help us in all of life.

God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks to us in our conscience, but shouts to us in our pains.

Secondly – the explanation of suffering lies in the fact that as long as life is what it is and we are what we are, pain will always be in the world. If suffering were taken out of the world, three things would go out of life. (1) A world without pain would be a world without law. Things do not come by chance or caprice. Do good in this world, and you will be rewarded; do wrong and you will be punished. If you took away law, this world would be chaos instead of cosmos. Perhaps some do getaway by doing wrong, but eventually they will be caught and punished for their wrongdoings. Regardless, I believe that the truth is always the straightest and the best solution in the end. It may hurt sometimes, but it’s still the best way out.

(2) A world without pain would be a world without freedom. If we had no freedom for the development of moral character, we would simply be automatons with no moral urge. The power of choice is the fundamental possession of our character. Freedom brings peril and pain, yet who would live in a world without freedom? While it brings untold misery, it constitutes at once life’s sublimest gift.

Look what freedom and liberty cost are for fathers. The lives that were lost, the suffering, and the pain that was endured. It will cost us something to be a Christian too. It doesn’t come cheaply. If perhaps will cost us; friendship, popularity, we will have to deny ourselves things that before we considered pleasure, but in the end, it will all be worth it. (3) A world without pain would be a world without human relationships. We are so related that what happens to one in a remote portion of the earth mightily affects all. What brings misery to one people spreads gloom to other people. Would you rather be a Robinson Crusoe on a desert island and thereby escape pain or live interrelated with all mankind and pay the price of suffering? Though the price be pain, who would sacrifice the benediction of human relationships? No man can live to himself. We are all God’s children. We should be concerned for and love one another, even though there will be pain and suffering.

We do not live in a cushioned world. If we did, our souls would be too soft to endure the conflicts of this world or to face the opportunities of the next.

Suffering is necessary to obtain our ideals.

Suffering is essential to the development of character.

Suffering enables us to enrich the lives of others.

Thirdly – the explanation of suffering brings the assurance that one day it will end. For indeed it shall if we put our lives in God's keeping, he will be he will remake the world, and one day we shall share the glory of that better country where we never grow old, where we never know, pain, and where God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

In Alberta, Canada, there is a city called Wetaskiwin, meaning, "the Hills of Peace," which got its name in this way. When the first missionaries came to that province, they were fiercely opposed by a young chief of the Cree Indians named Maskepetoon, who waged savage war against the Blackfeet. Eventually, Maskepetoon became a Christian. Shortly afterwards, his father was murdered by one of the Blackfeet. Maskepetoon rode into the very camp and demanded that the murderer be brought forth to him. When that this was done, he said, "You have killed my father. Now you must be my father. You shall ride by my best horse and wear my best clothes. Where upon the old man exclaimed, "My son, you have killed me!" Christian love was strong enough to conquer hate.

With this kind of love our suffering and pain can end also. He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb shall see to it that all things work together for good to them that love God. Never lose sight of the fact that all suffering is temporary. The fact of pain finds his explanation in the light of another world. One day we shall be rewarded after the perfect pattern of the eternal Christ, we shall no longer suffer because we shall no longer need it. Romans 8:18 says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

So, after all is said, we really do not have a clear-cut explanation of why we must suffer. What is important is that we realize that we will suffer regardless of how good a life we live and that faith in Jesus Christ is the only thing that will bring us through this suffering. We have something to look forward to, in that suffering is only temporary, and that we will be going on to a life where there will be no pain and suffering. Instead of us saying "Why did this happen to me," let us rely on Jesus Christ to help us through the pain and suffering and hardships of life.

Bless this House

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6:1-9

The text is chosen from Deuteronomy 6:5–6; “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all my soul, and with all that might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart.

First of all, the family is central to our lives and into our living. The family has always been a part of God’s plan. You cannot have a person without a family. We are made for it. We are incomplete without it. We never find a fulfillment without it. The family is central in God’s plan.

I once visited a man who had no home in the world, but a room in a rooming house. He had no family ties and no close friends. His landlady barely knew his name. People living on either side of him were rather strangers to him. He said to me in pathos, I shall never forget. “I wish I could mean something to somebody, if they were only a dog. And here, I can’t even have a dog. What’s the use of working or trying to do right or anything at all, if at the end of the day you have only four walls and if you don’t mean something to somebody?” Yes, we all need to be something to someone. We cannot happily live to ourselves.

