

# *B*raman *Foundation of Charities*



South Harpersfield  
United Methodist Church  
Geneva, Ohio

## The Sermons of Richard W. Braman Vol. 12

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Love Thy Neighbor

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

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



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

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

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

In Christ,  
The Braman Foundation

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## **Days To Ponder (Maundy Thursday)**

### **Scripture: Matthew 26: 20-29**

Text is chosen from Luke 22: 29-30; “As my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.”

A newspaper political columnist, Robert T Hartman some years ago on Good Friday headed his column, “A Day to Put Politics Aside – And to Ponder.” He wrote, “It seems difficult to write about politics today, to put my mind on such things as the crisis - or the defense budget or the Republican Party. My mind keeps slipping back to a Good Friday when I made my way through the Shepherd’s Gate of Old Jerusalem and down into the valley of the Brook Kidron. There, amid a garden of gnarled olive trees, is the supposed site of Gethsemane. I entered a vast stone church. Inside the church neither pews nor benches, only the cold stone floor. My Protestant tradition does not insist on public kneeling, but I doubt even an atheist would hesitate in such a place. I knelt, for three hours with the others. When I walked from the church, into the soft spring night, I gave no thought to my aching, untrained legs. But I was unutterably glad to have been among those who had made that public profession.

The world suddenly seemed a better place, though of course it was not, and is not now. But my I saw it differently, touched perhaps by the healing hand of one who had walked that way before, bearing his awful load alone.”

There are days in which to ponder. This week pondering might well follow the days of this week in the life of Jesus. Here we will give only a few directions for pondering.

First, we have Monday: The Day of Authority. Read Mark 11:15-19, and carry the thought of the authority of Jesus with you throughout the day. Mark 11:15-19 reads, “And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he over turned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. And he talked, and said to them, “Is it not written, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers.” And the chief priest and the scribes heard it and saw a way to destroy him; for they feared him, because all the multitudes were astounded at his teaching. And when evening came, they went out of the city.”

There was authority in his teaching. Matthew writes after the Sermon on the Mount “He taught them as one having authority.” He has a rightful power to speak to our hearts.

There was authority in his action. He cleared the temple at Jerusalem by his divine right.

We shall meditate then upon his words and also submit to the sacred presents of our own hearts to his cleansing.

Second, we have Tuesday: The Day of Controversy. This day in the life of Jesus is summarized by Mark, “And the chief priest and the scribes sought how they might destroy him.” They challenged his authority. They tried to catch him in an argument. In the midst of this argument, he found an opportunity to repeat the two great Commandments to love God and man as is recorded in Mark 12:29-31; “The Lord our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

On this day of pondering, we may find occasion to rewrite these commandments on our minds and hearts.

Third, we have Wednesday: The Day of Silence. There is no record of the events of Wednesday. Without doubt Jesus spent the day in spiritual communion with his Father, seeking and receiving spiritual strength for the days ahead.

This is a day for all Christians to follow the advice of the Psalmist and the example of Jesus, “Be still, and know that I am God.”

Fourth, we have Thursday: “The Day of Fellowship.” On Wednesday Jesus bid fellowship with the Father. On Thursday he sought intimate fellowship with the twelve, his closest disciples. All four Gospels give us an account of the supper held in the upper room, which we now commemorate as the Lord’s Supper. The most tender and searching words of Jesus were spoken on this occasion. They are written for us to meditate upon in the Gospel of John. On the evening of Thursday, we may find opportunity to continue our pondering about the Table of Our Lord as we are about to do.

Fifth, we have Friday: The Day of the Crucifixion. And for this day we have a prayer: “Grant that by the suffering of our Lord we may be led to put away those sins that make us unworthy to be numbered among his disciples by thy redeeming love and saving grace. Let the shadow of his cross fall upon our lives to make us from this day forward mindful of his love for us.”

Thus, may we ponder and pray.

As we come to our Lord’s table on this Maundy Thursday there are things we are called upon to remember. The spontaneous answer is the Last Supper: the setting, the participants, the broken fellowship, the betrayal, the cross.

We should remember more than a historic last supper from I Corinthians 11:26 we read; “We proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” The Resurrection is part and parcel of the remembrance. So is his promise: From Matthew 28:20 we read, “Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” They remembered forward as well as backward the memory of things to come gave them great confidence.

What will such remembering do for us? It should shock us out of the routine. It should make us look with new eyes on old events. If we recollect the wonder of the cross and reflect on it, we shall look on daily life from an unusual perspective. Our spiritual focus will be changed. Christ will become a very real and living part of our lives. Let us ponder these things this night as we partake of the bread and wine.

## **Christ's Witnesses**

### **Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:6-8**

Text is chosen from 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."

The advertisers whom we hear on radio or TV are very smart. They trick many people into a favorable reaction toward their product by having a movie star to recommend a brand of cigarettes or a professional man to switch to a particular product. The many advertisements for beer are appalling with catchy songs, etc. The movie star and the professional man may not care at all for the products advertised. They are paid good money for their endorsements. Many people are tremendously influential by the testimony of people they know or know about. The advertisers know that people are influential more by personal testimony and buy anything else.

Someone has made this comment: "the advertisers are smarter than the church. They have witnesses." The church hires lawyers (actually preachers), going on the assumption that a logical exposition of the Christian religion from the pulpit is what really influences people. The fact is that the witnesses have a great influence.

It is good that the preacher does expound the Gospel and gives his personal testimony but let's face it, I believe the ordinary layman has a far better chance to influence his friends and associates than the preacher. The preacher is expected to live a good wholesome life and people expect him to and perhaps to be a little different than ordinary people. But if an ordinary layman gives his personal testimony and what Christ means in his life people are impressed more because it comes from someone on their same level. Ordinary layman do have a more effective witnesses than the professional preacher.

A southern mountaineer who was hauled into court to face a moonshining charge was advised to hire a good lawyer to present his case. When he found out what it would cost, he said that he thought that he would rather spend the money for a good witness. There is something to be said for the mountaineer's idea that a good witness is sometimes better than a good lawyer. The personal testimony of a witness can carry more weight than the reason and logic of a lawyer; for people are always more easily persuaded by testimony than by logic.

There are millions of Christians in America today. What a staggering difference it would make to life, to their own lives and to the lives of others, if even half of them were to go out to work tomorrow morning, determined to witness to Jesus Christ. It boils down, I believe, to the fact that as Christians we do not want to be different. We do not want to stand out in the crowd. We are willing to sit back and let the other fellow lead, whether it be right or wrong. Christians have to start taking the lead and leading their differences, faith, and beliefs be felt. We have been instructed by our Lord to be his witnesses. This is our only hope in the world of disorder, hatred, and or evil. So, it would make a tremendous difference even if some of our



so-called Christians actually started witnessing for our Lord.

The last words spoken by Jesus before his ascension were these: “you shall be my witnesses.” This was not a call for endorsement; it was a call for personal testimony.

We feel the authority back of the words. Last words do have added meaning. Through something like three years he had been training and teaching his disciples for the responsibility. They had walked with him and they knew his words and acts; they had seen his crucifixion; they had experienced his resurrection. These words came now with power. “You shall be my witnesses.” They were spoken to be obeyed. His disciples would not now be content to nurse the rekindled faith in prayer and fellowship in some secret upper room, they were commanded to go and tell. They obeyed.

Do you think there would have been a Christian church at all, if the disciples of long-ago acted as most of us act today? The church would never have gotten started. Do you think we would have the privilege of worshipping together in this, God’s house, here in Fultonham, if our forefathers had not effectively witnessed for their Lord? Certainly, we would not have had this church building. But just look at the difference between Christ’s early disciples, yes even our forefathers, and us today. We have a hard job getting enough people together to even keep the church going inactive. We apparently have gotten into a rut of living our lives the way we do, yes even routine, and we do not want even God to disturb us. One of these days we will be shaken out of our chairs and then perhaps we will awaken.

There was wisdom back of the words we have already noted the practical wisdom of Jesus in the reference to the methods of modern advertisers.

When men talk out of experience, they carry conviction. Argument seldom persuades. If argument becomes effective it is generally based upon previous witnesses. It’s not this so in the courtroom? The profession of a creed will have a little meaning unless we have met with Christ and experienced something for which there’s no other explanation than that the grace of God was given through Him.

We repeat the Apostles Creed every Sunday in our worship service. Do we really know what it means? Do we really believe what we repeat? Even more important in your own life, have you experienced and felt the Holy Spirit of the living God?

Let us remember that Christianity is an active and a living religion. Our Lord lives and once we experience him in our lives, we will be living, too.

Jesus himself followed the method of talking from experience and not trying to persuade by argument. The conversation with a woman of Samaria, also with Zacchaeus, are examples of this.

It is open to our own observation that the method of witness really works. By the “one living heart sets

another on fire.”

We are called on by Christ to go out into our world through our contacts with friends, neighbors, coworkers, to witness for him. We do not have to stand in the street corner and preach. We do not even have to get into the pulpit and preach.

Just by our everyday living what a Christian example we can set. All of us belong to some kind of an organization. We do not have to sit back and let things go on that we know deep down in our hearts is not right. We have been sitting still and keeping quiet long enough. We should again begin to let our Christian influence be heard and felt.

There was concern back of the words.

There was no doubt that the love of Christ for individuals motivated his words and acts during his days upon the Earth. That concern was now to become responsibilities of his followers. It was concerned that only for the person nearest by in Jerusalem, but also for the person in the uttermost part.

Was not this commandment to witness also an expression of concern and love for these men who have been with him? They were given a task. Their lives were not to peter out. No deadly inertia should seize them. No on creeping in difference should lay waste their powers. Their apprenticeship with him would be fulfilled in the great task. Jesus endured the cross for the joy that was set before him; many of these would do the same. It is significant that the Greek word for witness is “martyr.” The great cause of the kingdom would draw out all their powers, even onto death.

A man I knew, who had been down and out, used to tell how one night in the stupor of despair he crept into a mission hall. A speaker was giving an address. But it was something more than exhortation or a condemnation of sin. My friend would not have listened to that; it would only have added to his despair. What caught and riveted his attention was that the speaker was telling what Christ had done for himself, and at that, hope spring up within him. If Christ could do that for him, he said to himself, he can do it for me and he most certainly did.

The call comes to his followers in these days.

The need of the world is to hear concerning Jesus Christ, his love and his power. The need is for men and women to witness to that love and power.

Have we not had an experience of Christ which we can tell with conviction? He has freed us from guilt. He has given us victories over evil impulses that have risen in us. He has comforted us in some great hour of sorrow. He has invaded our hearts with light that banishes the shadows. In days of despair, we have put our trust in him in a quiet peace and confidence provided over troubled my minds.

We are called to give our witness in words when the opportunity appears. We are called on to put our experience of Christ indeed and make them real. Our experience of the grace of Christ will show itself in what we are.

We cannot expect to have a better world by merely talking about it. We need to do something. Why should we sit back and let evil and moral decay creeping in when deep down in our hearts we know it is wrong. Perhaps some of our so-called friends would no longer be friendly but what kind of friends are they really? Especially in the political world we need honest, straightforward, truthful, Christian men and women. The crooked, immoral people only get into positions because we let them, because we don't want to be bothered. It is timely awakened, to the fact that they will not get better unless we do something about it.

How odd that it is only in regards to the spiritual life that we are reticent! Indeed, how very odd. As I think about the prolonged conversations my very best friends engage in, there is much involvement with political and economic opinion. Then when I introduce a major religious thought, how swift is the descent of silent. Will you tell me why?

It was not merely the words of the first apostles that convince the people of the living Christ at work. Words and deeds in spirit were all fused into light that broke through darkened minds and brought them face-to-face with Christ. It was so in Jerusalem. As we read from Acts 4:13 we can see this to be true. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they wondered; and they recognized they had been with Jesus." To this day it is so where disciples bear witness in the uttermost parts of the Earth.

In the first chapter of Acts there is a brief account of the election of Matthew to the apostolic band in place of the traitor Judas. The interesting thing was his qualifications and the function he was to undertake. He wants to be a witness with the other disciples of the resurrection. One wonders whether a congregation gathered to elect its office – because would look for more men or women, who could be whatever with them would be witnesses with them of the resurrection. One wonders whether a congregation gather to elect its office-bearers would look for men or women who would witness with them of the resurrection of Christ. It would probably be smiled upon as ridiculous or even a fantastic idea. Yes, this very thing, to be witnesses of the resurrection, is the function of the Christian people.

"You shall be my witnesses" is the authoritative, wise, loving, persistent call of Jesus to his followers.

## **Recovering Family Life**

### **Scripture: I Samuel 3:1-10, 19&20**

Text is chosen from Deuteronomy 6:5-7: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy I might. And the words I commend thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sitteth in the house, and when thou walk by the way, and when thou liest down and when thou riseth up.”

Each person has a variety of human needs – physical, emotional and spiritual. In order to meet these needs, it would seem that from the very beginning of recorded history, persons have gathered within family units. Indeed, it can be said that the family is the oldest and the most successful human institution.

It is reasonable to conclude that out of countless centuries of human experience, mankind has made the almost unanimous judgment that the best and most satisfying life is that which makes the family the basic unit.

Although there are traces of the influence of both Greek and Roman civilizations, there can be no doubt that the dominant influence in the formation of our concept of the family is Judeo-Christian. The Hebrew people, before the beginning of the Christian era had rejected polygamy and embraced monogamy as the sanctioned structure of marriages. The Christian influence strengthen the tradition, that the family is to be composed of two adults and their children all joined in intimate fellowship and united for the common good of all.

The Judeo-Christian tradition emphasizes three major Ideas about marriage.

First, it considers that marriage is based on a commitment rather than a mere contract. That is to say, it accepts from the very beginning the proposition that marriage is an unconditional relationship. It is for this reason that all traditional wedding services call for pledges from both men and women that they shall live together, “from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poor, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish so long as we both shall live.” This is both an idealistic and realistic approach to marriage.

This is not to be a temporary affair. Hence the relationship is not based on a contract that one negotiates but on a commitment pledge through an astonishing act of faith.

Perhaps this is old fashion and contrary to modern beliefs as evidenced by the high divorce rate in our country but I truly believe that marriage is a very permanent thing.

A second characteristic of Judeo-Christian tradition is that marriage is not just a private affair but one that takes on a public character. This is why in the traditional service the opening words are: “Dearly beloved, we are assembled here in the presence of God.” These words recognize the three levels of involvement in the commitment between man and woman, the assembled family and friends in the presence of God.

The third emphasis in our tradition declares that the men and women by free choice accept a bond. It admits that the marriage bonds curb and abolishes absolute freedom. It grants that there can no longer be undisciplined irresponsibility or self-centered expression. The ideal is held further that our highest freedom as individuals is to be found within our allegiance to loyalties greater than ourselves.

Namely, a marriage is a 50-50 proposition. Each person involved has to be able to take as well as give. There has to be agreement and compromise between the man and woman involved.

Now we ask, "What is happening in our society to this concept of marriage?" We need only consider a few straws in the wind.

Every fact that we can gather would indicate conservatively that more than half the adult population shows only slight respect for marital fidelity. This disintegration of the moral standards of modern marriage is reflected in the alarming statistics of juvenile delinquency.

Our divorce laws are inadequate and inconsistent. They should be the same in each state.

Another thing that has gone wrong is that we have been slipping at an increasingly accelerated rate into the quick sands of moral looseness. Just listen to the remarks and beliefs that some of our young people in college have today. They apparently do not know what the word moral or morale even means.

We need also to recognize that there is the ever-present danger that in our active lives the home may become just a place where we eat and sleep.

Too many homes are not unlike a kind of Grand Central Station, a place where bulletin boards advise where an individual member of the family has run off to. Too many activities for our youth, the numerous clubs and organizations, the social and business demands, all of these things tend to fragment the solidarity of the family.

And talk about fathers being strangers to their children. One little boy is reported asking his mother, "Who is that strange man who comes here on weekends?" It is often true that fathers are so busy getting ahead and being successful that they are almost strangers to their children.

Although in many house homes there is rich cultural and educational depth, at the heart there is a lack of a solid and satisfying philosophy of life and a firm religious faith. This lack causes confusion as to what are the worthy goals of life and real values worthy to be achieved.

And in back of all the reasons why young people "go bad", according to a study made by Doctors' Sheldon and Eleanor Ghush, of the Howard Law School, and reported in the United States News and World Report, is the problem of inadequate parents. Delinquent children, they found, were not confined to those growing

up in the slums. They came even from affluent families, where mothers neglected their children, and where fathers might as well not be there, for all the time they spend with their children.” Children of “inadequate parents” they found, “grow up with a sense of neglect and insecurity and this is what lays the foundation of delinquency.”

The Ghush team discovered that they were able to predict the likelihood of delinquency in a child, in terms of the performance of the parents in the following areas: “affection of the mother for the child, affection of the father for the child, supervision of the child by the mother, discipline by the father, and cohesiveness of the family.”

Then, too, it is clear that many enter into marriage with an adolescence or immature idea about what real marriage is, what it involves, and marry at too young an age.

A further complication: the modern woman is personally involved in a concern as to who she is and what her role should be. This problem is acute among many educated and talented women. We have educated women and opened up new opportunities for them in our society but we have neglected to elevate it to its rightful highest position, the unique role of the homemaker and the mother. Surely this role deserves a new status in our society.

Now let me make some suggestions that might hopefully lead us toward a more satisfying family life.

First of all, let there be a clear resolve in our minds and hearts that there is nothing, nothing in the world, more important than the creation of a worthwhile family, and let us see that the school can only be reached through a spiritual venture. It can never be achieved on any lower level. The reason for this is that love and its deepest spiritual sense is the only possible foundation upon which a happy marriage can be constituted.

Oh, you can marry someone because he has money or because you are lonely and need a companion but you will never know what a happy and fulfilled marriage is. And I’ll tell you something else, never enter into marriage with a chip on your shoulder because to have a happy marriage, it requires compromise and understanding of each other others points of view.

Perhaps you know of and have seen mixed religion marriages, but to be truly happy I believe both husband and wife must decide and become one, in everything, but especially in religion.

Secondly, once more, we confront the necessity of elevating the dignity of the woman’s role in the home as homemaker and mother. This is not a profession, or even a work, it is a ministry, the highest kind of ministry granted to a human being. And its fulfillment is to be found the joy and the strength of lives dependent upon her. Every one of us needs to look up on the unique role of the mother and the wife in this light.

Thirdly, let us resolve to make the home increasingly the very center of life. Within the home there should be work, play, education and worship.

Fourthly, let me suggest that religious experiences and expressions should become a normal and accepted part of family life. I can assure you that children will get some kind of religion from your home. The only question now is what kind of religion will they get.

There is no easy magic by which we may achieve the recovery of our family life. It calls for the conviction that nothing can be more important. It demands hard work in the recognition that anything of such value will not come automatically. It demands commitment to an ideal that is bigger than the self. It insists upon an emotional maturity that sets aside our selfishness and enables us to have a deep feeling for one another. It is the greatest of all human ventures between persons seeking the good and worthy life under the blessings of God.

Francis Cooper Thompson had this to say, “It seemed very strange to me that on the night the newspapers proclaimed the death of Rear Admiral Richard E Byrd, I should come across this statement by him in our own collection of Words To Live By: “At the end, only two things really matter to a man – the affection and understanding of his family.”

With a lifetime of honors pinned to his breast, with new worlds opened up because of his daring; this great man still settled for the simplest and most available source of human happiness, a loving relationship with his family.”

