

# *B*raman *Foundation of Charities*



South Harpersfield  
United Methodist Church  
Geneva, Ohio

## The Sermons of Richard W. Braman Vol. 9

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Love Thy Neighbor

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65 Country Colony Rd. | Queensbury, NY 12804

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

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



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

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

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

In Christ,  
The Braman Foundation

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# **Always Brothers**

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

Text is from Matthew 6:9-13; “Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” When Jesus prayed from the cross, he said, “Father.” He taught his followers to pray, saying “Our Father.” These two words bind all men into a brotherhood under the fatherhood of God.

Whether we assert or deny the brotherhood of man, the fact remains that we are bound up in the bundle of life together. We are always brothers. We may not like this truth; we may even resent it. We may deny it. Denial is dangerous. We may deny the law of gravitation, but life based upon that denial will somewhere, sometime, result in a smashup. Deny the fact of the brotherhood of man, by that denial we do not dissipate human brotherhood; we remain brothers, brothers in fear, in conflict, in desperation, in despair - yet always brothers.

In an issue of “The Mennonite”, a photograph depicts three Angolan refugees in flight - the leader, legless, his two friends blind. The captain tells us that the three have traveled for 50 miles; it also notes that as many as 600 such refugees streamed daily into the Congo from Angola. Wounded, exhausted, starving, they came seeking help -who measures the place of the legless and the blind or slow pilgrimage on an African path? The captain speaks of them as “friends”. Man measures his brother by nearness, familiarity, shared interests, social proximity, need. Need eventually wins, even over the miles. The blind inspire the legless and the legless lead the blind. In an article accompanying the picture in the “Mennonite”, Hugh Samson reports an interview with a doctor once of Florida but now of Leopoldville. Why had the doctor left his practice among the named, the important, the known near him at home? “The need”, he replied. “I read of it in a church paper and discussed the situation with a missionary home on furlough from the Congo. I just locked my surgery door and came.” And so, when it comes right down to bare facts, we as Christians cannot deny the brotherhood of man. We are all brothers.

This morning, let us consider together the Lord’s Prayer as a Charter of Human Brotherhood. First of all, it is a Charter of Human Brotherhood by its affirmation of the fatherhood of God.

Brother is the New Testament name for the Christian. In Acts and the Letters of Paul, the Christians are called brothers (brethren) no fewer than one hundred and fifty times. There is clearly no word more fitted to describe what Christians are.

Brothers are connected with each other because they are connected with a common father. So, Christians are connected with each other because they are connected with a common father, who is God, and a common Lord, who is Jesus Christ. Men can only be one with each other when they are one with God in through Jesus Christ. The Brotherhood of man can only stem from the fatherhood of God.

This must mean that the church is essentially a family. The church is not an association, nor an institution, nor an organization; it is primarily a family. The atmosphere of any congregation should be that of a family. First and foremost, any meeting of the church must be a family gathering.

If the essence of the church is that it is a family, then it ought also to be a unity.

In one of his dispatches Nelson describes his victory as being due to the fact that, as he puts it, "I had the happiness to command a band of brothers."

It is to be noted that this unity does not mean uniformity. In any family, there are differences of temperament, differences of outlook, differences of interest. In any family. There are disagreements and debates. In any family there is give and take, and it must be so in the family of the church. The fact that the church is a family does not obliterate the differences, but it means that the differences occur all within an atmosphere of love. The odd paradox is that it is only when we love each other that we can afford radically to differ with each other.

Because Christians are brothers, and because the church is therefore a family, there can never be any distinctions within the church. There can never be any distinction between those who are "important" and those who are "ordinary". The odd fact is that in a family, someone who is very important as the outside world sees importance loses his importance altogether. The man who is a "VIP" outside the home is simply daddy to the children and a lovable nuisance to his wife! And the mother whom the public does not know at all, is the person round whose family revolves and on whom all its members depend. Love has obliterated the distinctions which exist within the world. Only when the church is one united band of brothers is the church a true church.

And so, because our Lord, as he taught all his followers to pray, "Our father", we are all brothers regardless of where we are, regardless of the color of our skin, regardless of our wealth. We are all brothers in Christ. Secondly - the Charter (the Lord's Prayer) implicated we are brothers by the inclusiveness of God's purpose.

"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on Earth, as it is in heaven." This has reference to God's Kingdom, God's reign, God's rule, God's sovereignty.

The scope of God's Kingdom is not limited. Here is no suggestion that God's purposes are geographical, or narrowed by the racial, social or any other condition of man.

The inclusiveness of the will of God is taught us through the history of the Hebrew people, and especially by the words of the prophets. Jesus, by life in proclamation, fulfills these words and manifest in his death the will of God for the people, for the whole world. Thirdly - we are brothers in our need for bread. "Give us this day our daily bread". We cannot live without physical bread. Nor can we live on bread alone. There

is hunger in all our hearts for the bread of life, hunger for eternity.

And regardless of who we are or where we live, all of us still have this hunger and need for both physical and spiritual bread. And as brothers the search for this bread of life will always continue. Perhaps it's a mutual instinct that all of us have within us, the search to find the truth.

Fourth - we are all brothers in our need for forgiveness. "And forgive us, our debts, as we forgive our debtors." No man's sin stands alone; though it hurts the self, it also hurts the brotherhood. Having sinned against one, and that one having sinned against another, the whole brotherhood becomes entangled in sin. The untangling comes by the principle expressed in prayers. Even as we ask forgiveness of God, we give forgiveness to our brothers, and they do the same by us.

As Christians and because we are brothers, we should never be happy as long as one of our brothers is in trouble. And we cannot ask God for forgiveness unless we are willing to forgive someone for something he might have done to us.

All of us truly do need forgiveness for we are all sinners in the sight of God. We have fallen short of the glory of God. We know this because Jesus Christ died for our sakes that our sins could be forgiven. Forgiveness is something again that has to be felt in the heart and not just spoken with the lips. Too many of us hold a grudge and retain revenge in our hearts. Actually, when we do labor these kinds of feelings in our hearts, we have no room for love and forgiveness. In fact, we do not have time for anything else. Regardless of how perfect we may think we are; we all are sinners and require God's forgiveness. Fifth - we are brothers in our inability to cope with evil. "And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

It should require little argument to convince us of our inability to win victory over evil in this world. Our own lives bear witness to this. The morning newspaper, with its daily portrayal of crime and conflict, calls upon all of us together to establish righteousness and peace. No man can win victory over evil alone; we need one another; we need the deliverance of God. This also is a factor in our universal brotherhood.

The argument that if I live my own life to the best of my ability with God's help, that's all I have to be concerned about. That is wrong. Sure, it's a good place for every one of us to start, but we have to be concerned for our brother. It is a constant battle for all of us. To cope with and destroy evil in the world. You know it seems regardless of what is started today, it could start out being a benefit to all, someone in the end turns it into evil with harm to nearly everyone. We seem to have the ability to turn good things into evil without hardly trying. And so, our ability to overcome evil is very low. In fact, most of us are easy prey to temptation and fall into these traps without even trying. We allow evil things to go around us because of our complacency, indifference, and self-righteous attitude. We are not concerned as long as it doesn't affect us directly, but we fail to realize if it affects anyone, we should be concerned. We are truly all brothers.

Sixth - the great climax of the Lord's Prayer, "For thine is the Kingdom, and the power and the glory;" reminds us that we may be brothers. In the adoration of God, we are brothers in a Hallelujah chorus. We are brothers in worship, brothers in the new moment of a great drama.

The prayer, which we so often pray, points the way for us to follow; surrender to God's plans and purposes; share our bread and seek also the satisfaction of the spiritual needs of men; forgive others and be forgiven; accept together God's grace to deliver us from evil - and it will follow that we shall lift our voices and our hearts in a triumphant paean of adoration and praise.

If there were no other reason than the fact that all of us need God, this alone would be enough to join us all together as brothers. God has created us - all of us, and certainly we all have this in common. But for the Christian to say he isn't concerned about anything Except one affects him directly, I believe is wrong for sooner or later everything will eventually affect. All. Of us and by that time it will be too late to do anything about it. And so, we are our brothers in Christ our Lord. I would like to close by reading a poem entitled, "Brotherhood", by Edwin Markham.

The crest and crowning of all good,  
Life's final star is brotherhood;  
For it will bring again to earth.  
Her long-last Poesy and mirth,  
Will send new light in every face,  
A kingly power upon the race,  
And till it comes, we men are slaves,  
And travel downward to the dust of graves.  
Come, clear the way then, clear the way:  
Blind creeds and kings have had their day.  
Break the dead branches from the path:  
Our hope is in the aftermath -  
Our hope is in heroic men,  
Star-led to build the world again.  
To this event the ages ran:  
Make way for man.

## **Chastity**

### **Scripture: I Corinthians 13:4-8, Colossians 3:18,19**

The text is chosen from Philippians 2:5; “That you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”

If we are going to talk about chastity, I believe all of us should know its meaning. Chastity is the act of purity; to be modest.

The argument advanced in many evening discussions in the college dormitory is that since sex is a pleasurable experience and modern chemistry has provided a way to reduce the risk of pregnancy, then men and women both in and out of marriage should enjoy themselves, since they run (it is said) no personal risk and do no harm to anyone else.

Some modern persons declare that since sex is a natural part of life, there need be no limitations or restraint upon it. It might be rejoined that atomic energy is also a natural part of life, but one should not use atomic energy to destroy cities. Even though sex is pure and natural, it needs to be expanded in the most helpful expression, which is within the sacredness of marriage. It need not be used in the destruction of personality. Likewise, atomic energy need not be confined to explosions but can be harnessed to generate power for industry.

The Christian church believes that it is a false conclusion to believe there is no personal risk and no harm to anyone to participate in sexual relations outside of marriage. It believes it owes a duty to its own believing members, as well as to the general public, to declare that chastity is still the standard before and after marriage for the fulfillment of total personality.

First, this morning let us discuss unchastity.

Unchastity leads to an inner sense of the loss of fidelity and integrity. One of the greatest assets a person has, is in the feeling of being true to himself and knowing that others respect him as a truthful person.

How a husband or a wife can be unfaithful to each other and still look in the mirror I’ll never know.

The failure to maintain chastity leads to a breach of community of feeling. Because of deception and secrecy, one feels isolated from others and carries inner burdens which are always subject to discovery. This leads to restraint and isolation from the freedom which candor in openness produce.

Unchastity also increases one’s loss of respectability. To take another person’s life into one’s heart without a full commitment is to have something less than a proper appreciation of human dignity. To pursue a life

of unchastity is to declare oneself unwilling to assume the responsibilities and care of a partner.

More than that, unchastity is actually a loss of the personal freedom which one so eagerly seeks. As the clandestine relationship must be maintained in the secret and cannot be openly acknowledged in the freedom and joy associated with a holiness of marriage, so one suffers a loss of personal freedom. Never being able to hold your head up and look another person squarely in the eye because of the guilt feeling you have and always the fear of being caught or someone else knowing of your behavior. A person's freedom is definitely good.

In addition, there is a loss of sensitivity in human communication. Sex is part of the sensitive, subtle communication system of human personality. When it is practical apart from the devotion and commitment of marriage, it leads to a certain hardness of personality and a violation of the spirit of communication usually enjoyed by a husband and wife. What boy wants a girl for his wife who has had sexual relations with other boys and vice versa. I'm sure no girl can live with herself if her husband doesn't know she has been involved with other boys and certainly she is afraid to tell him for fear of losing him. Therefore, the communication and relationship between the two are kindred and held back because they cannot be honest with each other.

Unchastity leads to problems I'm sure most of us have probably never heard of before. If we live our lives to the best of our abilities, with God's help, we will have no guilt feelings, we will have nothing to be afraid of, nothing to fear.

Secondly, let us talk about chastity.

The fulfillment of sex is best obtained in the sacramental union of dedicated marriage. The case for chastity is that those who seek for fulfillment outside of marriage loyalty actually short-change themselves by the violation of their purity and high standards. On the other hand, those who submit to the discipline of integrity actually find higher fulfillment and greater personal satisfaction in the sanctity of marriage.

The enjoyment of sex is always personal, and not merely physical or natural, because it involves people.

In the modern controversy for a new morality, many declare that the physical side of life is purely mechanical act and need not be restricted to the sacred bonds of marriage, as taught in the Bible. But what this view fails to take into account is that sex involves the whole human personality and not just the physical side of life. Two whole people are involved and not just isolated parts of themselves.