The family has always been the center of the Bible. The Bible starts with a family and reaches its fulfillment in a family. The God of the Bible is the family of God upon the Earth.

The individual home, with its beds and games and dining table and books, may seem a tiny thing in contrast to states and governments and armies; but it is only by means of such tiny things that the world is changed. The home may, like the mustard seed be the least of all seeds; but seed it undoubtedly is. If we could have enough really good homes, we should have a very different world; and we are not likely to have a good world without them.

The family has always been the center of Jesus is thinking. Practically everything he said concerns the family. John 14:2 says; “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you.” He spoke of the home when he gave a text of faith. Matthew 7:24–27 reads; “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his home upon the rock, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

The family is a center. As goes the family, so goes the world. The psychiatrist, the physician, the sociologist, and the businessman all share the same verdict. If something goes wrong with a person, something is

wrong with his social relations. Although an individual is a son of God, he needs the family of God of which we are all apart.

When a boy or a girl in your class thrust his small hand in yours, it may be smeared with chocolate ice cream or grainy from petting a dog, and there may be a weight under the right thumb, and a ball around the little finger. But the most important things about his hands is that they are the hands of the future. These are our hands that someday will hold a Bible or a revolver, play the church piano or spin a gambling wheel; gently dress a leper's wounds or tremble uncontrolled by an alcoholic mind. Right now, the hand is yours. It asks for help and guidance. It represents a full-fledged personality in miniature to be respected as a separate individual whose day-to-day growth into Christian adulthood is your responsibility.

Secondly, if the family is to be God's family, it needs the Church.

The Church is an illustration and mosaic of the family. Every socialized study ever made bears witness to the fact that in so far as a person has a vital faith, he has the right quality of relationship in the family.

It is important that the Church be the fullest possible family of God and that we bring to it every possible resource. If you have not made your investment, you are cheating your children. It's up to us as parents to give our children every possible chance and opportunity to come to know God. They certainly are going to need something as they go out into our world on their own.

The church is not only a church of family; it is also a church of individuals. For many individuals it is their only family experience.

It is important that the outer sanctuary become a school in prayer, trust, love, acceptance, dedication, and forgiveness.

The home is a place where we begin to remake our culture. If our culture has slipped into unsound habits, or irresponsibility and egocentricity, the home is a place where we begin to mitigate these habits, if our culture has slipped into carelessness regarding human value, the home is the place where these values can be cherished and made to grow in influence. If our culture has learned to put a disastrously high premium on competition, the home is the place where the cooperative arts can be a strength and a delight. Nowhere in our culture is there an institution that can, more vigorously and deeply, serve the needs of our touring, then came home.

We cannot expect to lay the responsibility for the upbringing of our children on the public schools or the church. As parents, this is our responsibility, and these other institutions are merely aids for us to use in bringing up our families. The church and the school can influence the family in the home, but never take its place.

Thirdly, our theology is centered in the family.

If you are going to know God, you know him in love. You cannot know him outside of love. For indeed, God is love and if we say we know him, then we know him in love.

God is love. What does this mean? He is known in love a friend for a friend, of parent for child, of women for women, and of men for men.

He is known in the more intimate relationship of married love. He has known more fully in family love – in weddedness and by children who live in weddedness. Father and mother, who are truly wed, are God's right hand and God's left hand in guiding children.

Proverbs 17:1 says; "Better a morsel of dry bread and peace than a full, then a house full of banqueting and quarrels."

Effie lived with her large family in a plain, small house on the far side of town. Although they were poor, the house was always filled with warmth and laughter, and Effie's mother always told her that they had much for which to be thankful.

Sometimes on her way to school, when Effie passed the great house in which Olivia lived, she was a little envious and wondered what it might be like to live in such a large house and never have to worry about anything.

Yet at school, Effie noticed that Olivia was very lonely. Sometimes it seemed that Effie was the only girl who spoke to Olivia. When Effie said hello, Olivia smiled brightly.

One day, Olivia asked Effie if she would like to come home for dinner.

"I don't know if I should," Effie said.

"Oh, please come", Olivia begged. "I hate always to eat alone."

A black limousine drove Olivia and Effie home from school the following day. Effie was so excited that she didn't know what to say. The girls were greeted at the door of the mansion by an unsmiling butler. The home was so large Effie was certain she would get lost.

"Where are your brothers and sisters?" Effie asked.

"Oh, I don't have any." Olivia replied.

“Do you have any pets to keep you company?”