We are continually moving about. A friend told me the other day that he and his family had lived in 21 different houses in 10 different towns and cities. That is not unusual. In how many houses has your family lived? You will probably live in many more. Living in an ‘old homestead’ all your life belongs to times of the past.

Now there is an important question related to this moving from place to place – what do you leave behind when you move? It is by that that the self is revealed. For example, it is said that when it came time for Mimi Eisenhower to leave the White House, she arranged for flowers to be placed in every room of the great executive mansion, so that, when the new President and his family walked through their new home for the first time, they would feel the friendship and consideration of President and Mrs. Eisenhower. This thoughtful act revealed the character of the doer.

When we move on or pass through, we always leave something behind. Many years ago there was a quaint fellow called Johnny Appleseed. He went through the central states planting apple seeds wherever he went. In the years that followed, the influence of Johnny Appleseed could be seen by every roadside. Each blooming tree in the spring told that Johnny Appleseed had passed that way.

Someone came into a village in England and remarked about the pleasantness and beauty of the village in contrast with the conditions in other towns nearby. A resident was asked a reason for the difference. “Well”, he said, “John Wesley once passed this way many years ago.”

How do we judge the greatness and the littleness of men? Is it not by what they left behind? We speak much about our national heritage and our Christian heritage. These we possess because of what men left behind.

What did you leave behind when you left home this morning? What kind of trail will you leave as you pass through? A litter of roadside beer cans is a symbol of one kind of life; a roadside of blooming and fruit-bearing apple trees is the symbol of another kind.

It is important as parents to leave a lasting impression on our children, something they can remember us by and be proud of. The kind of family life we have in the kind we provide makes a big difference and a lasting impression.

This much we know, if we have good homes, we shall be happy people, and if we have good homes there is still the hope that eventually we shall have a good world. With God's help we can and will make good homes.



## **Everyday Religion**

### **Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13**

Text is chosen from I Corinthians 13:13; “: “And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

Who was that fellow who first criticized Christians because of their Sunday piety and their contrasting weekday practice? He has had many successors. You can meet one every day. And, of course, they have something – but not much. Generally, they do not know what they are talking about. If asked to defined this weekday religion that they were lacking, what would they say?

What is weekday, every day end religion? Every day religion is the practice of love. The argument for that is the character of God, the life and example of Jesus Christ, the two great commandments.

We think today of this every day religion as practical in the home. Some of us have seen this religion exemplified in his mother or wife. We are especially reminded of it on Mother’s Day. On the other hand, there have been many heart aches and frustrations and failures in so-called Christian homes. Unloving mothers, unfaithful fathers, disobedient children, have ruined many homes which the practices of Christian love would have saved. Let us think, then, of the everyday practice of Christian love in the home. Certainly, this is a fitting subject for Mother’s Day, for instantly we think of mother’s love and concern for her family.

Love affirms the other. Christian love is the opposite of possessive love. It’s around the other person for his sake, not ours. It is a giving and not a taking. This makes the distinction between a love which possesses another person and one which affirms the other.

Paul, in his great love chapter, I Corinthians 13, in four bold strokes, describes loves practice: “Love bears all things, loves believes all things, hopes of things, endures all things.”

First, “love bears all things.” How often a home falls apart because someone in the family cannot bear a situation. This is a failure in love.

The scholars tell us that the word “bear” carries the idea of “sharing.” Jesus’ own figure for this was the yolk. “Take my yoke upon you,” he said. This symbol of a Christian home might well be a yoke. The husband and wife, yoked together bear the burden by sharing it. Parents will be yoked with the children in bearing the children’s burdens and, the children with their parents in bearing the family burdens.

This may not work, this matter of yoking. One may have to bear all things alone. Love can do even that – “bear all things alone.” There is something of the cross of Christ in these words, “bearing all things.” Some persons take up their cross daily and follow him.

Arnold H. Lowe had this to say; “I remember two people sitting in my study. I had talked with one and then with the other, as is my custom, and now they were both with me. She had said everything she thought there was to be said, and now he was speaking. “Have I not been good to the children?” She quietly admitted that he had been. “Have I ever created a scandal?” She confessed that he never had. “What it is that I haven’t given you? Haven’t I given you everything? He wanted to know. “Yes”, she replied, “you have giving me everything but you just don’t understand. It isn’t everything I want. It is just something you can’t buy.”

Love certainly isn’t something you can buy. It has to be given and freely from the heart.

Secondly, “love believes all things.” Of course, this does not mean that every bit of gossip brought into the home is believed. Love is not credulous. These words have been translated, “love knows no end to its trust” and again “love is trustful of mankind.

Many a person has been enabled to bear all things by his believing that “all things work together for good to them that love God.” It was by his believing that Jesus could bear the cross. It is by believing in goodness and truth and beauty that homes become good and true and beautiful.

For the most part this morning, we are limiting our discussion to the inside of the home, but love that is belief and trust is an expanding circle. With all their faults a man can believe in his community, his nation, his world, and by his faith live usefully in them.

There is a poem entitled “The Greatest of These”  
“Life’s gifts are many, ye cherish each one.  
There’s beauty entire, a part  
Of life’s sweet living, balsam to the heart.  
There is all the wealth five senses can esteem-  
Sight, scent, taste, touch and all those things we deem.  
Delightful – then add music, with its power  
Of making mankind brothers, one brief hour.  
Life’s gifts are many, God has so designed  
A potpourri of pleasures - still we find,  
In his word writ “faith, hope, and love perceiving  
Life’s greatest gifts are loving and believing.

Thirdly, “love hopes all things.” Perhaps that is the best thing that love does in a home. We bare because we have hope. We trust, in hope.

This dreaming of the better future when there is even no adequate ground for it – that is love hoping.

Hope puts shine in the daily grind of father and mother. Help stimulate the children to strenuous endeavor. Hope puts its objects under the power of great expectation. Hope sees the possibilities in all. Hope is the mother who keeps the door open for an erring daughter. Hope is the son or daughter whose deep concern is to bring honor to a family. Hope is the dream of the good life. Hope is love in action, always laying the foundation of a better day. Love hopes of things.

Hope is what keeps the wife going even though her husband is constantly coming home drunk. Hope keeps that mother going even though her son is constantly in trouble. And why do we have hope regardless of the circumstances? Because of real Christian love and concern. Regardless of how bad a person is or how bad a situation may be, there are possibilities for that person or situation turning out for the best.

“That kid next-door is a pain in the neck”, said Mr. Babcock as the family met at the dinner table. This was a saying a great deal, for Mr. Babcock was not nearly as talkative as his son and daughter, Jimmy and Mary Joe. He continued, “another basement window broken.”

He is a problem child. His parents know it but they don’t get very far with him.” Said Mrs. Babcock.

“He’s in my class at school,” said Jimmy, “but half the time he’s absent. He belongs to the First Street Gang; I’d hate to get into a fight with him.”

“What do you think about Tom?” inquired Mary Joe of her uncle. “What I think, with apologies to all of you, is that probably his parents, his next-door neighbors, his school, and the police are all on the wrong track with regard to Tom Owen. Everybody thinks he’s a problem and they treat him that way. Forget problem and look at him as a possibility; then see what happens. Let me ask a question, how many of you know Charles Lawrence?

“He is one of the finest men in town,” said Mary-Jo.

“Well, I’d like to ask your mother about him when he was a teenager.”

“He was always in trouble with everybody,” said Mrs. Babcock.

“Until Hazel Tibbs straightened him out by caring for him. She treated him, just as I have been saying, as a possibility, not as a problem.”

Mr. Babcock broke in, “I was a bit of a problem myself until Harry Moser got hold of me.”

“Let’s do a little experimenting with Tom Owen,” suggested uncle George. “Will have to be tactful – but from now on let’s think of him and treat him as a possibility. It was Jesus’ method with his disciples, especially with Peter.

“He failed with Judas,” said Mary-Jo.

“Yes, that’s true,” said Mr. Babcock, “but he did succeed with others. Tomorrow I’ll buy a pane of glass for the basement window and Tom Owen will help me fit it in. I’ll win him that far; I’ll first invite him to look over my shop. I’ll get him interested, see if I don’t! After Easter, I’ll give him a Saturday morning job down at the printing shop. I think he needs a little spending money.”

“Let’s ask him in for Easter morning breakfast,” suggested Mrs. Babcock.

“That’s a great idea,” agreed Jimmy and Mary-Jo changing a problem into a possibility. “We’ll see what we can do at school.”

Each person has possibility regardless of how bad we may be. Jesus Christ can enter a person’s life and completely change it. Christ working through us and others can make this possible. Never give up for where there is life, there is hope.

Fourth, “Love endures all things.” Faith and hope and love are our greatest qualities because they endure. Love gives endurance to faith and to hope and thereby, proves it is the greatest of the three.

A teacher was telling of the hardships of the Pilgrims during their first winter. In the midst of her description concerning the starving conditions, one of the first-graders raised her hand and said, “I wish my mommy had been there. She always knows just what to do.” Truly a child’s tribute to her mother.

Gene E. Bartlett preaching on the same text we used for our sermon this morning said; “Some people come away from a service like this more weighted down than lifted up because they feel they have missed life and somewhere along the way have lost these great qualities of faith, hope and love. For the great relationships of life must be worked out by very imperfect persons. Many, hearing these words, would say, “Do you think I have chosen to miss them? Where do you find these qualities in life? It must be noted with great compassion that in many places divorces now equal the marriages. Then where is healing to be found?

The answer to that in many ways is a simple one, yet profoundly important. We would not make it more simple than it really is. But the answer is there. The way to find these qualities in life very simply is, to begin to give. You see, there is an important point in any person’s life. It is the point at which you move into maturity. It is the hour when you, will have been on the receiving end of life’s great gifts, move over to the giving end. Are you looking for the healing of faith and hope and love? Then for a while quit asking the question, “Where can I get them?” And ask, “What can I give him?” Somewhere in your own home perhaps, is another who hungers for your faith and hope and love.” There is nothing in the world more needed than the practice of this every day religion.

Today we do truly honor our mothers. There would be no homes without them and we miss them when they leave this earthly life. Mothers are patient, kind, generous, loving, helping and give all kinds of guidance both to children and husbands.

Mothers possess this kind of love we have been talking about this morning. For they are able to bear all things, they believe all things, hope all things and endure all things. They are able to do that because of the deep, deep Christian love they have for us. This is really what you call every day religion and something that desperately needs to be practiced in our world today and especially in our homes.

I would like to close this morning with a poem entitled,

“So Long as There are Homes”

So long as there are homes to which men turn  
at close of day;  
So long as there are homes where children are,  
Where women stay –  
If love and loyalty and faith be found  
across those sills –  
A stricken nation can recover from  
It’s gravest ills.  
So long as there are homes where fires burn and there is bread;  
So long as there are homes where lamps are lit  
And prayers are said;  
Although people falter through the dark –  
And nations grope –  
With God himself back of these little homes –  
We have sure hope.”

## **Send Out the Light**

### **Scripture: Matthew 5:14-20 & Rev. 2:1-5**

Text is chosen from Matthew 5:16; “: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works to give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

When Jesus said, “Let your light shine,” he did not know light as we know it. He never saw an airplane beam. He never looked down at night upon the lights of a great city. Except for the great lights of the heavens, the sun and moon and stars, and bonfires perhaps, Jesus knew only of little burning wicks in oil; but by these he knew that a small light could burn clearly and steadily, brightly and revealingly.

Let this be his call to the church. Send out the light! A clear light, a steady light, a bright and revealing light.

Perhaps we ought to ask this question of our church here in Fultonham and when we consider the question let us remember that you and I are the church, no one else. Let us hope and pray with God’s help that we can and do send out a clear, bright, steady, revealing light of living lives of happiness and joy and peace because we have Jesus Christ within us guiding and directing our every move, thought and deed.

First of all, the church ought to out a clear light. Clear light is light without smoke in it. It is the light of pure flame. As we have noticed, Jesus’ figure of speech did not include modern electric light, only burning wicks in oil, lamps, candles. These can smoke. These can be extinguished by their own smoke. It is Jesus’ thought that his followers should shine with a clear light into the glory of God.

This simply means that they must live on a high ethical level. Low living is smoke in the flame. By low thought, careless words, selfish deeds, unworthy habits, flagrant sin on the part of its members, the light of the church is fouled.

The Church and especially God demands of us that we as Christians and members of the Christian church live good wholesome lives and not just on Sunday morning. We should be setting an example for the unchurched. If we are not different and do not live our lives differently than the unchurched person then there is no need for us to come to church or belong to a church. Apparently if we live this way then God and Jesus does not make any difference in our lives. When I say everyday lives, I mean every moment of every day regardless of what we are doing; work, play, school, social activities, family life.

We cannot get away from it, Christianity is an ethical religion it requires a high morality on the part of its followers.

We can understand why, in the first days of the Christian Church, Ananias and Sapphira were struck

down dead for an insincerity. It was only by being a light in the world that the church could go forward. By the fouling of the light the church would fail. Only a clear light would attract the people then. Only a clear light will attract them now. There are plenty of faults and fictitious lights in the world; the Christian Church must not be another.

There are flames so hot that they burn their own soot. Is not this our ideal? Who of us is without fault? What insincerities, inconsistencies, and sins are ours; but the hot flame of which we are a part must burn out that which smokes the flame. By that the flame becomes more intense and the light more clear.

This is neither simple nor easy. No one likes to admit they are wrong, that they have sinned. Admitting it and recognizing it is half the battle. The figure of speech which tells of burning the soot is a true one. Every one of us knows the inner burning, tension, conflict, before the final purification. A prophet's figure was even stronger; he speaks of the process as a refiners fire like that by which gold and silver are reduced.

It is by submission to the fire that the light burns clearly. Each one's purification adds to the clear flame of the church. Each one's burning sends out the light which rescues and saves, not only individuals, but the community, the nation and the world.

One day as the bus I was on, made its way to the airport through a very lovely residential section of the city I was in, it passed a large and handsome stone church. A sign in front identified it clearly as the Tabernacle Church. Then I saw a banner on the spacious lawn of the church, much larger than the identifying sign, and it read, "Hot Doughnuts and Peanuts for Sale."

This makes a person think. What is it that the Christian church has to offer to this troubled world? "Hot doughnuts and peanuts for sale." Is this a measurement of the contribution of the Christian church to the life of today? If this should be so, God forbid, then let us lock the doors of the churches. Come to think of it, there would be no need to lock the doors. If this was all we have to say and all we have to offer, the time will come when no one will bother to enter the doors of the church.

Let us hope and pray that we can and do offer more to people than doughnuts and peanuts. Let us hope that in this place people can find the presence of the living Lord. Let us hope that they can hear the words of God being preached and let us hope that this church doesn't exist as a social organization or because it is a nice addition to the community.

Secondly, the church ought to send out a steady light. The hand lamp of Jesus' day was sensitive to every little gust of wind.

It is on the stormy night that the lighthouse must send out a steady gleam.

The exalted Christ condemns unsteadiness. He said to the Church of Ephesus: "I have somewhat against

thee, because thou hast left by first love – Repent and do the first works; or else I will come – and will remove the candlestick out of its place.”

How many churches of today are subject to the same condemnation as the church of Ephesus?

The steady light comes from contact unbroken with a supply of oil. The steady light comes from firsthand experience of the grace of Christ. The study light of the church does not come from any past experience or any future life, but from present contact with the oil.

A steady life is like a constant tug. Many of us know the thrill of fishing with a pole and a line. I never caught any fish when I was a boy but there was something about getting a bite that was worth the time spent. When you get a nibble or a bite you know there is something at the end of the line. You don't know what it is. I could tell pretty well whether it was a sunfish, bullhead or bass, by how big. Of course, they were always big until you pulled them out of the water, and the biggest ones always get away. It was the thrill along with the fishing line that the boys waited for.

That same kind of thrill a person may have without a line. The mind reaches out with an idea and you feel something out at the end of the line. You don't quite know what it is, but it is very real.

Here is an example. A few years ago there lived a man in Cambridge, Massachusetts, named Percival Lowell. He went fishing on the skies with a telescope and one night he felt a tug on his line. He caught nothing that night. Every night that old fish kept hugging and Percival Lowell couldn't catch it. He knew about where it was, but he couldn't bring it in. He couldn't see it.

Then this persistent sky fisherman went to Arizona and built in observatory. He said to himself, "I'll pull that tigger in." He failed. It was 14 years after his death that this astronomical fish was caught. It was a great big planet like Venus or Jupiter and they made it Pluto. Look at the word Pluto carefully. It begins with P and L. These letters stand for Percival Lowell.

Don't think that only things that your eyes can see tug at the lines of your mind and heart and will. When you feel the tug of God you have found him and he has found you. And when this happens there will be a steady light going forth from you. This is the kind of steady light the church must produce in our world today.

I heard a man tell this story one day. He said, "I was in the city of Nancy, in France on the morning when the 1918 armistice was signed. What was the first act of celebration? Everybody went to the drawers and boxes where their electric lightbulbs were stored and put them in their sockets again. The joy was measured by their measure of light." Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven."



Thirdly, the church ought to send out a bright light. The light should shine that men may see it's good works. Good works give brightness to the light.

“There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon”; the glory of the sun is to rule the day, the glory of the moon and the stars is to rule the night - fulfillment of function is the glory of each. It is the glory of the lighthouse to send forth a saving and rescuing gleam. The glory of the church and Christian men and women is to do good works. That is their brightness.

The church is to be geared to human need.

The church is to be motivated by the motive of Jesus.

How bright is the light you send forth? Is it about as bright as a candle? Let us hope that for miles around everyone can see our light as a ship can see the light in the lighthouse.

Fourthly, the church ought to send out a revealing light.

Where the light shines there will be a revealing of human need and ministry to it.

Truly there is plenty of human need all around us. We do not have to go very far to find it. We as Christians should be ministering to that need.

“Faith without works is dead.” We need both to be the kind of persons Christ wants us to be.

The light of the Church should reveal him who is the light of the world. It should flash to the world that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

Is our church revealing to our community the living Lord or do outsiders feel it's just another social club? The church is the place where we can find God. It's a place from which people come who are different. Yes, Christians are different we cannot be like the world and if we are, we are not Christian. A Christian considers other people first instead of him or herself. That is certainly different nowadays.

What is the church revealing? Is it revealing the greatness and goodness of God? Is it revealing the love and forgiveness of Christ? How many who are caught in the storms of life would welcome a clear, steady, bright beam of light from the lighthouse?

Is this church and museum, a clubhouse, a merry-go-round, or a lighthouse?

We profess to be good Christians – let us - “let our lights so shine before men, that they may see our good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

## **Finding a Deeper Faith**

### **Scripture: Hebrews 11:1-4, 6, 8, 17, 18, 32-40**

Text is chosen from James 4:8; “: “Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.”

“Please help me to find a deeper faith.” Such a request is often placed before a minister. An emptiness is acknowledged, and yearning to fill all that emptiness is expressed. Always it reveals a whistle longing to gain something not presently possessed. It comes from earnest desire. Sometimes the need is urgent. Always it reveals a wistful longing to gain something not presently possessed. It comes from earnest desire. Sometimes the need is urgent.

Truly all of us are searching and I know that we will never be satisfied until we find God in our own lives. We can have all kinds of friends, we can have all the money we need, we can think we are happy and peaceful but we will never really know what joy and peace is until we have discovered the power and the joy of the living Lord in our hearts. And so we constantly have people seeking a deeper faith.