Our moral standards, I believe, is one thing that does not change with the times. If they do, it's because we as a people never really understood these standards or we did not know what they were in the first place.

It's up to us as parents to instill these standards and principles in our children. If we don't, then we will

start to experience a breakdown in society as we are beginning to experience today.

The height of fulfillment of God-given sex is in a socially responsible relationship, rather than in an isolated, irresponsible union. Sex finds its fulfillment only in a socially responsible act, rather than in two people thinking to fulfill their selfish desires unrestrained by society. No one lives a completely irresponsible or independent life. We were all born in families, and we create families. We are supported by the affection and cooperation of our families, while other groups, likewise, depend on us for integrity and spiritual support.

If we declare ourselves Christians and followers of Jesus Christ, we have to set an example for others to follow. Christians are different, and they should act differently than other people.

In Christianity, love is concern for another person. The highest fulfillment of marriage is love without fear, practiced in a committed relationship that has its own special demand, which is mutual sacrifice and responsibility.

In the present search for the fulfillment of human personality in significant marriage, someone has observed that marriage has not failed people as much as people have failed marriage. A wise counselor suggested that marriage does not rest so much on finding the right person as on being the right person. Regardless of who is to blame in one of these situations, we have to remember it takes two to tangle. Each one has a responsibility, which he or she has to live up to.

In a world such as we live in today, where all persons, especially young people, are exposed to all kinds of temptations, we need all the assistance we can get to preserve chastity, to hang on to our moral standards without modifying them.

Christian men and women who commit themselves to the standard of purity both before and within the bonds of marriage need not be left utterly desolate in the present debate, which seeks a radical change in sexual standards. First of all, to preserve purity, one needs to keep free from circumstances which make it easy to violate purity. Generally, the easiest way to avoid these temptations is to stay away from them. True, this isn't always possible, but in a good many cases we know beforehand what kind of a situation we are getting into. So, if we know, then we should avoid it. Secondly, the sanctity of marriage and the purity of personality can be preserved by maintaining a deep loyalty to the person within the affection of one's heart and by the preservation of a sense of loyalty to all personalities. To violate the sexual code indicates a loss of loyalty for personality in general and the adoption of a harsh personal code of selfish fulfillment.

In an article on marriage Andre Maurois affirmed his credo of loyalty in the brief words, "because I have chosen". He based his view on the sacredness of marriage on the fact that he had chosen another human being as a partner. He had given to her alone the fullness of his personality, body, and spirit.

Thirdly- Christian people find that putting Christ in the center of their lives and letting him be the master of their bodies, minds and interests is one way to maintain a high purpose.

I think perhaps this should be our first step toward help in preserving our moral standards. People with thousands of years had found that if they let God guide their lives, they will have little trouble in living the kind of life God expects us to live. I know this is especially true for young people leaving home for the first time to go to college. We all need the guidance of Christ.

It should be remembered that when Joseph in Egypt was tempted by a seductress, he went through the same sex problem that modern collegians face. As he fought out the battles of personal temptations, his main defense was, "I cannot sin against God." His resolution was not an appeal to expediency or to "what neighbors might think", or any other surface sophistry. Rather, he maintained his personal integrity by a personal commitment to God.

Fourth – There is further assistance for maintaining personal chastity by contemplation of the rewards to be enjoyed from it. Those who resist the temptation to engage in premarital ventures find the reward of personal integrity, inner discipline, and a wholehearted commitment for the enjoyment of their marriage in the future. For those who are maintaining their marriage, even with a struggle, there is the reward of seeing the growth that takes place between a man and a woman who are faithful to each other over the years.

A final word should be said about the forgiveness of Christ for those who have stumbled and fallen. But who's sick to rise again. The most beautiful passages in the New Testament are those in which Christ confronts persons who have suffered in the battle for fulfillment in the marriage sphere. To one who was caught in the very act of adultery, he offered the unlimited gift of his forgiving and healing love. That same Jesus Christ offers effective forgiveness, reconciliation, and reconstruction of personal values to men and women today who seek to be restored to God and to each other.

All I'm asking, especially to young people, think twice before you act and do not let anyone tell you that the biblical moral standards are old fashioned, for believe me, these will never change any more than God changes. If you need help and you will, let Jesus Christ help you to make those decisions. Take Christ into all parts and phases of your life and he will help you make all decisions in your lives.

## **Found Faithful**

### **Scripture: Matthew 25:14-30**

Text is chosen from two texts. The first is from Proverbs 20:6; “Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but a faithful man who can find?” The second is from II Timothy 2:11; “The saying is sure: if we have died with him, we shall also live with him.”

It is told of the Greek philosopher Diogenes that he went about at midday with a lighted lantern searching for an honest man. Five centuries before Diogenes, the Hebrew King Solomon was given credit for having said, “Many a man proclaims his own loyalty, but a faithful man who can find”; which was one of our texts this morning from Proverbs 20:6. Diogenes doubted the existence of an honest man. Solomon wondered where a faithful man could be found. Perhaps these philosophers expected too much. Or perhaps human nature was less admirable in those days than it is now. Or perhaps they exposed some embarrassing truth about ourselves.

A faithful man who can find?

Faithful can mean many things. It can mean fieriness in maintaining one’s promise - or covenant. It can mean thoroughness in observing one’s duty. It can mean allegiance and devotion to another person, and to God. Being faithful can mean bound by ties of honor, gratitude, or love to something apart from oneself. And faithful can mean moral steadfastness. Implied is consistency, and abiding loyalty, not subject to change or to the whim of passing emotion.

I am sure of one thing, if we are faithful to God, we will be faithful to our mates, our family, friends, etc.

It was hardly simple curiosity that prompted Solomon to ask, “a faithful man, who can find?” Nor was it just good advice that Jesus gave when he taught, from Luke 16:10, we read, “He who is faithful in very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.” Something basic to human experience was being cited; something important to our lives was being made known. That “something” can be spoken of in specific terms. First of all, faithfulness is a characteristic by which God is known.

When we set our time by the sun and our directions by the stars, we acknowledge that God is faithful in his creation. Certain things can be depended upon. We can depend upon the fact that all things will die in the fall and decay. Likewise, we can be sure that everything in nature will come alive in the spring. When we affirm the existence of goodness, beauty, and truth, we admit that some things abide. We can find them again and again when we look at the biblical record of God’s relationship to man, we find constant reference to the divine faithfulness. From Deuteronomy 7:9 we read; “Know therefore, that the Lord your God is God,” declared an ancient Hebrew confession, “the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments to 1000 generations.” The New Testament

speaks out as we read in II Timothy 2:13; “If we are faithless, he remains faithful - for he cannot deny himself.” The laws of God cannot be trifled with. The good life he has shown in Christ cannot be trimmed down to suit our human sinfulness. He cannot deny himself. Therefore, our faith, our beliefs, are not a minor question to be wholly committed to Jesus Christ, to seek constant communion with him is a matter of desperate importance.

The story of God’s faithfulness is bound up with the story of his love and grace toward man. We read in Romans 5: 8; “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” “Why, one will hardly die for a righteous man,” wrote Paul the Apostle, astounded at the doctrine he himself proclaimed. Yet that is what God is like; spending himself that man might live, offering his gifts that the abundant life might be known. The artist symbol is a down reaching hand and this we say is God.

God loves us, cares for us, will never turn us aside, regardless of our actions, regardless if we can even deny his existence. God’s hand is always reaching toward us, in search of us. This faithfulness of God our father is perhaps one of his most main attributes or characteristics. What an example for us to try to follow in our dealings with him, with other people, even with ourselves. This brings us to my second point, that the characteristic by which God is known, faithfulness, is the one by which man, you and I, must live. “A faithful man who can find”, or better still, “A faithful man -can I be that man?”

Faithfulness begins with little things. “For the Lord says in the gospel,” wrote one of the early church fathers, “If you do not guard what is small, who will give you what is great? For I tell you that he who is faithful in very little is faithful also in much.”

This makes sense for life is made up of little things, small steps, small gestures of the hand, small breaths. Our days are woven of tiny threads. A prayer by John Baillie beseeches forgiveness for the unwillingness to believe that God has called most of us to a small work, and only a few of our brothers to a great one.

We need to believe that God is called all of us to do mighty works in his name. God knows what talents he has given us. He knows our ability. He knows what we are capable of if only we would let ourselves go and believe this, we could do many more wonderful things than we do, in the name of Christ. It’s too bad we can’t put to work just a part of the talents that are wasted, that people themselves hold back. The many wonderful and tremendous things that could be done if we really wanted to do them. Yes, indeed, God has called us all to do tremendous things in his name.

Another demonstration of faithful living is found in the words quoted a few moments ago from the life of Jesus. Those words had to do with the right use of money. Here indeed, is a test of man’s faithfulness!

Doctor Phillips translates Jesus’ message as follows: “The man who is faithful in the little things will be faithful in the big things, and the man who cheats in the little things will cheat in the big things, too. So

that if you are not fit to be trusted to deal with the wicked wealth of this world, who will trust you with the true riches?" This is taken from Luke's Gospel 16:10-11. We have read and heard that money is the root of all evil. Jesus himself said that "it will be easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than it will be for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God." Actually, there is nothing wrong with money, it's only our inward attitude towards it that creates evil, that causes a man to sin. If our goal in life is to accumulate all the money we possibly can, regardless of how we do it, false or true means, then I am afraid that money is the root of evil. However, if we are willing to open our hearts to help others in need, if our main objective is not the acquiring of this wealth, I believe money can be put to a useful purpose. I'm not saying that you have to give all your money away. I'm saying that we have to put first values on things in life that are worthwhile. We have to place God, Christ, and our church first and I know there are other things that will be added unto you. And besides, we need to consider that God has allowed us to make this money, and we need to share in his work giving back at least a small portion of what he has given us. This I believe is a part of our faithful living.

Faithfulness is linked to personal relationships. Faithfulness to a friend, or fidelity to a marriage partner, are among the greatest gifts within our power to bestow. To be the recipient of such gifts is to be truly blessed.

Perhaps we may not think so today, but the wedding vows are "till death do us part." William Lynn Phelps once said, "Every man who is happily married is a successful man, even if he has failed in everything else." The words "happy" and "successful" depend in part upon the words "faithfulness and fidelity."

A man of noble character and high ideals once was asked the secret of his personal integrity. "I have a friend," was his simple reply. It was this friend who both inspired and constrained him, inspired him to be his best, constrained him from yielding to the worst. Faithfulness to his friend helped to make this man the person he was. Christ comes to us as such a friend - not in some mystical way, but through the lives of those who are closest to us, those who both inspire and constrain us. And then, there is that friend of whom the Old Testament speaks, the one who sticks closer than a brother. From Proverbs 18: 24 we read; "There are friends who pretend to be friends, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

How true that is for I'm sure most of us have both kinds of friends. We can certainly do without the first kind. We can have no closer, no better friend than Jesus Christ. He is always there when we need him. He will never let us down. We can depend upon him and his faithfulness.

In John Bunyan's allegory, one traveling companion of Christian is called by the name of "Faithful." But the people of Vanity Fair put Faithful to death; his testimony is too much for them, and his very presence, a threat to their existence.

Perhaps the greatest stumbling block to living faithfully is our inevitability to see the end from the beginning. It is typical for a child to lose patience with a project that bears no immediate, visible results.

We often become impatient children when the uncertainties and the contradictions of life press upon us. At such times it is not unusual to question the value of faithfulness, of keeping at our task.

Here are some of Kipling's words:

...force, heart, and nerve and sinew

To serve your turn long after you're gone,

And so hold on when there is nothing in you

Except the will which said says to them, "Hold On."

Max Otto, scientist and educator, addressing students at the University of Wisconsin, told about a place along the upper reaches of the Ohio, where the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains hem in one of America's beautiful streams. Here you sometimes awake at daybreak to find that a heavy mist has obliterated the landscape, leaving only a narrow circle of it dimly visible about you. When this happens, you may resign yourself to the weather and wait for a change, or you may do what you have on hand with the best cheer you can muster, calling to the neighbor whose shadowy form you can see, though you cannot be sure what he is about.