“No, mother won’t have any in the house. She says pets are a hindrance and are not necessary.”

Effie said, “Well, I shall be very pleased to meet your parents.”

“Oh, they aren’t at home. In fact, my parents never seem to be home. They are very busy, but they give me a lot of things to play with,” Olivia explained, adding, “I only wish they could be with me more.”

Effie did not know what to say. Then she said, “Why don’t we go to my house for dinner?”

“Oh OK, I’d love to!” Olivia exclaimed. Later that night, when a black limousine came to pick up Olivia, Olivia said, “I’ve never had so much fun in my life.”

When Effie went to bed that night, she agreed with her mother that they had much for which to be thankful.

Indeed, those of us who do have a good family life, do have much to be thankful for.

There are many families who are called families by name only.

The family is God’s true instrument. A true Church is “a church in their house.” Children go forth to build the spirit that is the Church in every walk of life.

Luke 28:48 says, “And when they saw him, they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.”

Despite the fact that Jesus goes along home with his parents to Nazareth, there has been a breakdown in communications. Was there ever a greater need for basic communication to face the points of fraction in life then today?

Basic communication takes discipline. It takes discipline for a mother to tune into one of the radio stations that her son or daughter listens to by the hour; for a father at the end of the day to sit at dinner table, and listen to the “monstrous” events at school, and for a youth to ask questions of his parents.

Basic communication requires an ability to stand in someone else’s shoes. We forget so quickly the anxieties, fears, and uncertainties that make up so much of the world of youth.

Basic communication hopefully will develop mutual trust. Is this not at the very heart of what our faith is all about? It is a trusting relationship that we have with God. And is this not at the very foundation of our relationship to one another, binding brother, to brother, husband, to wife, and hopefully parent to child? “And his mother kept all these things in her heart.”

She continually tried to understand this child. There was the delicate bond of trust that was not broken. Without the bond of trust, the parent is lost in anxiety, the youth is lost on his own, and we are all lost as Christians.

We need understanding on the part of each member of the family. We need trust and faith. We need presence of God in the family and truly God is there to help and give us and guide us and without the kind of families we are talking about, the Church will soon falter and fall. Let us keep our families together and let us all work together in the church as one big family of God.

The Christian Pulpit

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:4-8

The text is chosen from Nehemiah 8:4–5; “And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden pulpit which they had made for this purpose. And Ezra opened the book in the sight of the people, for he was above all the people; and when he opened it all the people stood”.

The pulpit is not awesome and great in itself. It is brick, stone, and mortar or wood, and it will always be just that. But the pulpit is great as a symbol, though not a symbol of man’s power or man’s need it is a symbol of the goodness, greatness and authority of God. The Christian pulpit is the throne of God. Therefore, we tremble. Therefore, we feel unworthy. We, unworthy creations, are all by the grace of God permitted to stand here for one purpose only– to cry, “Thus saith the Lord.”

With such an understanding of the pulpit, as God’s throne, it is disturbing that too many speak from life’s level rather than from God’s level, sing the praises of men rather than the praises of Jesus Christ, and seek to please men rather than God.

It is also disturbing that in many areas there are clergy men who are not interested in gaining knowledge of God and Jesus Christ. Not every minister must be a theologian, but every minister ought to wish he could be a theologian.

If Christian, truth is to bring solace to spirituality hungry people, then the pulpit from which truth is proclaimed, must be there.

There is a litany, which I believe is typical of most churches.

Leader: we have the sweetest, nicest, kindest minister.

Congregation: isn’t that nice.

Leader: he always preaches gentle sermons that never disturb us.

Congregation: isn’t that nice.

Leader: he never gets involved in worldly subjects and fortunately is not a Crusader. Congregation: isn’t that nice.

Leader: everyone in our congregation is socially acceptable.

Congregation: isn’t that nice.

Leader: you can qualify for baptism in our church in six easy one-hour lessons.

Congregation: isn’t that nice.

Leader: neither our minister nor our deacons ever get involved in the nasty business of politics.

Congregation: isn’t that nice.

Leader: Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross.

Congregation: isn’t that nice.

I would say the congregation was not very attentive and surely the minister had a little if any right to be in the Christian pulpit. What must the Christian pulpit emphasize?

First of all, the Christian pulpit must put the Bible first, and this textbook of authority must always undergird Christian thought and pronouncement.