The first thing that must be said is that no high attainment comes easily or immediately. Faith represents men’s highest capacity and it would be unwise to claim that it is to be picked up for the asking. An infant makes faltering first steps and often stumbles. He walks before he runs. If by chance a man wishes to become a skilled runner, he trains under demanding discipline. The point is plain. A primary concern is to understand that everything has its price. This would seem to be a law of life. The whole matter of religious faith is no exception. If you want it, you can have it. But you cannot have it for anything and you cannot buy it with money, prestige or position. It will require some sacrifice on your part and perhaps even swallowing a little pride. At any rate you’ll never know what it is until you have truly found God and he has changed your life.

The second thing to be said is that faith is not simply a matter of accepting a certain doctrine. Many believe that they are or are not persons of faith depending upon the acceptance or rejection of prescribed creedal statements. They confront dogma hopefully, and then in all honesty turn away, wishing poignantly that it could be embraced. Because they define faith as a body of belief, they conclude that faith is beyond their grasp. This is a tragic misfortune.

Most of us repeat the Apostles Creed every Sunday morning in our worship services. It says what we as Christians should believe. Many times, we repeat words out of habit and never truly bothering to understand or comprehend what the words mean. The next time you repeat the Apostles Creed listen and feel what the words mean and most definitely should mean in your life.

And so, we can say that we accept certain doctrine but this does not give us the faith we most earnestly desire and seek. Faith is much deeper and much more involved than in a few words.

Some even feel they cannot live up to all the demands that Christ place is upon us. I know that none of us can but with his help and guidance we certainly can try and basically this is what he expects us to do. So, we do falter or fail, with his help we can pick ourselves up and try again. That's why faith is more than a creedal statement and a few chosen words of doctrine.

This leads me to say a third thing. Faith is not blind acceptance but daring action. It is the supreme motivating power within men. It moves his life from the present to the future. It is the force behind every exploration and experiment. It is the action which carries him from the known into the unknown, thereby enlarging the known. It is the hypothesis of the scientist. It is the marriage vow. It is the business venture. It is the military strategy. In short, it is action based upon commitment to that which is not holy known and remains to be proven.

If men didn't have faith in the future and what it holds for mankind, there would be absolutely no progress. Our civilization would stand still, actually it would go backwards for we never stand still in anything.

With this in mind, religious faith is seen as the active belief and trust before all the evidence is in. Its validity is not established by reading a book. I can read a book on how to swim. It may help. The proof starts with the plunge, and it gains strength by steady strokes in the water. We do learn by doing. We learn to walk by walking. We learn to speak by speaking. We learn to love by loving. We learn to "faith by faithing." The problem with many of us is that we continue to stand on the sidelines wondering if we can have faith in this or that. Here is our error. Take a belief, let faith move it from contemplation to action. The proof comes in the living. We have to live our faith and beliefs and not just on Sunday morning. Christians, real Christians, live their faith every moment of every day.

Our text, "Draw near to God and he will draw near to you," is a two-way appeal. God calls us, and then we call God! When you start towards him, he starts towards you. The best picture of this is the story of the prodigal son and his old father. God is our father and exactly like the father of the prodigal son.

We never really draw near to God until we come in faith, believing. Faith is a venture of the spirit, a resting on the eternal arms, and the outreach of the heart towards the unseen.

It's like our giving to our missionary programs. We give because we believe that God working through human beings can help people in the far places of this earth that really need help. We believe that God will help these people but most of all we believe that only through God can these people be helped and guided and made whole, human persons again.

When we draw near with faith, a miracle takes place and we enter into a strange mystery wherein the presence of God is felt, the experience of redemption is wrought, and we are made one under the awe and wonder of worship.

This morning let us draw near to our Lord's table with faith. If we do, we will feel the presence of our live in Lord, for truly he is here. We have only to seek and we shall find.

## **Continuing Pentecost**

### **Scripture: Acts 2:1-4,14-15, 36-37**

Our text is chosen from Romans 8:14; “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” Something happened in Jerusalem on a Jewish feast day called Pentecost (50 days after the Passover). It happened in the year that Jesus was crucified. It was an event. Let us call it that - event is something that happened.

On February 12, 1809, in a log cabin on a farm in Kentucky, Abraham Lincoln was born. That, too, wasn't event, something that happened.

The scholars of history tell us to things about events which interest us this morning. The first is that “no event is ever really finished.” That strikes us as true concerning the birth of Lincoln. The life of Lincoln, all that he ever said and did, his influence upon his country and upon the lives of generations of people – all this is part of the event of Lincoln's birth. The birth of Lincoln is a continuing event. Apply this thought to Pentecost and we see that which happened in Jerusalem as a continuing event. It will never be complete.

The second thing to notice is that if the event continues, then we have something to do with it. We can help make the event. The event of Lincoln's birth is made all the greater by our response to it. The event of Pentecost is continued and affected by our response.

In connections with the event of Pentecost, it is noted that there was speaking in tongues. Luke states this as a fact connected with the event and recorded in the second chapter of acts. Some years afterwards certain Corinthian Christians were attempting to continue Pentecost by speaking in tongues. This gave Paul considerable concern as can be read in I Corinthians, chapter 14. In this year, 1975, there are Christians who try to continue Pentecost in this same manner. These people call themselves Pentecostal Christians and continue the practice of talking in tongues. Let Paul correct the zeal of these persons. Let us catch inspiration from their zeal by ourselves continuing Pentecost in a manner which is “unto edifying.” Paul says, in I Corinthians 14:26; “What then brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” (Edification means improvement, instruction). When we worship God and if we talk in tongues that no one else can understand certainly this is not for the instruction of others and of no benefit to God or the church. How can we continue the event of Pentecost? What happened at Pentecost, never complete, became an ongoing event in the early days of the church and onto the present day.

There are three questions which come to our minds when we read the second chapter of Acts: Was the Holy Spirit present and active in the world before the day of Pentecost? In what unique way was the Holy Spirit present at Pentecost? Is the Holy Spirit present and active here and now? Perhaps we will have the answer to these questions by the time we finish our discussion this morning.

First of all, Pentecost is the empowerment of Jesus' disciples. That goes on unendingly. If not, when did it stop? And what day did the spirit of God cease to rest above the heads of true disciples? The event of Pentecost is today. Perhaps this is the most conspicuous fact about Pentecostal experience. God's Holy Spirit is always present to help and guide our lives. It never ceases and will always go on, if we are willing to accept it.

Secondly, continuing Pentecost is preaching Christ. It is preaching Christ in the manner of Peter's preaching as we read from Acts 2:22; "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth" – In some quarters it is said that we live in an age when there is decay of preaching; but can it be said that there is a decay of Pentecostal preaching? Let the event of Pentecost issue in the preaching of Christ and his resurrection today and there will be a continuing experience of that great day.

However, the preacher can preach Christ but if the people do not want to hear or listen to what Christ has to say, then the preaching goes in vain. We have to want to hear and do what Christ expects us to do. True there are many preachers today that have not experienced the Holy Spirit in their own lives and if they haven't then they certainly cannot preach about it. But certainly, to continue Pentecost is to preach Christ.

Thirdly, continuing Pentecost is a call to sinful men and their glad response to the call. The words of Peter from Acts 2:36, "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the Holy Spirit", we're effective then. Acts 2:41 says, "They were gladly received", wherever spoken and gladly received today, there is a manifestation of the Spirit of God.

We need to remember that Christ died so our sins could be forgiven regardless of how sinful we are, if we truly repent of our sins and try with all our hearts to become better persons Christ will forgive and we can start living a new life from that point on. This is Christ call to us and this is our glad response.

The Holy Spirit is God continuing in the midst of men and touching their daily lives. He's the God of continual contact with mankind. God will never let us down and he's always with us to give us guidance, help, courage and strength and all our daily lives.

Fourthly, continuing Pentecost is the growth and influence of the church. That day in Jerusalem is known as the birthday of the church. That is the event, but the event goes on. It goes on in the Book of Acts; it goes on through the centuries, it goes on now. The church goes on by the empowerment of the Spirit, by the preaching of Christ, by bringing men under the influence of Christ and his Spirit. The growth of the church is the continuing of the advent of Pentecost.

The church will only continue to grow as long as you and I grow in our spiritual lives, for the church is you and I and certainly we can have only the kind and amount of influence that we have in our own lives. If we grow spiritually, the church will grow spiritually and therefore its influence will be felt more and more in our world. Isn't this really what our world needs today? Instead of us worrying and being concerned about others, let's make sure that we ourselves have an our feeling the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives,

then Pentecost will be a continuing event.

The outpouring of the Spirit, fulfilling Joel's new age prophecy, sent the word on its way. It was the core of the earliest Christian preaching, which can be read in Acts chapter 2 through 11, and continually served as the key to the past, the secret of present power, and in assurance of things to come.

Fifthly, continuing Pentecost is changing the world. In Acts 17:6 we read how when Paul and Silas visited Thessalonica, they were accused of turning the world upside down. Is not that what we shall be doing today?

Do not let us be enslaved by any hampering details in the figures. Let us seek their broad significance. And what is the true character of a rushing mighty wind? It dispels the fog, it freshens the atmosphere. It gives life and nimbleness to the air. It is the minister of vitality. And the breath of God's Spirit is like that; it clears the human spirit, and freshens it, and vitalizes it; it acts up on the soul like the air of a perpetual spring. And as for the symbol of fire: fire is the antagonist of all that is frozen; it is the antagonist of the torpid, the tepid; it is the minister of fervor, and buoyancy, and expansion. The wind changes the atmosphere, the fire changes the temperature; and the Holy Spirit of God changes the atmosphere and temperature of the soul; and when you have changed the atmosphere in temperature of a soul you have accomplished a mighty transformation.

I read in a printed prayer these words: "Give us flexibility without which we can do nothing, take away all fear of change, for unless we are willing to change with changing times, we will have no power to help anyone."

I wonder whether a Pentecostal prayer would not have been asked also for power to change the changing times.

The strange thing about the church is that from age to age the body of Christ has inherited the power of the Resurrection and repeatedly risen again from the dead. Just when all seemed over, and men looking at it said, "Well, that's that!", God has intervened and life has returned to quicken the dry bones.

In the Middle Ages when faith seemed at its lowest ebb, God sent Francis of Assisi; when religion was dead to all appearance, then came the Reformation. And in England, John Wesley – just when we think the Church is dead and in need of burial, God sends a breath of his spirit and the Church revives. The resources of power that are available for it are inexhaustible if only they can be released and brought into action.

I am sure that young people, as well as older people, are sometimes perplexed by Christian teaching about the Holy Spirit. It is said that the Holy Spirit guides us. Just how he does this, it seems to me, is wonderfully illustrated by an incident that took place in the railroad station at Cleveland, Ohio. Melvin E. Wheatley actually told this story.

Following the 2nd World War, a clergyman had an assignment in Cleveland. As he got off the train in the terminal a young soldier was in front of him. The soldier was carrying a heavy suitcase in one hand, a cane in the other. The boy awkwardly tried to find his way with a cane. The clergy man realized he was blind and went up and said to him, “May I help you carry your suitcase? There seem to be no redcap around.

“No thank you,” said the boy, “I don’t need any help with the suitcase, but if you will guide me just a little up the stairs so that I won’t bump into anyone I would be glad to have you do that. You see, I am blind and I have to get used to a new set of artificial legs; I’ll be all right, though, with just a little help. I’ve got to learn to take care of myself and make my own way, you know”. With this the minister begin walking alongside the boy. He admitted that he wept as he watched the veteran move his valiant way up the steps to the main floor of the terminal. So moved by pity was he that when they got to the top, the minister saw the tremendous crowd milling there, rather unthinkingly he took a firm grip on the boy and started to move him directly through the crowd. With this, the boy almost yelled at him, “No, no! Not that. Don’t take possession of me. Don’t push me. Put your hand on my shoulder. That’s all I need.”

Now doesn’t that describe the action of the Holy Spirit in our lives? The Spirit of God does not take possession of us, but just lovingly places his hand upon her shoulder and lovingly guides us. We may not see him, but we feel the loving fingers of God.

Is the Pentecostal event completed? It’s Pentecost just an ancient story in the Book of Acts? Or is Pentecost now – it’s power, its men, its message, its influence, its church, its impact in the world? The promise of Jesus to give his disciples the power of the Spirit is not fully fulfilled until he gives that power to his followers today. The glorious event continues and will continue to the end of the human life. Remember God’s Holy Spirit can enter each of our hearts anytime we are willing to accept. When we accept the event of Pentecost, it will keep on continuing.



## **A Remnant with Roots**

### **Scripture: Isaiah 1:1-6; 16-18**

The text is chosen from Isaiah 37:31; “And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.”

Isaiah was brutally honest with his people. He saw them as they were and he denounced them roundly. He shouted, “Oh, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, I seed of evil doers, children that are corruptors.” Then, as if he understood that his people were simply drifting with the tide, and wondering without thinking, he noted that sadly, “My people does not consider.” He felt helpless and baffled until he remembered a handful of men and women he called “the remnant.” They stood for something and they would not drift. They still cherished the faith of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and they refused to conform to the movement of secular drift. In them Isaiah saw the promise of the future, and with confidence he wrote: “the remnant – – shall take root downward, and bear fruit upward.”

First of all, let us notice the words “shall take root downward”. They are decisively important for our time. Certainly, if any word can describe our era, it is the word “uprooted.” We have been uprooted geographically.

Our geographical uprootedness would be no insuperable problem if we had something permanent to tie to, but at the precise time when we put ourselves on wheels and wings we also cut our morals loose from their roots in God.

Even our language has been uprooted and common words whose meaning was clear have wandered off the map and have lost their grip on the old realities. The words freedom, democracy, republic, truth, justice, and right mean different things to different people in our world of conflicting ideologies.

The “displaced persons” of the Old World, men and women without homes or countries, are a symbol of our uprooted age. The home trailer, hitched to an automobile, is another symbol of our rootless, migrant ways. Every year millions move from place to place, from city to city, from apartment to apartment. Nothing seems to be permanent; everything is temporary.

You and I can manage considerable uprootedness if we can hang onto something that has a substantial ring.

Isaiah saw the remnant of his people preserving a place of moral and spiritual return for a generation adrift. He saw them rooted downward in the faith of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and “holding fast” to the good in an evil and perverse time. Maybe the people as a whole were behaving as if the recording angel had gone on a long vacation, but there was hope if a few gallant souls would hold fast to the decencies the many had forsaken.

There is a way of finding confidence in a time of confusion. Such was the need of Ezekiel, exiled in Babylon, shaken by the disastrous turn of events that crushed Israel and Judah. But he took root downward, and then remarked as recorded in Ezekiel 3:24; “The Spirit entered into me – and set me upon my feet.” Isaiah, confronting national disaster found security in the midst of it and said as is recorded in Isaiah 40:31, “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. “Then too, there was Paul, meeting situations that would have defeated most of us, but as he said in Ephesians 3:16; “I was strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man.”

In this world of our today, we find confidence. We can find direction, and courage, and strength. We truly only need to turn to Jesus Christ. He will show us the way to live our lives. He will help us to be the kind of persons, the kind of Christians God intended for each of us to become.

The world today is full of uprooted men and women, blowing hither and yond with the wind, following the crowd, blundering into evil, losing their sense of life’s meaning. But in the midst of them is the remnant, the creative minority, holding fast to the things that are good preserving the ideals and aspirations to which one day they must return. There is a basic distinction between a group which is organized to be involved in a vital process, and the group organized to carry on a relatively superficial function that does not involve them deeply and meaningful. It is clear that the followers of Christ originally felt themselves to be a group of the first variety. It is equally clear that most of our churches today’s fall into the second category – superficial groups. In these churches there is generally a creative minority of committed Christians to whom the doctrine of the remnant applies. This is true in our church as well. All we have to do is look around us and try to remember the faces that we never see or seldom see. In our uprooted era, men wander far afield for getting the best in their heritage, waiting there substance in folly, but as long as the remnant remains, generally to be found in the church, “holding fast to that which is good,” there is hope. So long as there are men and women who sing, “In the cross of Christ I glory – Towering o’er the wrecks of time” and take root downward in the cross there is a chance for a better day.

I’ll tell you something else, I can stand here and criticize those who do not attend church and it will do us absolutely no good because regardless of what I say or you say, I doubt very much if these people will change. However, we can’t give up and I wish that each of you would join me daily in prayer to God that his Holy Spirit will enter the hearts of these people and their lives will be changed. Let’s also pray for ourselves for tolerance, guidance, patience, and love in the hearts for all people everywhere. Let us become the remnant of God’s church.

Here is an example of a remnant. During the days of the Nazi occupation of Norway, when fear swept like a tide over the people, there were multitudes who ran for cover and came to terms with their conquerors. But in the face of the worst, there were those who were not afraid. They would not compromise and they could not be crushed. Who were they? They were a remnant, a creative minority within the church of Jesus Christ. The Quisling Press paid reluctant tribute to them, saying publicly: “The Christian front is the most difficult to conquer.” Of course it is the most difficult to conquer. It cannot be frightened. It has deep roots

in the Everlasting.

I wonder if we here in Fultonham would be difficult to conquer? Would we be willing to compromise our ideals, our beliefs, or faith? You answer the question.

“And the remnant shall take route downward.” It was sheer necessity in Isaiah’s Day, for in the day of adversity uprooted men are enfeebled by their fears. And it is so in our time. Without our roots in the Eternal, man and woman are beset by fears when they confront a changing, uprooted civilization. Certainly, if the first symbol of our generation is the word “uprooted” the second symbol is the frightened rabbit.

Our lives need to be fortified and renewed inwardly. We all know that. You know it, and I suspect it is one fundamental reason why you go to church or feel you ought to go. Your confidence wants renewing. You want to be assured that if hard blows come you can take them and keep on going. You want to know that the love of God is more than pious sentiment. You want faith big enough and strong enough to deal with your fears.

I truly believe, if a person is a Christian and has been reborn, he will be in church on Sunday morning, if humanly possible. Loving God and having Christ in us, automatically we want to be in church worshipping God each week. You can worship God wherever you are but I still believe if you really are a Christian, you will be in church on Sunday and there will be no excuses or anything else.

As one man said to me concerning another man: “He is completely incapable of a dishonorable action.” That man was bearing the life of God into the life of his times. Or there is a woman I know, bearing the shock of sorrow with dignity and without self-pity. One of her friends said of her: “She is an inspiration.” She is witnessing to her faith under difficult circumstances. Or there is a young man, a member of a college fraternity, just standing for something essentially decent, being altogether a man without condescension or pride, and holding weaker men steady, just being what he is. That is making the mind of Christ relevant on a college campus. These are examples of that remnant “bearing fruit upward.”

Our salvation is in the knowledge that by God’s grace we can take over our crosses and transform them into crowns of courage and redeeming loyalty. Our security is in the shining faith that in the hours when worse comes to worst, we are “strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inward man.” Truly God does strengthen us in a time of need and I believe God is the only hope for our world today.

Clearly the remnant, the creative minority within the church of Jesus Christ, is a bulwark for our times, holding fast to that which is good in our uprooted society and offering a faith big enough to deal with any fear. But taking route downward, that creative minority bears fruit upward by witnessing to their faith wherever they are and in whatever they are doing. There was a time when theologians were accustomed to think of the church as the beloved community of the saved; but now theologians see the church as a saving

leaven for society. It is a creative fellowship of men and women pushing out into every facet of society to make it different, to change its spirit.