"As you keep busy the mist arises. You see the river rolling on towards the Mississippi. Then you see the opposite shore, the houses of the city, the taller buildings, the towers of schools, the steeples of churches, highest of all. Slowly the mist climbs the hills, hangs for a little, like a torn veil on their summit, then vanishes, disclosing a blue sky. And the work you began in the fog you continue in the sunlight." This is the picture of faithful living. Faithfulness: it is that characteristic by which God is known; it is that characteristic by which man must live. Faithfulness should be the model and fame of every Christian, and the first commandment for every skeptic or impatient person.

## **Frozen and Bleeding Hearts**

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

Text is chosen from Luke 10:27; “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with also your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” Many of us have grown up through our childhoods and love Jesus’ parable of the “Good Samaritan”. The Samaritan, who stopped and bound up the wounds of a stranger attacked by bandits on the road to Jericho, after being ignored by the priest and a Levite, was projected for us as the model of human character. This sympathetic man should be our guide in all the years yet to come. This story is a part of our cultural heritage, and countless sermons have been preached on it. But someone has kidnapped the Good Samaritan, and in our jet age, he is very hard to find and so this morning, I raise with you the question of the frozen and bleeding hearts.

By the frozen hearts, I referred to the man or the woman who has closed off his sympathies from his fellow men, consciously or unconsciously, and has decided to fight his own jungle battles without the handicap of tender sentiments of any kind. With occasional exceptions toward his kin or longtime friends, his private elite, he is out for number one, himself. If questioned, he says, it’s a rough world, and one’s first duty is to take care of oneself, for it is certain no one else will. Every man must play the panther.

Reluctantly, at the present moment, I am convinced that a majority of the people in America today do not wish to become involved - when they pass a motor accident on their own street where they could save a life by pulling a driver from a burning car, or in a factory workshop where a man has a heart attack and needs instant medical attention, or in the neighborhood organizations for extending playgrounds and club rooms for the children at loose ends, while both parents work. We are too busy, too detached, too preoccupied, too emotionally barricaded, to stop and act. We are afraid of having to testify in court, of having to lose time from our job, afraid of being sued for damages. So, we turn the key once more on the cell where we have imprisoned the Good Samaritan.

I also realize that perhaps I am not being fair with the American people because I am sure for every person who turns his back on helping another person there is another person who will go out of his way to help someone in trouble. I can only judge from what I see, hear and read about, and I am of the opinion that too many of us have frozen hearts when it comes to helping our fellow men.

By bleeding hearts. I refer to those, often dismissed as the soft and sentimental ones, who talk as though we were our brothers’ keepers, bound by some obligation to worry about the other fellow and his troubles.

Why are so many people cold as ice to other people?

The churches have been telling us for 1900 years, and the Jewish synagogues for 1000 years before, that we must accept our responsibility for man’s welfare collectively - not just our own welfare, or the jig is

up; a man cannot make it alone. Mutual aid is not only good religion, but essential to an enduring political order, to a growing scientific civilization, to finding the heart of any culture deserving of the name. But millions of people either do not believe it or feel it would not work in the world we now have, or that its pure price is too high. So, their hearts freeze up.

First, let us discuss the increase in frozen hearts. Today, we seem to be encountering a great increase in frozen hearts. They defend themselves against the protests of the so-called bleeding hearts, the people of compassion who talk about and really take responsibility. The increase of people with frozen hearts is not necessarily deliberate and calculated, but it is taking place, and no church with any sense of obligation to our Christian heritage can shrug it off.

Getting back to Jesus is commandment and the parable, “who is my neighbor” no one, so far as I know, has even attempted to make out that the man who fell among robbers was a white, Protestant Anglo-Saxon with blonde hair, blue eyes, and a seat on the Stock Exchange. Who is my neighbor? According to Jesus parable, my neighbor is any human being in need. This statement covers a lot of ground and really gives us something to think about. It makes us wonder, how a church can be called a Christian Church unless its outreach goes beyond its own community. If we really think about this, then we definitely know what our responsibility to the millions of people who are starving in our world. We know what our responsibilities are for helping to spread Jesus’ “good news” to those who have not heard it. We also start to realize that we cannot stand by and see people oppressed when we can do something about it.

A very good friend of mine is against every program that has something to do with helping people in foreign lands. He feels that we should take care of the people in our country first. I argue we definitely should not be off in some far corner of the world, while people right here under our very eyes are in need of help. However, I feel that we need to realize that God has been more than generous to us. We have become the richest country in the world, and not only materially. We in this country have more opportunity if we want to take advantage of it and because of our abundance. I feel we can help those at home as well as abroad. I also feel that we have to stop letting the government do our helping for us. I feel that the churches need to play a bigger role in this missionary work, where each individual can feel that he is contributing a part of himself to help in God’s work.

A commentator some months ago wrote the following in the Los Angeles Times: “Never before were the Christians and the Jewish religions so distorted by confused sentimentality as they are today. I confess to being particularly annoyed when some self-righteous sentimentalist informs me, “You are your brothers, keeper!” I am not, and I am not sufficiently arrogant to desire any such station. So, I protest, sentimental churn, that I am not the keeper of every Chinese coolie or Congolese cannibal or Skid Row inebriant. I don’t mean to drench my pillow in nocturnal tears because daily, somewhere, or other, every moment, somebody is wandering from the fold. Not being divine, nor even an archangel, I cannot be held responsible for failing to set right the steps of every hot’ntot. God doesn’t expect us to be their priggish keepers. Persistent interferences with others is a usurpation of divine authority. “He definitely is quite a bleeding

heart.” Secondly - let us consider the long-term conscience and the short-term conscience. The long-term conscience seems to be maturing in America. We have discovered that we cannot prosper privately unless we manage to help everyone else to prosper and survive with us. We have come to depend on each other, and today we most definitely need each other in order to survive.

It is the immediate short-term conscience that should concern us. I am haunted by the kidnapped Good Samaritan, that bleeding heart.

This world seems to a great number of people to be a heartless place in which to live. Time to be compassionate and concerned is the hardest time of all to find. Has something happened to us, or to our world, to make it so much harder to listen to the cry of our brother on the highway of the world, when they lie bleeding there?

On the other hand, Doctor Charles Frankel, in his book, “The Case for the Modern Man”, writes, “If there is now a widespread sense of guilt and failure, it is in part because humanitarian feelings have indeed worsened, and because the moral sympathies of many ordinary men and women now have an immeasurably greater scope than the sympathies of any but the most exceptional leaders of mankind in the past”.

The paradox is real. Our scope is worldwide, but our power to see the injured neighbor at our doorstep has lessened. It is essential to give an annual check to the Mutual Fund or the Red Cross than to visit friends in the hospital or prison ward.

Many of us have acquired a disease called “myopia.” I remember hearing of a minister telling his congregation that a member of the church’s staff fell and injured her leg on a public sidewalk a few days ago. No one stopped to aid her to her feet or to call a taxi or even to take her to a nearby bench. Suddenly everyone was blind, all priests and Levites, as in Jesus’ parable. This is the near-sightedness myopia I am referring to.

Thirdly - what is needed? The compassionate and educated heart. We will never get back to the simplicity of Good Samaritan days, not even to the simplicity of the hidden farms in the hills or to the village intimacy of our grandfather. But, our homes, our schools, our industries and government, our churches, can play a part in changing the relationship between people, one by one, day by day.

It is a splendid thing that our sympathies are broader than they ever were before; this is indeed the compassionate and educated heart we need so greatly. But this same compassion must find expression in our daily lives, even with all the difficulties we face in a compulsive, profit-oriented society, which does indeed at times penalize us for stopping to be human.

We need almost superhuman patience in trying to live today as though we were already in the good

society. This is our task, as I see it, for a long time to come. The obstacles may be harder here in America than in some other parts of the world; I am inclined to think this is the case. But be that as it may, this is the place we are in, and here is where our work is called for.

Many of us feel the task of trying to change the world, person by person is too great. It is a great task, but if we never start, it will never be done. If everyone felt this way, what kind of a world do you think this would be? I know I would not want to live in it.

I am not belittling for an instant the complexity of pursuing the ideal of brotherhood in a transitional society. That happens to be the problem before us; I am persuaded that it can be done, and it starts with each of us at this very hour. You know, many of us complain about the way management handles its people in industry. But we do not try to do anything about it. Or do we use the policy, "If you can't beat them, join them?" We have to start with ourselves. It is true, we will not always be successful, and our milk of human kindness will often sour, and our tempers will probably grow frayed. But we at least know what is happening, and we can take care to preserve our decency and love of the brethren, privately and inwardly. The much-maligned bleeding heart is our only hope, and I trust we will soon find a better name for it. You and I and those immediately around us can begin at this hour to practice the joys and compassion and delight of the sympathetic and understanding heart. Nothing can really stop that, but death itself.

## **He Called Them Boys**

### **Scripture: John 21:1-14**

The text is chosen from John 21:5; “Have you caught anything children?” One evening seven of the disciples of Jesus stood on the shore of Lake Galilee. Peter, who was a fisherman by occupation, said, “I’m going fishing.” He wasn’t in the fishing business at the time. He was probably just following a natural inclination, he liked to fish. The others joined him, and they spent the night on the lake, and caught absolutely nothing.

When they returned in the morning, a man was standing on the shore. They didn’t recognize him at first. As they approached, he called across the diminishing distance between the land and the boat, “Have you caught anything, lads?”

Is it that word “lads” which attracts our attention on this particular Sunday in June, which we have set aside as Children’s Day? In the King James version of the Bible, the word Jesus uses was “children”; “Children, have ye any meat?” In the New English Bible, it is “friends”; “Friends, have you caught anything?” T.R. Glover likes the word. “boys”; it is this friendly, pleasant word, or one very like it, that he used with them.

Whatever word we use in translation, the original was a diminutive. These were big and brawny fishermen, but Jesus addressed them as children or boys.

Simon Peter had often gone a fishing, but never had he gone as he went, in the twilight of that most wonderful evening. He handled the ropes in a new style, with a new dignity. Born of the bigger capacity of his own soul. He turned to the familiar task, but with quite an unfamiliar spirit. He went a fishing, but the powers of the resurrection went with him.

This action of Simon Peters is the only true test of the reality of any spiritual experience. How does it fit me for ordinary affairs? A spiritual festival should do for the soul what a day on the hills does for the body-equip it for the better doing of the duties in the vale.

This action is also a preparative to a renewal of the gracious experience. The road of common duty was just the way appointed for another meeting with the Lord, for in the morning light there came a voice across the waters: “Children, have you any meat?” And that disciple whom Jesus loved sayeth unto Peter: “It is the Lord.”

This morning let us try to get Jesus’ own word by looking at all three words: children, boys, friends. First - “Children, have ye caught anything?”

In some respects, the disciples were like children. They were impressed, as children are, by bigness. As an example, from Mark 13:1 we read; “And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him,

“Lord, Teacher, what wonderful stones, and what wonderful buildings!” And from Luke 21:5 we read; “And, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings.” Occasionally they quarreled among themselves. How often Jesus must have noticed their lack of maturity. The thing of growing up is a long process. Some of us never really do grow up. Even today, how many of us grow up physically, become more or less mentally disciplined in our schools and at the same time acquire little spiritual stature? Paul wrote, “when I was a child, I spoke as a child - I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” Too many of us cling to childhood ideas of God, heaven, prayer, and the spiritual life. Children, those disciples were, and children, we have a tendency to remain.

“Children”, he said. The disciples might remember other words of Jesus, which made it a mark of honor to be called children. He set up a child as the symbol of Kingdom greatness. Across the centuries, we have been pondering his words, “except become as little children, ye shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven.” What did he mean by those words? Was it a child helplessness and teachableness, imagination, capacity for growth, capacity for faith?

“Children”, he called those fishermen of old, and the word echoes to our hearts. It is good to hear him call us children, especially when we have labored all night and caught nothing.

As we share with the disciples, whom Jesus called children, any fault and weakness that may have been simplified in the word “children”, we share, too, the honor and promise in the name Children - the symbol of Kingdom greatness. We shall glory in the name; and we shall be reminded of rich potentialities that are within us everyone. We shall pray, too, with Paul, that “we all attain - to mature manhood, to the measure of the fullness of Christ; so that we may no longer be children - rather grow up in every way unto him, who is the head, into Christ.”

Secondly - our next translation says that Jesus said to the disciples, “have you caught anything, boys?”

They weren't very old. In their 20s, perhaps. Someone says that until one is thirsty, one is only an affixation of a man. I think perhaps this is true, as I look back on my own youth. When we are young, we think we are pretty wise and smart. But actually, as we get older, we realize how immature we actually were. And therefore, even though we think we are men, we certainly can be called boys - as Jesus did his disciples. The disciples in spirit and attitude were often boys.