Over the pages of the Bible runs a flame of fire. It burns out the evil in men. It scares the selfishness and the greed of large groups of people. It illuminates eternal events. It throws its rays upon a cross on a distant hill. It warns us, and in its red glow we are aroused from our sleep and move into new worlds, carrying with us to all people the message of heavenly urgency.

The Bible gives us Jesus Christ. Paul marvels that he is given grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, the fathomless wealth of Christ. As we read from Ephesians 3:7–8; “Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given to me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ.” New

Kris came into a world that was cold of heart, and he warmed this world with a love never before known. The light of his love, fill the Earth and strongly strangely touched men and strangely touches men.

The story of Christ is written in the lives and between the lives of the Bible. When a minister enters the pulpit, he carries with him his Bible, which is rich in spiritual facts and glowing with Christ. If the minister does not proclaim what the Bible contains then he cannot call himself a Christian minister nor is he fit to be such. We have too many people today, hiding behind the title of Christian and not willing to proclaim their faith to others.

The gospel of Matthew, chapter 7:21, says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Men can hide from God behind their jobs, their amusements, or their doubts, but the shortest way is to hide behind religion. The Bible warns against this hazard, which is the more deadly because the person has no idea he is doing it. For our own safety, we need to see very clearly the temptation that religion has for us.

The temptation to make religion, a separate delight, something out in mid air, detached, and end in itself, as did the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, who wanted to build a tabernacle and stay up there, reveling in the ecstasy.

The temptation, “to keep up a form of religion” while having nothing to do with it as a force. Delight in the forms of religion can so readily become the end of the matter.

The temptation, in springing straight from religion, to be intolerant. Christians are distant and set apart, and utterly special species of humanity, but one of the qualities which mark them as so special is their amazing openness to all sorts and conditions of men. Jesus Christ ate with publicans and sinners, welcomed Samaritans, and sent his gospel into all the world. The Holy Spirit forced the early church to break out of its Jewish narrowness. Paul insisted that in Christ, all walls of partition are taken down.

The temptation to resist what is New religion has conserved the values of the past, but too often it has also been a sinful obstacle to God's leading of his children to new truth and new ways of living.

On a trip in New Hampshire, Ralph Waldo Emerson found a large building, put up in a country town. Being struck by its ungainly and rambling appearance, he asked who the architect was. "Oh, there isn't any architect settled on as yet," said the owner. "I'm just building it. Next month there's a man coming to put the architecture on it."

Secondly, the Christian pulpit must wrestle with Christian truth. The masses of people are appallingly ignorant when it comes to an understanding of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the cross, and the resurrection. Yet to speak of them is life, and to neglect them is death.

Jesus Christ was ever wrestling with truth. He stood before people and talked of God. Were the people saying, "We have never seen God?" Jesus replied, as we read in John 14:9; "He that hath seen me have seen the Father." Were the people asking about the greatness of God? Jesus replied as his recorded in John 14:28; "My Father is greater than I." Were the people asking, "What is the kingdom of God like?" Matthew 13:31 gives Jesus' reply; "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed." Were the twelve wondering about the eternal? Jesus told them concerning his death and resurrection as we read from Luke 18:31-33; "Behold we are going to Jerusalem and everything that is written of the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon; they will scourge him, and kill him, and in on the third day, he will rise."

A traveler who was attempting to find a minister in an obscure English village asked a man where the minister lived. He replied; "oh, the Signpost! He lives in that large white house on the corner." The traveler's curiosity was aroused. He asked, "Tell me, why do you call your minister the Signpost?" The man answered, "Because he points the way, but always stays in the same place himself."

Most of the people in the pews want the truth, and for their sakes, the pulpit must wrestle with truth. Alexander Whyte, describing Robert S Caudlish's use of a text, said: "He would set himself to unwind and unweave its texture, filament by filament and fiber by fiber, with the most minute analysis and the most practical exegetical skill. And then he would address himself to the reweaving of it all again and that in rich web of exegetical doctrine."

When her husband died, the county clerk asked Cora Harris, the author of "The Circuit Rider's Wife," for

an inventory of the estate. Mrs. Harris sent him this unique reply. “it is not with the intention of showing any egregious sentimentality that I say, I find it impossible to give you a complete and satisfactory inventory of the estate of Lundy H Harris. The part that I give is so small that it is insignificant and misleading.” At the time of his death, he had \$2.35 in his purse, \$116 in the Union Bank and Trust Company of Nashville, about 400 books, and the coffin in which he was buried which cost about \$85.