If we bring our hands together with a clap it usually makes a loud noise which we call applause. It is a wonderful noise.

A very fine runner represented his school in an out-of-town meet. He was a much better runner than his opponent, but he lost. When he asked why he lost, he replied, “nobody cheered.” His school mates were not there to cheer and put their hands together in applause. Applause does make a difference, doesn’t it?

Don’t be afraid to applaud for someone you know needs cheering on.

Another way of bringing our hands together is in fellowship. Handshaking is a good custom. When a person has met with misfortune or sorrow, we will shake his hand and not say a word. Comfort passes from hand to hand. Goodwill passes from hand to hand. Happiness and joy pass from hand to hand.

Children are often taught when they pray to put their hands together. It seems natural to do this. I wonder how many of us really prayed when we came into church this morning. Did we pray for ourselves, for anybody else, for the service itself?

If we do these three things with our hands all week long, it would make a great difference to ourselves and to others. Put your hands together to applaud someone who deserves it; put your hands together in fellowship and pass on goodwill; put your hands together in prayer.

Truly these simple things will help us to become a remnant with roots in God’s church.

When you travel down through the centuries it is plain that those who have “borne fruit upward”, revealing the life of God in the life of their day, have been those who “took root downward” by sharing the worship and fellowship of the Christian community. They found their inspiration there and they were as leaven in three measures of meal. I would hate to live in a world without the remnant in it. I would not wish to live in a community without the leaven flowing into it from The Church of Jesus Christ.

Each of us can make sure we do not live in such a community by fulfilling our Christian obligation and duties. Jesus Christ will help us to fulfill them. Let us see his help in guidance now before it’s too late.

## **Compass and Measuring Tape**

### **Scripture: Philippians 3: 7-14**

The text is chosen from Philippians 3:14; “I press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Van Wyck Brooks in his book entitled ‘The Flowering Wilderness’ tells that Oliver Wendell Holmes in his later years loved to walk and he walked in many directions in and around Cambridge. He always carried with him two things, a measuring tape and a compass. With a tape he measured the girth of the trees he loved; the compass he carried so he could find his way home.

These two things, a measuring tape and a compass, are important for other reasons in the business of living. The measuring tape for determining the relative values of this and that, for there are many things in our lives we have to determine whether or not they are worthwhile and should we even spend time with them and the compass for giving us true direction for many times we become sidetracked in life and need to find a way back to the path which leads in the true direction.

And nothing is more important than knowing where we are going. If a player doesn’t know where the goal posts are, or at which end of the gym is the basket of his side, he cannot play the game with any meaning. Likewise we all need goals to strive for in our lives, otherwise we do not know which direction to go in.

In the business of living, direction and goalpost are important. We rush hither and yond, day by day, year after year: what does it mean? We are busy doing what? Many, if they stop to think and evaluate daily activities, would find they are busy being busy and without purpose or direction in their lives. That’s why generally the person that should be the busiest is always able to do that little extra because he has so organized his life that he knows what he is doing and when he is doing it.

Many of us are like this man who made a 200 yard dash to catch a bus and went on the last sprint he landed on the step of the bus he asked the driver, “Where is this bus going?”

An Arkansas native had come to town for groceries, which the clerk was wrapping up in a newspaper. “Don’t tear that paper,” said the native, “I want the girls to read it to me when I get home. No, I never learn to read. But I can figger! When I come to a significant sign post along the road I can tell how far, but I don’t know where to.”

Perhaps some of us know how far but not where we are going. Where are your goal posts? Is your direction in life clear? What did Jesus mean when he said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness?” I know and believe we should definitely consider Jesus Christ first in all our plans. If we do, we will have the proper direction. We will know where we want to go and we will eventually get there.

Let us next consider the measuring tape. This is for measuring the value of this or the other thing. In the world so far of ours a million pressures are on us to buy this, read this, see this, hear this, want this; it is terribly important that we have some way of determining their relative worth. If we do not have a way of doing this we can waste a lot of valuable time doing things that don't benefit our lives or anyone else's life. In other words, we need to spend our entire lives in service to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Did you ever stop to think that times just keep moving on regardless of what we do or think and the time we waste can never be recovered?

That's why we need the best use of every moment of every day. Time to us, is too valuable to be wasted with trivial unimportant things.

How do you measure true values? Here is an American in Paris. He asks a Frenchman if he can speak English. The Frenchman says, "a little." "How deep is the Seine?" "I'm sorry I do not know." "How fast is the current?" "I don't know that either." "Well, how far is it across?" "I'm sorry." "You don't know much about the river, do you?" "It has beauty, and it's soft, and it moves," the Frenchman replied. "On great days, the river, too, is gray, yet when the sun shines, the water looks golden. This much I know. This is important to me."

The meaning of what we do in time can be measured only in terms of eternity. Our lives acquire meaning, purpose, joy and significance almost in direct proportion to the cleanness with which we envision our lives in mortality.

How we measure what is, in the end is determined by some invisible quality of soul.

One says of a Primrose, "a primrose is a delicately balanced bio-chemical mechanism requiring potash, phosphate, nitrogen, and water indefinite proportion." Another says, "a primrose is God's promise of Spring." Both are true. But we incline to forget the latter.

Some years ago a woman died in Paris who had the reputation of being "the best dressed woman in Europe." After her death her chief legacy to the world was a wardrobe of 1000 frocks and formals.

But long before, at the beginning of our era, a man died who had nowhere to lay his head and one tunic, which Roman soldiers fought for at the foot of his cross. His legacy to the world was an unforgettable memory of sacrificial service and love.

It is a very true that not all persons can place the same importance on the same things in life. However that's exactly what is wrong with our country and the world today is that we placed the greatest importance on material things. Life has gotten to be such a luxury to us that we cannot get along without these things, in fact our luxuries have become necessities, at least in our minds. You know as well as I as what things we are placing importance on. However, if we have any hope in faith in survival of the human race we had

better start placing importance on spiritual things. We had better stop long enough to realize where all our blessings come from before it is too late. If you think I'm exaggerating look at your own life and just stop to think what comes first in your life, then you will know exactly what I'm talking about.

The seer in revelation was told, "Rise and measure the temple of God." How do you measure God's temple? Only quantitatively? Or qualitatively too? What are your orders? What to you is of exceeding worth? What would you give your life for?

Material man will not accept what the Spirit of God offers." Unable to detect the value of that which cannot be weighed, possessed, or exchanged, he clings to those things he covets. "But the spiritual man is alive to all true values."

Perhaps there is help for us to determine true values in life and to help us start putting spiritual ahead of material.

I remember the first time I noticed a yellow line in the middle of the driving lane of the highway. It was not a line separating one from traffic going in the other direction. But why this line? I asked myself. It was not long before my question was answered. My car moved into an area of heavy fog. The yellow line was a lifesaver. I watched it closely and never departed from it. It reminded me of Jesus's words, "Do this and thou shall live."

Dr. Theodore P. Ferris wrote about the yellow lines in life. They are what we call rules. Most young people don't like the word "rules". But rules we must follow. There's no fun in the game if the players don't keep the rules. There's really no fun in life unless you keep rules.

Some of the rules are written by nature: a man must eat or he cannot live; a man must not touch a wire heavily charged with electricity.

These rules are written by men. We must not dismiss them lightly. Without such rules our country would become a chaos.

Dr. Ferris tells about rules written by God. For example, there is something about honesty. That is more than one of nature's requirements or men's expediency. It is written into the very heart of man. He may break it not once but 1000 times, but he never breaks it without hurting either himself or someone else.

Someone might say, there are rules that should be broken. That perhaps is true. Jesus broke certain rules, which people were following, because they idolized the rules themselves. But every time he broke a rule, he put another in its place. Listen to some of Jesus's rules; don't criticize other people; don't worry about the future; don't look less fully at other people; don't wear your religion on your sleeve; don't be money mad. He knew that we need rules by which to live certainly the highway of life is not safe without yellow

line, same as the highway for automobiles.

These rules of life help us to determine what is important and what is less important and our one way we have a measuring true values.

Thirdly, we are in real danger of neglecting that side of life that cannot be caught in the jaws of a caliper, or on the pan of a chisel balance, or measured in a slide rule. William Temple wrote: “if you begin by attending to objects only in so far as they are measurable, you are likely to end by having only their measurements before your attention.

When Herbert Spencer crossed the ocean for America, he wrote nothing in his diary of the mystery of the ocean or the beauty of the clouds. He did write this: “Terrific disturbance from fog whistle. Getting bored.” When he visited Niagara Falls he missed the soul stirring wonder of the scene. He wrote: “the falls are 160 feet high – delivers 100,000,000 tons of water per hour - 27,000 tons per second – this mass of water, as it curls over, it’s probably 20 feet thick - the rocks on which it falls have to bear a brunt of, say, 20,000 tons per second.

It’s amazing how we can miss things right in front of our eyes. We are a people who have a one track mind, usually what benefit is this to me. We miss the beauty of nature God has placed before us. I think mainly we do this because we never have time to wander to think, to dream, to appreciate.

Student majoring in the science should never become so enamored of quantitative measurement and pure logic empirical verification to the degree that they no longer grant a meaningful place to the spiritual values and experiences of life. Quantitative measurements are never to be despised. But love is also real with the logic and rationality of its own. So with a sonnet by Keats, so with a Beethoven sonata. So with the sunset.

Some truth we cannot learn by abstract learning or no by the intellect. The intellect is not useless and serves us well when it deals with a relative relation of things. But how it falters and stumbles in the presence of the eternal, the infinite, the elementary real.

I’m sure we have all heard and probably know of some educated fools. Education is a must and a fine thing but most certainly it is not all to living our lives. We can become so engrossed in our education that we cannot see the forest from the trees. Along with education we need to know and feel the presence of the living Lord in our lives. We need to think of and feel the spiritual things as well. Our country today, right now, needs to get back to God. We need to put God first in our lives and I know these other things will come more easily and more readily. We need to place values on the true things of life. We need to know how to measure what is most important. I firmly believe God and reading the Bible can help us to do this and I pray that all men everywhere may come to know Jesus Christ in their own lives. He will guide us in the right direction and show us how to measure true values. Always we, as Paul did, should be pressing on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.



# **God and Your House**

## **Scripture: 127th Psalm**

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.” Matthew 18:20.

There’s no place like home if God is there; but there is no place more difficult if he is not. If you do not believe this statement, I suggest you try having God in your home and see the difference.

No group in human society offers greater opportunity for spiritual venturing than the family, but at the same time no group involves greater hazards. On the one hand, two or three, or five or six or more in one home provide a reasonable facsimile of the “beloved community” united in love for one another. On the one hand, the members of a household may be divided and in conflict, separated by barriers of hostility and even bitterness. Sublime possibility always invites its opposite.

First of all, Home, with Jesus Christ at the center of it, is a place where members of the family sustain and support each other in love. There is understanding and help in guidance for one another and each person involved is willing to share the burdens. In our world of competitive struggle, in business school, and society at large, the home in which we find no competition, but sustaining encouragement and support, is a priceless resource. We do not have to pretend at home. We can be ourselves and know we are loved for who we are. We do not need to be on guard, lest someone get ahead of us. We can relax in the security of mutual confidence.

Really the world today is a competitive battle regardless of what we become involved in. The children and young people are involved in competition at school. They have to maintain a good average in order to get into college. Little League is another place where boys have to play their best. Business today is especially competitive. We have to offer the best quality for the lowest price. And the person who works in a business is competing directly with his coworkers for the person with the best ability and aptitude is the one that gets promoted. Actually, competition in many ways is a good thing. It keeps us on our toes. However too much competition leads people in devious ways, scheming ways of getting ahead of the other fellow at work and at school and at play. The home should be one place where a person can relax and forget about being competitive. In the home we should be able to find understanding and love. Truly, happy is the home that is founded on love. Love binds us together in fellowship and brotherhood, for love is kind and understanding and thoughtful.

Most certainly, happy is the home that is ruled by love. If love is the ruling force in the home there will be no bickering and arguing. There will be compromise and discipline and no delinquency.

Most definitely, happy are all the hearts that are warmed by God’s unconscionable love. We know what great love God has given to us. Just think what happy homes we could have if this same love was given to

the members of the family by each of us. This love could not only lead to better family life but eventually a better world for all of us to live in. It's amazing the power that this kind of love could have in our world.

Secondly, Home, with God in it, it's also a place where members of a family sustain and support the values that endure.

It is at home that our children learn to respect the ultimate Christian values and come to feel the significance of the things that make life worth living if we parents have been priced them ourselves.

Do some observing around you. Can we expect our children and young people to come to Sunday school if we ourselves do not come? Can we expect them to be active and take part in the affairs of the church? Can we expect our young people to read their Bibles if we as parents do not read ours? Can we expect them to pray regularly if we do not pray regularly? Can we expect our young people to act as Christians every moment of every day if we as their parents are only Sunday morning Christians? You know the answers to these questions as well as I do.

Our children will not know what is important in life if we as parents do not teach them.

A New York minister, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, was walking down the street one day with a friend when a little boy said, "Good morning, Dr. Peele."

This unexpected recognition pleased Dr. Peele, and feeling rather expansive, he put his hand on the boy's shoulder and said, "Son, I'm going to give you a thought for the day. Think big!"

The little boy said, "Thank you, Dr. Peele, I will!"

A little a few days later Doctor Peele walked by and saw the same little boy. On the house was a large sign, "Puppy for sale, \$10,000."

Dr. Peele was a bit staggered at this response to his challenge. He said, "My boy, I see you are thinking big." And the boy said, "Yes sir, I'm thinking big."

A few days later when Dr. Peele came down that way, the sign was gone. Somewhat fearfully, Dr. Peele said, "Did you sell your puppy for \$10,000 OK?"

"Oh, yes sir, hope" said the boy, "but I had to take two \$5000 cats in payment.

It is characteristic of our age to think big and it is wise to do so.

Here are a few principles which may help us in thinking big.

First, little things add up. One little thing added to another, may make a big thing. This is so with evil. This is so with good.

Second, little things can start a chain reaction. Smoking one cigarette asks for another and that for another, also as with drinking. Who can eat one potato chip? These are good chain influences, however pass them on.

Little things can grow into big things, like the parable of the mustard seed.

Fourth, small deeds may have great significance.

And, so little things that we as parents do, have and make a lasting impression on our children. Never consider anything as being too little for we never know the results or consequences.

Thirdly, again, Home, with Jesus in it is a place where members of the family find resources for venturing. We always make our best adventures into the unknown from a dependable base of love and trust. Youngsters push out into the wide world with the confidence when they know their base is secure. They leave with rejoicing, but their rejoicing is conditional by the possibility of returning. They venture with confidence when they know they are secure in what Hosea called, “the band of love.” Where two or three are gathered in my name,” one may venture far, knowing “there am I in the midst of them.”

There is a hint of what sustaining fellowship means in the comment of a small boy whose mother was planning a trip. “If you go,” he said to his mother, “who will I show my homework to?” The boy was able to do his homework and his schoolwork, but there was a need in him for someone he loved to approve his toil. It added something to his security and confidence.

There’s a deep craving in children for love that sustains and supports. When a college girl from California visited an orphanage in Japan, a little boy approached her hopefully with a question, “Are you going to be my mother?” “No” she said, “I’m sorry.” Then he added, “Will you kiss me anyway?” Another orphan is reported to have slipped a note through the fence surrounding the institution in which he lived. The note read: “Whoever finds this, I love you.” These youngsters were simply being human in their big, bewildering world. They were giving unsophisticated expression to their need for love.

There are two dangers implicit in our relationships with our children. One is that we may exert too much pressure to achieve. This is one thing I believe many of us parents are doing today. We realize that our children have to be average or above even to get into college. Most of us feel and know that, a college education is very necessary especially for a boy and therefore we push them to achieve better and better marks in school. This certainly can be overdone and often do more harm than good.

The other danger is that we may insist on helping them too much. It seems with new and modern methods of teaching today we don't seem to be able to teach the proper way and often we give them the answers and they don't know how we obtained it. Sometimes it's difficult to teach or show without doing their schoolwork for them.

One father, intent on making his son a mathematician, persisted in helping his son with arithmetic so much that his son coasted on his father's brains. He came home holding a loft and report card, saying, "Look, Dad, you flunked arithmetic." He didn't even say, "We flunked" but "You flunked."

Many times, we also try to fight their battles for them. They certainly have to learn to get on in the world and they can, by our teaching and instruction, not fighting all their battles for them.

Fourthly, Home, with God in it, it's a place where members of a family lay foundations for the future.

Unfortunately, we have a way of indoctrinating our children with the ideas that are native to our particular generation, often confusing abiding values with passing opinions. We pass on our prejudices, quite intact, as if they were ultimate truths. What is more, we often are scandalized when our children are exposed to ideas that are one at variance with our own. And yet, ours is not to make our children think the way we do. It is rather to make them think and to arrive at their judgments in the light of abiding standards which shine in the person of Jesus Christ.

I believe this is evidenced by the racial prejudice present in our country today. I'm sure if the adults did not influence the children with their prejudice, things between the races would be much better.

Henry Adams, growing to maturity in the 19th century, lamented the fact that his ideas and attitudes nurtured in one century were quite inadequate for the next. So, there are many of us, raised in a period of isolation and parochial ideas, who find ourselves living in the world that has become a neighborhood in a single generation. Our old ways of thought need to be revised in the interest of the world as it is today.

We try very hard to raise our children to be good Christians and citizens. Many times, we overdo it, sometimes we do not go far enough. It is difficult not to let our attitudes of prejudice overflow into their lives. How much better off we would be and our children would be if we could find that happy medium.

Old customs and systems are dissolving around us like sand castles in the rising tide of new things, but we still need enduring principles to guide us. We need men and women and young people who are searching for knowledge, dedicated to the quest for sound values by which to test and use the gifts of our material civilization. We need parents and children who know how to think with reference to the mind of Jesus Christ.

And so, the home and family are the most important part of this world in which we live. Home with Jesus

Christ at the center of it, is a place where members of the family sustain and support each other in love, it's a place where members of a family sustain and support the values that endure, it's a place where members of the family find resources for venturing and it's a place where members of the family lay foundations for the future.

It becomes increasingly more difficult to raise a family in our world today. We need all the help we can get. I believe we desperately need the help and guidance of Jesus Christ. He is the only one that can give us the proper direction. Let Christ join you and your family, right now.

## **God's Will and Man's Work**

### **Scripture: Matthew 25:14-29**

The text is chosen from Matthew 25:29; "To everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

Hard as it may be to understand and except, I believe there is a high, stern truth in these words with which you and I need to come to terms, and most especially as that truth concerns our daily work.

Jesus Christ knew as well as we do that men differ in their talents. Some start the race of life with bitter handicaps while others seem to have everything coming their way and handed to them on a silver platter. Yes, these are a lot more one – talent and two – talent people in our world than five – talent people. Only a few invent like Edison, or paint like Rembrandt, or preach like Paul. No good can come of overlooking these real inequalities among us. But neither should we go about blaming God for them. We may just as well face the fact that we are not endowed in equal measure for doing our work in the world. At least this is the way it looks in a good many cases in our earthly lives, but I believe we will be rewarded in the life here-after.

