

Braman

Foundation of Charities



Central Bridge
United Methodist Church

The Sermons of Richard W. Braman Vol. 4

“

Love Thy Neighbor

65 Country Colony Rd. | Queensbury, NY 12804

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

An Over Abundance Scripture: II Cor. 9:1-8	Page 3
Beyond Our Thought Scripture: Ephesians 3: 14-21	Page 7
Binding Love Scripture: Philippians 1:1-11, Deuteronomy 11:1-15	Page 11
Christ a Living Factor in Our Lives (Easter) Scripture: John 20: 1-18	Page 15
Great Moments in Holy Communion Scripture: John 6:18-28	Page 20
The Holy Spirit Scripture: Acts 2:1-21	Page 23
Interpreted By Love Scripture: I Corinthians 13, Proverbs 31:10-31	Page 28
Living Responsibly Scripture: Ephesians 5:1-21	Page 33
Love with No Conditions Scripture: Luke 15:11-32	Page 40
Making the Most of Your Vacation Mark 6:7-13, 30-32	Page 44

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Meeting the Test Now (1 st in a Series “Christ is Able”) Scripture: Luke 4:1-13	Page 49
Men Made Whole Scripture: Mark 2:1-12	Page 54
The Christian Home Scripture: Deuteronomy 6: 4-15	Page 59
The Difference Easter Makes Scripture: Romans 8:11-17, 36-39	Page 64
The Easter Victory (Sunrise Service Easter Morning) Scripture: Matthew 28	Page 68
The High Uses of Memory Scripture: Deuteronomy 8	Page 71
With Only One Life To Live Scripture: Exodus 35:30-36:1; Matthew 4:18-22	Page 75
Morsels That Make Sense Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17, Luke 10:25-28	Page 80
The Crisis of Our Age Scripture: Matthew 16:1-12	Page 84

An Over Abundance **Scripture: II Cor. 9:1-8**

Text taken from II Cor. 9:8, “And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that you may always have enough of everything and may provide in abundance for every good work.” Phillips translates this: “After all, God can give you everything that you need, so that you may always have sufficient both for yourselves and for giving away to other people.”

Our three proceeding outlines of this Lenten series on, “Christ is Able”, directed our thoughts to Christ’s ability to help us in a time of temptation, to “save us to the uttermost”, to integrate or make whole our personalities. This is just the start. Paul gives us further suggestions as he writes to the Church of Corinth concerning a very important and practical matter.

The Greek churches are taking a collection for their destitute brethren at Jerusalem; and Paul wishes to make sure that the Corinthian church will make a willing and liberal offering. In his plea for liberality he writes, “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having a sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”

Paul is saying that God is able to make a Christian man into an abounding person. Strong, forgiving, integrated, he needs also to abound. He is not complete until he overflows with goodness, with grace, with kindness, with liberality, with practical help to his needy brother. By this he becomes Christ-like, Godlike, grace, blessings, loving– kindness are to flow through him.

Our text in its three parts directs our thoughts.

First, “God is able to make our grace abound toward you.”

That’s God’s nature. Love doesn’t skimp, give sparingly, count an even dozen. Christ’s miracle of the feeding of the 5000 with the basket full of leftovers is a parable of the nature of God’s love. When the prodigal came back home the father gave him a best robe, a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. That reveals the true Father – heart of God.

That’s God’s ability. The prodigality of nature reveals this. That seed that is planted in the earth, watered by the shower, warmed by the sun, brings forth even a

hundred fold. Abundance runs through the economy of God.

That God is able to make all grace abound is verified by human experience. It was Paul's own experience. Why did Paul use the word "all" five times in this one verse, if not because he knew its significance? It would be profitable and revealing to look about us in our own community to observe the people who are living truly abundant life.

Would these people testify that God was the source of their abundance, whether it be of a material or a spiritual nature. I know that we can have as much more abundant life if we know and realize that God does provide everything we have in life. We will also realize that we have much more to share with others when God is in us. When we accept this fact we have much more time and effort and we give more freely of what we do have.

That other people do not have such abundance suggest another series of observations to ask and answer the question, why? The faults may not be in the individual under observation but in his nearby brother who, receptive of God's abounding provision, is unwilling to share it, unwilling to become a channel of grace. There is terrific human need in the world. God is able to give abundantly. Someone says, where there is famine there is faults. Where there is destitution in the church in Jerusalem there maybe fault in Corinth, if the Corinthian church is unwilling to share its abundance with its distant brethren.

The need for sharing our abundance today with people in our own country as well as people in the rest of the world is greater than it ever was. We have a direct responsibility because we claim to be Christians and because we are one of the richest nations in the world. The world isn't going to get better by trying to increase our wealth and holding other people down. The world will only get better if we can help others to raise their standards, if we help others to come to know God's word and as we share some of our vast abundance with them. After all why shouldn't we share's our blessings, God gave them to us and all people everywhere are God's children. What better reason do we need?

It requires no labored assemblage of evidence to convince us that in our civilization overflowing with wealth, the supply of joy is tragically depleted. Our rightful inheritance seems to be tied up in chancery. We can't get at it. The stupendous and brilliant feats of our civilization bring us no deep joy or content. Our buildings are higher but our joy is not more profound as someone has said, "We have the machinery to manufacture everything except the peace which passeth understanding.

Our text continues, “that ye always having all sufficiency in all things”. “That ye” or “So that ye” belongs to the third division of the text. “Always having all sufficiency in all things” is parenthetical. It repeats Jesus’ statement of his own purpose, “I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John 10: 10)

Here is a woman’s conversation with her physician. “You can understand – when I say that she was suffering from a serious nervous disorder of the digestive system. But how happy she was now! I was astounded.” Then she immediately added, “I can feel and measure the love of God.” Then after thinking for a moment, “Fundamentally, I think we cannot really love mankind without having realized the immensity of God.”

Why do some men make a bondage of the Christian life? Why do they not rejoice in their freedom? Why are some Christians meager in their living? They never take the privilege of a son to make a feast of merriment for their friends. Princes of the realm, they live like beggars at the gates of the palace. Does not the good father rejoice in his child’s happiness? Is he not pleased to give him pleasure?

Is it unchristian for a man to make a success of his life? The answer I believe is definitely no because God has definitely given some of his people more talent than others and if our talents are put to work we are bound to be more successful than others. I can’t see anything wrong with this unless a man becomes a success at the expense of another man. Naturally the ones that are more successful are able to contribute more to God’s work and there we can repay God for what he has given us. I do not believe that God wants us to hold ourselves back if we have the ability and the know-how. However, when this becomes the main objective of our lives we sometimes lose sight of where our abilities came from in the first place. When God comes first, we will be guided and directed in the rest of our life.

If it is God’s ability and purpose to give abundantly, why should his children not live abundantly? A generation ago it was Roger Babson, a well-known American financier, who barraged the ministers of America with literature urging them to preach the doctrines of material advantage in following the Christian way of life. The ministers of the country did not respond too enthusiastically because of Babson’s emphasis upon the material advantage. But in looking upon life in its fullness, how rich spiritually, and even materially, it might become if one were more

fully and more eagerly receptive to the gracious gifts of God. Once God has become the center of our lives, I believe it is true that materially we will be blessed also. From my own experience I have found this to be true.

In a cemetery in Scotland there are engraved on the tombstone of a man who died many years ago the words, "He died opulent". Just what that puzzling inscription meant is hard to tell. Perhaps it merely records the fact, rather irrelevant in the presence of eternity and he died having a lot of money. The words may mean much more. When we live unsparingly, with an open hand in heart, we cannot only die opulent but live opulently.

Now for the last part of our text, "That ye may abound to every good work".

God gives all grace. We enjoy a sufficiency of grace, then what? Dr. John Jewett once described the church he was serving as "clogged by a glut of unutilized grace".

There is water in the mountains; there is need of water in the plains; between the mountains and the plains lie the water courses with wide open channels. In an irrigated country sometimes the channels are cut off. Then the country goes back to desert. Open the Corinthian channels so that there may be water in Jerusalem, Paul was saying.

Changing the figure, he said, "Sow sparingly, you will also reap sparingly." It is an axiom, "Spare sowing brings a spare harvest."

Our age has given great study to the task of adding years to our life and has succeeded marvelously. The span of life has been increased by many years. But the deepest problem is not too to add years to our life but life to our years. That is the gift Jesus came to impart, "life to the full."

Gods abounding grace, the channels full, the channels overflowing, by their emptying they receive again from the Source. And where the grace goes other lives abound and become channels in turn. It is a lovely and inspiring picture. But best of all it is true.

Beyond Our Thought

Scripture: Ephesians 3: 14-21

I have chosen my text from Ephesians 3:20-21, “Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that working in us.”

“How do we think of God?” That is what we are to ask ourselves when the light of faith within us grows dim. The cause of this lack of faith that makes our Christianity powerless is that our God is too small. We have come to think of God and Christianity as just another thing for us to be bothered with. We haven’t really taken God into our hearts and our lives. Christ has not become the center of our activities.

In Paul’s letters, the thought of God that fixed his imagination and kindled his energy is always breaking through in striking language such as that of our text this morning.

Note his words, “He is able to do far more abundantly than we can ask or think.” When you think of God you must go beyond the bounds of your own thinking. As Browning put it, “Oh, but a man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s a heaven for?”

The man engaged in advanced scientific research fling out their hypothesis beyond the boundaries of their knowledge. The creator has created and perhaps is creating far beyond their apprehension.

When we use certain words we do go out of bounds in our thinking. Space is within bounds, infinity lies outside. Who knows what infinity means or is? We live in time. What of eternity? Eternity lies beyond our minds’ comprehension. We use the word beautiful, but for beauty we are still on search. We followed a scientist to the outer boundary of knowledge and we learn of the intelligence of God but what is the wisdom of God that makes all things work together for good? We know what righteousness and love is to a degree, but what is holiness? Glory is the word that we fling out into the great unknown. “Our father who art in heaven,” we are taught to pray, but who can define or describe heaven? Define the Trinity, if you can. In other words there are many words and expressions that we use that we really do not understand what they are or it’s exact meaning. There are many things in our lives that we have to take on faith that cannot be proven or

that we do not understand.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was that they should know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. That's where we should live and move and have our being— beyond our knowledge, in the infinite, eternal, ineffable, holy, glorious, heavenly God. We do not live and move and have our being in the small and the petty and the understandable.

Our minds must be active in the greatness of God. It is the great God that can do more than we can ask or think. We need to realize that everything is possible with God; he never uses the word impossible.

We read in Isaiah 55: 8-9, "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 then your thoughts."

It is easy to fall into a mood of discouragement and retreat into a little backwater of personal piety while the world goes on its own way. How easily we become discouraged and give up when things do not go the way we feel they should go. We've become very impatient and fail quite often because we do not have enough faith.

We need to breathe again the bracing and victorious atmosphere of the New Testament and rediscover its source in the vision of God and his boundless resources. He is at work and his wisdom and love are unfailing.

Again and again writers of both the Old and the New Testament's affirm that, "with God all things are possible." In fact it is a foundation conviction of both the Hebrew and the Christian religions. It is shared by other major religions of the world. Jesus carried the thought one step further. Since "with God all things are possible," those who yield themselves completely to God's will and purpose live lives of very extensive possibilities.

How do we think of man? The power works within us, that is, within the lives of men, especially within the lives of Christian men. Our thinking about man is kept too closely within bounds. Again we must kindle our imaginations that our energies may be fired. Do we ever cry out with the Psalmist, "Oh Lord— when I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, who though has ordained, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?"

Sixty miles west of Sydney, Australia, lie the Blue Mountains. Standing upon a mountain summit, one can look out upon “the Beyond.” The whole mountain area of “the Beyond” is suffused with a mystic blue light; no human dwelling or other edifice can be seen, but the traveler is told that busy cattle stations, and thriving villages and towns, nestle in the valleys. Looking to the horizon, the observer becomes aware that there is “the Beyond the Beyond” –it is the broad, unknown, mysterious heart of Australia. It is with awe and desire that one looks out upon the boundary between “the Beyond” and “the Beyond the Beyond”. So one stands in awe and desire before God– little we know, so boundless the unknown.

Leap beyond the boundaries of knowledge concerning man. Reach for his infinite worth in his creation in the image of God and in his redemption from sin by the love of God and in his service in the eternal kingdom of God.

Einstein, whose discoveries have made the dangers of the atomic age possible, has also pointed out the road to meaning in life. “The most beautiful thing we can experience,” he says, “is the mysterious. He who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead, his eyes are closed. This insight into the mysteries of life is at the center of religiousness.”

Imagine what comes about in the lives of men and in the life of the world and God’s power, above all that we can ask or think, forced into them like a torrent. JB Phillips speaks of a positive torrent of love and wisdom, sanity and courage, which has flooded human life and is always ready to flow wherever human hearts are open.

Most of us probably think of a lasting peace, in fact, we pray for one but we doubt in our hearts that there will ever be one. Suppose that Christians all over the world of ours actually believed that a lasting peace is possible and they believed it so much that they set out to do something about it. For we know that if men everywhere could show forth the kind of love to each other that Christ gives to us, peace would come to this earth and be everlasting. Peace is possible. We have to believe it and work toward it always.

We certainly need positive, loving thoughts concerning the racial situation in our own country. We know that God’s love doesn’t choose the color of a person’s skin and that the colored people are as much God’s children as the white person is. God’s understanding, and patience go far beyond what we can comprehend. We need to use some of these characteristics ourselves. We can live together in har-

mony and we have to believe that we can. There is a solution to this problem and with God's help we can find it.

Because of our out-of-bounds vision of God and our out-of-bounds vision of man, "God is able to do exceedingly abundantly, above all that we can ask or think, according to the power that working in us."

What is this out-of-bounds vision of God and man? Is it not faith? It is faith in God's power and faith in man's potentiality. It is faith that enables God's power to get to work. It is faith that thinks, a faith that has imagination to see what God is able and waiting to do. Why should we tell ourselves that human nature being what it is, there must always be war and strife, or that such barriers as race or class prejudice must always make brotherhood an impossible dream? Why should we be discouraged with ourselves and with the world when the power of God lies ready to work within us and among us?

I believe in God. I am intellectually aware that this belief is a hypothesis, which I cannot prove. But I am also intellectually aware that it is a reasonable hypothesis. There are difficulties in every belief about the alternate realities of life, but it is as reasonable a belief that man, with his spiritual, moral, intellectual and aesthetic strivings and appreciations, is related to something greater than himself which is the source of these strivings, as it is to believe the opposite.

Again the faith for which God waits is a faith that asks. How great is the range of our prayers? How far do they respond to God's willingness to give? Nothing in Christ teaching was more urgent than his call to pray. "Ask and ye shall receive," and he said, "knock, and it shall be opened unto you." What can that mean except that God's hands are held out to us waiting for us to receive and that his door awaits our knocking in order to swing open? Have we thought out what that means in terms of faith and confidence that should flow through our prayers?

But the faith we need is also a faith that acts. James the apostle was right. "Faith without works is dead." Jeremiah in his day believed with all his heart in the victory of God and the deliverance of Israel after the exile. But he put his faith in action. He brought a piece of ground when the enemy was over-running the country. And, we in our day need a faith that is more than lip service. We need action and works along with our faith, otherwise we are at a standstill and dead. Let us remember and let us truly believe that all things are possible with God and that God can do things beyond our belief working through us and among us.

Binding Love

Scripture: Philippians 1:1-11, Deuteronomy 11:1-15

I have chosen my text from John 13:34-35, “ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

In writing to his friends in the church in Philippi, Paul expresses himself with the lovely tenderness and warmth of feeling. Surprisingly so. Partly, because in this same letter he’s going to be very critical of the people of this church, condemning their cliques and the rivalry they have. Partly too – and this from our personal point of view– we do not normally think of him as a warmhearted person. But listen to him. “I hold you all in my heart,” he writes. And again: “I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. I hold you in my heart–I yearn for you– with the affection of Christ Jesus. My brethren, whom I love and long for – my beloved.”

Normally when we talk or speak of love we get involved in human emotion. First, let me call your attention to Paul’s reference to Jesus when he says; “With the affection of Christ Jesus.” Affection – is that a word you would use about Jesus? Yet Paul uses it, without qualification or explanation. It appears in the Revised Standard Version of the Bible; it appears in older modern translations as well as Moffat, Weymouth and Phillips. Apparently, Paul uses the word just as we use it and it’s what he means to say about Jesus. And why not? Would we want an ascetic Christ shorn of all emotions, pure cold mind but no warmth of heart?

In our image of him we have often robbed him of the ordinary and wonderful human emotions. Affection. It’s a good word. “With the affection of Jesus Christ.” Jesus had friends among outcast. He was very close to children. The reason? I think it might largely be the warmth of his personality–“the affection of Jesus Christ.” Paul also had this warmth, as we should remind ourselves. “I hold you all in my heart– I yearn for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” Note in Paul’s letters, how many people he mentions. In the 16th chapter of the letter of Romans, Paul greets a host of friends by name. Paul loved these people; they loved him. He would naturally hold them in his heart. He would yearn after them with affection.

Paul was not a cold aloof person; he was a warm, affectionate friend. Take a look now at the first Century churches. They consisted of people who knew each other

rather well. They didn't always get along with each other— that we know. Paul called them “saints” but some of them were rather unstable and unruly saints. Nonetheless their churches were fellowships. Consider the church at Philippi. Troublesome as its internal difficulties were, it managed to survive, not because it had a firm hold upon doctrinal truths but because there was love among the people. There is strength in fellowship that cannot be derived from rational belief alone. What should this mean to us? What about our churches today? Isn't it true of us too that where we are truly effective, our effectiveness rose out of the fact of fellowship? And that if we are ineffective, it is because we are not sufficiently joined in the communication and bonds of love and affection—that is, are not sufficiently of fellowship?