They must have loved the outdoors. They walked the roads and slept under the stars. Occasionally they went fishing. By this they must have developed a comradeship, which was expressed in a word of address that passed between them. It would be followed sometimes by a word, a banter, or a joke. “Boys, have you caught anything?” It's a pleasantry that gets under the skin of an unsuccessful fisherman - all in fun.

“Boys”- It recognizes their enthusiasm, not only for a fishing expedition, but for setting up a Kingdom. Sometimes the enthusiasm of the disciples almost ran away with them. This indicated that they must have

had a lot of it. And Jesus, their leader, would take advantage of it when he called them boys.

“Boys” a recognition of their potentialities and possibilities. They were men in the making. A Peter, a Thomas, a John were not what they should become. Jesus knew that they were developing the strength of character which belong to men of the Kingdom. But even then, they were still boys to him.

Christ will help us all to grow up real fast if we truly accept him into our lives. When we become Christ-minded - our lives take on a new meaning and purpose and we start living our lives for an entirely different reason. All of us need to grow up sometimes.

Third, we have this word “friends” - this is the new English Bible translation of the word. “Friends, have you caught anything?” Who knows where the translator got this idea? They may have caught it from the attitude of Jesus rather than from the word he used.

We read from the Gospel of Mark. Chapter 3:14; “And he appointed twelve to be with him,” that is all. And they are with him under all sorts of circumstances - Friendship depends not only on great moments; it means companionship in the trivial, too. It means idle hours together, partnership, in commonplace things.

Jesus truly is our friend, a companion no matter where we go or what we do.

This incident in our scripture reading this morning, when Jesus saw the disciples fishing, took place in the period between the resurrection and the ascension. He had previously said to them, “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” He had proved himself a friend indeed. He now called them friends. He was sure of them. He was telling them that he had absolute confidence that they would not hold back life itself, in the cause of which he was Lord.

So often the message of the Lord reaches us through some experience or acquaintance (or word) reckoned at the time as ordinary or commonplace. Only afterwards, and in light of results, do we realize what or who was really in touch with us through the apparently commonplace event or person (or word).

Certainly a spectacular event doesn't have to take place in our lives for Christ to talk or communicate with us. He is in everything that surrounds us, every moment of every day if, only we would recognize it and appreciate it.

Regarding those young people who are graduating from high school this year and those who already are in college, I would like to say that when you leave home, mom and dad will not be there to guide you directly. You will be pretty much on your own, making your own decisions. Some of those decisions will not be easy. I know you could use help making them. This is where your parent's instructions and guidance over the years is really going to pay off. Your Christian training will also help you to make the right decisions.

But please remember this, Jesus Christ, is constantly beside you and will gladly help you make choices and decisions, if you want him to. Remember, you are never alone for Jesus Christ truly is your friend always.

Jesus called his disciples children, boys- lads, friends. Basically, they all mean the same, for Jesus is our father, we are his boys - lads, we are his children, he is our friend. We take this call from Jesus' life and recognize it as his call once more to love and follow him. This it meant to the disciple by Galilee and this it means to us today. Love Christ as he loves you. Follow him and become his disciple.

## **He Tarries Among Us**

### **Scripture: Matthew 28**

Text is chosen from Acts 1:3; “To them he presented himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days, and speaking of the Kingdom of God.” Forty days divided the resurrection and the ascension. What a wonderful forty days they must have been for the apostles. There was first the almost intolerable ache of joy in their hearts as the wonderful truth slowly mastered the lifelong conviction that dead men do not live again. There was, also, the delirious hope every morning that Christ might at any moment appear to them, and another proof he added to the accumulating evidence that he was, indeed, alive, forevermore. Most of all, there were the actual appearances themselves, the teaching and the reminders, the promises and the admonitions.

I think - had I been one of them – that what would have impressed me most, would have been my own incredible dullness in the days before Calvary. Again and again, I fancy, it would have risen in my bewildered memory, “Yes, he did say that! The Son of Man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day arise again! It comes back to me now. How could I have been so dull? I must have been thinking of something else – what was I going to get out of it when he was made king and, in my selfishness, I let him go to his death misunderstood and alone.”

But the apostles were human beings, the same as we are today. Most of us really pay very little attention to other people, especially if that person is talking to us and trying to make us understand for our own good. Many of us think we know everything that is to be known and we seem to close our minds to others talking. We hear what we want to hear, and we really do not understand all we hear until we think back over it later on. So, the apostles were human as we are today.

However, those forty days after the resurrection certainly must have been wonderful for the apostles.

But what were they for Jesus? What was the divine purpose in that more than a month between his rising on earth and his rising to Heaven? What was unfinished in the work, or incomplete in the training of his disciples, that could still deny him the full enjoyment of the Father’s home above?

That is the question I should like us to face.

First, I think he tarried among them, to lead them in no doubt about the resurrection.

The proofs were numerous. He came - and came again.

Some things are so incredible that we find them hard to believe though all our senses testified that they are true.

In fact, I am not so sure that many of us really believe that Jesus was resurrected. I think we have our doubts, mainly because we cannot physically see how this can be possible. We want proof. We want something more than hearsay. We can have more than hearsay once we accept Jesus Christ into our lives. The doubts will be gone, faith will be enough, and we will believe. Jesus Christ is our risen and living Lord among us today, as he was to the first apostles.

If Jesus had appeared to the apostles on one day only, they would have doubted it afterwards themselves. They would have said: "It's an illusion. We were overwrought. We only imagined it."

Do you remember the little girl visiting the zoo who saw an elephant for the first time? She stared at the huge bulk, the flapping ears, and the elongated nose of the mighty beast and said quite definitely: "I don't believe it." There are times when the mind refuses the clear judgment of the senses. And so, it would have been with the apostles, had Jesus only appeared to them once.

So Christ harried among them. So he piled up the proof. Mary; Peter; two going to Emmaus; ten disciples together; eleven disciples; James; even on one occasion, five hundred at once - they all saw him.

It couldn't be - and yet it was! Dead men do not rise again, but this man did! "We will announce this news to the ages," said the apostles. "On our honest testimony, multi millions yet unborn, will reply."

Is there any wonder that this Christian message is called "good news"? What better news could there be? I wonder if those first apostles had any inkling of the importance of this message they were going to proclaim and the far-reaching effects it would have down through the ages? I doubt it very much. But certainly, it was and is a message that will live forever.

As our text says, (Acts: 1: 3) "He showed himself alive." Has Jesus Christ ever come alive for you? Have you ever experienced the moment pictured in the old Greek myth of Galatia when the statue comes to life and steps down from the pedestal and becomes a living person? The church perversely spent centuries in putting Jesus on a remote pedestal. Now it takes still more centuries to lift him from it and allow him to live. For indeed, he is alive and among us today.

"To whom he also showed himself." These words record that Jesus showed himself to those who were his friends, who had been attentive to him. The assurance of religion comes to the aristocracy of the attentive, to those who have exposed their minds and the secret places of their hearts to the data of religion as a photographic plate is exposed to a view. And it may well be added that we ought not to allow ourselves to be browbeaten by scientific bullies who swing clubs and tell us that religious experience is an illusion, because it cannot be proved by astronomy, chemistry, or psychology. Such a person is exactly like a man trying to get the flower show on the radio. And so, we have no doubt as the apostles, that Christ did rise from the dead.

Here is the second reason why I think our Lord tarried: he tarried that the disciples might learn a new independence.

When Jesus was with them all the time, they could refer every question to his immediate judgement. “What shall we do about this tribute money, Lord?” “What shall we do about these Samaritans who will not give us hospitality in their village?”

It is clear that people who can turn for an authoritative ruling on every difficult question do not grow beyond a certain point. Sooner or later the wise teacher stands a hands breath off and nurtures independence by strengthening individual judgment.

It’s like a person breaking in on a new job. The instructor teaches him how to do the job, actually shows him, but if he never lets the man do it himself, he will never actually learn. If the instructor is always there to answer his questions and direct his every move, the man will never have to think for himself. He will never have to face a decision. Quite often, most people want to be left alone so they can make their own decisions and correct their mistakes if they make them. I believe Jesus was being a good instructor because he had led them constantly for those three years, telling them every move to make and how to make them. Now that he was going to be gone, he wanted to do it gradually and get them thinking and deciding for themselves. Actually getting them stronger in the area of making their own judgments.

To such a point, the apostles had now come. They were to be helped supremely by the gift of the Holy Spirit, but the Spirit’s help was to be received and interpreted through human faculties, and those faculties were to be experienced by independent use.

Jesus was schooling his men to world evangelism and to all the solemn responsibilities of spreading the church. And he did it in part by this gradual withdrawal. They had to learn to think and act for themselves. Not daily, but only at intervals, could they listen now to his spoken words.

We actually learn when we stand alone. It was so when we came to the years of manhood and womanhood. The day came when we had to leave home. There may have been some shrinking in our minds from the ordeal and something of unwillingness on our parent’s part to let us go, but we knew, and they knew, that in most cases it is necessary for the fullest development, and we learned most when we stood alone, and I think perhaps we learn faster.

The third great lesson the apostles had to learn was this: fellowship does not depend on a body. Fellowship is really a companionship of minds. It can be independent of a body; it can never be independent of a mind.

We can dispense with the body. It is very hard for us to believe that, and it was very hard for the apostles. And that was one of the things which Jesus had to teach them in those forty days. He came and he went. The intervals between his visits grew longer, and then he left there, in his bodily presence, forever. But not

before they had learned that lesson; that fellowship is independent of the physical form.

Symbols help us sometimes to realize Christ's nearness. John H. Jowett tells the story of R.F. Horton on an occasion when Horton asked to take the chair and presided over a meeting. He begged them to leave the chair, apparently empty.

"I want our Lord to preside over us," he said. "I will sit at his side and say such things as need saying but let him take the chair."

Dr Jowett adds: "the effect of the moment was almost overwhelming, and if, at the meeting, any man were tempted to say any word that was unworthy, the site of the empty chair froze the word upon his lips, so that it could not be said."

This is difficult for us as Christians to come to realize we have fellowship with Christ, even though physically he isn't with us. Perhaps this is why many people cannot believe that such a Lord exist if you cannot see him. But believe he does exist. He is very much present in all our lives, in fact, as much as we want to let him be. As Christians, he is and should be the center of our lives. He actually should conduct our lives to the point where we depend on him to help us make decisions and judgments we otherwise would be forced to make without divine guidance. We most definitely have to learn the lesson, as did the first apostles, that fellowship is independent of physical form. Christ's Holy Spirit is always present in our lives.

Learn that lesson again in these days between the Resurrection and the Ascension. When the cloud received him out of their sight, the apostles knew quite definitely that that could make no difference to them; that he was close to them throughout though unseen; that when he said, "Lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world," That was plainly true and true forevermore.

# Love Lifts Life

## Scripture: I Corinthians 13

Text is chosen from 1st Corinthians 13:13; “so faith, hope, love, abide; these three; but the greatest of these is love.” Christopher Morley said that if we were given 5 minutes warning of sudden death, 5 minutes to say what it all had meant to us, all telephone booths would be occupied by people trying to call up other people to stammer that they love them.

Love has been called the Queen of words and well does it deserve this designation. Paul’s exultation of love in 1st Corinthians is but the revelation of true insight. Even a casual reading of this great passage, if it can be read casually, leads one into the presence of spiritual greatness. Here one breathes mountain air. Here one treads lofty places.

Let us know some of the characteristics of this supreme virtue and value.

First of all, true love shares.

Love has a sharing quality that makes a place for others. As our modern life becomes increasingly complex, we read more of the spirit of love that keeps before us our total responsibility. As we become more and more interested, we depend more on each other. Health, education, government - all places of community life - represent opportunities for sharing and enlightened leadership. As we love people, we will feel our obligation to contribute our best for the best of all.

This love will reach out to include all mankind.

Here is a great actress’s testimony. “A young man asked Mrs. Fiske, “What quality do you regard most important in an actor?” The great actress replied, “he must go on the stage with love in his heart, always. He must love the people he knows are out there. He must love everyone - the tired businessman, the critic. Most of all, he will love those who sit in the top gallery. They have given him more than they can afford in order to come. The actor should do his best for them, love them best of all.”