“The major part of his estate was invested in heavenly securities, the values of which have been variously declared in this world and highly taxed by the various churches, but never realized. He invested every year, not less, usually more, than \$1200 in charity so secretly, so in effusively, and so honestly that he was never suspected and never praised for his generosity.”

II Timothy 1:7 says, “God have given us a sound mind.”

Among the wonderful creatures in the world of nature is the bee. The bee has a brain about the size of a pinhead. Yet it organizes the city, builds 10,000 cells for honey, 12,000 cells for larva, and a sanctuary for the queen bee.

It observes the increasing heat in summer, and when the wax is in danger of melting and the honey lost, it organizes the swarm at the entrance to the hives, glues the feet down, and then with flying wings creates a cooling system, which would put an electric fan to shame.

All this is performed by a brain, the size of a pinhead! But God has provided us with much larger minds. We have the capacity for greater thought and planning. You and I are created in God’s own image, and God expects us to use faithfully our mental powers to do those things we know are according to his Will.

We really know what the truth is and most of us want to hear the truth and I believe the Christian pulpit is where the truth should come from, or if it doesn’t, then I don’t know where you will ever find it.

Thirdly, the Christian pulpit is a place for proclamation of truth.

It is not required of us that we should prove God. Even if we could prove God to the complete satisfaction of every man, it still is not required.

Jesus didn’t argue about God’s existence; he proclaimed it. He didn’t argue about the Resurrection; he said simply that he would rise again.

The ruler on a throne and never argues with his people; he makes a proclamation. So, we, in the name of God, make our pulpits a proclamation of God’s loving care over all his children and all of God’s redemption.

With all its faults and failures, with all those inconsistencies of belief and of conduct which what might make rivers of water flow mournfully slow from Christian eyes, the church must receive large credit for its work of education, of philanthropy, and of reform. Every child, every needy and oppressed man, finds safety and deliverance in the Gospel, which has been through these centuries proclaimed by the Christian Church. There have been eddies and back currents which have made the stream look sometime hesitant or reactionary. But, speaking in the large, the church has been the friend of education and intellectual progress, the helper in efforts for the weak, the vicious, the enslaved, the struggling, and the disheartened.

We must, however, measure our achievement. It's not by history, but by ideals. It is not the question whether the world is better, but whether it is right. It is not the question whether the Church has done something, but that it has done anything? Is its work accomplished? Is its mission fulfilled? If the business of the church is to continue the enterprise, which Jesus undertook, we must confront his program in Luke 4:18–19 which says, “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim the release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” Has all has it all come true yet? Are the captives all set free? Are the brokenhearted all healed and the bruised delivered from their distress? Has the acceptable year the Lord arrived; the jubilee of freedom and restoration and equality? Is the kingdom of God finally established, with its righteousness, its peace, it's universal joy? I believe the answer to all these questions is no, and therefore we need this proclamation from each Christian pulpit. This I believe is what God has entrusted me to do and I intend to try with all my strength and heart and mind and soul, and with God's help.

Those Who Are Called “Father”

Scripture: I Corinthians 1:3-7

The text is chosen from Matthew 1:19; “Joseph-being a righteous man.”

The influence that Joseph brought to bear on the life of Jesus is made understandable when One realizes that the father in those days spent a great deal more time with his sons than is the case today.

From the time a boy was five or six years of age until he had his own establishment, the father had the care, guidance, and all the vocational training of his sons. The father was companion, guide, teacher, disciplinarian, playmate, and well everything to the boy. Out of this rich father and son relationship, there are two masculine characteristics which stand out in the character of Jesus.

First of all, and Joseph must have given Jesus a deep concern for righteousness.

Even though there is a minimum of factual data to be found in the Bible concerning Joseph, by piecing together, historical information, incidences recorded in the Gospels, and our general knowledge of human character, we can be pretty sure of certain fundamental things about Joseph. Luke said that he was “a righteous man.” In all likelihood, he was a member of the Pharisaic party, though a man who probably cared less about party loyalty than he did about the basic principles for which the Pharisees had stood in history.

The term “righteousness” was in those days applied to a man who not only dealt honestly with his immediate neighbors, but was also deeply concerned with such larger questions as social justice, world, peace, righteous government. Jesus demonstrated that he knew this kind of righteousness which was in the tradition of the great Jewish prophets. The synagogue emphasizes the law, but Jesus lived more in the tradition of the prophets. Joseph in all likelihood taught the boy Jesus much of his astounding knowledge of the prophets.