We certainly cannot have fellowship together if we are constantly at each other's throats, condemning and criticizing each other. True fellowship will come as a result of each one of us accepting Jesus Christ into our hearts and lives as our personal Savior and Lord. After we have done this, Christian love will result and that will bind us together in true Christian fellowship. And I do not care what you try to bring about fellowship— until we have done this there will not be true fellowship. It sounds simple but there will be ups and downs, there will be disagreements and differences of opinions, however there will be understanding and consideration for each other views because Christ is in us.

I dare say that this church or any church cannot exist for very long unless the people of the church have this Christian love. How does the church seek to mediate the love of God? And to whom does it speak? It seems to me that the apostle is capable to distinguish between states in the development of the church. There is a mentality which needs the love of God as affection, permissiveness, healing. There is another mentality, which needs love as the structure of authority, the strength of encouragement and warning. Both of these loves recognize the creaturely character of the church and its need of sanctification. It must be the kind of community in which love supports the creature and moves him towards maturity.

Why do Christians have so much to say about love? We do, you know. “Beloved let us love one another.” Not just let us be friendly, or tolerant, or agreeable, but “Let us love one another.” We read these biblical words, unabashed and unembarrassed. Someone to whom the vocabulary of Christianity is strange might wonder about our seeming imprudence or forwardness. We would, of course, quickly reply that we don't have romantic love in mind. Yet we do mean much more than carnal good feeling. The mischievous modern notion, and it is modern, that to be

born again is merely to have a new relation to God, ignores the fact that it is impossible to have a new relation to God without also having a new relation to people. The very first green tendril of love that sprouts in the human heart, fumbles its way immediately toward other human beings.

We cannot possibly love God and not have feelings toward other people. Perhaps we say that we love God but do we really mean it in our hearts? If we do love him, our feelings, our concerns, our actions towards others will change and the feeling within us will be something that is indescribable. We will start to find that joy and peace and happiness we talk so much about.

Why do we say so much about love? First, because Christianity understands the nature of man: man must love and be loved. God intended it to be this way. The churches have been repeating these words long before they became part of our general vocabulary through modern psychiatry. It's rather interesting, however, that our present stress upon, "loving and being loved" coincides with the popular clarity of modern psychiatry and its insights. This new scientific discipline has helped us to see what our own gospel means. We should recognize that love will always involve emotion, in that we must expect to have a warmth of feeling for other people if we are to love them. Even Paul, who had so many unhappy limitations in what he said about human love, spoke very feelingly about his relationship to those people at Philippi. We would do well to follow him here.

Christianity knows the importance of affection. Affection will obviously be differently expressed in different relationships. But fundamentally, we need affection in some way – in every relationship. We read in I John 4, "if we love one another, God dwelleth in us."

Everywhere the devout are asking where God is— in a world like ours. With wars going on, with the racial tension in our country, where is God? It is an old, old question. The mocking have asked it in derision, "Where is thy God?" The disturbed have asked it in perplexity, "Where is now my God?" No one answer is neither enough, nor any answer easy. But John knew this: "wherever love is, there God is." Where the sorrowing mourn their dead in loving tenderness, where parents say goodbye to the children to save them, where affection watches the imperiled, there God is. Wherever an ethical goodwill mourns man's inhumanity to man and plans, beyond moral chaos, for a kind and righteous world; wherever broken hearts and lives cry, "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." There God is. Whenever the estranged pray for reconciliation, whatever the hurt refuse

to hate and compassion forgets enmities, there God is.

We don't need to search the skies for God. He is nearer than that: "if you love one another, God dwelleth in us." Only if there is a bond of love can a man be in an effective relationship with another person. Communication between persons—how can it be accomplished unless there is warmth of feeling that allows people to speak to each other sincerely and to listen with concern? A transition of some sort can take place, no matter how people feel about each other. But the "gift without the giver is bare." We Christians are very much concerned about the effectiveness of our churches. Our world, we say, desperately needs what the churches can give in faith and in service.

But we can meet the world's needs only as we are strong. We need to remember the church is you and I, it isn't someone or something else. What we are, what we make ourselves through God's help, the church is. The church is only effective as we are effective. What will make us strong? I'll tell you: "Love." We have discovered this in our life as families. Every family bound together in love is strong and makes an effective contribution to the neighborhood and the community because it is rooted in love.

A man and his wife were at an orphanage where they hoped to adopt a child. One boy appealed to them in particular. After they explained to the small child the many things they would give him and how much he would be grateful for, he said, "if you have nothing to offer except a good home, toys and other things most kids have— why then, I would just as soon stay here." "What on earth do you want besides those things that we mentioned," the woman asked. Little boy replied. "I want someone to love me." Many times we consider all the material advantages of life for our children but the most important, and it definitely is the most important, we leave out love.

Love also makes our churches strong. The Church serves the world to the degree that they are true fellowships—and here in Fultonham Union Church too – we have little to offer as a church. Our church or any church is neither a card file list of interested families, nor rows of people neatly arranged in pews on Sunday morning. A church is "the people of God"—a fellowship. And where we are not yet a fellowship we must become one. Using whatever words we ourselves might choose—for we would hardly use Paul's—we must be able to say to our fellow Christians: "I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus."

Christ a Living Factor in Our Lives (Easter)

Scripture: John 20: 1-18

I have chosen my text from Philippians 3:10. “I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings.”

In this text we find two ways in which Christ becomes a living factor in our lives. Let us take them in reverse order.

First– “the fellowship of his offerings.” What gives Christ his tremendous appeal to the human heart is just this: we know he has “been through it.” He is the divine Lord but he knows what it is to be exposed as we are to danger, pain, and separation from friends– even final agony when God himself seems to be hidden from us.

We can never forget that the Christ whose victory we celebrate on Easter morning is also the Christ who hung in agony on the cross for six hours on Good Friday, where human wickedness had nailed him. The mysterious appeal of that cross through human history lies surely in the fact that here he speaks our own language. We know, in greater or lesser degree, what it is to suffer. And to know this Lord is to know “the fellowship of his sufferings.”

Sometimes I think that a man may miss the experience of knowing Christ simply because he wants to skip this part of the story. He will not face the element of suffering in life but wants the resurrection story without the Calvary that gives it its deepest meaning.

A friend stood one day where he could view the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. At first, it was completely shrouded in early morning fog. But as the sun rose, the fog lifted between the upright peers of the bridge, leaving the land anchors still unseen. Is it not so with life? We see only what is between the great peers called birth and death. But Easter lifts the fog from both. Easter is the time when we see more clearly the anchorage that sustains life.

I think perhaps it is a human trait to forget the sad and difficult part of life and remember only the joyful part. When we do this we forget the supreme suffering and sacrifice that Christ made for us. All of life isn't easy and joyful. We all have

our share of suffering and troubles.

When you are in deep trouble to whom do you turn? Is it to the radiant, happy person who seems to ride always on the crest of the wave? I do not think so. I believe if you want the friend who has been through it, who knows the darkest valley as well as the mountaintops. This is the Lord who is alive and who offers you his friendship— a Savior who knows for he has been there and he has been there for us.

If you have ever truly shared in the sorrow of a friend or had a friend standby in the hour of your own greatest need, you know the meaning of these words that tell us what it means to know Christ— “the fellowship of his suffering.”

We often say that experience is the best teacher. I believe that this is true. The person with a similar experience that we are going through is the one that can comfort and guide us the best. He can understand our problems better than someone who has never experienced it. Jesus Christ had the experience, any experience we could possibly have. He can best help us and is more than willing to do so if we will let him.

The other deep meaning of knowing him is hidden in these great words: “the power of his resurrection.” I say, “hidden”, for this resurrection power is not an open, obvious, dazzling power like the waters of Niagara or the lights of Times Square. It is a power that works quietly in the recesses of the human heart. It is a power that is celebrated on Easter day in the great cathedrals services with pagantry and the sound of trumpets and also in quiet, secret rooms in other parts of the world where Christians are still meeting in prayer in times of persecution. Although the outward celebration will vary around the world; all who seek the friendship of Christ will know the inward truth.

Resurrection power. What is this power? It is nothing less than the divine power that raised Jesus from the dead, the power of love stronger than human hatred, the power of hope that was stronger than despair, the power of goodness that demonstrated its mastery over evil. This is “the power of the resurrection” and it is this that is offered to those who know him.

Paul speaks of the ‘power’ of the resurrection. And a power it ought to be. For Christian living is not a course of study, nor a balancing of probabilities. It is a fellowship with an unseen hero, our Lord and Savior. It is an opening of our hearts

and lives to him, and the power of God in him. The moral and spiritual resources of the universe are behind the living Christ.

I asked what kind of friend do we need in trouble. It must be your friend who has “been through it”, too. Yes, but it must also be a friend who has known how to triumph. The one who sympathizes so much and so deeply that he drags us still lower into the depths is of little use to us. We need one who is not only a fellow sufferer but is able to raise us up— one who, in fact, has resurrection power. It is this alone that can penetrate the deep and lift us out of ourselves and set us on the way of health and hope. And it is this that is so supremely offered by the risen Christ.

As persons and as a community of believers, “we can share the divine energy of Christ risen life.” Feeble, ordinary men and women turned the world upside down 19 centuries ago. How? It was due to the mysterious power working in them. They were a new creation because they were “in Christ.” It can happen here! It can happen to us!

Why could we not come alive as a Community of the Resurrection?

When we are linked in faith, in prayer, in worship to our Lord, the power that raised him from the dead is made available to us. Silently the tides of his spirit operate within and lift us from the mud of our sins and follies, delivering us from the grip of our despair. “Because he lives, we shall live also.” This is the life, eternal life— beginning now— that he came to bring.

“That I may know him” is much more than a memory of Easter. Our Easter bells are not just reminders of what can happen only once but are heralds of what can happen now. Our Easter lilies are not just a memory of a battle won long ago but are symbols of present triumph.

Off the coast of Newfoundland, we are told, one may see a strange sight. The winds are blowing from the south. The driftwood in all drifting things on the sea are silently moving northward. But far out at sea one sees the mighty icebergs. They are moving majestically southward. Winds and currents carry all drifting things towards the north, but the icebergs, eighty or ninety percent of their bulk underwater, are gripped by strong ocean currents and carried southward.

The fact of Christ’s presence is like that. His spirit can so possess us that the trivial movements of life do not bother us. We have a goal, we have a task, we have a destiny; and we have a power which drives this forward towards the fulfillment of

the mission of our Christ. Surface movements may come and go; Christ in us is an inner power, which is greater. Thus we can say with Paul; “I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

What does the Risen Christ offer us? First of all he offered a communion as we read in Mark 16:15. “And he said to them, go into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.” This is our obligation as Christians, to bring the Gospel message to all mankind everywhere. And again in Matthew 28:19, “go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” It is true it is physically impossible for us as Christians to preach and teach the gospel to all people but we can certainly teach those around us and we can support missionaries to foreign lands. This is what Jesus Christ told us to do as his disciples.

Second, the Risen Christ offers a task for us as we read in Acts 1:8 – “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.” This is our task as Christians and we can fulfill it when we have truly received the Holy Spirit into our lives, for Christ gives us the power to do things, which may seem impossible.

Third, the Risen Christ offered an explanation as we read in Luke 24:27, 44 – 46. “And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Then he said to them, these are my words, which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures and said to them, “ thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead.” Christ can open our minds too and give us understanding as to why he died and rose again so that our sins could be forgiven– a debt that we can never repay.

Fourth, the Risen Christ offered a message as recorded in Luke 24: 47, “that repentance and forgiveness of sins shall be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” This is the message we are to get across to all people everywhere.

And fifth, the Risen Christ offered us a promise as recorded in Matthew 28:20. “And lo I am with you always, to the close of the age.” This truly is what the promise of Easter brings forth, our assurance of the presence of Christ with us al-

ways.

When two disciples went for a walk on the first Easter day, their hearts for full of memories. They talked together in sad and hushed voices about the Jesus they had known. Then something happened that transformed their lives. “Jesus himself drew near and went with them.” This will be for us the happiest of all Easters we have ever known if to us Jesus, himself, draws near, “and we know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering.”

Great Moments in Holy Communion

Scripture: John 6:18-28

I have chosen my text from Luke 22:19. “And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, this is my body.”

There are some great ‘moments’ in the Holy Communion Service. I propose to suggest four of them and to say something about each.

The first may be described by the word “Covenant”. We are reminded, at the very beginning of the service, of the Old Covenant God made with his people Israel through Moses. The terms of it were made clear in the form of a legal code inscribed on stone. The recitation of the Ten Commandments is the declaration of the Old Covenant. Of course these Commandments are still a good guide for us to follow in our lives.

The terms of the New Testament were written in another place, in the heart of man. This new relationship Jesus inaugurated at the last supper is what we commemorate in the Holy Communion. God, through Jesus Christ, has put his law in our inward parts and written it on our hearts. We know how often we have failed to keep our part of this Covenant. The Commandments remind us of our shortcomings; the Epistles and the Gospels show us the standard to which we should approach; the confession is our admission of our failure. God has kept his word to us. Have we honored his?

We are fortunate that God has so much forgiveness, and more fortunate yet that God gave such a great sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins.

The second ‘moment’ is one of Commemoration. We are now doing something in remembrance of Christ himself. With thanksgiving, we recall his death for us on the cross, and all that great sacrifice has meant to mankind. We don’t think, however, only of our Lord’s death. We remember his life, his teaching, his glorious Resurrection and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Spirit. “Do this in remembrance of me” was his command, and as we carry it out, we pass from a memorial to an encounter with him. We achieve this in an act of Commemoration.

When Abraham Lincoln’s body was taken across the country from Washington to Illinois, stops were made at cities along the way. In Albany, the funeral procession

passed through the streets with the coffin bearing the body of the martyred president. A Negro mother stood in the crowd up on the curb with her baby in her arms. As a procession drew near, she held her child up above the shoulders of the crowd and said, "take a long look, honey. He died for you."

Bread and cup tonight, and the cross each day, say to us: "take a long look. He died for you."

Have you stopped to think what God's gift of the Holy Spirit really means to us, for without it we would not have the direct guidance and help we now have. We could not have the direct contact with God we enjoy now. This Holy Spirit is always present in our lives if we're willing to listen and be guided by it.

The third moment is Communion. In a spiritual and yet in a real sense, we come especially close to God as he has been made known to us in Jesus Christ. We partake of the elements of bread and wine, "the effectual signs of grace and God's goodwill towards us, by which he doth invisibly work in us."

Speak to Him, thou, for He hears,
For spirit with Spirit can speak,
Nearer is he than breathing,
Closer than hands and feet.

Sometimes when we become so busy in our lives that we don't have time for God, his work and his teachings, we need to stop, "Look and Listen" for he is there. He always waits for us and we can truly be thankful for that. Here when we partake of the Holy Communion we can come very close to God if we come prepared to meet him and are willing to let our lives and go to him.

The final 'moment' is one of Consecration. With thanksgiving we pledge ourselves to Christ's service and make our acts of dedication and resolution. We want now to show him forth in our lives. Jesus laid down an acid test for those who profess to follow him. "By their fruits ye shall know them". If our communion with him is sincere, we shall surely let men know that we have been with him. The meaning of our worship on Sunday morning ought to be seen on Monday and every day of the week.

Most of us profess to be good Christians; at least we like to be considered as such. It seems however sometimes we leave our faith, our religious lives here at the

church and practice something else during the rest of the week. Christianity is a full-time life 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Some of the things we do perhaps escape are friends and acquaintances but God notices and knows exactly what kind of a person we are. He knows us better than we know ourselves. I think if we can remember this we might think twice before doing some of the things we normally do in our lives. It is true we are going to make mistakes but if we recognize these mistakes and try to live better lives, God will forgive us.

The Holy Communion proceeds as a drama in which these four moments represent the Acts. Around them occur many scenes, which help to unfold the story. Each worshiper is conscience of the progress in the service as he takes part in it. He must endeavor to reproduce the action of the drama in his own devotional experience. To achieve that requires great preparation, devotion, and concentration on his part. Take the time to come prepared to meet your Savior and Lord here at the table tonight. The rewards and results will be worthwhile in your life.

The Holy Spirit

Scripture: Acts 2:1-21

I have chosen my text from Acts 2:4, “ And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Before an all-star game a few years ago, the American League locker room strategists we’re debating how to pitch to “Stan-the-Man Muriel, the great National League hitter. Should you pitch to him high and inside or low and away? Could you sneak a hard fast one by him or fill him with a big slow curve? Yogi Berra, who was to catch, listened briefly then ended the discussion with a single sentence. “The trouble with you guys is that you’re trying to figure out in 15 minutes what nobody has figured out in 15 years.”

That is substantially the position we are in this morning. We’re going to try to figure out something in 20 minutes which nobody has really figured out in 20 centuries: The Holy Spirit.

What is the Holy Spirit?

The phrase is familiar enough to us all. We have probably used it half a dozen times in this service already. It is used in a good many hymns. Creeds almost invariably involve it. It or one of its synonyms appears on practically every page of the Bible. Prayers and benedictions abound with it but few, if any, of our chief Christian beliefs are as foggy in our minds as is this. We find it a good deal easier to believe in than to define! What is the Holy Spirit?

The simplest and plainest way to begin to get a purchase on the idea is to regard it as another name for God. Any time or place you see the word Holy Spirit or just “Spirit” (with a capital S) you can substitute the word God without doing the slightest violence to the meaning and vice versa.