Jesus told his story, in our scripture reading, mostly for the benefit of the one – talent man, who is liable to particular discouragement and fear. He may feel, "with my limitation's nothing much will be expected of me; what can I do?" He may begrudge the better talents of his co-workers. He may even complain against God and be paralyzed by fear of him. We have seen these one – talent men and women going to work, looking beaten before they start, with an appalling blackness on their faces as they sit chewing over the small grass of daily futilities. They seem to be resentful of their own mediocrity, accusing God of reaping where he had not sown. They are the number one problem of every employer, every teacher, every pastor. They are to themselves their number one problem and the parable of the talents is meant for them.

First of all, regardless of how many talents we have or we think we do not have, each person has his own contribution to make. One-talent persons are tempted to take themselves for granted. They do not see how greatly they are needed for the world's work. Every person cannot be a manager, whether it be a farm or factory or store. Someone has to do the necessary planning and distribution of work. And someone has to be available to do the work, otherwise no work will be done. No products will be produced, no crops will be sown and harvested.

The real point of Jesus's message, of course, is not that some have greater gifts than others, although that is true enough; it is that each of us has his own contribution to make, whether large or small, and this is what we ought to discover and put to work. We all have something to start with, something to invest and build upon and cause to grow. Every man's life is a talented and gifted life in some respect. That is a part of God's plan for ourselves and for the world. This I believe is true whether we think so or not. God has created each of us and, I believe, he expects each of us to contribute to society in some way. Perhaps it

takes time to discover and develop our talent but I know God can help us to discover it and develop it.

All of us, whatever our talents, great or small, are servants and stewards of God's gift. Before God leaves us to discover and work out the meaning of our lives he endows each one with his own special gift.

Secondly, regardless of how many talents we think we have, we are all made for responsibility.

Work is judgment. God will return to settle his accounts with us. How have we been using our talents? Keeping them smugly locked up like curiosities in some museum? Hiding them in the ground of harsh routine and grubby duty? Have we been using our talents for good or bad? God would like to know. In fact, he makes a point of finding out. He expects the increase in his investment. He demands that we take our stewardship seriously and this is a part of our Christian stewardship. What use do you make of the talent of friendliness? What use of the gift of prayer? What use of the benefits of an education? What use of the privilege of financial independence? Our work reveals the answer to all these and many other like questions. The quality of our devotion is nowhere better tested than written within the tour of duty God assigned to us.

Another way of putting the same point is this – greater gifts mean added responsibilities. Those who are fortunate enough to have been given more talents are expected to bear more responsibility. Those to whom much has been given, from them much shall be required. That is one of life's surest and most basic laws. The job of those who have is to give, since what they have has first been given to them. A lot of what we ordinarily call "service", I am afraid it's nothing more than pooled self-interest. But to be "to the eternal goodness what a man's right hand is to a man," that is a real and reasonable service. We are made for responsibility as much as we are made for freedom, and in the end responsibility and freedom mean the same thing. He who would be first among you, said the Lord, let him be the servant of all. Instead of trying on a halo for size I might better take up my share of the world's work. Making each day's task a way of saying "thank you" to God.

What a waste of God's creation it is when a person has all kinds of talents and abilities and does not use them at all, or sometimes a person uses his God given talents for evil and bad instead of good. Sometimes persons with many talents do not want to take responsibility and so they hide them and do not develop their talents.

There is the story of the boy who stuck to the job. "What do you think happened last night on the Coolidge farm?" Said Mr. Day in great excitement. "Vice President Coolidge was sworn in by his father as President of the United States. He's off for Washington by now. And that means we will lose young Cal. He'll never stay on and work in a tobacco field now that his father is President of the United States and living in the White House. Little did I think who that boy was, when he rode up on his wheels two days ago and asked for work." Just then Mr. Day looked out of the window. "Well, I declare here he comes on his wheels this minute-I suffice to tell you he'll quit. He'll want to be living in the White House now. No more hard work

for him.” And he hurried out to be the first to offer congratulations to the president son.

“Well, Calvin,” he said in great excitement. “Your father is our President I see.”

“Yes, sir,” said Calvin quietly. “I suppose he is.” Then he added eagerly, “What shed do you want me to working today?”

For a real fear had entered young Calvin’s heart. Two days before he had given his word to work all through August and then missed your days tobacco fields. It was hard work. It meant getting up before daybreak, eating a hasty breakfast, riding 8 miles on his wheels, with nine hours hard work in the hot sun. Then the ride back at night and supper after he got home. But Calvin loved to work – he had never broken his word. He wanted to stick to his job. Now his father was president, and it might mean a return to Washington for him.

So, the first chance he got to he wrote his mother. This is the letter.

Dear Mother: It’s raining and I don’t have to work. It’s the first chance I’ve had to write. I have a desirable job picking tobacco at \$3.50 a day and I like the work. I want to stick to the job. Please let me stay.” So, stay he did, and stuck to his job in the tobacco fields.

Of course, his friends thought of the President’s son as enjoying quite a different vacation. They said: “We suppose you’ve had a wonderful time riding, swimming, and motoring.”

“Yes,” replied young Calvin, “we drove around some up there. But there was a lot to be done, hay to get in, potatoes to hoe, and all that. So, we did that mostly. It was great. It was the best kind of a vacation, working on a farm. I’d much rather do that then go to camp or the seashore.”

One morning just two years later, the papers told of the sudden illness of young Calvin. For five days this brave boy fought to live. The nation read of his courage in bearing pain, his struggle to help doctors win the fight, his efforts to hide this suffering from his parents. At last, like a brave young soldier he died, as he had lived, courageous to the last breath. Today from a place of high honor, there looks down from the walls of Mercersburg Academy, where he was a student, a picture of this lad, who won for himself the title, “An Ideal American Boy.” A boy who all his short life made a record for himself in hard study, good work, clean sport, Christian living.

This is a good example for our young people to follow today. He was not afraid to bear his responsibility God had given to him through his talents.

Thirdly, regardless of how many challenges we have or think we don’t have, each person has an equal opportunity to serve in love. When we do our work in this way with an eye for God’s will, we find out that more and more is added to what we already have. Our gifts are multiplied in the sharing, not diminished as our property and money when they are divided. Work done in loving service has a way of bringing



its own great rewards, and when rewards are least expected. No job is without drudgery and dullness. There are bound to be long stretches when you seem to be putting everything in and getting nothing back. Parenthood is like that, and teaching, and establishing a business. But it does not worry that Christian who knows his life is lent to be spent.

So, it seems, there is a kind of equality in God's plan for us after all. Not any quality of gifts, but an equality of opportunity to serve and love to each of us, his gift and his place in the Kingdom. Thus, there should be neither envy of those who seem to be better – endowed, nor pride in our own achievements. The best of us can claim to be no more than God's obedient and faithful servant; and all of us without exception can hope to hear God's "Well done!" Life is venturing for God, our work is a trust, and its law is that of serving love. Let us put our talents to work for God and for the establishment of a better world in which to live. Indeed, each of us has something to contribute whether we think so or not. Let God help you discover and develop your talents.

## **Lay Hold on Life**

### **Scripture: Proverbs 8:1, 22-36**

The text is chosen from Proverbs 13:4; “The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is readily supplied.”

Life is not a paltry thing that we are to shuffle through; it is grand and lofty destiny. The quest for self-fulfillment comes from the sense that life is God’s good gift and we want to experience it to the fullest.

Christ gave an example when he said, “I must work while it is day; the night, when no man can work. My heart has to do the will of him who sent me to accomplish his work.” No sloth there, no torpor, no apathy – and no blues. Christ had a spirit as fresh as a spring. “The water that I shall give you,” he said, “will be an inner spring always welling up for eternal life.” He has left us an example that we should feel in his steps.

Let us proceed with a text case. A student has just returned his room from supper. He is standing in the doorway. To the left is his radio; to the right is a stack of magazines; in the back of him, in the room across the hall are three students playing cards and asking for a fourth. Against the far wall in front of him is his desk, with a wooden chair. On the desk is a textbook on Geology. The next assignment in it is to memorize the identifying characteristics of a long list of crystals. Now what is there that will propel that student away from the card players, past the radio, pass the magazines into the hard chair? What will then make him read the first paragraph, not taking in a word of it, then read it again with utter distaste, then read it again with no motive except given stubbornness, until it begins to sink in?

This is a problem in dynamics. What is there that will move those legs across to the room and get that book pried open? On the face of it, this seems to be like expecting an effort without a sufficient cause? Like lifting a 10-pound weight with a 2-pound force; it is like expecting a body to take the path of most resistance. Now let us consider the several possible forces which might produce that effect.

One of these is intellectual curiosity. It is the love of learning. There are mathematicians who find calculus a game. Some people are fascinated by their forebears; history to them is like gossip. Most people are highly interested in themselves, which can make psychology appealing. Study of fine arts or literature can be an aesthetic thrill.

Another force which might compel 160-pounds of a student past the radio and magazines all the way to his desk is competition. He may be born to be a winner on that day when the grades announce who won and who lost. It is this urge which makes the drive for promotions, and for titles, and for big bank accounts. Sammy from the shows, runs with a fierce determination to become a big shot. The boy from the smalltown dreams of how his school friends and relatives will point to him as one who made good.

The desire to be admired is a part of this. The long list of crystals will be memorized If there is enough

eagerness to be labeled before the world as a cum laude graduate. It is pleasant to be looked on with respect. Allied to this are some unworthy motives for exertion – jealousy, greed, pugnacity, the craving to push people around. But competitiveness and the desire to be admired are basic urges which can be turned to good account.

Pride can be a worthy motive. It impels us to do our best. We feel that people, like eggs, are classified as A or B or C or D, and we want to show ourselves that we are grade A. It is ignoble for an eagle to be willing to be a sparrow. It is disgraceful for the good swimmer never to leave the children's wading pool. We know that the sluggard is a flabby weakling, and we want to show ourselves we can be strong. We want to find out that we are not scrubs, but thoroughbreds.

Another drive which can propel the student all the way to this desk is necessity. Hunger is unpleasant. He needs food and clothes. He wants a home and a family – and perhaps a sailboat. If he is to earn his living by being a geologist he is going to have to memorize that list of crystals.

Another motivation is obligation. For our benefit coal miners are toiling underground, shepherders are out in freezing weather, policeman and doctors and steel workers are laboring. If we are not working as hard for the common good, then we are parasites. The student gets into an unwelcome task because he is not willing to take a free ride on the backs of other people.

The Book of Proverbs has among Its cast of characters the sluggard of which we read this morning. He plays a sorry role. He is a comic character, but the comedy has a grimly serious import. Consider this, "The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be slain in the streets! That is intended to be funny; it is a better rationalization than even we can think of when we are straining for an excuse not to go to work. "As a door turns upon its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed. The sluggard buries his head in the dish; and it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth." That is really lazy! "I passed by the field of a sluggards – and low, it was all overgrown with thorns - - a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber."

Another motive is desire to help one's fellow man. We are all surrounded by urgent needs. Anyone who has a heart must long for a dozen lifetimes to do all that is crying to be done. The suffering need doctors, those in trouble need lawyers, the ignorant need teachers. Every useful occupation is a response to human need.

God never finished the world. He moved over and made room for us in his occupation. He has given us the infinite honor and satisfaction of helping him make of this a better world.

Look around you. If you cannot find any reason to exert yourself, you must be blind and death and heartless. That student gets himself across the room because he believes that he has something which his fellow men greatly need, and he is fitting himself to deliver it.

A group of people who had been in a Christian conference were sitting at lunch one day. Now when the dessert was served an odd thing was seen. The dessert was custard and fruit and jelly. But it's so happened that only about half the people at the table got any jelly. When everyone was served, a lady who had been a missionary in the Congo and who had really put her Christian faith into practice, and who happened to have gotten her share of jelly, looked up and said in a puzzled voice, "Why have I got jelly?" The only puzzled voice to be raised was the voice of one who wanted to know why she had got it.

In this apparently trivial incident, there is summed up very precisely the whole difference between the Christian and the worldly attitude to life. The worldly man, when he sees someone with something he has not got, demands; "Why haven't I got this?" "What right has someone to have it when I haven't gotten it?" The Christian, when he finds himself in possession of something that others have not got, immediately asks: "Why should I have this? Why should I possess something that someone else does not possess?" The Christian is always asking, not, "Why haven't I got this or that?" But, "Why have I got what I have?"

We must always be asking, "Why have I got this thing called life?" After the First World War, Lord Dunsany tells in his autobiography that to his surprise he found himself alive. And the question that troubled him was "Why?" Why did he survive when so many of his contemporaries did not? Why had he somehow or other come safely through? And from that moment there came into his life a new responsibility to God.

It might not be far off the truth to say that to most Christians, of all the feelings, it is a sense of responsibility that is deepest. The Christian must ask himself, "Why did God give me this life which he has given me?" "Why does he want me what does he want me to do with it?"

The Christian must ask, "Why have I been given talents which I possess?" There are two ways of regarding one's talents. We may regard them as a means towards carving out a career for ourselves, towards making as much as we can for ourselves. Or, we may regard them as something given to us in order that we may make ourselves as useful in the world as we can possibly be.

There is a kind of person who will not use his talent unless he is paid for doing so. This kind of person assesses all his rewards on a cash basis. There's a kind of person who is glad to lay whatever talent he has God at the service of the community. This kind of person sees his reward in the joy of service.

So the desire to help one's fellow worker is a strong motive.

Perhaps the most important of all motives that gets us off dead center and into action is the belief that God had a use for us. There is a purpose for our lives.

In the Ten Commandments it's very definitely says, "Six days shalt thou labor." This does not tell us to labor because we are hungry or because we cannot get out of it. It says that we are to labor, because that is what

God designed us to do. If an electric motor is run with a belt off, it shakes itself to pieces. It is designed to run only with a load. So are we.

We may sense the call of God, without recognizing that it is from him, in our inner urge for self-fulfillment. We feel the deep obligation to live out what is in us. There is a compulsion to make the most of life.

That is why the effects on a personality are likely to be so deadly when this inner compulsion is denied. The person who has gone soft tends to become cringing, and uneasy and insecure, even though he may try to hide it by being loud and over bearing. He gets crossed up with himself, and he gets crossed up with reality, and he gets crossed up with God.

The apostle Paul demonstrates what it means to drive hard towards great goals in the Christian way of life. In a moment of self-realization he reviews the sort of life he has had – great laborers, imprisonment, beatings, brushes with deaf, lashing, clubbing, stoning, shipwreck, peril by land and sea and in city and wilderness, toil, hardship, sleepless nights, hunger, thirst, cold, daily anxieties. That was quite a record for a man whose health was bad but, you see, he was a Christian.

The good news is that every time that student forces himself across the room all the way to his desk the path gets easier.

Here is a bit of wisdom that might well be posted above every desk, or stove, or workbench. It was spoken by Thomas Huxley: “Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not.”

The 40th chapter of Isaiah has the promise we need. “He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he increases strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.”

Whether we be in school or out, whether we are young or old, there is no place in the Christian life for a sluggard.

## **Live as Free Men**

### **Scripture: 1 Peter 2:11-19**

The text is chosen from I Peter 2:16; “Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil, but live as servants of God.”

“Live as free men.” Taken by itself, that might become an inspiring phrase, a dynamic slogan. But what does it mean to live as free men?

One of the ways in which modern people have tried to understand freedom has been in terms of “self-realization.”

This sounds pretty good, but immediately one bumps up against the question, “What kind of self is going to be realized?” Today the answer is not very clear. We are entering a new age and the kind of man which is about to appear on the stage of history has not been identified.

Freedom cannot be understood as self-realization, because it never answers this question.

We can think ourselves pretty good persons, perhaps even think we are perfect but I assure, to think this way does not make us free. And so, we really never will understand what freedom is through self-realization.

Secondly, large numbers of modern men identify freedom with “rebellion.” Rebellion is often a good thing. No one can deny that. But for what?

Do you think the Negro or any minority group will ever be free by the way they are caring on their campaign? I know, and you know, they will not because as soon as they have one point there will be another to fight and rebel for.

We can pass all kinds of laws to stop discrimination legally but no law will change the feeling and attitude in the human heart. And so, on our politicians, especially in a presidential year can bend over backwards to prove to minority groups he is really for them but is that going to make them free?

A noted police chief in America says that the characteristic spirit of the modern world is rebellion. Other perceptive men echo his analysis. The general picture of law and order is discouraging and not a little frightening. What if a man is a rebel with no transcendent loyalty to anything? We have people today that feel they can obtain their freedom and become free men by rebellion.

Thirdly, millions describe freedom as ‘surrender’. They believe that the meaning of life is found in the utter surrender of self to something greater than one self. For them, freedom to obey, freedom to serve the

common good or the common welfare.

Unfortunately, great masses of men willingly surrender themselves to the state or the party. Here lies the secret of the totalitarianism of our time. The question persists: “surrender to what?”

There are any number of things and causes we can surrender ourselves today. Perhaps we could really believe we have the answer to freedom, at least some of the leaders of those causes try to convince us. If we think surrender is the answer to freedom, we had better know exactly what we are surrendering for, otherwise we will not be nearly as free as we are led to believe.

Fourthly, freedom as “sonship”. Freedom does not mean that one may do what one wishes, but one may be what, before the world was, he has willed to become – a child of God, responsible to a loving Father.

There has to be sacrifice in any kind of freedom. Whenever our forefathers won their freedom and independence from England many lives were lost and many more have been lost since maintaining the freedom and liberty.

The difference between freedom and slavery is not the difference between being bound and being unbound, but between false and true bondage. Here the ultimate dilemmas of our generation are resolved.

What is freedom then? Self-realization? Yes – the full realization of self God has always intended you to be. Rebellion? Yes – rebellion against the evils that threaten to destroy our civilization. Surrender? Yes – surrender to the will and wisdom of God but above all – freedom is sonship. It is only as we look into our Father’s face that we can know the true freedom of the sons of God. For where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

In the Lord’s supper we experience a wonderful sense of liberation, freedom, and emancipation. We enjoy the mysterious liberty of the sons of God. It was so with the disciples that walked with a savior to the village of Emmaus. They felt it, too, but did not know what to call it. As they journeyed with and listened to him, they were mysteriously delivered from the bondage of sorrow, doubt and confusion. Without knowing how to account for it, their burden lost its heft, tears their bitterness, and calamity its blackness. The atmosphere cleared, the fog lifted the light and freedom returned. So it is with us. Just so.

We come to the supper weary and heavy laden, feeling deeply our need of respite and strength; we come with sorrows and cares, longing for his peace; we come knowing fully how much is required of us in the most of life, and are haunted with fears; but in some strange way he makes the mind as peaceful as a fireside before which a little child is sleeping. “Christ takes the evil power out of today and takes the black thread out of tomorrow.” We commune with him and before we are aware of it enter into the joy and freedom of his triumphant life.

Let us as we commune with our Lord this day, not do it because it's a church ritual. Let us start feeling the presence of the living Lord. Let us really bring our burdens and cares with us and place them at his feet. We are all looking for freedom. We all want to live as "free men." We can, if we really start believing what we automatically have done for years. Put your faith and trust in the Lord and he will make you free. What a wonderful feeling and what a wonderful life we can have living our lives. As free men in the Lord.



## **Stop Apologizing for Idealism**

### **Scripture: Ephesians 4:17:32 (JD Phillips Version)**

The text is chosen from Romans 8:38,39; “I have become absolutely convinced that neither death nor life, neither messenger of Heaven nor Monarch of earth, neither what happens today nor what may happen tomorrow, neither a power from a high nor power from below, nor anything else in God’s whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Ideals are having a hard time these days. In life’s market, ideals are quoted as being among the most depressed of all commodities.