We must do what we can to usher in an era of goodwill among men. This will do more than anything else to halt the insane world conflict that is ringing our social order to the brink of ruin.

It is a sad and tragic commentary on our civilization that it advances with man’s ability to kill his fellow man. In this rough order man has advanced from an “uncivilized” state to a “civilized” community.

The civilized man could siege a rock, and with it he could kill one man. With a club, a spear, a sword, and a bow and arrow he continued to kill a single person at a time in combat. Then gunpowder was discovered, and the repeating rifle was invented. With this rifle a man could kill ten men. Later, with a machine gun,

a hundred men could be killed. Then, as the crowning achievement, when men reached the heights of modern civilization, he possessed the atom bomb. With this, he could kill 50,000 men at one time.

Now he has created even greater forces for destruction. It is going to take a lot of good sense and a lot of goodwill to control the product of our vaulted civilization. Only the way of love for God and man can do it.

The other day I heard a story which I don't believe to be true. It was about a farmer who was too poor to buy a good grade of stock for his farm. He was interested in selling eggs in the market, but for that to be profitable, you must have well-selected hens. He had to be satisfied with culls.

My dictionary says that a cull is something selected but selected because it is inferior or worthless.

This farmer's hens were all culls. But he talked to the hens, sang to them, and loved them, as Saint Francis loved his little sisters, the birds. According to this story, the culled hens, the object of love, eventually won blue ribbons, first prize, at the County Fair for their proven priorities at egg laying.

Now, I don't quite believe that story. And yet it contains a truth, a great truth - love is powerful for good. Of course, I don't mean sticky sentimental love. I mean love, that cares, that tries to bring the best out of its object. I can argue against my own disbelief of the chicken story, because I have known a boy to take a puppy that was a cull and make a real dog out of him.

Then, there are people who seem to be culls. They look inferior. They act inferior. They are less than ordinary, and sometimes they give the neighborhood a lot of trouble. Often, they land in jail.

Now I will tell you this true story of Bill Marcy. He gave every evidence of being a cull. He was the worst boy in his Massachusetts school. He led the gang that threw out teacher after teacher. Then the school board named another teacher, Salem Towne, and everybody waited to see who would win this time – Bill Marcy or the new teacher.

Now we must shift the scene. Many years have passed. The Governor of Massachusetts is giving a reception for the Honorable William L Marcy - a man who became United States Senator, three times Governor of New York, and Secretary of State. The old schoolteacher, Salem Towne, is at the reception. When the two men affectionately greeted each other, the Governor said, "Do you know each other?" Then the honorable William L Marcy replied, "This is the man who made me when I was a boy. Everybody was against me, none, no, not even my own father or mother, saw any good in me. He was the first who believed in me - whatever merit or distinction I have attained; I owe to him more than any other living person."

The cull became a prize winner because someone cared. This is what real, genuine love and concern for people can do.

Secondly - True love builds. Godly affection is a wonderfully creative force. It moves people constructively. It paves the way for a meeting of minds. It provides the atmosphere in which respect is nourished. Paul would have all believe that love is more important than eloquence, stronger than knowledge, loftier than charity.

Love builds faith. Thomas Carlyle once wrote: “my kind mother did me one invaluable service. She taught me her own simple version of the Christian faith. How indestructibly the good grows and propagates itself, among the weedy entanglements of evil. The highest whom I knew on Earth, I here saw bowed down with awe unspeakable, before a Higher in Heaven. Such things, especially in infancy, reach inward to the very core of your being. Mysteriously does a Holy of Holies build itself into visibility in the mysterious deeps, and reverence springs forth.”

Loving parents can transfer their faith to their children and others. Faith is transferable in this sense. Though it must finally be achieved personally, a deep love can make the achievement easier.

There most definitely is a lack of spiritual training in our country today. A municipal law expert reports that lack of spiritual training is the greatest single cause of juvenile delinquency. Roger Armbergh, Los Angeles City attorney, said that one juvenile court judge who studied cases of 8,000 boys and girls under 17 involved in law violations reported that only 42 of them attended Sunday school regularly.

Sunday School is definitely a start for a youngster’s spiritual training. But they must have cooperation of the parents in the homes too. I firmly believe we have to start insisting that our young people do the things that we feel is best for them. Oh, we will get resistance, but I’m sure later in life they will thank us.

Love builds character. Parents must assume some of the responsibility for the integrity of their children.

And well-known educator says, “Studies show that integrity is largely an acquired characteristic. We tend to grow into a state of integrity, rather than to have it given to us. While we have such rules as the Ten Commandments, constitutions, and civil laws. And rules of the game, they are not enough.

Knowledge is necessary, but it is inadequate. Significant influences on our youth are in the home situation and with their friends. Within the home, the mother is the greatest influence. A teacher in school is important, but not nearly to the degree of importance the mother attains.”

So, you mothers take notice and realize the importance of your influence.

A real home is a gymnasium because it has a program to give a child a healthy body. It is a light house because it reveals breakers ahead and shows a clear way past them. It is a playground providing for innocent games and sports. It is a workshop where the child is taught to do things. It is a forum where honest and open discussions of life and great problems are hopefully discussed. It is a secret society where

family loyalties are sacred. It is a health resort where mothers are natural physicians. It is a cooperative league where the interest of each is made the interest of all. It is a temple of worship where the child learns of a heavenly father whose love finds ready response in the heart of the child. This is a real home. How does your home measure up with these statements?

Thirdly, love is sacrificial. Love that is worthy is costly. When a person loves another or loves a great cause, he must pay for his affection in the finest contribution he can make. Genuine love demands that we probe beneath the surface. And seek to eliminate the conditions causing the evils that plague us as a race and as individuals.

Simple preaching against war is not enough. We must create the conditions of peace in modern society. And this is not easy nor inexpensive. A coin tossed to a beggar really begs the issue of poverty. It doesn't, in itself, even seek to solve the social problems involved. Great evils are not exorcised by superficial sympathy or a patronizing attitude. The price of solution is higher.

Parents need to face in love the problems of teenagers. One of the hopeful signs of the day is the fact that parents are blaming themselves for the troubles of their children. Love is costly in its exercise of necessary discipline. Love is not only tenderness. It may be sternness. It may involve stiff rebuke, even coercion. No loving parent would want to leave a splinter in his child's foot because he hurt the child in removing it. Punishment for misdeeds is expensive when administered in love. Yet who will deny its necessity in the violation of the law that would protect and conserve the rights of all.

The home is the scene of our greatest opportunities. All too often it is the scene of our greatest failures. Perhaps it's because we think we are too busy with other trivial things, or that our children can take care of themselves. Perhaps it's the time in which we are living. At any rate, we certainly need to take the job of parenting seriously.

A hunger for love and affection is native to the heart of man, and we have been set in families so that this hunger may be appeased. It is God's plan for us. If it isn't, how do you explain the fact that young people from good, respectable families, often get into trouble. It has to be because they have not been shown the love they long for.

When parents are willing to sacrifice for the moral and spiritual development of their children, they are wise and their children in maturity may well rise up and call them blessed. A minister passes along this incident. A mechanic, after a hard day's work was seen by a friend catching a baseball with his son. The friend stopped and looked over the fence and said, "Bill, aren't you tired?" "Why, yes, I am. Of course, I'm tired." "Well, what under the sun are you doing that for?" "Oh.", he said, "I'd rather have a backache now than a heartache later on." Bill was smart. Aren't you smart like Bill? Do you really take the time you should with your children? Every one of us can become so busy we have no time to do a decent job at anything. As Christians our responsibility is to pick out the things that really matter and spend our time

at them. Our time is valuable and should not be wasted. Our children deserve at least this much. Let us remember what Paul says in 1st Corinthians - "So faith, hope, love, abide; these three; but the greatest of these is love." Love most definitely does lift life.

## **Mothers Have a Glory**

### **Scripture: Proverbs 31:10-31**

The text is chosen from Proverbs 31:28; “Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her.” I do not know the source of this story, but I am most grateful that I can pass it on to you. It is the story of a man who traveled frequently by the river boats on the Mississippi. Usually, he avoided the entrance to the engine room because of the smell of the hot oil on the boiler and the odor of the stagnant bilge water that had not been pumped out. The combination of odors from the engine room gave him a disagreeable sensation as he passed the door.

One week, as he was taking his ride on the riverboat, he noted a great difference. Lounging in the entrance to the engine room was a short, rather squat man with a gleaming face and bright eyes. He was holding a Bible and reading some of its passages. but from the engine room there were no foul odors. The engine itself had been polished until there wasn't a speck of oil left on it. The bilge water had been pumped out and even the boards on the upside had been scrubbed clean. It was so different from anything that this traveler had met before, that he couldn't help but speak about it to the engine man sitting in the doorway. All the men said, as his face lit up, was this: “I have a glory.”

“I have a glory.” Malcolm K. Burden, who retells this story comments, “A strange use it would seem for that noble word. Yet in a clean engine room that man had found his glory.”

The task of motherhood is wondrously great in its creative possibilities – tiring to be sure in its many details and its many trials and ordeals along the way - but so great in its perspective and in its possible achievement, that there can be applied to it, “I have a glory.”

Now, this is Mother's Day on the church calendar. Indulgence in sentimentality is out. Neither mother nor their children welcome this excess. There is, however, a certain sentiment that we cannot, nor should we, suppress as we give honor to motherhood. Mothers do have a certain glory.

Mothers have a glory reflected from an ancient poem. In many churches in the land. Words of King Lemuel. (Proverbs 31) will be read for the Scripture lesson. This passage begins, “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far beyond rubies.” It also reads, “Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband also, and he praises her.”

Lemuel is an unknown king, and the words of his poem were written long ago. To the present day they reflect the glory of a woman. Though the good woman may no longer make fine linen and sell it, she does look well to the ways of her household.

It should be noted that the poem appears in the Book of Proverbs. This book does not always speak of wives and mothers with words of praise. At one place it reads, “It's better to live in a corner of a housetop

then in a house shared with a contentious woman.” (Proverbs 21:19). And again, “Like a gold ring in a swine’s snout is a beautiful woman without discretion.” (Proverbs 11:22) These words throw into vivid contrast the words of Lemuel. Proverbs 31:10 through 31 really says that the glory of the virtuous woman is her industry. Most mothers are always busy doing something. Their work never seems to be done.

The glory of the virtuous woman is her kindness; “She stretches out her hand to the poor.” Most mothers are kind, not only to us, but to our friends, to neighbors and everyone they come into contact with. They are willing to give people handouts and help those who really need help.

The glory of a virtuous woman is in her character; “strength and honor are her clothing.” Most mothers are stronger than any of us can possibly imagine. They have to be to raise a family because always the unexpected is happening that really requires extra strength and faith.

The glory of a virtuous woman is her wisdom. What one of us have not received some mighty good advice from our mothers. Perhaps we would not admit that at the time, but we will now, for we know she was right and always acting in our behalf.

It is no wonder that the praise of an ancient king should also be our praise for a good wife and mother. Such a woman surely does have a glory.

On the banks of the James River is a tombstone erected by a husband in memory of his wife, who was one of the maidens who had come to Virginia in 1619 to marry the lonely settlers. The stone bears this tribute: “She touched the soil of Virginia with her foot and the wilderness became a home.”

Secondly - mothers have a glory which is the glow of idealism. The idealism of their children rests upon them. This is the reason we have a Mother’s Day.

Perhaps no mother would claim that she is the embodiment of King Lemuel’s poem. She knows that she is not the perfect woman. Nevertheless, the idealism of her children gives her glory.

By this idealism, mothers are lifted to a higher level of conduct and character. They live under the power of great expectations. Mothers expect that their children will turn out to be great men and women, persons that they can be proud of. They expect their children to respect their wishes and to make something out of themselves. Mothers always expect the very best for their children.

By their idealism of womanhood and motherhood, sons and daughters are strengthened and inspired to overcome temptations and win victories in life. They, too, come under the power of a great expectation, the expectation and prayers of their mothers. Mothers can help their children overcome temptations and give them strength, courage, and faith, which can only be excelled by that of God himself. How often and how hard most mothers pray for their children, that no harm comes to them, that they grow up to be the

kind of person God wants them to be.

By the idealism which rest upon womanhood and motherhood, the state and the church are strengthened. If all church members could be mothers, we would have real Christian churches. If all human beings were like mothers, this world would be a better place. In which to live. But we are not all mothers, and that's why mothers continue to pray and seek guidance and direction for their children.