As the Bible uses the term, however, Holy Spirit is more than a synonym for the most high. So come a little farther and know that it is a term usually used to try and express God’s way of working, his intangible conversation with his creation. “In the beginning”, we read that, “the Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters.”(Genesis1:1-2) The Holy Spirit is a way of describing the unifying power which we sense in the midst of the continual flux and flow of things.

A way of understanding this, perhaps, is to say that the Holy Spirit is to God what sunlight is to the sun. On a bright winter day one can appreciate the radiance effect of sunlight. Even though the air is cold you can feel the penetrating warmth of the sun. Although the sun is 95 million miles or so away, and the earthly temperature is below freezing, you feel warm inside. And the way it does it, in a layman's terms at any rate, is by sunlight-by radiation from itself. So you might describe the Holy Spirit as radiation from God.

Jonathan Edwards, noting that "We often read in Scripture of the Father loving the Son and the Son loving the Father, yet we never once read either of the Father or the Son loving the Holy Spirit" or the Spirit loving either of them", said that "The Holy Spirit is the Divine Love, the love of the Father and the Son"— It is the bond of felicity between God and his son in all creation.

This brings us a step farther. Not only is the Holy Spirit another name for God, and particularly a way of describing God's way of working, it is especially descriptive of God's way of influencing humanity. It is a name for, or identification of, that aspect of God's activity that is intuitively connected with human beings — our very life is his Spirit breathed into us. For we read in Genesis 2:7, "Then Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." And similarly Jesus did the same to his disciples after his resurrection as we read in John 20:22, "And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit." Our intellectual and moral and religious capacities are in the arena of its particular operation. Prophetic, aesthetic, and scientific inspiration are attributable to it. Talents and abilities spring from it. It is the divine influence in our lives.

With all the initially confusing variety of meanings attached to the single term, Divine Spirit, within the world of religion, two are distinctive and universal—intimacy and potency. The Holy Spirit testifies to the immediately present activity of the Divine — God near and God-mighty. The "Spirit of God" or "Holy Spirit" is always God-at-hand, and the "Spirit of God" or "Holy Spirit" is always God-at-work.

This brings us to a very practical consideration. If the Holy Spirit is another name for God, a description of the way he works, and especially descriptive of his way of influencing humanity, how does one know when something is the work of the Spirit and when it isn't? Everything that someone may decide as the "work of the

Spirit” isn’t necessarily divine in its origin, and not everyone who claims to be inspired or directed by the Spirit can be believed!

I remember hearing of a person who was brought up in one of the more emotionally religious climates where such as ecstatic experiences as speaking in tongues and assorted physical gyrations are commonly taken as the supreme evidences of the religious spirit. His mother was a deeply Christian woman, however, and while never attacking such religious activities, she shrewdly observed to her son: “Roy”, she said, “it’s not so much how high they jump as what they do when they come down, that counts.”

How is one to know when one’s own impulses are from the Spirit? How is one to know when a man or a movement is truly inspired? Such questions soon arose in the church and the New Testament offers several practical test.

One of them is consistent with Jesus; anyone or anything that is incompatible with the fullest possible understanding of, appreciation of, and obedience to our Lord is not of the Spirit. We read in 1 John 2: 3-6, “And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his Commandments. He who says, “I know him but disobeys his Commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.” And in Hebrews 5:9, “And being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him.” And again in I John 4:2&5, “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God.” “They are of the world, therefore what they say is of the world, and the world listens to them.”

Another of the test, and particularly one to be applied to social movement and institutions, is the extent to which it contributes to genuine freedom. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Cor. 3:17). Any man or movement or habit is what the Bible calls a “false god” if “having once become a repository of a man’s allegiance, it straight way proceeds to destroy his freedom.”

The most exhaustive test for the presence of the Spirit is Paul’s list in Galatians 5:22, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Or as John puts it more simply in 3 John 2, “He who does good is of God; he who does evil has not seen God.”

For the most part the first generation of Christians was not composed of college

graduates. PhD's were a few. Wealth and social standing were conspicuous by their absence. Yet, these ordinary people, of ordinary education, and with ordinary resources, found themselves with an abundance of new power, courage, and ability to express their experiences and religious faith. They found themselves doing things they had never dreamed they could or would do. However, they were aware of a guidance and direction from beyond themselves. They were steering a new, unknown, uncharted course and just when it seemed that they didn't know which way to turn or what to do next the answers seemed to come to them. They discovered to their amazement that they were growing, learning, changing, being transformed and renewed morally and spiritually. And they described it all— a new power, the sense of direction, and the personal transformation— as the work of the Holy Spirit.

You see God's Holy Spirit comes to us regardless of our education, regardless of our social position, regardless of whether we are rich or poor. These earthly and worldly things do not matter to God. And when we do receive this Spirit we will have all kinds of power, we will be able to do things that previously we thought were impossible. We will know when the Holy Spirit has touched us because we will feel differently about things, we will look upon things with a new light, we will have a feeling of joy and happiness we never before have experienced. It is difficult to explain exactly what will happen and how God speaks to each individual in different ways. All I can say, when God really touches you, you will know, there will be no doubt.

A delegation of women once called on President Lincoln to urge a particular course of action. The leader assured the president that he had been up appointed a minister of the Lord to accomplish this very thing and should follow the example of the inspired Old Testament leader Deborah. When the woman had finished making the presentation, Lincoln terminated the interview with a single lawyer – style sentence. “I have neither time nor disposition to enter into argument with you, and would end this discussion by suggesting for your consideration weather, if it be true that the Lord has appointed me to do the work you have indicated, it not probable he would have communicated knowledge of that fact to me as well as to you.”

Let us close then with this line from that remarkable bestseller of a few years ago, Dr. Zhivago. “I think that if the beast who sleeps in man could be held down by threats— any kind of threat, whether of jail or retribution after death—then the highest emblem of humanity would be the lion tamer – with his whip, not the prophet

who sacrificed himself. But don't you see— what has for centuries raised man above the beast is not the cudgel, but an inward music; the irresistible power of unarmed truth, the powerful attraction of its example.” “Not the cudgel, but an inward music—the Holy Spirit, God present with us for guidance, for comfort and for strength.”

Interpreted By Love

Scripture: I Corinthians 13, Proverbs 31:10-31

I have chosen my text from I Corinthians 13:13, “ So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Webster’s dictionary says that love is “a feeling of strong personal attachment induced by that which delights or commands admiration; by sympathetic understanding, or by ties of kinship.” It doesn’t seem to be quite complete, does it? If a young man or young woman, coming into a minister’s study to plan for a wedding, and were told that they were suffering from that, they would scarcely recognize the ailment. Love is one of the greatest indefinables.

We get a much better picture of the meaning of love from the 13th chapter of I Corinthians then we do from the dictionary.

But regardless of our difficulty in describing or defining love, most of us feel that we have a working knowledge of it. So with the assumption that we have a working knowledge of the word I am asking that we turn our minds to Whittier’s use of it in his great hymn, “Dear Lord and Father of Mankind.” You recall one of the stanzas says:

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hill above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
The silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!

What a wealth of suggestion is in those three words. “interpreted by love”. What a different world it would be if the interpretations of men were rooted in love. If they have in their hearts more of that which was in Christ on the cross. “Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” If ever and act was interpreted by love it was that.

Just think if we could only take all of the little criticisms as an act of love instead of taking them as a dirty dig or being resentful about them. And think of the difference it would make if the ones criticizing could do it as an active love instead of plain criticism. What a difference it would make. For most of us spend nearly all of our lives with hurt feelings or trying to hurt someone else’s feelings. We

spend untold hours on trivial things that really are unimportant when we could spend our time to much better advantage. We need to remember that our earthly life is rather short and we should try to make the most of it.

Dr. George Morrison once said there are only two classes of people in the world—the minus people in the plus people. There are those who by their apathy, indifference, criticism and censoriousness diminish life and re-class the world's fund of goodwill. Then there are those who are the great encouragers of their brethren — what a help when we begin to lose confidence in ourselves to have someone come and express confidence in us; interpreting our shortcomings and failures not in terms of the redemption but in terms of love.

This idea of “interpreted by love” speaks to so many areas of life. We are sure, for instance, that in numerous homes would have been saved shipwrecks, if, instead of interpreting actions by suspicion and thoughtlessness, husbands and wives had done more interpreting by love; if they had looked on their problems through eyes of love.

We cannot get grace from gadgets. In the Bakelite house of the future, the dishes may not break, but the heart can.

And this principle has application in many situations other than marriage. If there was only a little more of this love that Christ took with him to the cross, the chances of understanding would be brighter everywhere, would they not?

Alice Humphreys tells of a schoolteacher who had a special problem—a pugnacious, mean spirited lad who tried to compensate for smallness of size and a sissy name by being quarrelsome and sometimes down right vicious. One day a little girl came to school with clean white mittens and a muff to match and he seized the muff and threw it in the mud. The teacher immediately sprang to execute judgment. But the little girl picked up her muff and stroked it and said to her teacher and a very responsible manner, “I’ll have to take time to tell him about God someday.” Now I imagine that the child was showing a great deal more self-restraint than any of us would have shown. But she certainly was on the right track. She wasn’t thinking of punishment. She was thinking of helping. She was manifesting, in a large measure, that ingredient of love with which Abraham Lincoln interpreted the behavior of men when he said, “with malice toward none; and charity for all.” “I’ll have to take time to tell him about God someday.” It certainly takes a heap of love to respond to ill-treatment in that manner.

And of course such an understanding is a blessing to all.

In the past twenty years physicians have come to the realization that worry, fear, anger, and hatred are poisons that can cripple and destroy the body as well as the mind. Grudges can bring arthritis; rage can bring about the need for surgery; tension can lead to complications for the heart and the brain. When we are right inside, these diseases of the Spirit have nothing in which to take root. Resentment and grudges give place to forgiveness; worry and tension give place to trust; selfishness gives place to zeal to be an instrument of love for someone else, and all of life takes on a different glow. We even feel differently toward God— for we come to know him to be love— and we learn to sit even before the silences of eternity and interpret them by love.

I know that it is difficult to respond in love to someone who has done us an injustice. Our thoughts, generally, is how cannot I get even with this person. Perhaps this is the first normal reaction. But quite often we are not always on the receiving end of life, sometimes we are the ones who are dishing it out. Perhaps if we gave a little thought, and use some love before we acted or talked; our criticisms and suggestions would be accepted by other people the same way. You know we all aren't going to change overnight but we all need to start somewhere and at some-time. Why don't we try it and see what the reactions are.

It is the secret of many people's lives. There was someone who loved and understood and gave us a feeling of confidence and security again. Isn't it wonderful to know we do have people around us like that? Certainly children should always know they have such parents. When they take to their children sympathetic understanding, they provide a haven of protection to which they may turn in times of distress. They give to their children a sense of security when emotional disturbances threaten. A baby specialist has a special treatment for babies he thinks should be coming along more quickly. He right across the chart, "this baby to be loved every three hours." It's a treatment that might be very helpful for their years after they are babies. But certainly love in the home provides a great source of strength and confidence for the child.

While we are thinking about loving children and love in the home, let us think together about the person who generally is responsible for bringing about this love, mother, of course. All of us have known this motherly love from the time we were babies until her passing, for regardless of what we did wrong, mother always

looked on the bright side and showed fourth her love for us. By natural affection for we can sense and feel their love and concern for us.

Here is a portion of a Mother's prayer, "One has to be very great and good to be mother. No one short of God himself could be equal to it. But I love thee, God, and in love I climb beside thy seat. Teach me thine own wondrous skill and indiscretion so that I may also learn to wait and to suffer and by long wisdom to circumvent."

I believe it is fitting and right to honor mothers on a particular day during the year because most of us owe what we are to our mother. They have made the sacrifices, they have born the pain and disappointment, they have stuck by us through thick and thin, they have continued to love us regardless of our actions. But where would most of us be if it were not for our mothers love, and care and guidance.

I think perhaps what a mother and wife is, is best summed up in Proverbs, chapter 31. (Read Proverbs 31:10-31)

Life without love is meaningless. In Helmut Gollwitzer's account of his journey to Russia as a German prisoner of war this is brought out significantly. We quote from Douglas Webster's book, "In Debt to Christ". The war was over but they had been captured; their hope of home was fading, and in his diary Helmut Gollwitzer writes:

"The great ideas had vanished; the important things in life have shrunk into the little circle where love is. It is essential that I have somebody whom I love and who loves me. That is what gives meaning to my life and is therefore the ground of my happiness; without that I may have the wealth of Pierpont Morgan or the power of Stalin, but my life is poor and meaningless."

The fact is that love anywhere gives things a different nature and a different look. Love gives you everything we touch this warmer feel. In the irrigation of land, little gates are opened to irrigation furrows and water flows in, and growing things result. And they flourish or they die according to the extent to which the gates are opened. That fact has a parallel in the use of love in the interpretation of life. What we make of life depends on how far we have open the gate to let love in.

An unemployed janitor turned in \$240,000 that had fallen from an armored bank truck in the Wilshire district of Los Angeles a few years ago. After finding the package he phoned the F.B.I. office. "I've got something here you folks might be

looking for,” he drawled. When he turned over the sack, which had not been opened, but which bore the label, \$240,000, he said, “if I’d kept the money I never could have looked my kids in the face again.”

This thing about which I have been talking is not easy of attainment. It is not easy to forgive persecutors and those who crucify. One man who had been having great difficulty with his neighbors said that any minister who preached on the subject either has never tried it or he has unusually good neighbors. Be that as it may, interpretation by love is a must, for it is the way the Master went. He speaks of it in his great parables, the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.

How to grow in this habit, then? It is not easy. But as Christians we must. And at least the start of the road is simple. You recall that when one of the early church fathers was asked the way to heaven, he said to take the first turn to the right and keep going. The directions are applicable to what we have been talking about. I believe, though, that we should start with prayer on the matter, should do some listening to the silences of eternity. And ask God for strength and courage that whatever and when ever we meet an opportunity to practice love, and sympathy, and forgiveness, and understanding, we do it. We make our beginning at the first turn to the right and keep going.

Living Responsibly

Scripture: Ephesians 5:1-21

Text is taken from Ephesians 5:15, “Live life – with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days.”

In his concern for the Ephesian Christians that they may attain to spiritual maturity, Paul wrote very bluntly in the letter to the Ephesian church.

He says, “Live life with a due sense of responsibility.”

Was Paul disturbed to find many of the Ephesian Christians as morally indifferent as pagans? Should we be admonished because we adjust ourselves too comfortably to the secular world? We ought to understand the Ephesians. We often are very much like them. They tried to avoid responsibility by appealing to the circumstances that surround them. We shift our accountability, by saying that we are simply doing what everyone else is doing. This is the way we excuse our own actions by saying that everyone else is doing it so it must be all right for me to do it. Sometimes we let other people do our thinking for us, and then all we have to do is conform to other people’s ways.

But I think we should consider that a Christian is individually responsible for his own thinking and doing. I am responsible for me, and you are responsible for you. That is a major premise of our Christian thought.

What is more, each of us is responsible for the impact of his influence upon others. Sounds paradoxical, and in a sense it is. If I am responsible for me and you are responsible for you, and I am not to blame if you flounder because it’s something I do– but I am responsible. Whether we like it or not, we are “bound up in the bundle of life.” One with another, and we cannot avoid responsibility for the impact of our influence. We are accountable. If I can get away with breaking all the laws in the book then other people feel they have the same right. Does that make it right? Certainly the example we set for our children, our friends and other people around us is all-important. How we live our lives reflects on those around us.

The sheriff of Los Angeles County, facing a rise in the rate of juvenile delinquen-

cy, recently stated that a new principle would henceforth be applied to the county: the youth themselves would be held responsible for their deeds. No more will the home, the school, the church or any other organization be reproved. A group of youth had previously expressed themselves in the press advocating such a procedure.

We are responsible to our social and hereditary background. This was expressed by Paul in his letter to the Romans, chapter 1:14: "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians."

We are responsible as servants of Christ and his stewards of the secrets of God for we read in II Corinthians 4:1&2, "This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy." We consider ourselves Christian, and as Christians we are Christ disciples and followers, serving Christ to the best of our ability through the talents God has given us. This is what Christian stewardship is, serving Christ through our God given talents and abilities.

Paul goes on to suggest that a sense of responsibility grows in us when "we know the meaning and purpose of life." The purpose that gives meaning to life is twofold, personal and social.

On the personal side, the purpose of life is inner growth, "in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." How can we obtain and acquire more knowledge of our Lord and Savior? The best way I know is through reading the Bible and through prayers with him. Certainly by talking and listening to other Christians we can obtain more knowledge. As Christians we cannot stand still or fall behind, we must go forward learning more about our Lord each day. The alternative to growth is stagnation, boredom and the likelihood of moral failure. There is no boredom and no necessity to pursue distraction if we are bent on growing in mind and spirit.

People glued endlessly to television screens or leaning on bars are victims of intellectual and spiritual arthritis and are trying to work off their pain with tranquilizing distractions. Edmund Fuller notes that our pursuit of distraction is revealed in the modern novels where in "boredom, dirt and despair" are regarded "as fitting subjects for poetry and prose," and we are asked to "join in hailing the loss of human dignity, the degradation and disgrace of man."

On the social side, the purpose of life is contribution to the common life of man, that is, to the kingdom of God. Personality flowers with both meaning and joy when we are growing and contributing. There certainly isn't much satisfaction in being a free rider all your life and not contributing to life somewhere along the line. When we are self-absorbed, pursuing nothing more significant than our own wants, life becomes a meaningless pursuit of distraction. On the other hand, when life is dedicated to growth and contribution for Christ sake, life becomes meaningful and radiant. We rejoice in living responsibly.