What is an ideal anyway? An ideal is a mental picture of perfection as a model towards which to strive. This is why we hold up Jesus Christ before us, as a goal for all Christians to strive for.

In this day in which decency and goodness and integrity and moral standards are regarded by many as a hindrance to what they call a “satisfying” life, these ideals are treated as excess baggage, to be discarded by those who would fly high and free.

In this day when the struggle for the ideal of freedom and equality among men and races and nations gathers tremendous momentum, the ideal is excepted up to the place where it touches us personally, in our privileges, in our prejudices, in our pocketbook; and then at these places the ideal is opposed, often with bitterness and undisguised hostility.

Whenever an ideal gains our attention, or enters our lives, it creates tension between what is and what could be; it involves us in a struggle with what we are and what we might be; it prods us and will not let us settle down in contentment in any present; it pushes us out of luxuriating in what we come to think of as our “achievement”; and then as we attempt to fulfill the ideal, we find that we never attempt really fulfill it or completely capture it, because if we follow the lure of its goodness far enough, we discover that the ideal is related to the family of God’s ideals, of God’s purposes and that there is something of his perfection about it.

Secondly, by such attitudes of bitterness and hostility the ideals of life are isolated from having created contact with our lives in our common practices and deeds. Such blindness to truth about what the ideal is, and, if I may say so, such a cowardice before the ideal’s challenge, or shown in spoken remarks and inner thoughts. “Of course, you know it’s only an ideal”, “of course, a man has to be practical” “Of course, we shall have to be realistic; and after all and ideal won’t stop Communism.”

But how do we know that an ideal will not eventually stop Communism? What do we think an ideal is anyway? How much power do we think an ideal has? What if ours is the kind of world in which ideals

in hopes and goodness and truth and integrity and honesty and decency and goodwill and honor and trustworthiness and concern and forgiveness and justice and mercy and a Christ, really hold the key to understanding what God's purpose for the world is, to understanding what the future might be in which our highest moments we yearn after.

But common deeds and thinking regard any such suggestions that ours is this kind of world as being incredible, it cannot be, we say; and we say this because we are too much informed by our failures and the evil of people to believe anything like this!

Most of us are greatly impressed by the majority, whether it is a good or bad. We do not like to stand alone even when we know what the majority is doing is wrong. Many of us straddle the fence and wait to see which way the crowd is going to go before we make up our own minds. However, if we have any principles and ideals now is the time to live by them. Now is the time to set an example for others.

But are the failure and the evil which so impress us that's really the measure of the character in the nature of life? Why does not achievement for the ideal against difficult odds, why does not goodness, alive and creative in a human life, show us much more truly the nature and the purpose of life?

If goodness is not the nature of life, is not the character of life, is not the purpose of life, then life would literally fall apart. Life is held together by the strength of the trust worthy; by the cement of the honesty, certainly not by the destruction worked by dishonest men.

It was Woodrow Wilson who said that he would rather be defeated today on a particular issue in which he was interested, knowing that he would be judged right 100 years from now, then have a victory in the present that would prove to be false in the generations that were to follow.

Thirdly, how strange that there should be the willingness, even the eagerness, to spurn ideals in hopes, when so much of life has always depended on ideals; when ideals have accounted for so much in the character of the common life, and in our freedom and our faith. An idea, a hope, an ideal – these are the most powerful forces in life.

The ideal deniers and the ideal apologizer's ask me to believe that ideals and hope are not important, or impractical, or to be avoided and spurned and laughed at. What kind of insanity is this? Why do we and others talk that way?

Is it worth a special trip to a good vantage point in order to look at the marvel of a great bridge.? As I look, the question comes: how did this great structure ever come to be? The answer is that since it was an idea, a hope, an ideal – nothing more – in a man's mind. And then it went to be a blueprint, and then to 10,000 blueprints, and then the day came when the workers first arrived – the men, who, under direction, by labor and toil, were to make the ideal real and actual.

Have any of you ever done construction work? It is hard and dangerous. Have you ever seen a man fall to his death from a high girder? Watch men on construction work and try to grasp what it is that is going on. These fellows, struggling, shouting, sweating, or actually fulfilling and realizing the idea, the hope the ideal. What is the bridge but an ideal that has been realized and fulfilled.

Fourthly, God has put the divine restlessness in the seeker in our hearts, and we are really never content unless we are seeking a better life than we have yet known. But we keep on in our confusion about what the true meaning and character of life are. There is a strange perversity about our ordinary human nature which, in spite of the profession in our lives, has to rarely surrendered itself to the Christian purpose, to the power of God. And so, we watch people living by truth and honesty and faithfulness, and what they believed to be the Christian purpose, and we are unimpressed. But let five such people fail, and the 95 who still go on following the ideal are forgotten; and we wag our heads and say: "There, look at those five people – what a mess they have made of it. That's life.

But it is not life; it is the failure of people to understand life and to live life.

Fifthly, in God's world life is so made that life is struggle. The good never comes easily. It has to be struggled for, and its fulfillment cost. In this Christian faith of ours there is always a beyond, if you choose, and ideal towards which we are being lured. The New Testament speaks about "a new heaven and a new earth." It does not use these words as a kind of pious chatter. The men and women of the Old Testament literally risked their lives on the truth of that possibility; and you and I are the heirs of the possessions of, what they did and what they created, by their faith in the ideal.

When the whole world seems to be moving away from Christian professionalism, just how far will you go for an ideal? Will you be sexually clean and morally honest? Will you choose a vocation in which you can serve God and man with a full heart? How far will you go to change the world situation? Do you still believe that peace and justice in our world are worth striving for? These are real good questions for us to consider for all of us to do plenty of talking about but how many of us are willing to put our lives where we put our lips and mouths?

Sixth, in this difficult dangerous world, you and I have to be far more Christian about our ideals than we have ever yet been.

If we are to understand an idea and follow it and struggle for it, we have to believe in Something – Someone beyond ourselves. And, when today, when in personal life, the ideal of goodness draws us, and when today, amid the clamor of the biggest, busiest industry in the world – the defense industry – the ideal of peace lures of us, we can respond with courage, "I believe in the ideal – and it is a practical ideal." And then we have to live for it! And that can be a lonely business. But we have company, the company of persistent believers in the ideal over the generations of some believers in the ideal in our time, and the

company of the God who put the ideal in our hearts and minds.

In the last century, Hugh Price Hughes said, “if you ever hear anyone say that slavery is necessary, that ignorance is necessary, that war is necessary – you can shout “thank God, that’s a lie. Jesus Christ shall bring in about that the right shall prevail.” And in the end the right most constantly will prevail.”

I think there was no mirror in Daniel’s room because he lived long before the time of Christ – no plate glass. All he may have had was a piece of polished metal which he used, but no mirror to give him a mirror-mind turned in upon yourself.

But Daniel did have windows in his room. If we read Daniel 6:10, we note; “he had windows in his upper chamber open towards Jerusalem. Dr. Harry Emerson Forsyth, wrote concerning mirrors and windows.

In the first place the open windows helped him get rid of himself. Before a mirror a man becomes absorbed in self-reflections, that is deadly. Standing before an open window, life is no longer bound

Daniel looked out on life, the lives of people, the lives of nature. He lived “in a world where persons, causes, truths, and values exist. “His interests were challenged.

His windows were open towards Jerusalem. Jerusalem was hundreds of miles away, but he knew the direction.

Jerusalem was the capital of his native land. Jerusalem was his only city his own city. Jerusalem was the city of his fathers.

Jerusalem was the city of his hopes and dreams. In Daniel’s day, Jerusalem lay pretty much in ruins. But ruins are in opportunity for a youth like Daniel. Daniel may have looked out his window in the spirit and with the hope of rebuilding Jerusalem.

David had one window open too great stretches of light and air and space. He was a youth of prayer. It can see him kneeling by an open window.

Our ideals, our hopes, our dreams, will be fulfilled by the younger generation. Let us stop looking in our mirrors and stop being concerned for number one. Rather, let us look out on our windows into the vast world before us and let us teach and let our daughters any young women know what our ideals are so they can fulfill them. We have to be the leaders not followers.

A man who believes in God and has faith in him can afford to wait and work, to work and wait, for God himself is working and creating, waiting for people who, believing in the ideal, well, with his help, by their deeds, labor to fulfill his purposes.

I most certainly have become absolutely convinced that nothing in God's whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If this be so, then let us stop apologizing for ideals and start putting them back to work.

## **The God of All People**

### **Scripture: Romans 10:1-15**

The text is chosen from John 3:16; “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life”

Deep in the heart of our Christian Gospel is a text which itself contains the whole Gospel. And deep in the heart of this text is a word which stands for all people. “Whosoever” is the word. The text is John 3:16. Today we emphasize the ‘whosoever.’

All people, of whatever race or nationality, have a capacity of response to God. God’s created things obey their own natures, and it belongs to the nature of man to be able to love his Creator with heart and soul and mind and strength. Not all men have given this response, but that they have this capacity is one of the most optimistic ideas in the world.

Men of all places have responded to God. The Gospel of John 3:16 of has been preached on the streets of nearly all cities in the world, in great city churches, in the out-of-doors to young people at summer conferences. The people made no difference; at these and scores of other places have given response to the Gospel . The great Christian missionary enterprise began with Paul going to Athens, to Corinth, the Ephesus, to Rome. From the beginning it has spread everywhere throughout the world. So it hasn’t mattered where the gospel has been preached, men of all places on the face of the Earth have responded to it.

Men of all places have responded to God. This response in time began when Abraham stood at his tent door and communed with God. The records of 20 centuries of Christians history tell the story of response in conversions, consecrations, martyrdoms: in steadfast loyalties and pioneering adventures. Yes, even today we hear and know of men who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. In fact, I hope all of us experience Jesus Christ in our lives and know what it means to say Christ died for my sins and rose again, that I may have eternal and everlasting life. Yes, men of all times down through history have responded to God.

Man of all various circumstances were numbered among the whosoevers. The Gospel was preached to the temple slaves of Corinth; it was preached to Caesar’s household in Rome. Today it is carried to the abject aborigines of Australia’s hinterland; it is heard on the sophisticated avenues of New York and other large cities. In the same city the rich and the poor, the cultural and the uncouth, the educated and the illiterate, constitute the whosoevers. Let no man find his circumstance or condition a barrier to the love of God, nor let it prevent him from making his response. In fact, many times our conditions and our circumstances make it easier to refuse God’s love because we realize there is a power and a force in the world greater and mightier than man himself and that we do need God’s help and guidance in our lives.

When Frank W. Boreham was a little boy, his parents took him to London to see the assembly of Cleopatra's needle. This granite column had been brought from Egypt, where it once stood in front of the great temple. Dr. Boreham tells of the cavity at the base of the obelisk which was to be filled with objects from the civilization-that-is, and later to be on earth by the civilization-that-is- to be. What is to be placed within it? The officials had decided upon a strange list: a set of coins, specimens of weights and measures, children's toys, photographs of the period, a box of hairpins, a razor, and a text in 215 languages. The words of John 3:16 were written out as a greeting from the 20th century to the 50th. The text will seem to those far-off people as fresh as the latest fiftieth-century sensation. Those stately cadences belong to no particular time and no particular clime. Ages may come and go; empires may rise and fall; they will speak with fadeless charm to the hungry hearts of men. They are for the nations-that-were, for the nations-that-are and for the nations yet-to-be. That text is everybody's text.

God is the God of all people by his gift of Christ. The great text says that God gave his son that "whosoever" believe it. Jesus himself said when approaching the Cross as recorded in John's Gospel, chapter 12, "And I, if be lifted up from the Earth, will draw all men unto me." The master trusted his cause to the power of persuasion. He left both the desire and the opportunity to compel everyone. Whatever consequence was to come from his ministry could come only from the appeal of his life and love and sacrifice, drawing to himself men's voluntary allegiance. The amazing thing is that he trusted in that end the persuasiveness of a divine life lived sacrificially for men reaches deeper, takes hold harder, and last longer than all the coercion the world can move against it.

There is an instinct for greatness in every man which recognizes the greatness of Christ, the greatness of his heart, the marvel of his deeds, the depth of his religious and moral insight.

What a realization it is when we discover the great gift of Christ that God has given us. He died for all people, not just you or me, but for everyone who takes him into their lives. In our earthly lives we shall never receive a more valuable gift.

Perhaps just talking about in proclaiming this message is not enough but it is Christ on the cross that reaches the world. There is universal appeal in this disclosure of God's love. "For a good man some would dare to die", but "Christ died for the ungodly." For those of us who are sinners and actually know it. This is the gospel message that went out into the world and all its universality and in all its particular particularity – Christ died for me, regardless of how sinful I have been.

You know, if every person was righteous, Christ would not have had to die for our sins but we are not righteous. We all sin somehow and at some time and therefore need God's forgiveness. Realizing this and knowing when we have done something wrong is half the battle because we are then on the road of seeking help, guidance and Christ forgiveness. What a wonderful feeling to know that our Lord is forgiving.

So Christ forgiveness his great sacrifice was for all people regardless of race, or nationality.

Jesus had always felt that his earthly mission was to the Jews. His ointment was held for the time in that small alabaster box. But do you remember how the universal scope of his work was born in upon him in contact with the Syrophoenician woman as recorded in Mark 7:24-30; “But immediately a woman, whose little daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter and he said to her, “Let the children first be fed, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” But she answered him, “Yes Lord, yeah even the dogs under the table is the children’s crumbs.” And he said to her, “For this saying you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.” And she went home, and found the child lying in bed, and the demon gone.

“And at the same time, he was forced by the attitude of the Jews to face an earthly death. The two convictions, universality in death, we are one. There was but one way for his work to become universal. To fill the world with the healing odor, the box must be broken. The emancipation of the gospel must come by his death.

God is the God of all people because he can look at and enter the secret portal of any man’s life. By secret portal we mean, that in a man which makes him different from all others. It is by God’s access to each individual person that God is the God of all people. Is not the Bible a witness to this? How differently does God enter into the lives of Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Peter, Paul and many others.

Since we are different persons, God does enter our lives differently. He knows just where and how we can be reached and therefore he speaks to each of us differently.

We can never escape from the ever-present God. Every time we open an inspiring book his spirit pleads for an entrance into our hearts. Every time we pray he stands at the door and knocks. Every time some great claws demanding sacrifice lays its imperious claim upon us, God six entrance into our lives.

Find a man in any condition of guilt, loneliness, lostness, disillusionment, satiety, boredom, failure, meaninglessness, let him not despair, God is the God of all men; God is his God. God will knock at his secret door. When given entrance he will be that man’s God and deliver.

Jesus Christ knew how important it was that this Gospel message should be spread to all people everywhere. That’s why he gave the great commission as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20; “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded of you; and low, I am with you always to the close of the age.” Christ knew that his God and our God is a God of all people everywhere. Once a person knows and can feel in his heart that God made the supreme sacrifice for him, he will believe, he will be saved, he will be a changed, new person and live a different life.

So let us not think we are the only ones that have the inside track with God because this is not true. God makes no distinction between race or nationality. He is a God of all people. Listen to Christ knocking at



your secret portal. Perhaps he is knocking now. Open it and let him in. Let him guide your thoughts, your deeds and actions. Let him change your life and give you meaning to your existence. Perhaps you think God doesn't care for you because of the way you are, the way you live or your actions. You are wrong because he cares for all of us. It's up to us to meet him halfway. God has always done this as evidence throughout the Bible. Try letting Christ into your heart and see the difference. Become the kind of person and Christian God wants and intended for you to come become.

# **The God of All Places**

## **Scripture: Psalm 139**

The text is chosen from Acts 17:27; “He is not far from every one of us.”

Where is God? When little children, yes even big children ask the question they should be given a correct answer. Their elders, we adults should be able to answer the question. Quite often important questions like this go unanswered because we adults don't know ourselves. We dismiss it as foolishness or just plain ignore it. There are at least three great discoveries that give us the whereabouts of God.

First of all, missionaries who go to primitive tribes and investigate closely their religious beliefs and practices, with no exception perhaps, learned that the tribes have a fundamental belief in a maker or creator – God. In some instances he is known as a Father – God. This guy may never or seldom be one worshiped. The religious rights of the tribe are developed out of the belief in spirits, the fear of spirits, and the practice of magic. The great God is a long way off. He can be ignored. “It is a great discovery to find that God is nearby.”

The Christian message sometimes receives quick acceptance by inanimate peoples. The gospel brings God down from the skies, as a loving father. God is near. God is loving. God is kind. God is stronger than any evil spirit. God drives fear out of man's life. The coming of Jesus makes this graphic and understandable. It is no wonder that primitive tribes are comparatively easily reached by wise missionaries.

“Where have you been all this time?” asked an elderly woman in India when told the message of the risen Christ. “You say it is nearly two thousand years since Jesus, of whom you speak, died for sinful people! Why have I never heard before this wonderful story? Look at me! I am now an old woman. All my life I have said the prescribed prayers. I have given alms. I have gone to holy shrines. My body is dried up and became as dust with fasting. And now I am told that all this is useless, and that Jesus died to take away my sins. I say again, where have you been? “

How often we are like primitives in this respect. The unseen is considered as far away, up in the sky somewhere. “It is a great discovery when we learn that God is near by.”

Secondly – It was an idea held in early Old Testament times that God was in certain places.

Abraham built alters in the places where he pitched his tent and these alters because Beth-els, House of God. The story of Jacob tells of his finding God at a certain place. Moses' experience associated God with the place where a bush burned down in the desert, with the top of a mountain, with a place above the ark. Later God is found in the temple which Solomon built.

In II Kings 5:17, we read of Naaman's request to be given two mules burdens of earth that he might take

it back to Syria. Only upon that earth from the land of Israel, God's earth, would he be able to offer burnt offering and sacrifice into Israel's God. The adjoining earth of Syria belonged unto Syria's Rummon.

The idea that God was found in certain places suggests the idea that he was not to be found in other places. Abraham would not expect his God of Bethel to be found in the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. The idea prevailed to the extent that when Benhadad, the Syrian, was defeated in battle his servant claimed that it was a God of the hills. When they should fight in the plain, the outcome would be different. 1 Kings 20:23 reads, "The servants of the king of Syria said to him, "Their gods are gods of the hills, and so they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we should be stronger than they." In the 137th Psalm we read of the bitterness of the Jewish captives of Babylon. "How shall we sing the Lord song in a strange land?" And so each person believed that his God was only in certain places. I hope we believe God is everywhere and always with us.

We most definitely need to remember we arrive at different places at different times. Let us not forget when we are on the mountain, that had it not been for God's help in the valley we should never have reached the heights. This certainly is true of all life. Regardless of what our position may be, we can thank God.

"It is a great discovery to find that God is in all places." In certain places, yes; take not God's presence from Bethel where I am accustomed to find him. I must still find him in my secret place in the hills, but I must know that he is also to be found in the valley. He is in the gardens, in city streets, in the cornfield, in school. He is in the great out-of-doors, at Yosemite, at the Grand Canyon, at Crater Lake, Lake George, along the Schoharie river. He is to be found in homes, in little rooms, where only one person dwells, in churches, chapels, and cathedrals. And let us remember that no one person or one particular group has the inside track with God. Everyone has an equal opportunity to come to know God.