If you were choosing someone you had to trust to educate your children, to teach them good citizenship, to impart to them a Christian faith, acknowledge of God, a friendship in Christ, would you choose yourself?

The greatest influence that those who are called fathers can have upon their sons is to hand on to them a heritage of righteousness—a righteousness of principle. Few fathers, faced with a necessity of setting for their sons an example, would not far rather be able to set forth a life dedicated to principle than a life dedicated to expediency. That is the heritage which Joseph handed on to Jesus.

A discouraged man in London was on his way to drown himself, because at the moment life did not seem worth living. On his way along the street, he stopped and looked at a picture he saw in a shop window.

It was “Watt’s Hope”. It is a picture of a woman, blindfolded, sitting on top of the world. Her lyre has but one string, but still hoping and believing the instrument will make music, she is ready to strike it. The bewildered man, as he stood looking, said to himself, “Well, I have one string – I have a little boy at home.” So, he turned and went back to his boy.

As fathers, how can we give our children a deep concern for righteousness? Certainly, we have to have this concern ourselves before we can impart it to someone else. Jesus has laid down certain principles that we should live by and it’s up to us to impart these same principles to our children. It’s true times have changed, but the kind of lives we live and the way we live them has not changed. Perhaps sometimes we feel that justice has not prevailed in certain cases, but in the end, it will prevail and it’s the only way to live.

Secondly, Joseph also gave to Jesus the means whereby he could fill his thirst for righteousness.

This makes Joseph the unique personality he was and gives him a prime place among those who are called father. Most people are eager for righteousness, but they fail to achieve it. Joseph knew how to be righteous.

He had a quiet, deep, trustful devotion for God when he listened to the angel’s voice guiding him to marry Mary.

He was so devotedly aware of God that he could hear the still small voice of God telling him first to flee to Egypt and then to return to Nazareth.

Such devotion takes principles from the mind and so plants them in the heart that the whole power of the human soul lies back of the determined righteousness of an individual. Such as the devotion of those saints who have suffered imprisonment that they might stand for righteousness. Such devotion is aware of God and find his wisdom and power to be the means of righteousness. Such devotion comes by the grace of God, and not by the faulty efforts of mere men.

As a sponge soaks up fluid, so our children soak up the attitudes involved in whatever we say or do in their presence. If we take the news, the name of God in vain, our children will prove be prone to do it also, and so lose reverence for God. If we argue ourselves into believing no harm comes from drinking alcoholic beverages, our children cannot be expected to have any conscience to the contrary. If we speak ill of our neighbors, our children will think as we do about them. If we have “roast preacher” for Sunday dinner or condemn the church, the school, or our children’s teachers, our children will lose faith in them. How vitally important it is that we, as parents, follow the course on behalf of our children that will give them altitude in attitudes.

If we try to tell our children to live as we tell them rather than the way we actually live, then we are asking for trouble because the example we set as parents is of the upmost importance.

We have made two mistakes in dealing with a younger generation. We have told our youth that this country was carved out of the wilderness. The truth is, it was hammered, bold, chopped, dug and clawed out of the wilderness by men who asked nothing for nothing.

We have told them that it is a wonderful thing to be an American. But we have forgotten to tell them what a difficult, demanding, and dangerous thing it is to be an American.

We cannot expect, nor should our young people expect something for nothing. It's up to us to earn our own way, to be willing to work for what we want and to obtain it honestly.

There are two practices in religion.

The first is the practice of custom. Many people have found religion to be a hollow shell because they have practiced only religious custom. They have read their Bible, prayed their prayers, gone to church, and given their money, but they have found no power to carry out the principles after which they have hungered and thirst.

The second is the practice of the Presence. Others have used the church, the Bible, the prayers, gifts, and services as means of expressing the devotion which they have felt in the practice of the Presence of God. This kind of religion Joseph gave to Jesus. It is the kind of heritage when men today can give to boys who call them father.

Today is Father's Day, and I believe we should rightly honor fathers everywhere on this special day. Fathers do have a definite responsibility to their families. They are the head of the family, the ones who earn the living and provide for the care and upbringing of their children. They need the help of mother and I believe it is a mutual Admiration Society, both working together to raise their children to the best of their abilities with God's help.

Proverbs 1:8 reads; "My son, hear the instruction of thy father."

John Wooden in his book entitled, "Courage to Conquer" said, "Inside my wallet is a piece of paper which I have handled so many times it is worn and ragged. It was given to me by my father when I graduated from the eighth grade of an old country school in Centerton, Indiana.