A prophet approached Ahab, who was hard-pressed by the Syrian king Ben-hadad, and said, "Thus says the Lord, have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will give it to onto your hand this day; and you shall know that I am the Lord." They have asked, "Who shall begin the battle?" Narrowing the focus of responsibility, the prophet replied, "You."

There are plenty of people in our world, you know, who would stop at nothing to get what they want for themselves. They smash or side step anything that gets in their way. I've often wondered what happens to them after they have reached their goal in life and then look behind them at all the destruction they have left in their path. I imagine they wonder of what use was this whole thing. On the other hand there is much self-satisfaction from having helped another human being or giving another person a boost, for who are we that we should benefit more than someone else? After all we are all God's children and equal in his sight. Sometimes all a person needs is a little boost to get them started on the right path or road and very often we can provide the boost.

Living responsibility is being responsible for something. Paul gives an example: "Make the best use of your time." We wonder about those Ephesians— why did they need this special admonition? Were they too, filling time with distractions to avoid boredom? We recall that in Rome the Caesars offered circuses to the restless masses, and violence and cruelty as diversions from boredom. We offer the violent, the licentiousness and the vicious in the movies, in novels, on the radio and television screen.

As the years go by we are interested in a shorter workweek. Most industrial concerns now have a 40-hour workweek and we are interested in getting a 35-hour workweek. We have more and more free time on our hands. More time to get into trouble, more time to enjoy life and relax and become a people spending two-thirds of our earthly lives relaxing. If we could spend our free time to advantage

by helping others, visiting them, serving our Lord through our church, then more free time would be to our advantage.

”Make the best of your time.” There is thinking to be done, great ideas to master and truths to be won for ourselves. There are causes to be served and dreams worth our devotion. There is faith to be understood and flung around the world. “For the healing of the nations.” We have no time to kill. Make the most of your free time live responsibly.

”Make the best use of your talents.” Whether we think so or not God has given each of us certain talents, perhaps to some he has given more, but to all some which can be used for the building of his kingdom here on this earth. Isn’t it a shame when a person has many talents that are not used, that’s seem to go to waste because he or she does not have the ambition to use them or no desire to use them? I truly believe that God intended for us to use the talents he is given us. Perhaps all a person needs is encouragement or a kind word from another person. I think it is true that often talents go unnoticed and this certainly is a shame too. We all have some kind of ability or talent that can be used to help God and the church regardless of how small or insignificant it may seem to us. Let us make the best use of our talents and live responsibly.

”Make the best use of your wealth”. We generally connect wealth with money. As far as I can see God has nothing against a person having a lot of money, if he uses it properly. Certainly if we use all kinds of means to acquire it regardless of how much harm we do to another person in the process, God will not approve of this. Just think of how much good a person can do with his money. There are many unfortunate people in our world that need our help and we can help them through the missionary field.

Another plan, which is available to us, is the adoption of a foreign child who has no parents or home. \$10 a month will fully support a child in a foreign country. There are hundreds of thousands of children in this kind of situation. Of what use is our wealth if after we have accumulated it, the Lord requires our souls. We certainly can’t take it with us. So while we are on this earth why not share some of it with the less fortunate.

Albert Einstein said, “A gentleman’s first duty is to put back into life at least the equivalent of what he has taken out of it.”

And speaking of money, the church has expenses that have to be met and I do not know of any place where this money can come from except its members. Today is Stewardship Sunday and as stewards of Jesus Christ we have obligations to support our church. God gives us everything we have and we need to give back to the Lord in return. Many Christians believe that tithing is the only way to give to the Lord and from my own experience I have found that we get back much more than we give if we give from our hearts and with the right attitude. We should give because we want to give and because we obtained a feeling of joy and happiness from giving. So keep this in mind when you sign your pledge cards this year.

The great Apostle put his admonition in the framework of the difficult times he knew. Life was not easy. Being Christian was a rugged assignment in the first century. Did we take it seriously, it might become a rugged assignment in our competitive secular society. It never is easy to live with a due sense of responsibility, or to use what we have creatively.

We live in a world that mauls and mutilates our best intentions and our noblest resolves. Conformity seems to be a must nowadays and regardless of what is being done as long as everyone is doing it that makes it right. If we do not conform then we are oddballs and do not belong to this world. I do know that being a Christian is different. We act and live differently. We feel inwardly different too because Jesus Christ guides and directs our lives. So being a Christian today is not easy but with God's help we can live as he would have us live.

Norman Cousins, surveying the contemporary educational scene, remarked that the basic motivation in the educational process needs to be changed from the question, "What's in it for me?"- to the deeper question, "What's in it that will enable me to contribute more fully to the life of my times?"

As Paul said, we struggle against "principalities and powers" that often seem dark and demonic, both in ourselves and in society as well but life demands that we take sides. That means living with "a due sense of responsibility."

In his concern for the Ephesian Christians that they may attain to spiritual maturity, Paul wrote very bluntly in the letter to the Ephesian church.

He says, "Live life with a due sense of responsibility."

Was Paul disturbed to find many of the Ephesian Christians as morally indifferent as pagans? Should we be admonished because we adjust ourselves too comfortably to the secular world? We ought to understand the Ephesians. We often are very much like them. They tried to avoid responsibility by appealing to the circumstances that surround them. We shift our accountability, by saying that we are simply doing what everyone else is doing. This is the way we excuse our own actions by saying that everyone else is doing it so it must be all right for me to do it. Sometimes we let other people do our thinking for us, and then all we have to do is conform to other people's ways.

But I think we should consider that a Christian is individually responsible for his own thinking and doing. I am responsible for me, and you are responsible for you. That is a major premise of our Christian thought.

What is more, each of us is responsible for the impact of his influence upon others. Sounds paradoxical, and in a sense it is. If I am responsible for me and you are responsible for you, and I am not to blame if you flounder because it's something I do— but I am responsible. Whether we like it or not, we are “bound up in the bundle of life.” One with another, and we cannot avoid responsibility for the impact of our influence. We are accountable. If I can get away with breaking all the laws in the book then other people feel they have the same right. Does that make it right? Certainly the example we set for our children, our friends and other people around us is all-important. How we live our lives reflects on those around us.

The sheriff of Los Angeles County, facing a rise in the rate of juvenile delinquency, recently stated that a new principle would henceforth be applied to the county: the youth themselves would be held responsible for their deeds. No more will the home, the school, the church or any other organization be reproved. A group of youth had previously expressed themselves in the press advocating such a procedure.

We are responsible to our social and hereditary background. This was expressed by Paul in his letter to the Romans, chapter 1:14: “I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians.”

We are responsible as servants of Christ and his stewards of the secrets of God for we read in II Corinthians 4:1&2, “This is how one should regard us, as servants of

As Paul said, we struggle against “principalities and powers” that often seem dark and demonic, both in ourselves and in society as well but life demands that we take sides. That means living with “a due sense of responsibility.”

Love with No Conditions

Scripture: Luke 15:11-32

Text taken from Hebrews 7:25, “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.”

Some people have a prejudice against the word ‘save’. This word may be like an old coin that has been battered and become misshapen by rough usage, but nevertheless is pure gold, recognized by the dealer in precious metals. Let us not scorn the word.

“It is so easy to persuade men that the amount of forgiveness they can receive is measured by the quality of repentance they can offer.”

Christ is able to save. From what? Our text today suggests an answer to this question: it suggests that the saved man is moving toward God; the man who is not saved is moving away from God. The ultimate in salvation is being united with God. When the prodigal left home he was not saved; he was headed the wrong way; when he turned toward his father’s house he was on the road to salvation.

There are many experiences that a man has when he is moving away from God. Here are some of them.

He is affected with a sense of guilt. There are all sorts of guilt, false guilt, repressed guilt, guilt that is a feeling of inferiority, guilt because you have not been true to yourself, guilt because you have not served well your fellow man, guilt because you have hurt God. The form that guilt takes depends much upon the nature of the person involved. When a man moves toward God, Christ lifts the sense of guilt. Christ is able to lift the burden of guilt.

Movement away from God is movement towards darkness. Day by day the lights go out. Candles of idealism sputter and fail. Men walk in the plume of failure, futility, and frustration. All things begin to lose their luster. Life itself may become a dark alley. Jesus is able to save a man from the oncoming darkness of despair, even death. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world”. He turns men to God by the attractive brilliance of his light.

In movement away from God love diminishes and finally disappears. A man

called upon a minister by night in despair because he was becoming loveless. “I do not love my children, I do not love my wife; I do not love my friends; I am becoming like a nut.” These were his actual words. To live in a loveless world is separation from God who is a god of love. Christ is able to restore love to a man’s heart.

Lost is a word that Jesus used to describe separation from God. Some men are lost like sheep that have wandered from the fold. Some are lost like coins that have fallen into a dark corner. Some men are lost because they have deliberately left the house of light and love and joy. “Lost” has been called the most tragic word in the English language. There are so many places where men get lost-lost in pride, lasting ambition, lost in envy, lost in greed, lost in their own obstinacy. Christ is able to reclaim the lost.

All sorts of things happen to us when we move away from God, in fact, nothing seems to go right. Problems and conditions come to us and we have no one to turn to for help and guidance. We are actually alone and to be alone is a feeling that none of us enjoy. When we are moving away from God, I also believe that we imagine things are happening to us, our emotions run away from us and our thinking and conception of right and wrong have vanished. These are but a few of the experiences that come to men who are moving away from God.

What is this great salvation? It is much more than we have implied so far. It is often known as relief from bearing a great burden. A burden that is so heavy it holds us down and we are unable to rise above. It is walking in the light, which shineth more and more onto the perfect day. When we are in darkness everything is black, we cannot see where we are going. “We love because he first loved us”. If we could only love one another as Christ loves us, all of the misunderstanding, all of the prejudices, all of the fighting, all of the wars in our world would end and this piece that we are all concerned about would finally come to pass. Love isn’t necessarily the showing of affection by physical acts, such as kissing or hugging but it can be a concern that is so deep that it moves us to show our concern by some kind of action.

Salvation is the prodigal’s joy of living in the Father’s house after experience as a swineherd.

Now the word “uttermost” becomes emphatic in our text. “To the uttermost”, reads the King James version; the new English Bible says, “absolutely” and “fully

and completely” writes J.B. Phillips. “To the uttermost”, saved forever and ever, for this life and the next. “Absolutely” forgiven, our sinfulness is separated from us as far as the east is from the west. “Fully and completely” clean, like new fallen snow.

“Love with no conditions”, this phrase comes from Dr. Paul Tourner’s book, “Guilt and Grace”. He writes, “in every age, men have projected precisely the same idea on God. They picture God as one who loves them only on condition that they are good, and who refuses them his love if they become guilty. Fear of losing the love of God— this is the essence of our human problem and of psychology. Even a person, who does not believe in God, trembles to lose his love. This false idea of God, still so widespread among his people is just what Jesus came to remove. He shows us that God loves us unconditionally, loves us not for are goodness or are virtues but because of our misery and guilt.”

You don’t have to know theology to accept the love of God through Jesus Christ.

You do not have to agonize in repentance for your sins in order to receive this great salvation.

You need not bring any merit of your own. You need bring no achievement, no accomplishment, no payment, no works, no service. Christ is able to save without these.

Is it not necessary for men to forgive others their trespasses against them, before God will forgive them? For we read in Matthew 6:14-15, “for if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses”. Will men who are moving away from God, children of darkness, on the road of lovelessness, do this?

This is the road they will take after they have turned, not before. Saved men will seek to forgive their brothers, not unsaved men.

Christ is able to save to the uttermost, without conditions.

How is it possible for Christ to save us without our fulfilling certain conditions? That is a question worth asking and worth answering, but that is not the point of this sermon. To know how Christ saves us is not a condition of salvation. He is able to save us without that.

Martin Luther, an impetuous man, driven to despair by the feeling of guilt, after vainly plunging into penances and mortifications, discovered afresh in his turn that salvation is not earned, but it is a gift of God, free and offered in advance to the sinner, and that it is sufficient to accept it by faith. From his cry of relief, the Reformation was born, like an explosion, at a time when the church was insisting on works, merits, and indulgences, all of which laid the cost of salvation upon man's own souls."

In the Old Testament story, when a plague of snakes had come upon Israel wandering in the wilderness, the people were saved from death by the serpents' stings by looking upon a serpent of brass set upon a pole. This is recorded in Numbers 21: 8-9, "And the Lord said to Moses, make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." So Moses made a bronze serpent, and set it on a pole; and if a serpent bit any man, he would look at the bronze serpent and live." Jesus referred to the story in these words, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." "Look and live", was an old gospel song that carried the message of the Old Testament symbol and the saving power of Christ.

Look and Live! It just doesn't seem possible. But all things are possible with God. "Jesus is able to save to the uttermost."

Making the Most of Your Vacation

Mark 6:7-13, 30-32

Text is taken from Mark 6:31: “Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest a while.”

We are attracted to our Lord, not only because of his intense love of God, but also because of his deep, undying love for men. Jesus Christ loves ordinary folks. He understands you and me as we could never understand each other, in fact better than we understand ourselves. As we go about our daily tasks love is all around us – the love that is both human and divine.

His humanity was subject to life’s sorrows and joys, just as we are. He labored as we labor; he grew tired as we grow tired, and he sought rest too. No wonder it is recorded of him, “the common people heard him gladly.” He won them by his personality and his love. He was considerate. He understood their needs. He understands our needs too.

The 12 disciples, who shared an intimate relationship with their master, had a wonderful experience of his concern, his understanding sympathy, and his patients with the frailty of their humanity. On the occasion of our text we noticed that when they had fulfilled their Lord’s commission, and had given of their utmost, he not only recognize their need of rest but offered it to them.

Often faithful work saps our energy. We become tired, and when we are tired we can no longer give our best. We need a rest– a vacation, if you like.

There is a rhythmic law underlying all existence, an ebb and flow, of movement of periodicity. And in that ebb and flow, work and leisure both have a place. It is with the mind as with the soul. If you want to get the best out of your land you must change the crops and sometimes even let it lie fallow. One who never slackens the bow becomes at the last a work-ridden neurotic.

For the next few weeks, vacations will be in full swing. Many people will be taking a ‘break’ from the normal routine of everyday life. It certainly would be a great pity if the break was not used to the fullest possible advantage. It is so easy to waste a vacation. By that I mean spend it in such a fashion that when we resume our normal occupations we are in no way refreshed. In other words, some of

us say after our vacations he had to come back to work to get a rest. If this is the case, I would say that our vacation was useless and of no advantage to us. Actually, that is a threefold sin – a sin against ourselves, against our fellows, and worst–against God. We can’t serve God effectively through our work if we have neglected to refresh ourselves in body, mind and spirit when the opportunity comes our way. You know we should be serving God effectively regardless of what we are doing or where we are doing it.

First of all we talk about ‘blessed change’. What is the first thing our text tells us to do? “Come ye yourselves apart.” We are to withdraw ourselves, completely, and entirely, from that which makes up for us our normal, daily routine. We need a change of environment, a change of scene; we must get away from that which is familiar—so familiar that it has made us irritable and bad tempered.

A vacation is just getting away from our normal duties. Vacation means different things to different people and it isn’t necessarily relaxation. I’m sure that you, as well as myself, have felt the definite need for a change, for every little thing bothers us or little problems become insurmountable when ordinarily we could handle them with ease. We need to be refreshed so that we can be at our best.

It was our Lord’s intention, too, that his disciples should depart not only from the place where they had fulfilled their appointed task but that they should escape from the people who require so much from them. How well Jesus knew that it is the constant demands placed upon us by our fellows that takes such a terrible toll of our strengths– and good humor! The danger of failing in our Christian witness is always imminent when we are tired and less able to withstand the onslaught of temptation.

”Come ye, yourselves apart”, said Jesus. Get out of the rut of everyday things.

Secondly – we talk about “healing nature.” Jesus suggested the place into which is discipleship withdraw. “Come ye yourselves apart”. Where? “Into a desert place”. Away from what we mean by civilization – cities, towns; thronged streets, rows of houses, giant buildings; all the noise in clamor, and hustle and bustle of hurrying men and women. Away from that which is man-made! Away from man’s world into God’s – into the great– wide, mysterious world of nature! So often Jesus had to withdraw from the heat and burden of a busy life, to a lovely hillside, where he was able to rest in the sense of God’s presence. Now we find him inviting his disciples to a similar retreat. And he bids us to do the same.

Everyone is familiar with the process by which the priceless pearls of the Archduchess Raines, on losing their luster, are taken into the cliff beneath the castle of Miramar, and lowered in a cage into the waters of the Adriatic; and Time, in the darkness of those ocean depths, restores to them their vanished health and color. The annual migration to the seaside, and the tan skin and lusty countenances with which, after the holiday, the children return to school, would seem to indicate that for them, too, the sea is nature's chosen tonic and antidote.

I can't imagine myself spending a vacation in New York City for example, especially in the summertime. I know that each individual has his own taste as to place in time but I believe we need to relax in a quiet place where we can hear ourselves think and where we can talk with God. Everyone needs his quiet time with God alone.

We shall do well during our vacation to wander away and get lost in the wonder and beauty of nature's grandeur; to look up on something that is vast and big, then we shall begin to see ourselves and our problems in their true perspective. This is what Dr. B he's the guy that was a college president age 37 he was a college president so that I can get a book this is a new one oreham calls "a time of big things." Such a tonic is necessary and it is within reach of all of us.

These are the things:
The restful calm of peaceful woodland ways,
The rapture of a songbird's silvery trill;
The whisper of soft voices in the trees,
A brooklet's murmur when all else's still.
The quietness of twilight's hour of charm,
The splendor of the star-blessed realms above—
These are the things that really touch the heart
And tell us of the great creators love.