Most certainly God is here and now if we want him to be. However, if we cannot take time to talk with God, I doubt very much if we will feel his presence. It is really pretty much up to each of us whether we want God to be in a particular place. We most definitely want God in our homes but he isn't there automatically. We have to want him there and we have to work on it otherwise finding God becomes difficult.

Francis Thompson found God in the great city. The great city of London troubled with God. It seemed to be the new Jerusalem. The angels hovered around Oxford; the seraphim sang their "Holy, Holy, Holy" above the mansion house and the bank; Ezekiel's life-giving river flowed from underneath Saint Paul's.

After Thompson's little poem was found on his desk. In it he speaks of – Jacob's ladder pitched between heaven and Charring Cross; and of Christ walking on the water – not of Gennesaret but the Thames.

It was there the highways and byways of London that the Hound of Heaven pursued him, and the highways and byways of London became transfigured in his eyes in consequence.

It is a great discovery to find God in all places. However, this doesn't mean that God is everywhere. That may become a dissipating, scattering concept. It may mean that God is nowhere. Nor does it mean that God is in everything. It means that God is "here". You'll find him there if you find him "here". It will definitely be a great discovery.

Though "primitive" religion generally recognizes a supreme deity who is far away, the songs and proverbs of Africa express a recognition and a desire for his all providing presence. John V. Taylor, secretary of the Church of England's Missionary Society, gives us these African proverbs: "God is in the front: he is in the back; "the the cattle shelter under the same tree with God."; "God needs no pointing out to a child"; "the ears catch the whisper of God though we do not see him"; "wherever the land graze in herds, there is God"; "God is in the great trunk and in the low branches."

A third great discovery of the whereabouts of God is given to us by the apostle Paul as we read from 1 Corinthians 3:16; "Know ye not that you are of the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."

This satisfies human need; no longer is God far away, or to be found only in certain geographical places. Here is a sure place where the searching soul finds God, and God finds the searching soul. Certainly others can find God in us, if he is in us. By the way we live our lives, the way we treat other people, the way we act in our every day lives, the way we respond to God's demands on us, let's other people know whether we have God within us or not.

The scientists and the cosmonauts and astronauts are busy early proving that the Universe is a Universe. The same structure and rhythms prevail throughout, demonstrating the stamp of a creator. We are discovering with awe that the Creator of all things visible and invisible is he who is adored and worshiped in the great creeds of the Christian church. To whatever planet or star man goes in space he will learn that God's creative power is there and that the Spirit of God has not been left behind upon the Earth, but continues to abide in his own heart.

So regardless of where we go or what we do we cannot get rid of or escape God. He is always with us. The sooner we recognize this and realize this in our lives the better off we are going to be.

It's sometimes difficult for us to realize that God loves everyone, but he is in Africa, Europe, as well as the United States, that he cares for the black person, or red, or yellow as well as the white. Most certainly color, or nationality makes no difference to God.

Can other people see and feel the Spirit of God in you? Do you even know that God's spirit dwells in you? Are you awake to his presence? Or do you think you have escaped God's presence? Many, many people

have a rude awakening if they think they have escaped God's presence.

A small boy came to his pastor and asked a question, "How can God understand all the language of the people in the Earth?" The minister replied, "God speaks the language of the heart. He speaks to us in our own hearts." Then said the boy, "I can understand that." Can you understand that?

Indeed, God is nearby, he is in all places and his Spirit dwells within you. After we have made these discoveries, we will know where God is.

# **The God of All Time**

## **Scripture: James 1:1-18**

The text is chosen from Psalms 90:2; “From everlasting to everlasting thou art God.”

We waste a lot of time asking the wrong questions. Some questions are these: How can I make a success of myself? How can I get along with other people? How can I get rid of my superiority complex? How can I achieve happiness? These are really little questions in contrast to the big questions, questions about God and your relationship to him, about the nature of man and the meaning of life.

G.K. Chesterton had a theory about looking for a place for room and board. When the land-lady answers your ring, you should not ask about the quality of her food and bed linens. You should look her squarely in the eye and say, “Madam, what is your total view of the universe?” Silly? Not at all. We waste a lot of time asking the wrong questions.

Today we ask the big question. What is God’s relationship to time? With the hope that many little questions will be answered or disappear. God and time – the theologians use the phrase “the eternal God” and lift him right out of time – outside the limitations of time and space. Nevertheless, you and I are children of time. Time is enmeshed in God’s eternity somehow or other and God has relation to it.

And so, this morning I wish to make five simple statements concerning God in his relationship to time.

First of all – God is the God of all true beginnings.

God is the God of all his own beginnings. How marvelous, majestic, awe- inspiring, when pondered, are the words with which the Bible begins: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

John’s Gospel opens with an echo of the great statement in Genesis. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” As the book of Revelation, and the Bible itself, draws to a close, we read, “I am the alpha – the beginning, – – the first” (Revelation 22:13).

God is the God of all our beginnings. They are very many.

The conception of a child is beginning. When God is related to this beginning it becomes a very holy act. The Psalmist words become eloquent as read from Psalm 139, verse 15-16; “My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in the book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.”

How many beginnings have we in life which are related to God's will and purpose? Marriage is one of the most important ones. The boy and girl choose a mate which they intend to live the rest of their earthly lives, at least this is the intent of holy matrimony. They start their lives together. A whole new beginning.

The choice of a vocation is also an important beginning. The kind of job or work we intend to perform the rest of our working days. Important because we have to be happy working at what we choose, otherwise we make ourselves miserable and everyone else around us. It's important to get the right beginning in life.

It makes for a happy life to multiply beginnings in relationship to God. Each morning is a fresh beginning; by meditation and prayer we can make God the God of that beginning. Birthdays, Monday mornings, the first day of the year, and the month bring opportunity to relate a beginning to God.

Many people seem to dread Monday mornings and the start of another week, but try starting it with God, in fact, each day with God, and see what a difference it makes in your life and your whole attitude.

A high school teacher confessed that Monday morning was to him a great psychological event. By the previous Friday his mistakes and inefficiencies and frustrations had piled up until the burden of them was almost unendurable, but on Monday morning a fresh start was possible. The slate is clean again. He had a new zeal and enthusiasm for the task.

There is a day when you begin to live the Christian life. And what a day this is. It may come upon you gradually, but one day you will know it has come. With another person it is a great decision. Another may feel a deep emotion and God is especially the God of that beginning, expect him to serve your life in the second birth as wonderfully as he served it in your first.

We speak of the second birth as Jesus referred to it as, "You must be born again or you cannot enter the kingdom of God." We must be reborn again to become true Christians and what a wonderful experience this is to start again with God besides you.

Secondly – God is the God of all happy continuances.

Time is not all beginning; it is also continuous plea. How often we make a good start but feel and its continuance.

God is the God of his own continuance. How God's being rest within himself is a deep question that no man can answer. How wonderful is God's continuance of the universe under law! No less wonderful his dealings with men through the centuries under grace. James said that with God there is no variableness nor shadow that is cast by turning.

God is the God of our continuances. In the background of his continuance, consider your own affairs as in the fore-ground. There are hours of beginnings like conception and birth, but after that the years of continuous. What kind of continuance? How many people mererly exist? Their lives continue in the realm of circumstance, but God is a person, a loving person, a person who created them for life and fellowship with him. In him they live and move and have their being. That they do not know.

Marriage. A true beginning made in God. A happy continuance is in him. Vocation! A good start with higher deals, but what about its continuance?

Life with its multiple beginnings should have multiple continuances- all these beginnings in our lives should rest in God. God is the one that can assure us a good continuance of all beginnings in our lives.

Thirdly – our God is a God of all mobile transitions.

God is the God of his own transitions. Continuance and change are not opposites. “Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, today, and tomorrow.” But he does not still walk in the flesh in Galilee. He is here, but not in the flesh.

A river gives us the figure of God’s transitions. It is very permanent, but ever-changing.

From of old, a river has been the metaphor of fleeting change. The stream is never the same for two consecutive minutes. The water is constantly moving. Attempt to stop the current in order to examine it, and the river itself is completely altered. You have a reservoir or a lake, not a flowing stream. This makes a river so apt a simile of religious experience. For what is our sense of God but a sense of fleeting impressions, of emotions that rise and subside in waves, of moments of confidence alternating with moments of skepticism, of intense enthusiasm changing to placid indifference, of the broad experiences of heart which reflect the sunny skies and narrow, pent-in currents that take their dark course with power.

God is the God of all noble changes.

God is the God of our transitions. A man grows. A man moves on. He changes from childhood to youth, from youth to maturity, from maturity to old age, from this life to the life beyond. There is a continual flux in the personal religious experience. God is the God of all noble change.

Fourthly - God is the God of all high culminations.

He is the God of his own culminations: creation, incarnation, redemption, victory.

He is the God of our culminations. Any culmination of our own character is by the work he begins and continues in us. We do not expect too much of our own attainments. The culmination in achievement is by



his presence and help. Otherwise in the bright light of success a man shrivels.

When a man's life culminates in high sacrifice, it is by the grace of God.

Fifthly – and last; God is the God of all good endings. Now the chord of our thought becomes tangled. The chord of time and is entangled in eternity. Endings become beginnings and continuances and transitions and culminations. We need only to repeat the words from Revelation 22:13; “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” There is a little poem by Florence Dietrich entitled “Holding the Faith.”

So shall I hold my faith that God is good,  
That there's no permanence in things infernal,  
And they today shall pass, as well they should,  
And only truth and love shall live eternal.”

Our God is a God of all times. He is an everything we do, everything we are. He is with us from the beginning through all of life into the eternal. When we come to realize this in our lives then we will actually be living our lives to the fullest. Let God into your life. Let him become the center of your activities and see and feel the difference he makes in your life. If every man, woman, and child could do this at this very moment what a different world this world would be to live in. Let us hope and pray that eventually this will happen and let us work and strive to make this a reality.

# **The God of All Circumstances**

## **Scripture: John 9:1-11**

I have chosen my text from the Psalm 46:1; “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”

These past few weeks we have been talking about God. Two weeks ago, we discussed “God is the God of All Places”, and what a great discovery it is for us when we finally come to realize this. Last week we talked about “God is the God of All Time.” “From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” Today we are discussing “God of All Circumstances”.

First of all – What are circumstances? The best definition is in the word ‘circumstance’ itself – it is a standing-around thing. Circumstances are facts that bear upon other facts or conditions.

As we read from our scripture reading this morning, “As Jesus passed by, he saw a man who was blind from his birth.” His blindness was pure circumstances. Think of a circumstance as something given, not chosen, like the color of a man’s face. These are outstanding examples of persons whose lives were influenced by adverse circumstances. Helen Keller, blind, deaf, and dumb, comes to mind. We think of Milton’s blindness, Beethoven’s deafness. Some men profit by good circumstances. Things work out in their favor and to their advantage.

The ‘web of circumstance’ is an old metaphor. One young man is “caught” in the draft, sent to Vietnam and loses his life in the war. His younger brother by a circumstance of date of birth has a long and useful career.

The web is very complex. One man’s sin may become another man’s adverse circumstance: one man’s fine example may become another man’s most “happy” circumstance.

There was once a little boy in the East side of New York City name Johnny P. His father was an Italian. That was a circumstance. Johnny had no choice in the matter. His mother’s maiden name was Kelly – Irish. That, too, was a circumstance. When Johnny was very small his mother died of tuberculosis. Another circumstance. Left, day in and day out, in charge of a girl in a nearby flat, Johnny became sick. One day he was found by a church worker, who watched the situation for some time and decided that if Johnny wasn’t take to the country he would die. She had a friend in a suburban town, the pastor of a church. She called him on the phone and explained the situation and asked, “Do you have anyone in your congregation who would take Johnny for a month?” “I’ll call you back,” was the reply. Arrangements were made for Johnny to be take into the home of the vice-president of the railroad company with lines leading out of New York. Later Johnny was adopted by this mane and his wife. He is now the heir of a large fortune. Johnny never had a choice in any of these matters – a pure web of circumstances.

I'm sure all of us know of several circumstances. Some perhaps that did not have nearly as happy endings as this one. However, they were circumstances over which the persons effected didn't have any or very little control.

Secondly – Let us discuss the handling of circumstances. What to do “under the circumstances” is most important and one area of our lives where many of us fail to do the right thing.

First of all – a lot of people indulge in self-pity under bad circumstances. How easily all of us fall into this condition where we feel sorry for ourselves.

Here is a person who might have done this. She never had a chance. Her father was a criminal and her mother was a drunkard. Her sisters were prostitutes. She had to take care of a sister's child born out of wedlock. She was taken out of school when she was a little girl. Her story might be continued along these lines. It is hard to understand why she never indulged in self-pity. She worked, she stuck to her kin, she gave her foster-daughter a college education, and advanced herself into a position in an eastern college. Just think of what might have happened if she had met her circumstance with self-pity.

Certainly, it's tough to come home from a war with a handicap and find it difficult to fit into a job, and find no place to live; but playing with the doldrums is the most weakening experience that one can have. It results in an ever-deepening bitterness.

Perhaps it is difficult not to feel sorry for ourselves when things go bad and wrong but it most certainly is not the right thing to do.

Secondly, some people rebel against circumstances. Rebellion is a lot better than self-pity. There are some things that we ought to rebel against; some things we ought to fight. Many of us have too great a fear of ‘sticking’ our neck out.” We rebel against many trivial things and let the things that really matter go right on by. We do not want to be left standing alone either. Someone points out that “men's first great struggle for progress was a fight with wild beasts of prey, wolves, tigers, and lions.”

There is sometimes no greater evidence of faith than rebellion. There is also rebellion that is futile and wrong. Suppose George Washington Carver had spent all his energies in rebellion against the fact that he had a black face. He would not have had time to devote to his great work had he spent his time rebelling.

Thirdly, some people become cynical when they face circumstances. Don't be cynical. “A cynic is just a man who found out when he was about 10 that there wasn't any Santa class, and he is still upset.”

Fourthly, some people try to escape the circumstances. In this they may have minor success. No orgy of drink, pleasure, or self-assertion will remove them, they are there.

We know many people today that try to ignore the circumstances around them and hope they will go away but they don't leave and in most cases the circumstances get worse instead of better unless we try to do something about them.

Fifthly, some people are stoics. They grin and bear it.

Some feel they cannot do anything about the circumstances, so they try to make the best of the situation.

There is another way of facing and handling circumstances.

See if you can find God in the circumstance.

Study the seven miracles in John's Gospel, ranging from the almost trivial circumstance of a wedding feast running out of wine and including the serious circumstance of a man born blind. Note how Jesus entered into the circumstances as indicating how God can be found in the web of every circumstance. Abundant illustration is found in the miracle of John's Gospel. They give examples of circumstances of embarrassment, danger, hunger, despair, sickness and death.

It might be said that you can never tabulate all the circumstances until you include the fact that God is there.

First of all, God has power to direct. Insight is given because God is. Moral direction is given because God has a purpose.

Secondly, God has power to support. He supports as a bridge supports a train going over a stream. God is one against whom a man can lean and lean hard. There are times when by leaning upon God one endures the impossible. For with God all things are possible. With God we have power to do things that formally we thought were impossible. How much better this is than self-pity, rebellion, cynicism, or escapism.

Thirdly, God has power to save. He saves this from bad circumstances by opening up reserves of power in us. We overcome all habits of inferiority. We receive the stimulus of love and by that we save ourselves receive the saving power of God in your life and let him direct your every move, thought, indeed.

We have said that God has power to direct, support, and save us regardless of the circumstance. God also has the power to nurture us. In every circumstance, regardless of how bad or good a man can grow. Jesus is metaphor of the vine as recorded in the Gospel of John. Chapter 15 tells us that Christ can come into our lives like the surge of the sap in the vine bringing growth and fruit. When God is in the circumstance, no matter how adverse it may seem to be, there is to be found the possibility of growth into finer manhood.

Faith in God gave confident stability to Jesus even in the most distressing of circumstances. When the storm raged on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples panicked, but Jesus slept peacefully. The terrified disciples awakened him and exclaimed, “We are perishing!” Jesus asked, “Where is your faith?”

Where is your faith in many of the circumstances of life you must face. We have to have faith in someone higher than men in order to survive. Faith in God is the only thing that will help us endure and come out of these circumstances better and more faithful persons than when we went in.

Throughout time and many people have endured many handicaps, and become better person because of their faith in God.

The biographer of Alice James, sister of the famous William and Henry James, paid her this compliment, “She never excepted the horizon of invalidism.” Though an invalid, her handicap never penetrated her soul, it never invaded her mind, she held herself erect.

What matters most is how we carry our handicaps, what we do with them. I talked of Helen Keller earlier. Here are some words of Helen Keller which ought to hearken and encourage us. If anyone ever was handicapped, it was this remarkable woman, who at the age of 18 months contracted a fever which left her both deaf and sightless. Said Helen Keller: “I thank God for my handicaps. For through them I have found myself, my work, and my God.”

If we read the 12th chapter of II Corinthians, we will find a man who agrees with these words of Helen Keller. Paul speaks concerning his handicap, “Lest t I’d be proud and puffed up, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh.”

Paul knew how to handle his handicap, his circumstance. First of all, instead of letting his handicap defeat him, Paul let it throw him squarely on God for health and strength. Paul got his strength straight from God because he had none himself. He says again, “Therefore I would rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” He also says, “I can do all things through Christ who empowers me”.

Secondly, Paul’s circumstance gave him a rare and beautiful compassion for others who know the meaning of defeat and suffering. In the sixth chapter of Galatians, he is speaking to the board of Deacons of the Galatian church. He does so in these words: “Brethren, if a man of your congregation is taken in a sin or trespass, you who are spiritual, restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourselves, lest you be too tempted.” He then added these words, “Bear ye one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Thirdly, Paul’s infirmity in handicap caused him to lay his all on the altar of Christ. A life that could have turned inward in self-pity and self-approval is turned upward in a consecration of service and love for the master which the very ages have never equaled.

Again and again, he must have said to himself as well as to others: "It doesn't matter how long a man lives, it matters only how much a man lives."

Truly this is the one great example we have to help us bear our burdens, our handicaps, our circumstances. Isn't thus much better than being soaked in self-pity, or rebellion, or cynicism or escapism?

God may open up reserves of power and influence in others to aid us. Many a man has been carried through the hard spots by the inspiration and reinforcement which came from a friend.

God may use his own power. There are moments when he speaks to us directly and says, "It is I. Be not afraid." Truly God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

## **Why Isn't God Real Anymore**

### **Scripture: Romans 8:14-19**

The text is chosen from Romans 8:14; "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God."

A student came to his minister with a problem. He was troubled, he said, by the fact that he no longer felt any sense of the reality of God. This is a very real problem and perhaps a hard one to solve even for a minister. This boy had been brought up in a Christian home, and believing in God, he had supposed, was as natural to him as breathing. But after a few weeks of living in a college town, attending geology classes, and so on, he no longer had any awareness of God at all; he had reluctantly concluded that he didn't believe in God. He was troubled and uncertain about what had happened.

You see, merely being raised in a Christian home isn't enough. Certainly, it is the very best kind of bringing up but we cannot live on our parent's faith and beliefs, we have to have faith and beliefs of our own. We have to have a real live experience of our own. We have to be born again.

There are probably many factors which enter into this relatively common experience.

New experiences tend to push into the background of consciousness the experience and activities of the familiar pattern. Things, the old home town, ideas, friends, activities, are not as real as they used to be. The diminished reality, to be sure, is in us and not in the old familiar experiences, but at all events things will never be quite the same again.