My father, in his simple way, was a most remarkable man. Although we had few material possessions on our farm, dad was a man who believed that one needed a philosophy of life if he were to amount to anything. On the paper he gave me for graduation, dad had listed the following creed which he had entitled, "Seven Things To Do."

(1) To thy own self be true, and it must follow as night does the day, thou canst not then be false to any

man.

- (2) Make each day your masterpiece.
- (3) Live each day as it should be lived. Never leave until tomorrow what can be done today.
- (4) Help others. A perfect life can be lived in helping others.
- (5) Drink deeply from good books. One book alone would suffice-the Bible.
- (6) Don't take friendship for granted. Study friendship and make it a fine art.
- (7) Most important of all, pray for guidance every day and divine guidance will come in some way.

I found these guides to be meaningful in every phase of my life. During the 18 years, I have coached basketball at UCLA, they have helped me develop a balance added toward victory and defeat. We play to win, of course, but more important to me is what the boys learn about life. That is why I stress the same principles dad did."

I would say those are pretty good principles to live by, wouldn't you? I know from my own experience, I need help and guidance to get through each day and certainly some days are more demanding than others. That's why I start and end each day with God for I know without him I wouldn't even have a chance. I definitely need his help in raising my children. I admit I am not the perfect father and I probably never will be but with God's help I am trying. How about you? Are you trying?

This last picture is the other three completed and made perfect. It is the transfigured face made perfect in suffering. It is the set face which has completed the task. It is the redeeming face melting the heart, not of Peter alone, but of all who have behold it and consider it's meaning.

Romans 8:37 reads, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."

When we face life with Christ, we inevitably become concerned about the things he wants done.

When we face life with Christ, we do not make excuses for ourselves, because through him, "we may become more than conquerors."

When we face life with Christ, we may welcome each advancing year, and especially the great moment when it becomes our turn to enter into the life, which is beyond this life.

Ways In Which B.F.C. Serves the Community



Many of us struggle with stress, depression, our weight, and other debilitating issues. "Living the Interior Life" is a program that teaches the individual affirmative prayer, meditation techniques, cognitive behavior therapy, overcoming addiction, physical exercise and proper nutrition. In addition, we offer guidelines on how you can learn to effectively apply these principles in your life daily & with God's grace overcome many of life's difficulties that until now you just simply believed you had to live with. Learn to overcome many difficulties and be liberated from them forever. We offer monthly workshops that are available in your church or organization. Call for our free booklet or schedule a convenient time that we can meet to discuss the benefits of this program to your congregation or organization. We are available anytime to serve your needs.

In 1985, Braman began to witness his recovery from addiction in the New York State Correctional Facilities. Braman has presented programs since that time in many facilities including : Greenhaven, Fishkill, Downstate, Summit, and several local and county jails. It is a thorough program using the 12 step method of recovery, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Meditation techniques as well as a program for dealing with violent behavior. In addition, our program helps to provide clarity concerning the negative learned behavior that unfortunately comes out of some families. If you are a correctional facilities administrator please contact us to schedule a convenient time when we can meet to discuss the program. If you are an inmate please contact your counselor to request a copy of our free booklet. There is no need to continue to live in a manner that does not contribute to the well being of yourself and society. Write, call, fax, or email us. May your lives be blessed as you seek greater heights of awareness. Peace to you.