Thirdly – we talked about "rest in silence." The disciple's retreat was to be a rest. "Come ye yourselves— rest a while." And since there can be no real rest without quietness, our Lord suggestion of rest follows quite logically upon withdrawal to a "desert place. A good many of us spend our lives—necessarily – in a conglomeration of noises; therefore, to spend our vacation just running from one set of noises to another would be not only unwise but positively harmful. Since our world is becoming increasingly noisy, so much so that we begin to imagine that we can't

live without a noise of some sort, what we need as much as anything on a vacation is a good big dose of silence. If only we knew it, there is healing in the silence—there is peace!

Then, of course, we are living in a world where there are many voices clamoring to be heard. Many of them have nothing to say at all; but there is a voice we might hear if we are very quiet. The voice that Andrew heard by the Sea of Galilee. John heard it also, on Patmos: “if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him and he with me.”

Let any man go into the silence, strip himself of all pretense and selfishness, and sluggishness of soul, lift off thought after thought, passion after passion until he reaches the innermost depth of all, and it will be strange if he does not feel the Eternal Presence as close upon his soul as the breeze upon his brow.

Our human rhythm of work and rest is a refraction of that image of God in which we are made: man’s work, like his Creator’s, is crowned with his rest and his chief end is not too labor but to enjoy God forever.

And finally, I wonder if you have noticed one other thing of the utmost importance. It is contained in the first word of our text, the little word “Come”. Jesus said not, “Go ye yourselves.” But “Come ye yourselves”. He went with them. There could be no true rest for those men away from Jesus. He would give them peace; he would calm their fears; he would restore their faith; he would renew their strength; he would impart to them his abiding love. His presence would give them rest.

For those of us who are Christians our vacations will not be a vacation from worship; from our Bible reading, from our prayers. A vacation from the normal activities of our own particular church, yes, but in the quiet, undisturbed countryside or with a blue sea stretching unendingly before us, or in the worshipful atmosphere of a church, where we are known, that which has become commonplace may once more become revitalized; our faith is strengthened.

Someone tells of a little girl who, on hearing that the family would soon be leaving for vacation, went upstairs, knelt beside her bed, and prayed, “Goodbye, God, we are going on our vacation. See you next September.”

When we go on vacation, do not take a vacation God. If God took a vacation from

us, we would be panic-stricken and would not know what to do. We certainly cannot get away from God, even if we wanted to; he is everywhere, all around us.

This church will be closed for a month to give the pastor a rest and also to give you an opportunity to visit other churches. A chance to change your environment.

If we know that our religion has sunk to a level of the mundane, let us give our Lord the opportunity to find us again! Leave the door of our heart ajar – and he will come in! Listen for his voice– the voice that whispers: “Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Meeting the Test Now **(1st in a Series “Christ is Able”)** **Scripture: Luke 4:1-13**

Text taken from Hebrews 2:18, “For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.” The New English Bible says “He is able to help those who are meeting the test now.”

Christ is able to help us meet the test now. The word, “to tempt”, has come to be associated with the idea of encouraging one to do wrong. The meaning of the Greek word is simple and clear. It means, “to put to a thorough test.” This gives an entirely new emphasis and challenge, to the word.

Why Come Temptation?

Was the Trial sore? Temptation sharp?

Thank God a second time.

Why comes Temptation but for man to meet.

And Master, and make crouch beneath his feet,

And so be pedestalled in triumph?

Here is a physician’s statement concerning temptation:

“I don’t forget the accurate distinction made by the theologians between temptation and sin. I am the first to expound it to an over scrupulous patient. Temptation is not sin. The proof of this is that Christ himself was tempted as we read in our scripture lesson this morning. Any idea, even the most impious and the most criminal, can surge up in our minds without our being able to do anything about it. The only fault lies in our accepting it, cultivating it, and taking pleasure in it. I quote Luther’s saying that we cannot prevent the birds from flying over our head, but we can prevent them from building their nest in our hair.

A very important thing needs to be said about temptation – “it is sinful”. That is a great comfort to the man who is on a quest for the good life. He is perfectly aware of temptation rising in the mind, or coming from the environment, but the temptation in itself is not sinful. If temptation were sinful, Jesus had sinned on the Mount of Temptation.

There is a bit of verse which many of us know;

Sow a thought, reap an art;

Sow an art, reap a habit;

Sow a habit, reap a character;
Sow a character, reap a destiny.

This may apply to good thought with all the good consequences, but it is the evil and tempting thought that requires resistance, lest it issue finally in an evil destiny. Between the tempting thought and the act lies the struggle. In this struggle a man needs help. Or it may be that between the sinful act and the act repeated help is needed.

Temptation comes to us in three successive stages. First, there is 'awareness'. In some way or another, an evil suggestion comes into the mind. The sinful idea is presented as a possible course of action (The store is deserted. It would be easy to break in.) The next stage is 'delight'. This is usually a more or less instructive response to the suggestion the enemy has gained a foothold. The evil idea is not only present; it has touched a responsive chord and has become attractive. (It would pay off well. I could make a down payment on that car) Now the will is involved and the soul must choose. (I'd give anything for that car but Rev. Smith would be upset, and I know he's right really.) So a third stage is reached, which is 'consent' or 'rejection'. It is only at this point that temptation may pass into sin. Sin occurs if the will goes over to the enemy and the temptation wins the day. (The hell with Rev. Smith; I'll do it.) If the will holds fast and rejects the evil though pleasant suggestion, no sin has been committed. (No, I won't do it. I'd better go home.) The temptation has been resisted and one of Christ's soldiers has stood firm under fire. Our text this morning says that Christ is able to help him.

Here is Christ's own experience. Hebrews 2:18 reads "for by virtue of his own suffering under temptation, he is able to help those who are exposed to temptation." The principle is true. The man that has been through an experience is enabled to help another person in the same situation. Jesus was tempted at the beginning of his ministry as we read in the scripture lesson, but note Luke's graphic statement, "and when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season." Only "for a season"; Jesus was put to the test again and again.

Every member of Alcoholics Anonymous knows that the man who has gone through and has come out victorious is the man that can help. If you have ever known a person who was an alcoholic and came through it, you know that they live from day to day and they are constantly tempted to take a drink again. Each day as they arise they ask God to guide them through that day and to overcome temptation and you also know they know how best to help another person who is

going through the same thing they have gone through. Jesus Christ also qualifies as one who can help another in time of temptation.

And then we have Christ's teachings. At a most critical hour in his life and in the life of his disciple Peter, Jesus said, "Watch ye and pray lest ye enter into temptation." Again, he taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation."

There is danger of accepting the temptation by the imagination, cultivating it, and taking pleasure in it; thus, it motivates a spiritual act as evidenced by Jesus saying in Matthew 5:27-30. "You have heard that it was said, "you shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell." When a man desires the temptation, then a man is in struggle with himself when he resists it. He needs all the help he can get.

Much temptation comes because of environmental pressures. An old proverb (Proverb 16:29) reads: "A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him in the way that is not good." In these modern days it is not only the violent man that tempts his neighbor, but even the quiet and passive man in subtle ways may tempt his friend. Environmental pressures to lower our ideals and act accordingly are exceedingly strong in these days. The expression that everyone else is doing it, makes it tempting for us as being right because the majority are doing it. We need help in meeting the test now. Our prayer "lead us not into temptation", means for one thing that in the face of environmental pressures we are not equal to the task of being good. We need help.

I'm sure you remember the story of Joseph who was sold by his brothers as a slave. He eventually was taken to Egypt. The Master saw that he was in favor with the Lord and soon the Master made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of everything he had. The Lord blessed Joseph and his Master's house. One day the Master's wife asked Joseph to come in and lie with her but Joseph refused and day in and day out she bothered Joseph but Joseph said, "Lo, having me my Master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand; he is not greater in this house than I am; nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife; how then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Joseph was surely a man who stood the test of temptation.

How does or how can Jesus Christ help us? Christ helps us to overcome temptation by giving us assurance that God wants us to be good men and win victories over evil. Then some ask, "why did he not make us good in the first place, perfectly and everlastingly good?" The answer, I believe, lies in questions such as these: Is honestly without temptation to dishonesty true honesty? Is purity with no temptation to impurity true purity? Is faithfulness with no temptation to unfaithfulness true faithfulness? If Christ could not have sinned when tempted on the mount, would he be the victorious Christ of our worship? In other words, there would be no point to our lives if we did not have the choice of right from wrong. If we were good, righteous and would not be tempted we would be perfect and not of the earthly life.

No wonder the practical James wrote in 1:2-3, "count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

God could have made us robots, automatons, but he didn't. He made us men to win victories and become good men. Christ's life is an assurance of that. God's purpose works in us. Our struggle when tempted resulting in victory is not only our own victory, it is God's victory in us. Somehow or other my victory is related to God's purpose in the universe.

Christ helps us when tempted by bringing us into many relationships of divine and Christian love.

God loves us. That is not just a sentence for the tongue; that is an emotion for the heart and a bastion for the will. For the love of God, I will not do the sinful deed. For the love of Christ, my love for him and his love for me, I will win the victory. God loves us! His grace is given. By his grace I am strong. When Christ was tempted his mind was God-centered. When we are tempted we can be Christ-centered.

Christ opens avenues of grace, which help us now. Strength to resist temptation may pass from one man to another. John Rice could pass a saloon without entering for a drink when Tracy Redding was by his side. A family strengthens its members; "Remember that you're an Everett", was a mother's whisper to her daughter who was leaving home for the first time. "No Hogan was ever a drunkard" because a family slogan which supported its young men when they were exposed to an especially vicious environment. Such strengthening grace passes from

idealistic organizations to their members. The Church supports its members.

The living Christ renders a secret ministry to all of us tempted people. He lifts our ideals. He turns our minds toward the true, the honest, the just, the pure, the lovely, whatsoever things are of good report. He makes keen our conscience, which warn us of the encroaching danger. He stimulates our love for others—we would not hurt others by any action of ours; we will not eat meat if it causes our brother to stumble. Christ gives us tasks, which lift us out of temptation's way. He gives us the Holy Spirit in our hearts; the Spirit fortifies our souls. Paul's word, "know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" has lifted many a man out of temptation. Christ keeps his promise, "Lo, I am with you always." Christ is able to help us meet the test now." Let him help you.

Men Made Whole

Scripture: Mark 2:1-12

Text taken from Matthew 9:2, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."

Christ is able to make a man whole. The paralytic in our scripture lesson this morning was sick. He was depressed. Borne by his stalwart friends, an inferiority complex undoubtedly stilled his manhood. Sin had left its mark of guilt upon him.

The whole personality of the man was suffering, as it would with us if we had been sick for a long period of time.

Every physician of the bodies of men and every physician of the souls of men knows that a man's personality is in delicate balance. It need not be what we call a grievous sin to trigger a vicious circle in a man's life. Any sinful thought or act brings guilt; the guilt gets on the nerves; a malady sets in; the mind gathers "psychological complexes", self-mastery is weakened; the whole personality suffers.

Jesus is able to catch with his fingers the thread, which will untangle the bad situation. In this instance he said to the sick man, "Your sins are forgiven you". He pays no attention to the symptoms; he reaches for the cause of the man's trouble. No wonder Jesus has been called "The Great Physician".

A man under the care of his doctor, after suffering four months from a weakening sickness, was about to undergo a serious operation but before doing so he decided to visit a famous doctor living in his city. After giving him a careful examination, the doctor said, "Do you have anything personal troubling you?" "Yes", said the sick man, and divulged his secret trouble. In less than a week this able doctor had relieved the man of his sickness and saved him from an operation.

Jesus as the Great Physician can go straight to the seat of the man's trouble. And how often the trouble is a guilty conscience!

Guilt is a religious problem, which interest theologians, a social problem, which interest sociologists, and a physiological problem which interest physiologists. But it does not let itself be dissected. It is a human problem, a form of suffering peculiar to man, and of concern to the doctor (The Great Physician) because his

vocation is the relief of suffering.

Christ can forgive sins. The scribes who were observers of the cure thought this claim on Jesus's part was blasphemy. Concerning the scribes in our scripture lesson; "there were some scribes sitting there pondering." They argued in their hearts. Just like owls blinking in strong sunlight! It was something they could not quite grasp. Jesus had just healed the paralytic. That was bad enough from their standpoint—a breach of ecclesiastical etiquette. But he had done more— a shocking thing. He had said, "My son, your sins are forgiven." That set them pondering in a heavy, confused manner. The simile "like owls" is more than fanciful. They were exactly that— wise owls— blinded by the fresh light, which Jesus threw on life. They could find their way around in the dim region of logical distinction; in the daylight of clear moral issues and spiritual values they were lost. They could only blink and ponder.

That is not our reaction. We just don't believe it. We just don't understand grace. We can't get it into our heads that God cares for his children to the extent that he willingly and freely forgives their sins. How can sinful man be convinced of this? It is only as they have faith in Christ. This good news, this gospel, comes to us through the words and the deeds of Jesus— Christ can forgive our sins. The simple words need a million repetitions. The evidence has to be brought to bear in the lives of millions.

If people could only take on faith that Christ does have the power and will forgive us for the sins that we commit, many of our psychologist would have a lot less business. For the feeling the guilt we have within ourselves when we commit a sin is great and can be removed by Christ. But we have to believe that Christ really does forgive us. This is the message we as Disciples of Christ have to get across to others. This is our task, the Church's task and we have our work cut out for us.

Can we imagine what would happen in the lives of men and in communities if this simple gospel message got hold of them? For many people believe they are too bad to become Christian, that God could not possibly forgive them and that he doesn't love them. And for this very reason there are many people who are not becoming Christians. Note what happened to a man name Saul who became the Apostle Paul, Augustine, who from being a grievous sinner; attained sainthood. Consider the men and women around about you who would testify to Christ forgiveness. Each one places an exclamation point after the words, "Christ is able."

Another example of the Great Physician's insight is found in John 5:1-9. He placed his fingers upon the right strand in the personality tangle. He was aware of the man's strong will. Impotent of body, the cripple had persisted in his efforts to get well. Jesus immediately commanded the man's strong will and he was cured. Jesus is able to deal with the whole personality. The word "whole" was in Anglo-Saxon, "hal" from which we derive such words as "hale", "heal", "health". Closely allied is the word "holy". After he had rid this man of guilt he cured him of the palsy. There are doctors who deal with only parts of their patient's personalities. Jesus cured the man spiritually, bade him to be of good cheer, and then cured him physically. He made him whole. He was completely cured.

We too, many times would be cured physically, if we would let Christ cure us spiritually. We have to believe in and have faith in Jesus Christ. We have to truly accept him as our Lord and Savior. Many of us say this with our lips but we don't believe it in our hearts and then we wonder why God does not answer our prayers and why everything in life seems to go against us. I truly believe most of the mental illness in our world today that is caused by nerves and emotions could be cured by Christ. There is no doubt in my mind.

The miracle done in the body is purposed to be a symbol of a grander miracle to be wrought in the soul. "That ye may know that the son of man has power on earth to forgive sins," he heals the paralyzed body that we may know what he can do with the paralyzed soul. He liberates the man who is bound by palsy that we may know what he can do for a man who is bound by guilt. We are to reason from the least to the greater, from the material type to the spiritual reality.

And so it is with all my Lord's doing in nature. They are a glorious symbolism of what he will in spirit. "That ye may know how beautiful the Son of Man can make the heart of man, then saith he to the seeds of the springtime, "come forth". And so nature becomes a literature in which we see our possible inheritance in the Spirit period

But on our side it is all conditioned by faith. "There he could do no mighty works because of their unbelief." Even in the miracle of the spirit our faith must cooperate. Divine grace and human faith can transfigure the race. "Lord increase our faith!" And everywhere, let praised souls be delivered, and attain to glorious freedom.

"Suffering knows no frontiers, that is living suffering, the suffering of man, the

whole personality of man”, said Paul Tournier to his fellow physicians, and then made this appeal: “Open your eyes and you will see among your patients that huge crowd of wounded, distressed, crushed men and women, laden with secret guilt, real or false, even in a sort of guilt at being alive, which is more common than we think.” These words bring before our eyes the crowds of such folk, sick of body and soul, who sought out Jesus that they might be cured. We read in Mark 1:32 -34, “That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered together about the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.” How satisfying it is to know, as we seem to know by the cure of the palsied man, that Jesus did not deal in nostrums, palliatives, alleviate symptoms, but went to the real cost of each man’s disease and cured the whole man.

Christ is able to make a man whole, body, mind and soul.

Christ is able to follow through. Our imagination follows this man who was cured. No longer did his hands tremble. No longer did his body totter. No longer get his head lie sleepless on his pillow. He could now do the work of a man, and sleep the sleep of a child. What became of him? Who knows?

But our questions concerning this restored man stir us to make affirmations concerning Jesus. The Great Physician who forgave the man his sins was not his savior only for an hour or a day, but by the man’s quickened faith he was his Savior forever. This Jesus who cured the man’s body and soul at that certain time was by the man states his position for all time. When the infirmities of age fell upon him, if not delivered from them, they were transcended. He would rise above them.

I’m sure that many of us know people who have risen above their infirmities. They have stopped feeling sorry for themselves and are helping others around them. Perhaps some of the most cheerful persons I know have known, have been people with an incurable disease or something wrong with them that they knew they would not get any better. Having a true and everlasting faith in the God they rose above it and went on to comfort and help others.

We recall that Paul had an infirmity of the flesh that Christ did not heal, but most marvelously gave Paul the power to rise above it. With the guilt of man Christ does not deal in this manner. He separates the man from his sin as far as the east is from the west. The figure of Isaiah: “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be

as white as snow.”