Even those of us who remain at home among familiar surroundings and friends, and events can see things change right before our very own eyes. If we aren't prepared and if we do not have certain principles to hang on and guide us, we too will be of doubtful mind.

Another factor that tends to push into the background of consciousness the experience and activities of the familiar pattern is our increasing maturity. "When I was a child," says Paul, in I Corinthians 13:11; "I spoke as a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways." So, ought we all; we ought to outgrow childish and immature ideas of God. There are sentimentalized and romanticized conceptions of early adolescence which should be outgrown. If after we become adults, our prayers are still, "Now I lay me down to sleep", we had better grow up with respect to our relations with God otherwise our Christian growth has been standing still and even going behind.

"I have been a botanist for 54 years", says the old professor in David Grayson's, "Adventures in Contentment." "When I was a boy, I believed implicitly in God. I prayed to him, having a vision of him, a person, before my eyes. And as I grew older, I concluded there was no God! I dismissed him from the Universe. I believed only in what I could see or hear or feel. I talked of Nature and Reality."

“He paused, the smile still lighting his face, evidently recalling to himself the old days. I did not interrupt him. Finally, he turned to me and said abruptly;” “And now – it seems to me there is nothing but God!” “As he said this, he lifted his arms with a peculiar gesture that seem to take in the whole world.”

Another factor: all of us, though perhaps less with younger persons, do go through periods of spiritual dryness. There is a sort of cycle to our moods; as the old spiritual puts it, “sometimes I’m up, sometimes I’m down.” When one is in the trough between the waves, rather than riding their crest, he often wonders about his relationship to reality.

A man once asked me, “Why in the world should I believe in God?” I looked at him quickly to see if he meant it. He did. He was painfully serious.

My answer with something like this: “First of all, believe in God because of what happens when you don’t. Life without faith is flat, stale, and unprofitable – lost.” Then I added, “believe in God because of what happens when you do.”

We all have periods of depression and doubt about our beliefs in God, perhaps of what has happened to us or to someone else. But the faith we have carries us through these periods and then something happens that restores our faith a hundredfold and we realize how foolish we were to doubt in the first place.

Whatever explanations there are for the condition, the practical problem remains for us all: “What can we do about it?”

What can we do when God doesn’t seem real anymore?

When God isn’t real anymore it may be that we need to begin again with the concrete, instead of becoming lost in the abstract. Then we can move out into the abstract again. Theodore P. Ferris advises: “Begin with Jesus, the way he lived, the way he managed his life, the way he loved, the way he lost his life, the way he lives now and, if you begin with him, you may get a glimpse of the Being of God.

When God doesn’t seem real anymore, we might ask ourselves what does seem real? If they think God seems to have evaporated, ask yourself what you do have faith in, what you do believe? The idea is to get down to the bedrock of your own thinking and experience, to discover the things that are self-evident to you. Then you cannot doubt. What is real, inescapable, undeniable? When you come to a conclusion along these lines you’ll be in a better position to think constructively.

Horace Bush helped to found, and was asked to be the first president of the University of California. As a student at Yale, he had found his faith in God crumbling. One thing led to another and nearly everything worthwhile seem to be dissolving in the acid of doubt. It got to the place where there was just one thing he



couldn't doubt: there must be a real and permanent difference between right and wrong. That is not a very large area of positive thinking, you might say, but it was enough. With that for a basis he pulled himself together and went on to become one of the most influential Americans of the 19th century.

A few years ago, Henry L. Mencken was one of the most famous cynics and iconoclasts on the American cultural scene. To read some of his savage and satirical pieces on American life and religion in particular, would lead one to believe that Mencken held absolutely nothing sacred. He was sure "there are no certainties." A reporter once called him the man who hates everything. Yet Mencken also wrote these words: "I believe that it is better to tell the truth than to lie. I believe that it is better to be free than to be a slave. And I believe that it is better to know than to be ignorant." Those, apparently, were irreducible minimums for him.

What can one do when God doesn't seem real anymore? My third suggestion is that you deliberately arrange for regular times of "unhurried hours" of personal devotion and worship."

The art experts tell us that the best teachers of art are the art works themselves. "If you associate with great paintings, if you approval them in a mood of serenity, of receptiveness, and spend unhurried hours with them, they will speak to you, helping to awaken your understanding, adding to your deep-down experience.

So, it is also in the realm of religion. Our activities easily become almost frenzied in pace, and an early casualty in the rush is devotion such as prayer or Bible reading. Attendance at church may become a dwindling matter.

Truly, all of us to live a hurried life. We do not take time for the things in life that are really important. If we are to grow spiritually, we have to set aside an amount of time today where we can be alone with God, reading our Bibles and in prayer and meditation. You'd be surprised at the difference it will make in your life. When we become so busy that we cannot take time to come to God's house on Sunday morning, then apparently God isn't very meaningful and real to us. Take time for these things that are important in life.

A fourth thing is closely related to what we have just been saying: "practice the presence of God." This may have a mystical, or unfamiliar, ring in our ears.

Many of us have heard of Nicholas Herman, though probably under the name of "Brother Lawrence." At the age of 55, when some would say that a man can't change or be changed, and others would just give up the fight, he entered a monastery; he never became anything more than a layman and was known simply as "Brother Lawrence." His were the most menial of tasks – marketing, cooking, dishwashing. But he did them in such a spirit that eventually, by common consent, he was look to as the unofficial spiritual superior of the order and his personal rules and maximums were published after his death. Basically, they come down to doing ordinary duties for the love of God. "I do all things for God," he says.

It Is true that many of us have menial tasks to do in our everyday work. Perhaps at times it becomes boring

and we wonder how useful we really are but if we can do everything in the right spirit and with the right attitude our task will become meaningful, easier and we will be much happier doing them. We do have a knack for making things difficult for ourselves but God can help us to make them seem easier and more enjoyable. We need to practice the presence of God in everything we do.

Perhaps you say God cannot help you with your job but I believe it all things are possible with God.

Some of you may sympathize with a little girl who prayed one night after she had taken that day an examination in geography, “please, God, make Copenhagen the capital of Japan – even if only for a week or so.”

Even adults get wrong ideas about what God can do. We call him the Almighty but he can't make a round square or one-sided piece paper. He can't make us obey him for that would make us slaves. He means that we should be sons, with powers of choice. When God grant us power to love and serve him, he also grants his power to disobey him. God doesn't do nonsense.

But he does do miracles. There are some things which we call impossible, that are not at all impossible to God. Jesus was always challenging people to do the impossible. He said to a man with a withered hand, “stretch forth your hand.” He did it: he stretched it fourth, and we call it a miracle. He said to a cripple, “Rise up and walk!” And he did it. That wasn't nonsense. Jesus had the power to help the man. When we recognize the power of God, we can sometimes do the impossible. A girl going to her first job, to serve in the slums section of a city, said, “Thank God for impossible work to do!” In that spirit she did the impossible.

Her prayer was a lot better than that of the little girl who wanted God to make Copenhagen the capital of Japan.

God does work miracles. I truly believe that because I also believe we have to be realistic and practical and we have to help ourselves. Perhaps most important is our attitude and outlook on life in everything we do. If our attitude is right many, many, things will happen that we thought were impossible.

The same thing is possible for us as for Brother Lawrence – the relating of even the simplest and seemingly most insignificant of our duties to the most High, doing them for the love of God, practicing his presence. It will come to pass that God will no longer seem remote or unreal. For indeed God is as real as he always has been. Truly we are Sons of God if we are led by the Spirit of God.

## **You and the New Morality**

### **Scripture: Luke 10: 25-37**

The text is chosen from Proverbs 29:18; “Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who helps the law.”

The service today is based on two assumptions. The first assumption is that there is a new morality as old as the centuries, that is new to this generation. And the second assumption is, you and I will have to learn how to live as responsible individuals, as Christians, in this new moral climate. It will not be or is not easy. This I'm sure all will agree.

Consider the first assumption: there is a new morality. Is this a statement of fact? The answer to this question is that every responsible authority to my knowledge declares it to be a fact.

Now we turn to the second assumption: you and I will have to learn how to live as responsible individuals, as Christians, in this new moral climate. The problem I present to you is as ancient as the time itself, it is the problem of moral men in an immoral society.

The editors of *Love Magazine* assigned J. Robert Moskin to interview a broad selection of thinkers and leaders to determine where in their judgment our society is going. Here is his report: “We are witnessing the death of the old morality. In our world of masses of people, jet- age travel, nuclear power, and fragmented families, conditions are changing so fast that the established moral guidelines have been yanked from our hands – we are free to be prejudicial or promiscuous, to cheat or to chisel. We are left floundering in a money motivated, sex obsessed, big city dominated society – we are in the midst of a moral crisis – because the great majority of Americans, who want to live moral lives, no longer can be certain what is right and what is wrong. Out of today's moral confusion will come either a society of license and brutality or (if we are wise and lucky) a numeral code based upon the realities of our new world. We are groping, painfully and often blindly, for new standards that will enable us to live morally and decently.”

Perhaps we are groping for new moral standards but I feel we have the standards which have come down to us over the centuries. The standards are found in the Bible and if we took time to read and understand God's word we would not have to grope, we would have everything we need to live by.

Now we move in on this matter in a very personal way. How shall we live as responsible persons, as Christians, in this new moral climate?

First, we shall ask of every act, does this honor the dignity of the individual? Is it consistent with a Christian belief that each person is a child of God and is cherished in the eyes of God? Is it faithful to the Christian belief in the sacredness of the human personality? Or does it demean or degrade another human being?

If we can answer yes to all of these questions except the last one then we have one standard to live by. We most certainly need to consider other persons before we act or speak. Every act we perform reflects on other individuals. The person who is doing something he knows is wrong, most definitely wrong when he says it, not only harms themselves: every acts influences or has a direct influence on someone else and so we need to make this kind of consideration in all acts of our daily lives.

I offer a second standard. This is the wisdom of projection into the future. It means a matter of foresight, what will happen if I do this, what will happen if I do not do this?

Most of us are intelligent enough to know the consequences of a single act. We can predict the results if we will take the time to think, if we will stop being selfish and realize we have to consider more than our own pleasure or even more than our own lives. I'm sure we realize what will happen if we let things go by that we should be doing. Again, we often do not want to put ourselves out to help someone else.

We are not holy animals. We have both memory and imagination. There are times when both can torture us, and these are times when both can save us. Memory can warm us, or memory can chill us. Foresight ignored can fail us. Foresight followed can save us. Certainly, foresight is much better than hindsight.

Some years ago, a popular book carried this interesting title: "Ideas Have Consequences." What we are suggesting here, is equally true – acts and attitudes have consequences. You need not "fly blind" in this matter of morality. You have minds and imagination, you can project it into the future, you can experience the God-given gift of foresight.

As parents let us not take for granted that our children are automatically born to know what is right and wrong. They are not and have to be taught what is right and what is wrong. Perhaps one of the best ways we can teach them is by the way we ourselves live. The example we set in our everyday living plays a big part in the teaching of our children.

We use false and flimsy rationalization to attempt to explain and even justify the emergence of this so-called new morality. We wail like weaklings, blaming external circumstances over which we have no control. We say this new morality is an effort to escape boredom. Boredom in an exciting world like this?

We say that the new morality is brought about through our loss of a sense of security. Indeed. And when in recent history has a society provided more for the individual? There is more opportunity today than ever before if we are willing to seek it. We say that the new morality has come upon us because we cannot find meaning for our existence. What whispering nonsense is this? You do not find meaning in existence, you put meaning into existence.

We can try to rationalize and to blame all kinds of things for the moral decline in this country but when we

boil it down, it's our own fault for most of the conditions that exist in our country today. We are too busy to care. We do not want to become involved. We just plain do not care, we are indifferent. We have permitted these conditions to exist. We've gotten too far away from God. We have all material things to take the place of God in our lives and until we get closer to God things will not improve. They will only get worse.

And so - I believe if we take the time to think about the consequences of an act or not acting, we will have a second standard to guide us in the living our lives.

I submit third standard. Consider your conscience. You may not want to tell me that this is no more than a socially conditioned reflects. You may want to insist that it has no validity because consciences vary among cultures, and they vary within the same culture. You may have some psychological interpretation as to the definition of conscience. I am not here to argue with you. We shall not have a quarrel, you and I. But surely there is one undeniable fact: the fact is that you do have a conscience, explain it how you will. I'm trying to say let your conscience be your guide and I believe this is a good model if you have been taught right from wrong and if you haven't hardened over the years. Of course, there are things behind the conscience that help with the guiding. I believe there is good in everyone and if a person is allowed to mediate and really do a little thinking, he will choose the right over the wrong in nearly all cases.

Even as the musicians can tell harmony from discord, and the artist can tell true colors from false, and the weavers can tell good cloth from bad - so I submit that your conscience is a faculty that you can guide you through the morass of morals. You can say of the self and its highest sense: "To thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

In Joseph Conrad's "Under Western Eyes," he has Razumov say, "What is betrayal? They talk of a man betraying his country, his friends, his sweetheart. There must be a moral bond first. All a man can betray is his own conscience."

I say the things about conscience on the merited assumption that I am talking to those who have been exposed to the ideals of Jesus Christ. I say this to those who have known shame, regret, remorse. I say this to those to know that there is something called conscience and we have to live with it.

This I believe is why it's important that our children come to Sunday school and church, why it's important we have daily devotions in the home, why it's important we have grace at meals, why it's important we teach our children to read the Bible and have regular prayer with God. If our children are exposed to it and know what that means in their lives, they may stray from it for a time but eventually they will return to God, with more faith and enthusiasm than ever before. They will also have a standard to guide them through life.

So put this down as a standard for moral behavior – conscience. Elton Trueblood makes a wise observation: "The higher animals sometimes show genuine intelligence by the way they ask and answer the question, "How can I get it?" But man shows something beyond mere intelligence by his ability to ask and answer

the vastly different question, “Ought I to get it?” This is a crucial difference”. Indeed it is the difference conscience makes for the Christian in his acts and his attitude. In the moral crisis of these days, do not betray yourself – the better self within.

Arnold Toynbee, looking at human behavior from the eyes of a historian, once said, “Decisive choice is seldom the latest choice in the series. More often than not, it will turn out to be some choice made relatively far back in the past.” This is true not only for nations, it is true for the individual as he considers his impulses, his desires, his emotional drives.

Hold on to conscience. It is the most precious possession you have. It will not fail you. Indeed it will guide you through many a dark night of the soul and bring you out where the air is clean and fresh, and you feel right inside.

It is easy for us to sit back and criticize the moral standards of this country. We can talk about the moral decay that’s what is wrong with most of us today, we do plenty of talking and complaining but if we have to go out of our way to help we just sidestep the issue and apparently hope the problem will go away or hope that it will never involve us as individuals. If we could just use part of the energy that is used for criticizing, for doing something to help improve the morality of our society, we would be well on our way to making progress.

There is a new morality whether we admit it or not. Responsible Christians will have to make their way through it’s morass. In doing this, we are left without guideposts. Of every act we should ask: does this honor the dignity of the individual? Does this consider the future and exercise the power of foresight? Does this comply with a conscience and express the better self? The answer is of course have to be yes. I truly believe we need to turn back to God. Parents need to teach their children the Christian standards necessary for our country to get back on the right track. Let us hope and pray with God’s help we can do it before it’s too late.

# 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.

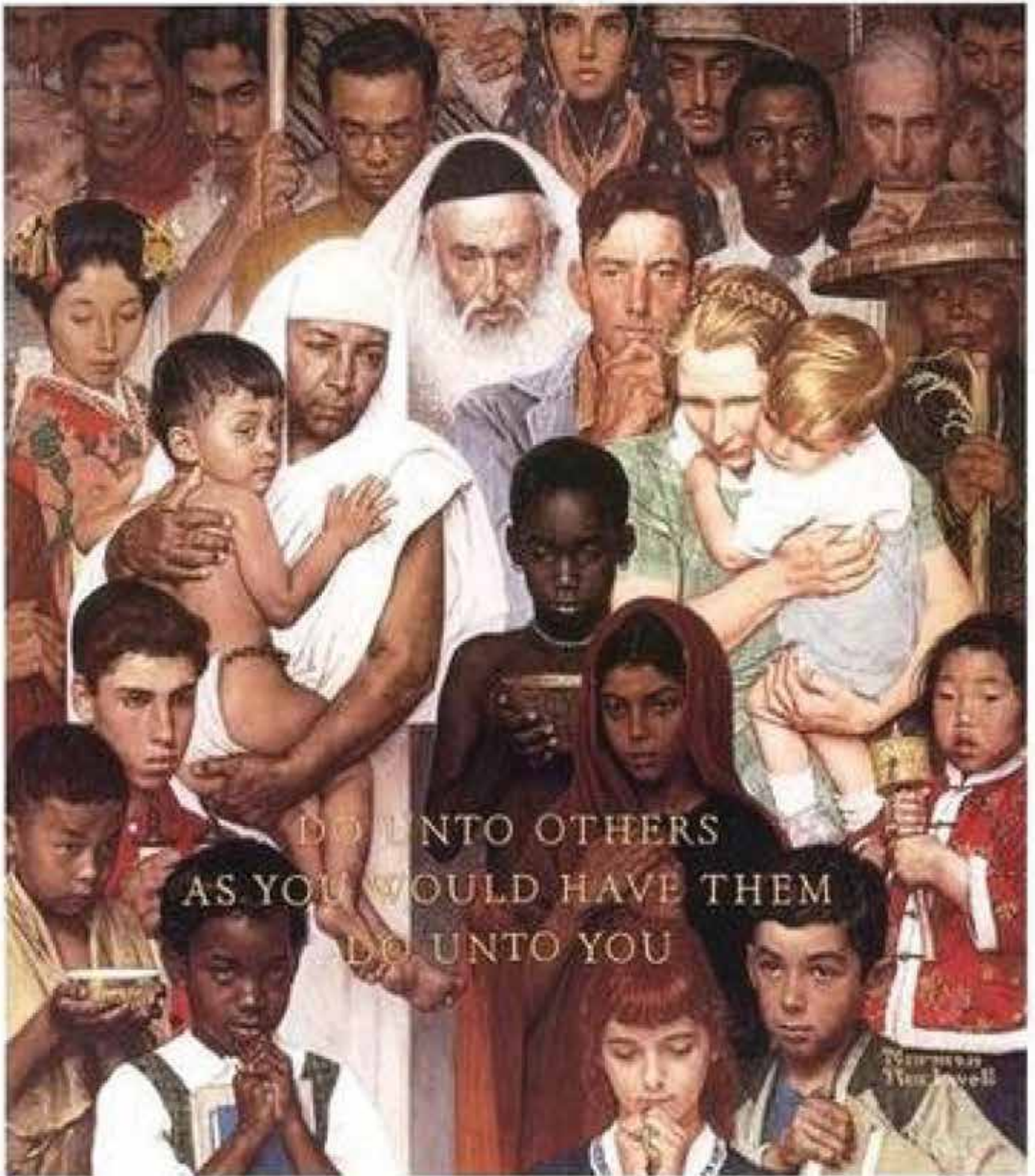


Millions of us suffer needlessly from addiction & depression. The reasons for this are many. In this program we emphasize the 12 step method of Recovery, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Meditation techniques to overcome difficulties. We also rely on God's grace to help you be lifted from your dilemma.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