Thirdly - mothers have a glory which comes from shining opportunity. Their contact with a new generation is close and intimate; it extends through a period of years. By this they have a duty, a privilege, a responsibility, and opportunity. (call it what you will) which adds luster to their lives.

We turn again to King Samuel's poem. We miss something very important if we do not begin at its beginning. It reads: "The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him." Read on: "Give not the strength unto women." Continue to read: "It is not for Kings to drink wine. Judge righteously and plead the cause of the poor and the needy." This mother of old taught her son chastity, temperance, and justice. She had a shining opportunity to influence a king and she accepted it.

Are there any lessons that our present generation of youths need to learn more than these three: chastity, temperance, and justice? Is there anyone who can teach them better than the mother of the land? Not that they alone have this responsibility, but there's is the greater part. It is indeed a part of their glory to lead a generation in the ways chastity, temperance, and justice.

Queen Victoria was officiating one day at the Royal Academy of Sciences. Somewhat overawed, she turned to her Prime Minister, John Bright, and whispered, "where do all these learned men come from?" John Bright replied, "from babies, Your Majesty."

John Bodo, commenting on this incident, said, "Learned men do come from babies, but so do all kinds of men. For good or ill, our destiny is shaped in large part in our homes."

Most definitely the home, the parents, have a big responsibility for shaping the lives of their children. Mothers especially have even more opportunity than fathers.

At any rate, in raising children, parents must communicate. Communication is essential. The Christian case for chastity is, I believe, a strong and convincing one. But it cannot be presented to youth, or to anyone else, without the use of language. Perhaps it would be well to explain the meaning of chastity so we all know what the word means. Chastity means the state of being pure. To be modest. When Christian parents are unable to discuss this subject with other Christian parents facing the same problems and unable to find ways of making the standards in which they believe convincing to their sons and daughters, they are at a double disadvantage.

To be hip and with it, to be modern, I do not believe it means we have to lower our moral standards, and if we do, then I would much rather be old fashioned. It's true that parents need help in conveying this message to their children. I believe that churches can and must help with this. For instance, a group of parents can meet together, formulate their convictions, and then have some well-chosen intermediary communicate these convictions to their teenage young people as a group. This method brings encouraging results. This kind of group communication can often open up the way for better individual communication within the family. The standard of chastity before marriage, maintained in our Christian culture through the long centuries, is today taking a heavy beating.

Of course, in order to convey convictions to our children, we ourselves must really believe in them and have definite convictions of our own. Here are "The Beatitudes for the Home, written by John Oxenham.

"Blessed are they who rejoice in their children; to them is revealed the Fatherhood of God.

Blessed are they who know the power of love; they dwell in God for God is love.

Blessed are the songful of the soul; they carry light and joy to shadowed lives.

Blessed are they that see visions; they shall rejoice in the hidden ways of God.

Blessed are they that have understanding heart; to them shall be multiplied kingdoms of delight.

Blessed are the childless, loving children still; there shall be a mightier family - even as the stars of heaven.

Blessed are they whose memories we cherish; our thoughts add jewels to their crowns.

It is always fitting to bring in the home on Mother's Day. For truly mothers are important in any home, in fact, it is almost impossible to have one without them.

Mothers do have a difficult task. In a society that is deeply and widely immoral, where the social pressures make Christian morality almost impossible, where entertainment conspires against chastity, where young people have a degree of freedom for which they are not prepared, where the meaning of the word "love" is to largely determined by unchristian influences, where commercial interest attempt to seduce young people to careless and harmless indulgences; against such odds the Christian mother of the land are called upon to communicate the ideals and practices of chastity, temperance and justice to their sons and daughters.

Mothers who accept this responsibility have a glory. Let them lead the way. Let all good men and good women follow. We know with God's help they will succeed. I call on all fathers, aunts, and uncles to give the mothers the help and support they need. Together with our help and God's, the mothers of the world will succeed.

## **On Making Good People**

### **Scripture: Luke 19:1-10**

Text is chosen from Proverbs 12:2; “A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but I man of evil devices he condemns. Question: “Can you have a good society without good people?” Answer: “I’m quite sure you cannot. And that’s why this particular crisis, this spirited crisis of the American people, disturbs me profoundly.”

These are the final words of an interview with Dr. Robert E. Fitch conducted by the National Staff of the U.S. Navy and World Report.

Thousands of others are deeply disturbed because of the spiritual crisis in America and the world. And I suppose that most of them would agree that there aren’t enough good people, or good-enough people, to a build a good society. The crisis then is a challenge to the Christian Church. The church is called on to produce good people. To the degree it is successful. Often its failure is conspicuous.

Why does it fail so often? Because it confuses means and ends. The church makes an end of a large membership or a massive plant or an intricate organization. By concentration upon these, the concern for and the care of the individual is lost sight of. In fact, we sometimes become so engrossed in how our church organization should be set up, how we shall redecorate the church, how we should expend it and take in all the persons we can get our hands on as members, that we lose sight of the real meaning of the church, the real meaning of the Christian religion. While we are concerned about these things, the individual seeking Jesus Christ is lost and can find no help whatsoever because really Christ is farthest from our minds and hearts. I’m not saying these things are not important because they are, but I believe they are secondary. The main object of any church should be to lead people to Jesus Christ and if we fail to do this we may as well close our doors.

We note, too, that in the educational world there has been a protest against universities that have lost sight of their students in the over attention given to the production of scholars and their books.

The building of churches, the elaboration of church machinery, the production of theologies, the encouragement of ecumenism will do little to meet the spiritual crisis of the present age. The call comes to produce good men and women.

“A young writer in England recently said that our civilization faces the choice of producing a higher type of man, or small.” Truly, I believe we have to start living and thinking spiritually or its going to be too late. I think God has let us go our merry ways about long enough.

For our purpose this morning the term ‘good’ needs not be defined; we know goodness when we see it. There is no formula for the production of good men. What then can the church do to serve in the

present crisis? (Keep in mind who the church is – you and I) First of all – the church can produce good men and women by bringing people into contact with Jesus Christ. That looks like a religious cliché. It is profoundly true. A single instance, that of Zacchaeus had contact with Jesus and by that he became a better man. Let men come into the I – Thou relationship and something happens inside them. It was so in Jesus' day. It was so in the early church. It was so across the years of Christian history. It is so today. It is conspicuously seen where Christian missionaries in Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, New Guinea, and other lands bring savages to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It is seen in the slum sections of modern cities. It is an observation that can be made in every town and village and city parish in America.

We are not saying that other religions and other agencies are without result in developing good persons. But this is a unique function of the church of Jesus Christ. Often the church has failed, but on the other hand its success has been conspicuous. It should be about this business.

When men are brought into contact with Christ they are brought into relationship with God. In this contact goodness is revealed and evil is shown up for what it is. Christ is seen as the revelation of God's love. By contact with the living Christ, a man becomes a new creature: he becomes a better man – a good man.

Let us not forget who the church is – you & I. Let us remember that in order for us to lead other persons into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, we ourselves must have known this fellowship in our own lives. Let us also remember that the church certainly has to be more than just a social gathering where people get together to tell and laugh and have a good time. The church is a fellowship of believers, believers in Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. If we truly have this kind of fellowship, all these other things will come automatically because we will have the spirit within us guiding, directing, and driving us. Yes, the church can produce better men by bringing them into contact with Jesus Christ, which is its main business.

Secondly - the church can produce better men by a means that Jesus used to perfect the lives of his disciples. Jesus said in his prayer for his disciples, as recorded in John 17:19; "For their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth." In this prayer there is a prophetic principle. Be and do what you want others to be and do. Jesus consecrated himself so that his disciples might be consecrated. The better man that my country needs must begin in me; if I feel the need of better men, I will begin with self-discipline and self-development. If I want a good son, I will begin by being a good father. If I want a good woman for a wife, I will be a good man and husband. How many virtuous circles can be worked out on this principle? What marvelous results would become of the lives of people, if all in the church would act upon this principle.

It certainly is good place for all us parents to start, and that is with our children. If we could raise our children to be better persons, eventually we would have a better world. Of course, in order to raise better children, we have to set better examples and start being better persons ourselves. This, I believe, is where we can start building a better world, within ourselves.

What is consecration? Is it not the setting apart to the highest use? The highest use James made of himself was to use himself that others might put themselves to the highest use. So, the Kingdom comes.

“Everything I know about history, every bit of experience and observation that has contributed to my thought, has confirmed me in the conviction that the real wisdom of human life is compounded out of the experience of ordinary men. The utility, the vitality, the fruitage of life does not come from the top to the bottom; it comes, like the natural growth of a great tree, from the soil, up through the trunk, into the branches to the foliage and the fruit. The great struggling unknown masses of the men who are at the base of everything are the dynamic force that is lifting the levels of society. A nation is a great., and only as great, as her rank and file.” These words have been quoted from Woodrow Wilson.

Thirdly, to make better men and women, the church must really care for people. (You and I must care about people) It is not enough for the church to admit Mary and John, 13, into the membership of the church. This should deepen its concern for the young people that they grow up into good persons. How soon some people drop out of church after they have been received into membership? Does the church notice their absence? Does the church care? Do the members of the church share the care of their pastor over their fellow members? When there is need in the community, does the church prove itself helpful? Again, we have to remind ourselves the church is only going to have concern as you and I have concern. If we do not care whether people who join the church and never again darken the doors except for a marriage or a funeral, I’m sure there are people probably will never come again. Do we care if a person is sick in their community? Do we offer to help when there is need for some outside help? And if we do offer, do we do it because of necessity or because we feel it’s our duty? Or are we offering because deep down in our hearts we want to? It’s too bad we don’t have someone or something to blame for the way the church responds, but I’m glad we will have to look to ourselves first. You know, many people who are unchurched, are right now looking at the church, looking at you and I, trying to see if we are different and if we are, would it be a good thing for them to be in the church. We never know when and how effective our witnessing can be. Some people do not want to belong to a church if it contains some of the persons they know and how true this is. Many of us act and look like entirely different persons on Sunday then we do the rest of the week. When we learn and come to realize that Christianity and our relationship to Jesus Christ has to always be the same, no matter what day of the week it is, or no matter where we are or no matter what we are doing, then the church, then you and I, will begin to care what happens to people. To make better men and women, boys and girls, the church must really, really care for people. Men respond to care, which is outgoing and sincere. Boys and girls respond to the care of their teachers, parents, friends. Why do we love? Because Christ first loved us. We all know how much Christ loves us if we remember the Easter message. How does a person become good? By response to goodness.

A child from a house that discourages religious activity was brought to our Sunday school by a friend. To the surprise of those who knew her family, she came regularly thereafter. One day, she was asked why she was now regularly attending Sunday school. She replied, “It’s because my teacher is such a fine person and reminds me of what Jesus must be like.” Actually, her teacher lacked many skills. She had

accepted the class on a temporary basis and did not consider herself qualified, but she compensated for the shortcomings by the attitude she expressed in every activity and every lesson.

It looks as though the teacher fulfilled the true point of the sermon: she taught the child concerning Jesus; she disciplined herself for the child's sake; she cared for her pupil. I know if we follow the philosophy, better persons are bound to result.

The I-don't care state is a vicious one to be in. If we do not care whether we have a good society in the nation and the world, this sermon will be of little avail. But I know and believe we do care. We care enough to apply these and other means to produce good men and women This is the church's business.

## **Regular Broadcast and Special Assignment**

### **Scripture: Acts 8:26-40**

Text is chosen from II Corinthians 5:20; “We are ambassadors for Christ.” What’s my line? The apostle Paul made a constructive answer to that question. His answer is clear out, concise: “We are ambassadors.” This is the business of publishing, proclaiming, revealing, announcing, preaching the Good News of God. We are ambassadors not diplomats. Doctor Hugh Thompson Kerr says, “We are not to preach sociology, but salvation; not economics, but evangelism; not reform, but redemption; not culture, but conversion; not progress but pardon; not the social order, but the new birth; not a reorganization but a new creation; not democracy but the gospel; not civilization but Christ. We are ambassadors, not diplomats.” As Christians and ambassadors of Christ, we do not have to smooth anything over. Everything we have to say can be said straight from the heart.

We are representatives, not salesman. We actually represent Jesus Christ, what he is, what he can do for you, how he can change your life, how he can change the work. We have nothing to sell. It’s all for free.

We are servants, not masters. Christians have no place in the role of master. Our Lord said he came to serve, and this should be our attitude as we go out into the world as his ambassadors. We can help so much more by being servants and actually serving others.