Pondering the life of this man cured of the palsy, we wonder whether he ever became one of four who carried another man to the feet of the Great Physician. Accept the healing power and forgiving power of Christ in your heart and let him become the center of your life. Let your self go and become a true disciple of Christ.

The Christian Home

Scripture: Deuteronomy 6: 4-15

Chosen text from Psalm 68:6, “ God gives the desolate home to dwell in.”

On April 10, 1852, an American citizen died in Africa and was buried in a lovely cemetery in Tunis. Thirty-one years later, an American warship brought his remains back to his native land. The funeral was held in his honor in the nation’s capital. As the procession preceded down Pennsylvania Avenue all business in the city was suspended. The President, the Vice President, members of the Cabinet, Congressmen and Senators, Judges, officers of the Army and Navy and tens of thousands of citizens, rich and poor, stood with uncovered heads.

Why was such homage paid to this man? He had written some plays, the title of which are now nearly all forgotten. But in one of them there was a little poem. You have all heard it. You all love it. And because of that little poem, this man’s dust was honored. The chorus runs like this:

Home, home, sweet, sweet home.
Be it ever so humble,
There’s no place like home.

These lines by John Howard Payne touched a cord that vibrated in the hearts of millions of men and women the world over, a cord that vibrates today.

For millions, the word “home” is the symbol of everything beautiful and good. Their memories of childhood are rooted in the homestead, or in the cottage where they were raised. Thomas Jefferson once said, “The happiest moments of my life have been the few which I had passed at home in the bosom of my family.” Christians have long believed that the family home is intended to be a little corner of the Kingdom of God, a place where all the members of the family make well together through Christ.

The Christian home is made up of persons.

A person is not a thing. There are families in which the members treat one another as things are treated. They use one another as objects of convenience. The Muslim world has suffered severe criticism because of this attitude towards women and

slaves. It is not unknown in Western homes.

There is a saying, “they fell in love with things; and when people fall in love with things, they are apt to fall out of love with each other.”

Such treatment of another is contrary to the Christian doctrine of the infinite and eternal worth of the individual. A person has intrinsic worth as one created in the image of God, redeemed by the love of God, and useful in the purpose of God. The Christian family is made up of such persons.

The Christian home is also made up of communicating persons. There are families in which communication between persons is not conspicuous. In them communication is for convenience, seldom or never for personal nurture or personal enjoyment, much less for strengthening the bonds of kinship and friendship. Often the home becomes a boarding house or rooming house, little more, and, of course, it becomes easy to change boarding houses.

In a Christian home there is giving and taking, sharing and mutual dependence, mutual sharing of thoughts, ideal plans, purposes. There is no lack of communication between the older wise generation and the younger generation acquiring new knowledge. Each appreciates the other. The members of the family are kinsfolk, but they also become friends.

Christian home is also made up of changing persons. A person can change. I can verify that from my own experience. That is one of the hazards and one of the glories of being a person.

How often in homes that are not really Christian, members of the family deteriorates and character. This sometimes happen in Christian homes. But in these never is the prodigal forgotten or forsaken. The Christian parent, brother or sister, is aware that the possibility is always there that the prodigal can change his mind and return to the Christian way. This is probably where a good many of us so-called Christians fail because we doubt that a person will ever change even in our own families. We apparently do not have enough faith in God, for we need to remember that with God all things are possible and that the Holy Spirit is always working in us and through us. There is always the hope that a person, regardless of how bad or wicked he may be, can and will change.

It was said of Jesus that he grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. Such a changing person was the Master, and such changing personalities are

seen in Christian homes. How wonderful to watch the member grow out of babyhood into childhood, through youth to manhood or womanhood, and even after stature has been attained, then into the wisdom and favor of true maturity.

The Christian home is made up of persons – real, communicating, growing persons

Secondly, the Christian home has ideals.

The family lives its life under a kind of critical principle which is its ideal. Together the members of the family know that attainment is to be made. There is tension and there is pull upward. Each member knows that he has not obtained what he should. The image of what he should be becomes his ideal. This situation is most wholesome.

This means that the Christian home is made up of free persons. The free person is not he who can do as he pleases. The free person is not he who can smash the piano with a hammer, if he wishes; the free person is he who can play the words of Chopin or Mendelssohn with his fingers. He is free because he is under restraint. Ideals are enabling restraints. They make for free persons.

Ideals bring happiness to the home and its members. There is much more happiness where John can play the piano than where he can smash the piano, if he wishes to do so. Happiness is not the child of license; it comes from the restraint of ideals. Ideals deliver the home from the vagaries and frustrations met in modern living. Ideals of honesty, temperance, purity, when planted in the home, bring forth the fruits of happiness in the lives of the children. Is there any greater happiness in the lives of parents to see this come to pass?

Ideals enable the family and its members to appraise correctly the values of life. How much of personality development, growth in wisdom, and happiness depends upon knowing values! The good book on the living room table maybe more important than the new gadget in the kitchen or on the car. It is by ideals that the family problems concerned with television are solved. It is by ideals that the adolescent, as well as the members of the family, are kept under their own self-control.

Ideals are not static. They change with the growing person and bring added growth. They are dynamic. They are the guidelines of life.

Constructive objectives of family living that should draw all members together are such desires as (1) that each family member be a free personality. Certainly all individuals do not or cannot have the same personalities and it's a good thing we don't. All persons do not like the same things or the same type of individuals and we shouldn't expect our children to like everything we do. We certainly shouldn't expect them to conform to us. (2) That they establish good techniques for airing on all sides of a question. Certainly when a family is planning anything, all sides of the question or subject being discussed should be investigated. Each member should be allowed to give his point of view and the other members of the family should be willing to listen. (3) That they build a fellowship that makes everything they do more rewarding because they work together. How rewarding it can be when each member in the family is free to give his own views and become a part of the family planning. The relationship that will exist will certainly be rewarding and the family will be held much closer together. They will enjoy one another's presence much more.

Dr. E. Everett Hale, American preacher and scholar, wrote: "I have observed, with profound regret, the religious struggles which come into many biographies, as if almost essential to the formation of a hero. I ought to speak of these, to say that any man has an advantage, not to be estimated, who was born as I was, into a family where religion is simple and rational; who is trained in the theory of such a religion, so that he never knows, for an hour, what these religions or irreligious struggles are. I always knew that God loved me, and I was always grateful to him for the world he placed me in. To live with all my might seemed to me easy; to learn where there was so much to learn seemed pleasant and almost of course, to lend a hand, if one had a chance, natural; and if one did this, why, he enjoyed life because he could not help it and without proving to himself that he ought to enjoy it."

We should be quite shocked by a news dispatch from Winnipeg, in Canada, picturing a collapse of the American home. The headline read, "New Type of Home Looms," and the subhead, "Architects Sees Disposable Kind as Home of the Future." Said Sir Hugh Cason of England to Winnipegians: "Planning of future cities may involve buildings that can be used for a while and then removed like disposable cartons. If the jumbling trend continues, buildings, including homes, instead of being permanent things, might become cartons— something that you use for now and then get rid of." So the standard invitation of tomorrow may very well be, "come over to the carton tonight."

The fundamental trouble is that the national confusion of the word “house” with the word “home”. The words are not synonymous. When we sing, “Home Sweet Home” we do not sigh for a cute little ranch house or a split level creation or 18 room ark, but for a company of people with strong ties, a spiritual fellowship. The real menace of a disposable home is that the home as well as the house may be disposed of. In many places the home as being disposed of. People are attempting to get along without what the “home” at its best really stands for. As a substitute they have contrived a room, which serves the purpose of a railroad station; it is a point of departure for innumerable destinations. An evening at home seems unthinkable these days; in some houses a child has barely learn to speak before he is pleading, “Dad, may I have the car tonight?”

We abound with better houses, but who would say that better homes are flourishing?

Thirdly, the Christian home is deeply and essentially a home of love.

By love Christian Grace is channeled into the home of Christian parents. They are in touch with the source of love. It is altogether possible that even before the home was established there was a solemn compact made that the home should be pervaded by Christian love.

Love becomes the community media of the household. Love is received; love is given. Love is transmitted beyond the doors of the home into the community. It is in love that the ideals of the home restrain and spur the members of the home.

When love is in the home Christ enters. His spirit is present. His values are known. His character is made the personal ideal. Into his will life is committed. He becomes very real. He becomes an unseen but known Presence in the family circle. How about your home? Is Jesus Christ present?

The Difference Easter Makes

Scripture: Romans 8:11-17, 36-39

Text is taken from Colossians 3:1-2. “If you are then risen with Christ, reach out for the highest gift of Heaven, where your master reigns in power. Give your heart to heavenly things not to passing things of earth.”

The churches all over the land, I imagine, are back to normal.

The world around us looks just about the same now as it did before Easter. Nothing seems to be changed or to be any different than it was before Easter.

So quickly and completely have the church and the world return to normal that a person might very naturally asked the question, what difference did Easter make? Did it make any difference at all? To be sure, it was a spot of brightness and beauty in a dark world. I suppose, we can all say that it gave a temporary lift to a great many people. But did Easter make any real difference to the life of the church or the world? Did it come and go without any trace of its passing? Or are there, if we look closely enough, signs of its movement across the waters of life?

First let us see, if we can, what difference the first Easter made, what difference the resurrection of Jesus made to those who were the closest to him. And of course, the first thing we have to say is that it didn't make any difference at all to the world. Not, at least, as far as we can see. Pilate was still the governor of Judea after Easter as he was before, Caiaphas was still the high priest, the Scribes and Pharisees still held the reins of religious life, the road to Jericho, I daresay, was still unsafe for travel; the tax collectors still bled the people when they could; and the money changers still sat at their tables in the porch of the temple. Rome still rules with an intelligent but iron rod; Jerusalem still fretted and chafed under that rule; and the people, if they ever knew at all what happened I'm good Friday and Easter, soon forgot it.

But after we have said that, we have to go on and say that the first Easter made a tremendous difference in the lives of a few people, for it made them realize that what had looked to them like failure was not failure. It made them feel, as well as understand, that the things that seem to die on Good Friday, things like forgiveness and confidence, trust and love, we're more alive than ever; in fact, they were the only thing in life worth living for instead of thinking that all that Jesus

had stood for had been denied on Good Friday, they came to see that it had been, in a strange and victorious way, affirmed. It made them realize in a way, which is almost impossible to describe—but you can sense it, I think—it made them realize that love (and you know what I mean by love— Christian love – creative sympathetic, forgiving, understanding care), love for neighbor, for friend, and even for enemy, was not a lost cause but a way of life.

“The Resurrection is the new factor which alters everything that relates to God. Something happened, so tremendous and vital that it changed not only the character of the movement and the man— but with them the whole history of the world.”

It's left a handful of people who would rather die than deny Christ, because they were sure that death could neither destroy or defeat him. And in a way in which it is almost impossible to conceive, his life was in them! His spirit and his way of living somehow got inside them, and they began to live for the things that he lived for, and what happened to them in the process didn't matter to them anymore than it had to him. They were ready for anything, believing that those things were alive and vital, at the very heart of life; and no matter what the world thought or said, or did, they would go on, regardless, because they knew that nothing could separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

In T.R. Glover's chapter on “The Christian Church in the Roman Empire” (The Jesus of History), he reminds us of the difference that the resurrection of Jesus made in the early centuries. First, Christians lived a great deal better than their pagan neighbors. They astonished people by their truth, their honesty, their cleanliness, and there was a new brightness and gaiety about them. Second, Christians had a new fortitude in the face of death. Third, Christians outthought the pagan world. Dr. Glover put this in the succinct sentence which has often been quoted, “Christians outlived the pagan, out-died him, and out-thought him.”

In other words we can say this: the resurrection of Jesus did not reform the world; it raised up a few people who were willing to live the Christian life in spite of anything the world might do to them.

Now, this is the kind of difference that we have a right to expect Easter to make. And I am prepared to say that we can see signs of it in the world today. They are not always clearly marked; they are anonymous, often. They are not always in places where you would expect to find them; they are not always done by the people that you would expect to be agents of the resurrection.

We think of them raised to a new level of life, who, for example, believe in and act on the principle of the dignity of the press, and stand by that principle, regardless of what the world thinks or says or does, and in spite of the fact that they lose money in doing so.

A man on the West Coast was murdered by a 14-year-old girl. The terrible deed was surrounded by every conceivable kind of sensational publicity, and the deed as well as the incidents surrounding it, were amply reported by all the newspapers. There's nothing wrong with that. Indeed, the purpose of the press is to print the news, good and bad. Shortly after the murder some letters were found that had passed between the murdered man and the girl's mother, and they were released to the oppressed by an anonymous donor. They added nothing to the information that the public needed to know; they did nothing but to minister to the people's morbid curiosity and thirst for sensationalism. They were sordid and trivial. An investigation proved that those letters were published by every major paper in the Country except "The New York Times" and "The Christian Science Monitor."

Now the "Christian Science Monitor" is admittedly a Christian journal: "The Times" is not. But I say that in both cases the people who are responsible for the decision not to publish the letters were people who had been raised to a new level of life on which they believed in and acted on the principles of the dignity of the press.

We think also of those who raise their voices in opposition to the moral and social irresponsibility of such industries as the moving pictures and television. It is a kind of resurrection faith that does and dares, regardless of anything that happens to them in the process.

One of the things that concern us in our modern culture is the crime and violence which is made pictorially available by our moving pictures, and then passed on to larger audiences by television. When John Crosby, who earns his living by writing reviews of television performances, spoke about this matter in a very direct way in his column, he did it by mentioning a specific program. He went on to condemn, in no uncertain terms, the irresponsibility of any industry, either in the moving pictures business or in television, that allows this sort of thing to go on uninterrupted, night after night, day after day, no matter how well it pays.

I don't know anything at all about the religious commitments of John Crosby and

those who backed up his statements. All I am saying is that whatever they say formally about religion, they have been raised to a level of life on which they are willing to stand for things that are true and good and beautiful in spite of everything that the world can say, or do, or think about it. This implies a kind of resurrection faith of do and care, regardless of anything that happens to them in the process.

It is a stirring resurrection life when persons are willing to stand for things that are true, and are willing to stand by them through thick and thin, through death and shame and every other thing that the world can do to you.

We find that same thing, of course, in the church. Many people all over the world go right on living for these things, in spite of all the disappointments that beset them, because they believe that in Christ that which is good and true and beautiful is alive and that it claims them, no matter what happens to them. Even though they may be defeated in their efforts they go straight on.

Here is what a well-known minister of one of our large churches in the country says, "for the past few years I have been working very hard to get the church and the Federal Government to do something about excessive drinking and alcoholism. This has resulted in my being appointed head of the Federal Government commission on alcoholism. The disappointments of this job have really been something, both in the church and in government." Here is a man who, in spite of all the disappointments that come, nevertheless goes right on standing for the things that he believes in, because he believes that Christ rose from the dead. And, though I am sure that in his eyes he often seems to stand idle, we can see strides he has made towards his goal.

I would like to make this church a kind of resurrection center. It may happen in many different ways.

You see, you and I are the Resurrection! And if Easter is to make any difference in the world at all, it will be because it made a difference in you and me, raised us to a new level of life on which we are able to ally ourselves with the things that we know to be right and good, and then go out and stand for those things, and let those things speak to us, and live in us, regardless of the shame and the discomfort, and the inconvenience that may come to us as a result of it. I know that I haven't answered the question that I begin with, what difference has Easter made in our world and our church? But I know that the resurrection of Christ did make a difference, and that it can make a difference in you and me, and that is what I work and hope and pray for in this church and in the world.

The Easter Victory (Sunrise Service Easter Morning)

Scripture: Matthew 28

I have chosen my text from I Corinthians 15:57. “Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Easter stands for victory. It stands for several kinds of victory.

In the first place, it stands for the victory of life over death. Nothing escapes death. Death, we are tempted to say, has the last word.

And yet we know that that is not true. It is life and not death that has the last word. We all know that science cannot start life. But have you ever stopped to think that it is equally impossible for the scientist, or anyone else to bring life to an end? You might, as an experiment, take an acre of ground and say to yourself, “in this acre I will defeat life.” First you would have to chop down every tree and cut off every living thing that grew there. Then you would have to pull out all the roots and burn them. Then you might plow the field and harrow it. If you have been reading Roman history recently you might even conceive of the idea of sowing that acre with salt. And if you were of an engineering turn of mind you might even consider covering the acre with a thick slab of concrete. When you have finished your work you might dust off your hands and say, “I have defeated life in that acre of land.”

But of course you would be wrong. You might defeat life for a year or two in this way. But you could not do it indefinitely— For you cannot defeat life. It, and not death has the last word.

Everything that we know about life seems to indicate that God intends it to have the last word. Easter, then, is first and foremost a celebration of the victory of life over death.

Easter also stands for the victory of goodness over evil.

It is no exaggeration to say that in the story of the crucifixion Jesus appears as

goodness personified. When he was betrayed he continued to love, when he was denied he continued to be loyal, and when he was crucified he continued to be forgiving. If you want to see the real dimensions of goodness, look at Jesus.

Similarly, if you want to see the dimensions of evil, look at the forces that put Jesus to death. Here are the dimensions of evil— the kind of evil that gets the upper hand in churches that cease to put God’s purpose ahead of their own, the kind of evil that begins to work in governments that cease to speak for the people they govern.

And today if you want to see the dimensions of evil look around you. Increased crime rates, increased divorce rates, increased numbers of unwed mothers, increased consumption of alcoholic beverages, increased racial tension, increased tension of another war.

But there is also evidence of goodness in our world. Look for number of men and women who are making sacrifices serving our Lord through missionary efforts in foreign countries where the Word of God has not even been heard. Evangelist who are touring the world bringing the Word of God to millions of people, thousands of new churches being built, evidence that people are seeking to worship their Lord.