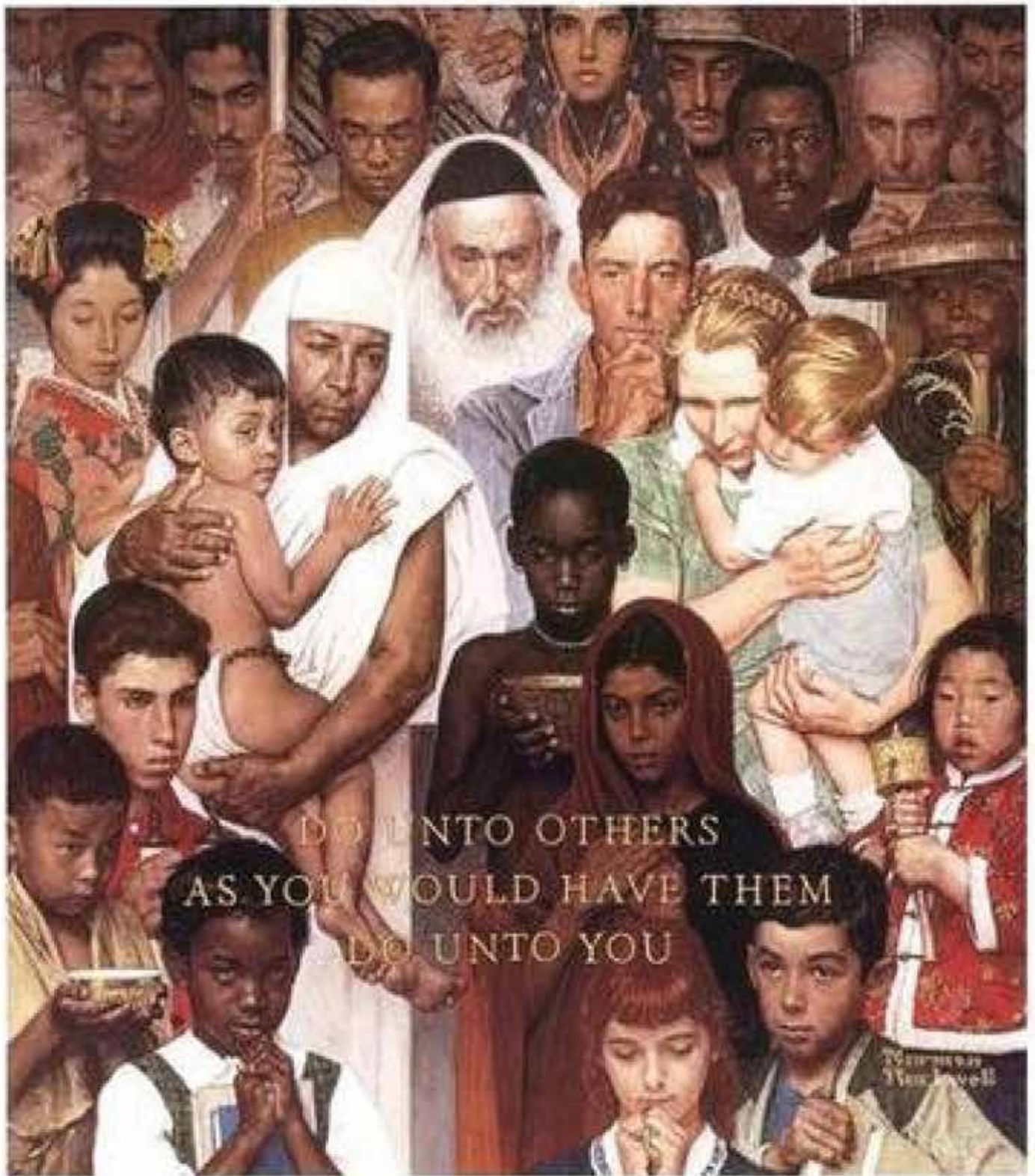


Millions of us suffer needlessly from addiction & depression. The reasons for this are many. In this program we emphasize the 12 step method of Recovery, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Meditation techniques to overcome difficulties. We also rely on God's grace to help you be lifted from your dilemma. If you or a friend or loved one suffers from difficulties surrounding addiction or depression please contact us for our free booklet. In addition we are available to schedule a convenient time when we can present a workshop for your organization to study these principles. All of the principles really are not new, but when presented together in one workbook and when applied in one's life, miracles can occur. Be sure to call, email, write, or fax us. May you be blessed as you seek greater joy & a truly happy life.

Learn about the journey of Love for some of the children in the state of Assam, India. In 1944 the late Julia Rose founded a school and boarding facility called Asapalli (A Village of Hope). Learn how you, your church or organization can donate to support the children of Asapalli. Write, fax, or e-mail for your free booklet: "A Tribute to Asapalli". In addition, it would be our pleasure to talk with you or give a presentation to your church or organization. Call us anytime. Many blessings to you.



Located Southwest of Calcutta, India, Orissa is the home of "Human Care Trust". Learn about our fellow brothers and sisters who struggle to provide education, healthcare, and economic enlistment to the people in the state of Orissa. Read about a few young individuals who have formed "Human Care Trust" and have devoted their lives to helping their fellow brothers and sisters. A free booklet is available upon your request by email, letter, fax or phone. We would be happy to schedule a convenient time when we can meet to present "Our Friends of Orissa" to your church or organization. We thank you!



NORMAN ROCKWELL
"DO UNTO OTHERS"