Two popular reporters worked together in broadcasting the news on a certain TV Broadcasting Company. Five evenings each week they broadcast but occasionally one of them is absent on “special assignment”, while the other carries on the regular program. They seem to be under some higher authority who decides whether they will be regular or special.”

The commitment of Christians to Christ involves them in a similar situation. Always they are “ambassadors”; sometimes they are given special assignment. Whether they are regular or special is by the authority of Christ.

First, let us discuss the regular assignment. The record indicates that all the people who follow Jesus were regarded by him as disciples. The word, “disciple” is a general, not a specific term.

To be a disciple of Christ is a full time, full life commitment and not necessarily a full-time minister, missionary, or evangelist. Jesus himself gives us direction as recorded in Luke 14: 27 & 33; “Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple. So therefore, whoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.”

Doctor Elton Trueblood points out that the call of God involves all Christians, not just a special few. “The great new fact in Christian experience today is the powerful drive in developing a universal ministry. All Christians, whatever their particular gifts, must be engaged in some kind of ministry.” We are all regulars.

Trueblood takes sharp issue with any view of the Christian faith which emphasizes the professional clergy at the expense of the laity, whose minor role too often consist of attending church and paying the preachers. He says the “balcony view” of layman’s religion is old-fashioned, obsolete, and inconsistent with the New Testament Christianity.

He argues for the abolition of the laity, and the return to the New Testament idea that every Christian is a disciple and every disciple a minister, with real responsibilities for proclaiming and extending the Gospel.

Doctor Grenfell told the story of how, at a dinner given in his honor, a lady remarked to him, “Is it true that you are becoming a missionary?” “Isn’t it true that you are?” was his unexpected reply. That is a good question, “Isn’t it true we are all disciples of Christ?”

Given the understanding of God’s call to us all, it follows that any worthy vocation is a part of God’s call to service. It is not difficult to find doctors who consider their medical profession as their calling. Joe E Brown said at a layman’s banquet that he considered his career in the entertainment world, as his call from God. He said, “Laughter is important.” Clean, wholesome entertainment is a part of the will of God. A teacher said to his minister, “I do not use my classroom as a place to preach, but I want you to know that I’m on your team.” I shall never forget the woman who remarked, as she washed dishes after a church dinner, “the Lord has given me a genius of drudgery.” Wouldn’t this world be a better place in which to live if all of us had the attitude that truly God has called us to the particular work we are doing? We would all be happier, and we would all do our jobs to the best of our abilities.

The call of God is a call for discipleship to all who would follow Christ, whatever their vocation, all of his disciples are regulars: all are ambassadors wherever they may be.

An ambassador always has, as one of his jealously guarded privileges, direct access to the king (or president) he represents. How could he possibly represent the king unless he knew the king’s mind?

No one sensitive to the importance of rank can ever speak lightly of the ambassadorial status. It is a tremendous thing to be the personal representative of a great ruler and to speak for your whole land. Would you like to have been the ambassador of Britain to Turkey, when the poor Samaritans were being exterminated and to have told the Sultan to his face, “My queen won’t stand aside and see the little people wiped out.” There are Samaritans in the world today because the ambassador said that. Would you like to have been the ambassador of Britain and to Portugal after the dreadful disaster at Lisbon in 1755 and to have said to the King of Portugal, “My king commands me to convey his deep compassion to you and to your people and to give you 40,000 pounds to alleviate the distress”? It is a high office, the Office of ambassador. Are you living up to your status? Are you really an ambassador of Jesus Christ?

Secondly - let us discuss those on special assignment. A college student, aware of the possibility of special

assignment and also ready to be assigned, said to his minister, “I do not ask that God will show me his plan for my life by any miraculous signs, I only wish that God were not so vague about his call to me.”

Many of us have echoed these sentiments in our own experience. Moses and burning bushes, Paul and blinding lights, and Samuel, audible voices are not present realities. But special assignment has been a real experience of the disciples of Christ ever since Jesus said to the twelve gathered in the upper room, as is recorded in John 15:16, “you did not choose me, but I chose you and I appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide.”

You remember in our scripture reading this morning that an Angel of the Lord appeared unto Phillip and gave him a special assignment to help the Ethiopian understand the scriptures and to witness for Jesus Christ. We also have the record of Ananias as is recorded in Acts 9:10-17, and how the Lord, in a vision requested him to go to Saul, later to become Paul, and lay his hands on him so that his site could be restored. In the Bible are many more records is special assignments given to the people directly by God.

It is obvious that Jesus chose from the multitude of his disciples, some whom we call Apostles, men set apart to go out on a special mission. Let the church set apart Paul and Barnabas as apostles, as missionaries of the church.

“Use me, oh Lord, use me,” prayed the revivalist, famed for his laziness, and added, “but only in the advisory capacity.” This story is a suitable starting point. For an examination of Christian discipleship today. Today’s Christian must be convinced about the nature of the church, understanding it to be always a body of people, “the body of Christ,” “the people of God”, those “called out”, elected for service in the communication and demonstration of the gospel.

What is the difference between an apostle and other disciples? Surely an apostle was not better than the other disciples. Nor was he to retire from the world to study, reflect, and live the disciplined life “far from the maddening crowd’s ignoble strife.” Rather, the apostle was one who was called of God to forsake the ordinary means of livelihood to devote all his time and energy to the proclamation of the gospel and the extension of the Kingdom of God.

So today: there is a general call to all men to follow Christ in the full-time commitment of life, whatever one’s vocation. And there is a specific call to those modern-day disciples who will forsake other means of making a living to devote themselves to specific Kingdom tasks that need to be done. The fields of service through the Church of Christ are many, and they are challenging. Surely God is calling some young people in this congregation to help accomplish his purposes. God really and truly does call persons for specific task. And believe me, if you really receive a call, you will know it. God truly does need persons in all kinds of fields to carry on his work in the country and around the world.

But how can you know that God is calling you to be a modern apostle in his service? Here are some tests:

Do you believe in the God and his rule in the world today? Do you believe in Jesus Christ, and are you committed to his way of life? Do you see great human needs about you - personal, national, world - for which Christ has and is the answer? Do you believe God has given you abilities which, when developed and trained, can be used of him to meet these needs?

And above all, are you now ready in your mind and heart to dedicate yourself to service, wherever it takes you, cost what it may?

If so, you have heard God's call and are prepared to answer, "Here am I, Lord, send me." God will decide whether you become a regular or receive a special assignment.

Today we tend to emphasize vocations to our young people that are appealing as far as a good income is concerned. Our first concern is to earn enough and more money so we can have all the luxuries of life and live a life of ease. Little emphasis is placed on the need to help others. As Christians, this should be our first concern, money should be secondary. I am not saying we have to devote our whole lives without compensation. But I do know, the compensation we received by helping others and performing God's work will far outweigh any monetary value we could ever receive. Be ready and listen for God's call. Accept his call and let him send you where he wants you to go. Whether it's regular or special assignment.

## **Remember the Day**

### **Scripture: Exodus 13:3-5, 9-10,14**

The text is chosen from Exodus 13:8; “And you shall tell your son on that day, it is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.”

“Moses said unto the people, remember this day, in which he came out of Egypt, not of the house of bondage, for by strength of hand. The Lord brought you out from this place.” (Exodus 13:3)

Moses gave further instruction, “And ye shall tell your son on that day, it is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.”

Now, on the face of it, isn't there a bit of absurdity in following that instruction when keeping the Passover in 1975? “It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.” His ancestors came out of Egypt, not the modern Passover keeping Jew. On second thought, the absurdity changes into profundity: the event of the past becomes a man's inner history in the present. The history of my father becomes my history. The ancient story is a part of my being and experience.

First of all, let us discuss the appropriation of the past. The link of each man with the noble events of the past was expressed in “The Present Crisis” by James Russell Lowell. “When a deed is done for freedom, through the broad earth's aching breast, runs a thrill of joy, prophetic, trembling on from east to west.”

Each man, if he will, can feel that thrill of joy become a part of his inner self.

No man lives unto himself. No man has ever been independent; every liberty we enjoy has been bought at the cost of martyr's blood. Every achievement of the race has been made at the cost of incredible toil. There is not a privilege nor an opportunity that modern society grants to us that is not the product of other men's laborers. We drink every day from wells that we have not dug; we warm by fires we have not kindled, We live by liberties we have not won; we are protected by institutions we have not set up. Our churches are built upon the rocks that have been put in place by martyrs of the ages past. Our governments rest upon the foundations cemented in place by the blood of soldiers who tracked their way, barefoot, through icy battlefields or over burning sands. Our courts are reared upon the bodies of those who died for freedom. No man liveth unto himself; all the past has invested in him.

Perhaps we feel we are independent and need no one else and anything else, but I assure you, we could not exist very long with this kind of attitude for truly all past accomplishments we are now enjoying in our lifetime. It's true that we probably do not appreciate what has happened in the past.

It takes imagination to remember in one very bones the heroism of Corregidor and Iwo Jima, Chateau-Thierry and the Argonne, Bull Run and Antietam, Concord and Valley Forge. It is not easy for us, stretched

out in comfort and security, to adventure and toil with our fathers and mothers in hewing out a clearing and building a home in the wilderness, in opening a trail across high mountains and a hostile desert, or in struggling to find the bare necessities of life in an unfriendly city. I know we often think of these things as happening so long ago that they must be fiction. It most definitely is hard for us to imagine that these things actually happened and took place. But they did, and we have to realize that our lives are easier and more full because of them happening.

By remembering, by appropriating the courage and heroism of the past, we assimilate that past into our own lives. By this, the sinew and fiber of our souls is strengthened. We walk our ways with a new awareness of the dignity and meaning of life.

Freedom is most definitely a thing of great cost. As we participate in the great liturgy of Memorial Day, watching new flags being placed beside old stones, as we look on the stones- be they frost marred slates of revolutionary times, or the mossy marble of 1812 and 1861, or the bronze and granite markers of liberty's later strifes, or the terrible acres of white crosses stretching over expanses of this soil, or foreign fields or far islands, may we remember their voiceless message, that freedom is a thing of great cost. But when we see the small flags rippling in the breeze, or the one great flag moving in the free wind, gracing a free sky above a free land, may we also remember that the price can never be too high.

Secondly - let us discuss the celebration.

To celebrate is to honor and observe with appropriate action, that is, with action belonging particularly to the day. Celebration makes use of symbols. This celebration of a wedding is with the giving of a ring. The celebration of the Lord's Supper is the symbolic use of bread and wine. Christmas is replete with symbols.

Harry R. Button said, "I stood on the mound at Marathon. The battle between the Greeks and Persians was fought before my very eyes. The field was covered with blood-red poppies. I plucked one and placed it between the pages of a book. The page where the poppy petals are pressed now tell the story of Marathon." Symbols do help us to remember past events that are important in our present lives.

The symbols by which we celebrate Memorial Day are indeed appropriate. First, we have the day itself. One day stands for as many years as the mind can compass, for all that is written of heroic sacrifices in the life of the nation, for all the dear memories of loved ones whom we have lost a while.

Second, the graves. Standing among them, they become for US tokens not alone of the past, but also of a thrilling future. They speak not only of time, but also of eternity. It is a great experience to stand near a small family burial plot, or where the white crosses extend row after row, and celebrate Memorial Day. Indeed, it does help us to recall memories of loved ones. And those who gave of themselves that the world might enjoy freedom and liberty.

Third, we have the flag. It is unfurled and lifted up, it is carried by; it is placed upon the graves of men who

served their country in war and paid the price for liberty and freedom.

John Glenn, speaking before Congress after his orbital flight, said: "I still get a hard-to-define feeling when the flag goes by."

Fourth we have the flowers. They are in their finest bloom. They are spread upon the graves, transforming the cemetery into a garden. They are symbols of love, a family affection, of hope.

Fifth, tears, the roll of drums, the crack of rifles, the orator's tribute, they add in their own way to the celebration of the day. Truly, symbols do help us to celebrate the day. On which our memories are at their highest. Truly, it is more. Then just another holiday.

For the devout American of any faith, Memorial Day is a time of complex sentiment. It is a day of tangled moods, of brightness and shadow, of remembrance, of sadness and pride. In a small town where the names on the stones have personal significance, where family roots have long gone deep, Memorial Day is the occasion for one of the powerful mystic rituals of the American way. Then may be heard the drum beat and the blaring brass of band, and the echoing silver sorrow of taps; on such a morning the lilacs, their white and purple richness, still wet with dew on the shady side of the bushes, spill, their heavy fragrance.