But the message of the story is that even these kinds of evil I have mentioned do not have the last word. Goodness does have and will have the last word. For, even though the church and the state combined to put Jesus to death, God restored him to life.

Easter stands also for the victory of hope over fear.

It is probably safe to say that the oldest hope of the human race is that life may continue beyond death. Some of the most primitive burials that have been uncovered bear pathetic evidence of this hope, for often in the grave one finds a few handfuls of cracked corn to serve as food for the journey into the next world.

High cultures as well as primitive cultures have cherish this same hope: witness the pyramids of Egypt, the hope of life beyond death is universal. But let us face the fact that the hope is always mixed with fear. And the resurrection marks the victory of that hope over that fear. Let me illustrate this by recalling a great discovery.

Columbus, as we are all know discovered a new world. But he did more than that. He dispelled an ancient fear. This was the fear that if you sailed far enough on the ocean you would come to the place where the world sloped downhill or dropped off. There your ship would slide down to be destroyed by monsters. When Columbus sailed to America he laid that fear to rest once and for all. Why? Because he had gone beyond the horizon and came back.

On the first Easter day this threefold victory was communicated to the disciples. It was necessary not only that Christ should rise again, but also that the disciples should know that he is risen; necessary moreover that they should share in the triumph of the Resurrection, in the sense of sharing its triumphant faith. The communication to the disciples was both of the fact and of the faith. The words, “he saw and believed” record the victory of faith in the heart of the disciple; a victory which is Christ’s victory, communicated now to man.

Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and because we are Christians and believe in Him and his teachings, our fear of death should be ended for death has truly lost its sting and is the beginning of an entirely new life with our Lord. There should be no doubts in our minds that life is eternal and everlasting and we can thank God for that.

We truly have something to rejoice in this Easter season for without the resurrection of our lives would be purposeless and meaningless.

This, then, is what the resurrection stands for— The victory of life over death, of goodness over evil, of hope over fear. Thanks be to God who has given us this victory, through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

The High Uses of Memory

Scripture: Deuteronomy 8

Text is from Isaiah 30:21, “And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, this is the way, walk in it; when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.”

On this Memorial Day, we honor the memory of men fallen in battle; the memory, too, of our fathers and mothers. There are those who died for us and lived for us. There can be no doubt that those who gave their lives in war and those who watched over our lives in the peaceful comforts of home were acting in our behalf. Much was done and enjoyed for our sakes. We should also remember the foresight of the people who organized this church here in Fultonham back in 1850. Otherwise we wouldn't have this place to worship in today. Let us remember and keep these things in our memories.

This text is an injunction from a wise prophet urging us to learn from our remembered experiences. We shall catch suggestions from it on this Sunday, which is Memorial Day. There can be high uses of memory. Memory can be a blessing and a great good.

Man has three tenses— past, present and future. Man is the kind of creature that can remember. We need to remember and gain experience from the past. Much valuable experience has been gained from past experiences and we should take advantage of it. However we are to live in the present and plan and look forward to the future.

Marshall Field I is said to have listed 12 things to remember:

1. The value of time,
2. the success of perseverance,
3. the pleasure of working,
4. the dignity of simplicity,
5. the worth of character,
6. the power of kindness,
7. the influence of example,
8. the obligation of duty,
9. the wisdom of economy,
10. the virtue of patience,

11. the improvement of talent, and
12. the joy of originating

One evening a small congenial group was engaged in exchanging pleasantries about its hobbies. After each person had extolled the merits of his hobby, a shy little woman was asked what hers was. "Mine" she explained, "is collecting memories."

There are higher uses of memory from dedicated patriotism. History has been spoiled for many people because the living, breathing, dying people who made history were embalmed in the coffin of details and dates. What is important in Washington crossing the Delaware is not alone the fact and why he did it, but the courage and spirit of the man. If I were a teacher of history, I would try to stir the imagination of my students with an abiding awareness of the flesh and blood of history as made by people may great by the way they faced life. I would try to get them to fall in love with these immortal people. What boy could prove a traitor to his country when he has in his memory the courage of the Minutemen at Concord, the undiscouraged determination of Washington at Valley Forge, the gaunt and lonely Lincoln at Gettysburg, the graves at Verdun, the story of the Marne, or the exploits of D-Day? And most and recent let us not forget the lives that are being lost in Vietnam. Fortunate are those who have visited some of the sacred places and wept there, where freedom was defended and history was made. Can't we hear this voice behind us saying, "this is the way, walk in it." So let us not take for granted the lives that have been lost so that we can enjoy the freedom we have today. Let us remember that the past is more than history or something written in books for us to learn.

Memory can have high uses for education. Robert A. Millikan, Nobel Prize winner in physics, tells in his autobiography that his early teachers in school believed in writing on the blackboard every Friday great sayings of wise men and encouraging the children to memorize them. He says, "I thus stored my mind with a goodly number of bits of classic literature, which I found useful all my life." This practice is all but lost and I think it is a mistake. I think the public schools in the early grades should have children memorize great thoughts and great pieces of literature. I think church schools should encourage children to memorize great passages of the Bible. Once Jesus said to his disciples, "Store these sayings in your memory."

One of the older, wise Sunday school teachers once said, "I have taught Sunday

school for the past 35 years and I have watched the change take place in Sunday school literature. It seems to me the literature is getting further and further away from the Bible, which is the main reason why we teach in Sunday school. When I was a child, we memorized certain Bible verses, which I have never forgotten and can repeat them now. The children today will know nothing about the Bible or recognize any of the verses when they hear them.” I think her statements are true, we should be teaching the Bible to our children and how the teachings of Jesus Christ relate to our own lives.

Each teacher should ask the question, “Of what significance is this matter I am teaching?” Is it dead facts, useless lumber, with no meaning for the future of the students? If we as teachers in our Sunday school feel the Bible is useless, then we had better give up right now, for we have to believe in what we are teaching.

Education should be for something more than the acquisition of facts for use in a job. It should also be for the enrichment of the soul, for the enlargement the mind. Education should give us interesting things to think about and live with in our hearts when we are alone.

Mark Twain, writing about his early years on the Mississippi, said, “My memory was never loaded with anything but blank cartridges.” Much education is putting cartridges into the heads of people. Because their memories are loaded with nothing but blank cartridges, education has little or no relation to character.

And what about old age? What memories will we have for our later years? Cicero in his essay on old age spoke of the harvest of “Old Age” as “the memory and rich sharing of blessings laid up in earlier life.” Old age can be rich in such memories. But not unless in youth we sowed the proper seed. The harvest is in our hands.

Another of the higher uses of memory is as a steadying power in a period of moral strain and uncertainty. What better gift can parents give to their children than the memory of a happy childhood, with questions answered, moral and spiritual values shared, expectations made it clear, examples of parenthood just and fair? Don’t forget for a minute that youth are seeking answers to questions and if we as parents cannot give them answers, they will seek them elsewhere. What boy or girl can go wrong carrying in their memories a picture of the family at prayer? At worship in the church? We need to remember the Christian example we must set as parents.

Speaking about the Transfiguration experience, someone has said, “the experience gave them a great memory to which they could return.” Blessed and twice blessed are those who have great memories of home and love to which they can retain and when death comes, have memories of lives fulfilled together.

When Mary MacArthur, daughter of Helen Hayes and Charles McArthur, died, Gertrude Lawrence wrote a letter of sympathy. In answering it, Helen Hayes said among other things, “Don’t be worried about us. We are protected by the happiest of memories.” There are the uses of memory for our faith. How much of the vitality of our Christian faith depends on memory! The Lord’s Supper has among other things the power to keep our Lords memory alive. “This do in remembrance of me.” So the church has been defined as the community that remembers Jesus.

George Buttrich has said that the church was given to us “to keep us in basic memory, of whence we have come, the brevity of life, the mission that is ours, the destiny to which we are called.” We can never forget that as children we were baptized into the covenant of faith; or that we were confirmed in a Christian church; or that our parents died in the faith they had us baptized into. The Christian centuries belong to us along with Paul and Augustus, Saint Francis, Luther, Calvin and Wesley.

When Martin Luther was troubled by doubts in despair he would write on the blackboard or top of his study table two Latin words: “Baptizatus sum” - “I have been baptized.” His baptism was one of the saving memories of his life. Luther remembered, and this memory was the strength of his soul. Our whole Hebrew-Christian faith is rooted in the acts of God! Things done for us and our salvation. Ours is a religion of revelation and memory. “Think on these things”. High and necessary is memory for our faith. So on this Memorial Day let us really make high use of our memory.

With Only One Life To Live

Scripture: Exodus 35:30-36:1; Matthew 4:18-22

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle,” says Job (Job 7:6). It is a vivid figure of speech to anyone who has watched a weaver at his loom and has seen the shuttle flash as it crossed the way to lay the wool in the tapestry.

“We are as water spilt upon the ground”, said a wise woman to King David on a certain occasion. (II Samuel 14:14)

“We all fade as a leaf”, wrote the prophet. (Isaiah 64:6)

“As for man his days are as a grass”, wrote the poet. (Psalm 103:15)

These words concerning the impermanence of human life need not depress us. They should make us thoughtful and appreciative of our span of years.

We shall use the personal pronouns I and you in a more or less impersonal manner in this sermon.

It is indeed strange that I have a life to live. What a mystery that you are you! It is a mystery that scientists dig into to seek our microscopic heritage. It is a mystery that poets seek to fathom.

From Psalms 139:14-17 we read, “I praise thee, for thou art fearful and wonderful. Wonderful are thy works! Thou knowest me right well; my frame was not hidden from thee, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance; in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them?”

With only one life to live let us be glad to live it in this marvelous world. I can conceive that beings live on other planets, but this I know: I am living here. Let each of us circumscribe his here. Here is beauty to enjoy; here is loveliness in sky and mountain, in roadside and garden plot. The marvel of here is order; seasons, seed, fruit after its kind, law. The marvel of the place is stuff: the stuff of the loaf, fabric, wood, metal. The marvel of the place is that which we can name and know

not what it is, light, warmth, electric energy.

Are we glad to live in this marvelous world? It is a marvelous world you know. Man has learned much through scientific discovery I believe we have learned what God wants us to learn and what he feels we are able to handle and appreciate. The marvel rests in God. The mystery of yourself rests in God. "This is my Father's world". He is creator. And appreciation of these things rest. He is owner. In the acknowledgment much of life's enrichment.

It certainly is wonderful to be alive and living in this world today regardless of all our problems and situations that exist. You know man is the one that has made these problems and situations, it isn't God but God is the only one that can help us with them. He has the answers, he is the one that can guide us and help us to solve these problems. We have to put our trust in him and have faith that he will help us.

With only one life to live let us be glad to devote it to a great cause.

With what one-sightedness the preacher has been preaching, as though all things in the world were beautiful and good. The world we live in is also falling rocks, tidal waves, earthquakes, influenza, tuberculosis, cancer, evil in the heart of man, hate, lust, greed, rivalry, ill-will, war. Admitted! And a man ought to face the problem of evil, as he ought to face the problem of good. When he says, "Why is there evil in the world?" It is also well to say, "Why is there good?" This is not the hour for that, but it is the hour to say this: with only one life to live, I will devote it to a good cause. I will enlist on the side of good.

I would be a nut to say that we are surrounded by everything good, for we all know this is not true. If we choose the evil path, we ourselves are to blame, for God is willing to help us make this choice if we take the time to ask him. We certainly would not want to be God's puppets and unable to make our own choices. This is part of human life, freedom to choose between right and wrong. Thank God for this choice.

Living in this marvelous world, I have intelligence, heart emotion, capacity to plan, to make, to will, to do. Shall we strive then in all our doing to build the Kingdom of God? So much that we want to come to pass is comprised in the idea of the Kingdom. We want all men to earn through their own labors the things which shall be their highest good; we desire all men to enter into their heritage of knowledge insofar as they are able; we desire on human relationships to be ena-

bled in justice and peace; we seek for all men the embodiment of virtue, honesty, integrity, wholeness of character, and the graces of sympathy and love; we desire all men to know God as Father, Christ as Savior, the Spirit of God as Guide. We desire all men to have the shortness and impermanence of this life overwhelmed by life that is eternal. Such ideas as these we might tabulate under the great cause of the Kingdom. With only one life to live, how marvelous that I can devote it to such a cause?

A minister with a very tough assignment said, "In the early days of my ministry, I resigned every evening but every morning found me working at the job."

We Christians do a lot of talking about the Kingdom of God but most of us do little to bring it about on the earth. You know with God's help we should be working toward its establishment on the earth. We talk about all the evil and immoral conditions around us but what do we do to help decrease it? We pretty much take the attitude that it doesn't involve us so let's stay out of it and perhaps it will go away by itself. I doubt very much if any of the evil forces and conditions will leave us by their own accord. We are going to have to stand up and speak out for what we believe and have faith in. Other people want to know where we stand on the various issues of our day and most people will respect us for our stand and perhaps our influence will be felt and help to change other people's minds and thought. We need people willing to set good Christian examples by living Christian lives themselves. What better cause can be supported than this since we have only one life to live and short at that?

With only one life to live we can make personal achievement. We put aside the thought that personal achievement can be measured by money income. Why do we insist upon saying a person has really made a success of his life if he has made a lot of money; for there certainly are other means of success.

To abandon the insane notion that money is the measure of everything is to start escaping from the sense of failure, which today shadows numberless lives. I would call attention to two well-known individuals. The first is the English poet, John Milton. He spent a great deal of time, and undoubtedly many years, writing a poem entitled, "Paradise Lost". For the manuscript of that poem John Milton received from a publisher only \$90. The other well-known individual of whom I speak is the movie comedian Charlie Chaplin. During the most profitable year of clowning he received (so it is reported) \$670,000. If achievement is accurately measured by pay, then Charlie Chaplin is 7,300 times as successful as John Mil-

ton. But does that computation seemed correct? Has not something been omitted from the calculation?

I once heard of a boy, that at (15) was caring for a widowed mother and supporting a sister and brother. He did this over a period of years. He went to school. He earned money. He always gave one-tenth of his meager earnings to the Lord. He placed such money in his minister's hands. In the church he sat in the pew with men and women of large incomes; he gave more than many of these. He was called into the service of his country in World War II. He distinguished himself as an aviator. He won a great victory over an adroit enemy. He married a humble girl. He became an instructor in the Air Corps. He has been advanced to high rank. He is a straightforward, honest, humble, loyal, loving man. He does not have a fortune. Probably he will never have a fortune. Is he a success? It would be downright stupid and silly to say that this man has not made a high achievement because he doesn't have a fortune.

James Gordon Gilkey suggest four true measurements of achievement.

1. "Achievement" he says, is loyalty to the task, easy or hard, which life lays upon us. If we do our work faithfully and well, if we carry out heroically the assignment life gives us, we can claim success.
2. "Another true measure of achievement is the quality of our work". If anything is worth doing it is worth doing well.
3. "The third accurate measure of our achievement is the amount we do to create and maintain fine institutions within our community."
4. The final measure is what we do to shape tomorrow. In some way we need to make the future for our children a better place in which to live.

So multiple and complicated a thing is the human self. When, therefore, one cries, "I must care for myself", the answer comes, "Which self?" This smallest, meanest self, that last of all comes up from the interior of life? This infinitesimal creature of narrow, clamorous, egotistic needs? To live for that self is to lose real life utterly. For all the while there is the larger possible self, that may enclose and glorified the smaller, compounded of family love, a friendship, of devotion to neighborhood and country, of loyalty to humankind, and to good causes on which man's meal depends. To live for that larger self is to live the abundant life.

A new era will call its leaders from among those who have demonstrated self-discipline, worthy motivation, and high purpose.

It is the deep Christian point of view that with only one life to live we should be glad that we can follow Christ. See him in comparison with all others, scrutinize his character, study his teaching, meditate up on his deeds, appreciate his resurrection— undertake to do all this. This being done, you will follow the highest; you will follow the Man.

With only one life to live— it is an inexhaustible subject— I can live in a marvelous world, consecrate life to a great cause, make true achievement, follow the Christ— and discover myself. “He that loses his life shall find it.” “He that sendth his life outward shall find it within.” All the time that you are living this life you are shaping of soul for eternity. With only one life to live you can live it in the light and warmth and assurance and hope of life eternal.

Morsels That Make Sense

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17, Luke 10:25-28

Text taken from Romans 6:14, “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.” Today we are to think together about the Christian answer to our need for moral standards. Every day we are making practical decisions, looking one way or the other, the standards of our sex relationships, the questions of temperance and abstinence. But equally, we are making decisions involving other moralities; our relationship to men of other races, our relationship with those with whom we work. All of these are part of the Christian concern for moral standards when the practical question comes to the fore, and when we get down to cases.

There seems to be a common idea that when we talk about morals we think of something, which keeps people from having fun. It is reflected in the observation about the man of whom it is said that his conscience did not keep him from doing things, it just kept him from enjoying them! That’s the way many people look at morals but the fact of it is, Christian moral standards are not given us to keep us from living but are the guidelines of life, the means by which we find the fullest life.

What do other voices say about moral standards?

In order that we really come to the point, we shall need, in the first place, to consider some of the common answers people try in this matter of a standard by which to live.

One of these is the idea expressed in the Proverb, “When in Rome do as the Romans do.” This is a way of meeting the problem by imitation. Morally we try to take on the protective coloration of our environment.

The idea that doing something because everyone else is doing it, is not a sufficient standard for our moral lives. Just because the majority of the people are you doing it doesn’t make it morally right. The majority of the people wanted to see Jesus crucified but that didn’t make it right. He will point out that there are two kinds of people in any society. The larger majority of the people in the country drink alcoholic beverages, that doesn’t make it right. So conforming to what most people are doing is not a good moral standard.

A sociologist makes an important distinction. There are those who are “other directed.” They do not really make their own decisions. They simply see what others are doing and adjust to that, or listen to what others are saying and do as they are told. This reminds me of the people in nearly all western movies, the people who follow the leader that believes the law should be taken into his own hands and wants to charge the accused person without a fair trial. On the other hand, there are the “inner directed” people. It is these who have a standard of their own. They ask not, what do others require? But, what do I require of myself? Surely, there can be little question in which group the Christian belongs.

Again there is the idea, “let your conscience be your guide.” It catches a great truth, but standing by itself is not enough our conscience can be trained, even schooled into silence.

You see while everyone seems to have some conscience, which tells us that he ought to do right there, is no evidence that conscience alone will agree what the right is. There is a world of difference between a communist conscience, for example, and the Christian conscience. Very often we can convince ourselves that something we do is right even though Morley we know it is wrong. We humans are good for making excuses for ourselves and justifying why we do something. So letting our conscience be your guide is not enough for determining a moral standard.

Once more, there seems to be the idea that we can, “just do what comes naturally.” In some ways a popular misunderstanding of the teaching of some psychology has seemed to support this view. We have all heard that it isn’t healthy to repress our natural drives and urges. But what we do not often see is that there is a great distinction between “repressing” something, which means denying that you have an urge, and, on the other hand, “suppressing” it, which means consciously holding it in check. The fact is, life could not possibly go on without the deliberate and mature suppression of some of the things we want to do in order that they may find their fulfillment in better ways.

Certainly if we all did what our first urge was, I’m afraid our world would be in a much worse in moral condition than it is. And so the answer to us finding a moral standard to live by is not “to do just what comes naturally.”

What is the Christian answer? What is the Christian answer for morals that make

sense?

At the outset it should be clear that there is no simple formula which will solve such profound matters once and for all. Knowing what is right and having the will to do it comes only from a total way of living. It is the sum total of the relationship in which we live, of the devotional life we cultivate, of the experience that comes with maturity, of the deliberate cultivation of our understanding.

Who would expect to read a single article, for example, which could give him sound judgment as to what is great music and what is lesser? There is only one way. You must listen and live with it and talk about it until the judgment is developed. In a similar way, sound judgment of right and wrong come apart from the total Christian's way of life, it's worship, it's study, it's duties.

Then what is Christian morality? For some time there has been in my mind a simple picture which is been profoundly helpful. A full life is like a river. It must have restrictions and restraints like the banks of the river lest it overflow and bring devastation. On the other hand, it must have the free flow of the Stream. It cannot be impeded nor can it dry up at the source.

Now, turn that around to look at your life. It will help us understand why Christian morality also has two sides to it. Both of these are stressed in the unfolding story of the Bible and brought to fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Dr. J.B. Phillips has translated Romans 12:2 in popular language thus: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remold your minds from within." That's putting it on the line! That's stating it in a way no man can misunderstand.

You see, these words, however they are translated, bring out two sides of any man's life. In a sense a vital religious life is rather like an electric current in that it has a negative and a positive in it. These words state both. There is the negative side, a resistance to lesser things. There is, on the other hand a positive side, and obedience to the highest.

First of all, there are those things in Christian morality that are like the banks of the river. They are restraints. They set the limits beyond which we are not to go. They are the commandments that say, "thou shalt not". They are not too repress life but to direct it. They are born of experience. They mark the points beyond

which life runs into difficulties and tragedy.

Look at the 10 Commandments for a moment in this light. They are given us as a means of protecting the basic relationships upon which any life must rest. It isn't the breaking of a rule, which is the tragedy of immortality; it is the breaking of a relationship. "Thou shalt not steal," because that breaks the relation of a man to his neighbor. "Thou shalt not bear false witness or covet," because that breaks essential neighbor relations. It isn't repressing life but respecting life, which is the root of the Commandments that say, "thou shalt not".

The 10 Commandments are God's laws for living our lives, his guide for us. They tell us what we cannot do what they do not tell us what we can do this is where Jesus Christ comes into our lives.

Now look on the other side. No morality is full that has only the negative commandment. "It is the marks of Jesus that he turned the commandment around to say, "thou shalt". "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself." If only we could recover the positive side, our moral standards would make more sense. You shall love your God and honor him in all your ways. That's morality. You shall love those who love you and trust you. For this is the fulfillment of life. You shall respect yourself; you're worth, your word, your mind, and your body. For all of these are God's gifts to you, entrusted to you for fulfillment.

If someone gives you a gift, you respect that person and try to take care of the gifts. God has given us everything we have, and we should respect his gifts to us and above all respect him. That's when morals make sense, when the commandment is positive. Here's the flow of the other stream of which we speak. That is the Christian standard which not only make sense but makes abundant life in the long run.

The Crisis of Our Age

Scripture: Matthew 16:1-12

What is the underlying meaning of our tumultuous was time? How is a Christian to understand the crisis of our age? The answer of our Lord is so short as to be almost cryptic: our text this morning is taken from Matthew 16:4 and it says, “an evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign; but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah.” What was Christ saying? Just this: look at history. The “sign of Jonah” is the revelation that God gave of himself and his purpose to the life of that and other ancient worthies. On another occasion Jesus said that if people couldn’t or wouldn’t learn from “Moses and the prophets”– they’re great historical in antecedents – been nothing would suffice to enlighten them. Learn from history– for no other sign shall be given.

Quincy Howe’s “A World History Of Our Own Time...”, begins with the words, “The 20th Century has put the human race on trial for its life.”

There are many figures of speech by which we attempt to understand the movement of history: some of them are good and some of them are not so good.

In my opinion, one of the poor ones, is the popular American idea of history as a sort of cosmic escalator, or forever climbing to higher and higher levels, carrying mankind almost effortlessly to broader vistas and nobler achievement.

We are constantly trying to raise our standard of living to a higher and higher level. Our goal in life seems to be to achieve more and more material possessions, to earn more and more money so we can buy more and have more luxuries, to make a living our lives easier. I sometimes wonder if the only thing we can see before us is dollar signs. And I also believe we need to have the right perspective on the word ‘success’ because certainly success or being successful isn’t just gaining or acquiring wealth. We can be a success in many other ways.

Another of the poorer ideas is that history moves in endless circles. That was the view of the saintly cynic who wrote Ecclesiastes. “What has been will be, and what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun, “he says. It’s all a changeless and ceaseless cycle, without goal or meaning. Nothing new ever happens: what appears to be a new is merely due to the fact that the past

is quickly forgotten.

Certainly if we want history to move in an endless circle, it will move that way. If we cannot learn from valuable past experiences then we will have to take the consequences. I truly believe that God will guide us through our lives and that history will be changed because God doesn't intend for us to make the same mistakes that have been made. However, the secret I believe is putting our trust and faith in God to direct and guide our lives and actions so we can advance toward his goal of making this world a better place in which to live. God needs our help to make this possible and we need his help to make it possible also.

One of the better ways to understand history, I believe, is to picture the movement of an ice skater. History moves neither in a direct upward line, nor in circles, but with a stroke to the left, and the shifting of weight and a stroke to the right. It goes as far as the momentum of events will push it in one way, and then it shifts its emphasis to another. It is an alternation between extremes.

Well, where are we now? I think we are living in a time when the weight is being shifted again. The movement now it's away from the freedom and diversity toward authority and unity. I believe this is evidenced by the fact that most people are looking for security in the future and hear talk about socialized medicine and more federal control toward helping the senior citizens of our country. I believe that a lot of people are looking for a savior in terms of material possessions, of money, of wealth. They feel if they have these things everything will be all right. I think that we are putting the cart before the horse because I know that if we accept Jesus Christ into our hearts as our Lord and Savior. First- then these things will be taken care of according to our needs. But first we need God in our lives.

Our lives are destined to live in years of uncertainty when this weight shifting is in progress, between relatively long, smooth strokes. That is the crisis of our age.

In the rest of this sermon I want to make three (3) observations about living in such a time of crisis. I believe with all my heart that it is a great time to be alive. If we are wise we will not bemoan our fate nor yearn for "the good old days". We need to make the most of our lives now and regardless of how bad we say the times are, talking certainly will not help or do any good.

God puts a hunger for security and unity in the human heart as surely as he did the one for individualism and diversity. We will not fight a rear guard action to pre-

serve the fast nor approach the problems of our day in the Manor of Lord Melbourne whose administration according to Winston Churchill, “won an 18th-century air war in the midst of 19th century stress.”

For one thing, “It is a great time to be alive because the periods of crisis are the periods of creativity.” It is under the stress of compulsions that the great creative advances for humankind are hammered out. The tumultuous decade in our history before the Civil War produced so rich a crop of ideas and books that historians sometimes call it “The American Renaissance.”

Christianity itself was born in a world of crisis. The whole New Testament is steeped in the conviction that the world is in crisis. That’s why it is so imperatively urgent in its demands! And that’s why it’s little letters and books were read it over and over again and that collected together and then made part of the Bible, because from a period of crisis it developed a great creative insight into the heart of God himself.

Do you know what the name “Gethsemane” means? It means “an oil press” and describes the device used to squeeze oil from olives. It is an almost ugly phrase, but a true one, to say that Jesus’ greatest moments came when “the screws were on”, when the pressure was the greatest; his greatest creative revelation of the mind and heart of God came from his moments of greatest crisis in the Garden and on the Cross.

Secondly – the periods of crisis always drive us back to the fundamentals. This superficialities will not do; “the dogmas of the quiet past,” in Lincoln’s phrase, prove themselves inadequate to “the stormy present.”

In times like ours, men are not going to be permanently satisfied by a washed out religion which seems to think that the idea is to see how little one can believe and still be a Christian. Nor are men going to be satisfied permanently by those who have mistaken the form of the gospel for substance. Nor are men going to be satisfied permanently by religious psychology in which our aims for a little personal peace of mind rather than for the life which brings peace of conscious. Nor are men going to be satisfied permanently by any dogmatic approach, be it Roman Catholic, Protestant, or what not whose claim to authority is not authenticated by the fruits of the spirit—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.”

No, we will be driven back on the real fundamentals—the being and love of God, the godliness of Jesus, the surprising value of the Bible, the communion of saints, the eternal distinction between right and wrong, the potential immortality of the human soul.

There used to be a covered bridge over 1200 feet long in New England. The story goes that one day a Yankee farmer who had never crossed it approached it with a load of hay. After one look down that long, dark, wooden tunnel, he turned his team around and started to drive away. Asked why he was turning around he shrugged his shoulders and said, “Well, I could get in all right, but blamed if I could ever squeeze this load through that little hole at the other end!” It was his perspective that betrayed him. It is important that we try to get a Christian perspective on the whole march of human events.

Thirdly— The periods of crisis demand our best. Berdyaev said something that is more vital now than it was in 1917. “There is no longer any room in the world for a mere external form of Christianity, based upon custom. The world is entering upon a period of catastrophic and crises when we are forced to take sides, and to which a higher and more intense spiritual life will be demanded of Christians.

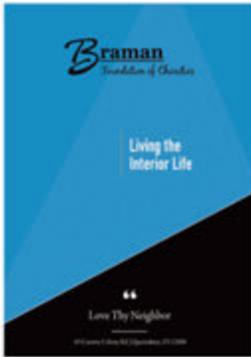
We can no longer afford the luxury of nominal Christianity in the pew, the pulpit, the school and the marketplace.

Today mankind is living on top of a boiling, seething political and economic volcano; it is folly to think that it can be put out by casual means. In fact, it’s a mistake to think that the revolutionary volcano can be stopped at all. What we must do is to learn to live with some new facts; what we must do is channel them spiritually. And that will take more than cursory, routine, perfunctory methods. It will take our best.

Every reader of the Bible knows that this is not the first time history’s skater has shifted his weight; it is not humanity’s first crisis. And every reader of the Bible knows that the times of crisis produced the great creative moments. For 969 years in one of our ancient Bishop, Methuselah’s, day of pastoral life there was nothing worth recording. But in the bare 50 years before Judah’s final collapse, the great book of Deuteronomy was completed and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and a host of lesser prophets were at work. And in that time of crisis Isaiah ventured a prediction Christians have always remembered because Christ fulfilled it so well, “from the stump of Jesse a shoot shall rise.” He was saying that he knew a King would

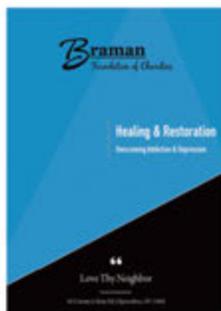
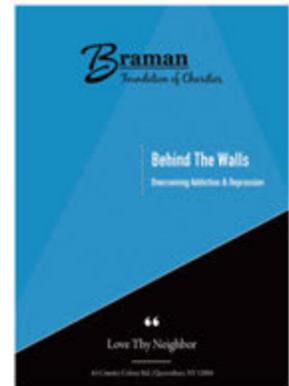
come from David's ancient line; but he was also saying more than that: he was saying that from the stumps of the old, new life and vitality can rise. He was holding up God's promise to every generation: a promise of new life! That is the meaning of the crisis of our age.

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



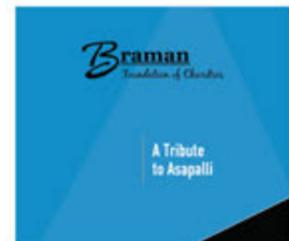
Many of us struggle with stress, depression, our weight, and other debilitating issues. "Living the Interior Life" is a program that teaches the individual affirmative prayer, meditation techniques, cognitive behavior therapy, overcoming addiction, physical exercise and proper nutrition. In addition, 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.

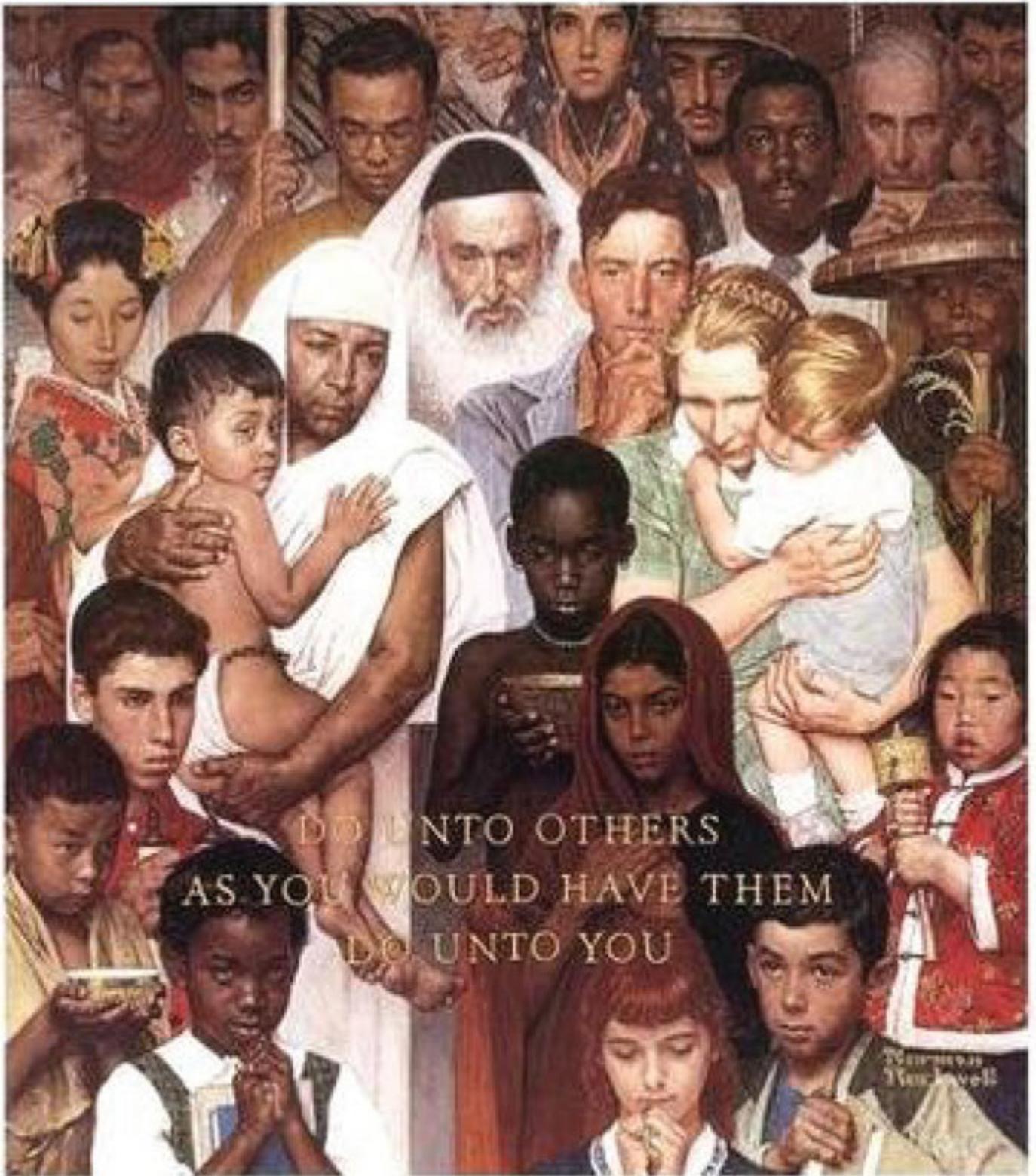


Millions of us suffer needlessly from addiction & depression. The reasons for this are many. In this program we emphasize the 12 step method of Recovery, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Meditation techniques to overcome difficulties. We also rely on God's grace to help you be lifted from your dilemma. 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"