In the old New England town of my youth, says Harry Butman, it was a day of excitement and awe; excitement when the harsh of remembrance was shattered by the triple crashes of salutes and the cadence clatter of Springfield breach-bolts, and small boys scrambling wildly for the spent gold of the shells. Its awe could linger into a blue day in June when one of the same small boys would wander through the burying grounds, empty and quiet now, and wonder why bright little banners of red, white and blue waved besides certain stones. And such a lad might think, in the dreamy, inarticulate fashion of boys, "What do the stones mean? What are the flags for?" Thirdly, we have the inspiration by intense appropriation of the events of national history, also of family, memories, and traditions, we reinforce our lives to meet the crisis of the future in the nation, in the family and in our personal lives. Moses of old urged his people in keeping the Passover to bring its significance to bear upon their children and their children's children. The Jewish people have been faithful to this responsibility. As Christians and Americans and members of families, can we do less than remember the days when we were delivered out of Egypt, the men of those days and the Lord who delivered us?

A friend of mine told me this story. He said, "The other day I met a friend who had just returned from a fishing expedition off the coast of western Mexico. When I asked him whether he had caught any fish, his eyes gleamed and his voice was raised and he became quite excited, as he told me about the fish that got away. He said it was 1000-pound marlin. How he knew it weighed 1000 pounds, I do not know, but it is a fisherman's privilege to name the size and the weight of the fish he didn't catch. He told me how he played the fish for 10 hours and then his line broke and the fish was lost."

He would never eat a steak from that fish, but he had something “to feast upon in recollection: That is something. Perhaps you have heard of or even read the Journal of James Boswell. On December 11th, 1762, he wrote in his diary that he was “laying up agreeable ideas to feast upon in recollection.” My friend, the fisherman, in spite of losing the marlin, we’ll never forget his experience off the coast of Mexico.

A woman came to her minister after the sermon and said, “will you give me the lines of poetry that you quoted?” “What do you want them for?”, he asked. And she replied, “I want to put them into my memory so I can use them for recollection when I am old. That was Boswell’s idea.

Isn’t it wonderful that we can take the “agreeable ideas” of our childhood and youth and store them up so that we may later enjoy feasts of recollection? Isn’t it sad that so many store up disagreeable ideas which irritate and burden them later on? So many gather things that bring them regret and remorse.

Monday we celebrate Memorial Day, and here and there, old soldiers, perhaps veterans of World War I, in spite of all the horror and tragedy of that war, will still spread out a feast of recollection. They will recall incidents of bravery and comradeship and sacrifice. Their eyes will gleam, and their hands will tremble.

We think of that great feast of the church, which is indeed a feast of recollection, the Lord’s Supper. We remember in it the sacrifice of our Lord and Master. What he did then is now our memory.

I truly hope, like Boswell that you are “laying up many agreeable ideas to feast upon in recollection” for surely Memorial Day is our day of memories. A day when we can recollect things that have happened from the past.

Remember the day - by appropriation of the past, in the present, by marching forward to meet the future.

# **The Abiding Presence**

## **Scripture: I Corinthians 11:23-34**

The text is chosen from Romans 6:13, “Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness.”

Is it possible for any person with eyes wide open to look out upon the world of today with any sense of satisfaction? Or complacency? Whatever spectacles we may be wearing, whether those of the pessimist or of the optimist, the liberal or the conservative, the poor man or the rich man, the world does not take on a rosy hue. Sometimes the world looks like a city submerged in smog that chokes the throat and inflames the eyes, with no hope that the irritant will be dispelled. Or we feel that the world is a heavy burden on our shoulders, more than we can bear.

What then is needed to correct this situation? We can expect nothing from any gadget or device to clear away the smog. International and national contrivances are put into operation and prove disappointing. We wait for new philosophies or new applications of old philosophies to clear the air, but we wait in vain. Political platforms, new laws, and the judgments of courts confuse the issues. Instead of government lifting the burden, it seems to increase it. Religion revives throughout the world, but the turmoil grows greater. The Christian churches grow in number of adherents, but the sociologists register statistics of a moral decline. And an upsurge of crime.

The world needs instruments of righteousness. The world needs new men and women who have truly accepted Jesus Christ into their lives as their personal Lord and Savior. And men and women who are not afraid to say so and tell others about it. First, people become the instruments of righteousness period. Of course, people are also the instruments of doing wrong. If people have brought about the present situation, people will continue it, worsen it or better it.

The better day may begin when the church takes seriously again what some have called its number one priority. Its function is to make good people. Good people are the instruments, the implements, the weapons of righteousness. Why do programs end in failure, judgments confuse, governments prove inept, churches find themselves inadequate to meet modern issues? Is this not for lack of good people, strong people, dedicated people, great people? And is it not the function of the Christian Church to produce such people? I truly believe it is the Church’s function. But let us remember who and what the church is. It is you and I, and it certainly isn’t going to be any more effective than its members.

Since last Sunday was laity Sunday in a good many churches, we think of laypeople who in times past dealt effectively with bad situations. There was a printer named Robert Raikes who saw a need for something to be done for children; and amidst the press of business activities, he found time and energy to publicize and popularize the Sunday school.

We recall Lord Shaftesbury who battled on behalf of children, minors, and chimney sweeps, against heavy odds, unshackling them from the chains of industrial slavery; he was a mighty instrument of righteousness. George Williams, in his early 20s, and his salary but 40 pounds a year, pioneered the establishment of the YMCA. Booker T. Washington led his people to a larger life. Doctor William Wandless gave hope to the blind, the lepers, and tuberculosis sufferers of India. These are but a few who, nurtured by the church, became instruments of righteousness in the name of Christ. There are many, many more like them. They face bad situations in such places as Washington, D.C., in Harlem, South Africa, South America. Such people are definitely needed today in government, in business, in all walks of life. The world needs better men and women. And they are the churches obligation to produce. How else can we hope to have a better world to live in, especially for our children and our children's children? If all of us do not become better persons? And the only way I know for each of us to become a better person is through Jesus Christ.

There is a young man, a graduate of Harvard Law School, who decided to throw in his lot with the people who live in the toughest quarter of East Harlem, New York City. He had come under the influence of Christ through reading the Bible. William Stringfellow is supremely happy as he laborers in his poverty-stricken office, which has become a clinic for human life needing redemption. "We all want justice", he says, "but the poor man can't afford justice." As a lawyer, he finds his work fascinating because he is dispensing the medicine of justice, which is very precious for the dignity of human living. From his Harlem hideout, he occasionally tells his lawyer friends what their duty is to the old and the colored people, the rich and the very poor, the flotsam and jetsam of this city where the races of the world jostle for life. Here is a man who has taken Christ into his life completely, not just on Sunday morning, but every minute of every day. This is what a real Christian is.

Every thoughtful person knows that the next few years will be critical for the human race. What is being decided is the kind of society, the kind of ideals, the kind of liberties, the kind of authority under which future generations will live. Whatever happens, it will be a different world. Will it be a world in which men, women, and children will be free to think and worship, free to grow in faith and love; a world in which truth and honesty, respect for human life, acceptance of rights and duties, liberty of the spirit, are the basis of society? These things are threatened today-and not only from one direction. The waters begin to run more swiftly as the river approaches the cataract. This is not a time for resting on the oars. It takes dedicated men and women to keep us moving in the right direction and I believe these men and women are going to come from our Christian churches under God's guidance and direction.

Second, people become instruments of righteousness who yield themselves to God, or as the New English Bible puts it, "Put themselves at the disposal of God." Have you put yourself at God's disposal? Have you said, "Here am I, send me?" Yield implies self-action. It is response to call. It is important to know who calls and to what purpose. Is it not the function of the church to lift up the Christ, so that he may be seen, and his call heard; so that people may be moved to yield to God and become his instruments? I truly believe it is the function of the church, which is you and I, its members.

In 1623, all things were rushing pell-mell towards turgid crisis, wild tumult, and self-revolution. England at home, which was then England abroad; the outlook was as bleak as bleak could be. The world wanted a man, a good man, a great man, a strong man, to save it. Everybody saw the need; but nobody could see the man. Down in Huntingdonshire a young farmer, leans on the handles of his plow. "The world needs a man, a good man, a great man, a strong man!" says his Reason. And then he hears another voice. "Thou art the man," cries his Conscience, with terrifying sullenness; and his hands tremble as they grasped the plow. That evening, as he sits by the fire, his young wife opposite him, and little Robert in the cot by his side, Oliver Cromwell takes down his Bible and reads. He turns to the Epistle to the Philippians at the closing chapter. He is amazed at the things that, by the grace divine, Paul claims to have learned and achieved. "It's true, Paul," he exclaims, "that you have learned this and attained to this measure of grace; but what shall I do? Ah, poor creature, it is a hard, hard lesson for me to take out! I find it so!" Poring over the sacred volume, however, he makes the discovery of his lifetime. "I came," he says, "to the 13th verse where Paul saith, 'I can do all things through Christ, which strengthened me.'" "Then forth began the work, and my heart to find comfort and support; and I said to myself, 'He that was Paul's Christ is my Christ too and so I drew water out of the well of salvation.'" And so the clodhopper became the king!

Paul, in our text was writing to church members. He was continuing to call for their yielding so that they might give continuing response. We become effective instruments of righteousness only as we give continued and continual response to God. Paul says, "Yield your bodies to him as implements of doing right." This carries our minds to his further word in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies as living, sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Yield all that you are to the Christ. "Your bodies" we would expect 'your souls'; wouldn't we? But the Bible is very cautious use of the word 'soul'-in case we get the idea that religion is a separate department of life, a vague, mystical, Sunday- only affair. "Your bodies" bring us down to earth. It's you, God wants-the whole you. We are asked to present to him this body, the same body that will wake tomorrow morning, the same body that will be around your home, that will be at work during the day, that will be in contact with other bodies, the body that eats, the body that sleeps, the body that walks, the body that expresses itself in so many different ways, the body that houses your brain, the body that is the instrument of your spirit.

When the finger of God points in your direction, it is you-the whole you, the real you, the everyday you that he wants. The Lord wants my body as a "living sacrifice". He asks for it when it is thoroughly alive! We so often deny the Lord our bodies, until they are infirm and sickly, and sometimes we do not offer them to him until they are quite "worn out". It is infinitely better to offer them even then than never to offer them at all. But it is best of all to offer our bodies to our Lord when they are strong, and vigorous, and serviceable, and when they can be used in the strenuous places of the field. You will notice in Romans 12:1, Paul adds curious words. He says this is "your reasonable service". Dedication isn't some supercharged emotional experience that can happen only to a spiritual genius. It's a perfectly reasonable thing for the ordinary man or woman, boy or girl, who believes in God. The Greek word is actually 'logical'. It is your "logical

service". If there really is a God in charge of the universe, if there really is a God who cares for each of us, what could be more logical than dedicating our whole selves to him-just opening up our lives and saying, "I am yours; make me what I ought to be." And what could be more illogical than to profess to believe in God almighty and refuse to offer him the only gift it is in our power to make-ourselves? What God can do with one person who has yielded himself to him as an instrument of righteousness, no person can measure.

What a changed world this would become if the thousands of men and women in the Christian Church would yield themselves to God, soul and body, as instruments of righteousness! What leverage God would be given in every area of the world's life! This would be leveraged to lift the world out of the wretched smog-like evil in which it lies submerged. Let us truly become God's instrument of righteousness.

## **The Christian Consensus**

### **Scripture: Luke 1:1-4; John 1:1-7**

Text taken from Luke 1:1; “In these days you can hardly open a newspaper or listen to a speech without stumbling over the word “consensus.” It is, at the moment, perhaps the most fashionable word to use when we referred to a current of common belief, a general agreement on principle or policy.

The word can be abused. We may use it to claim that all sensible people share our views. Politicians scramble to use the word. To suggest that all right-thinking people are on their side. Nevertheless, it is a good word. It lies deeper than any formula that can be experienced in writing, and it can bind together people of very different temperament and attitude.

Consensus can be a scientific word. There is a technical term in physiology which is used to describe the harmony of an organism, the smooth cooperation of all its parts. When, for instance, the different organs of our body are all working in healthy agreement, you and I would be inclined to say: “I feel fine,” but the scientific description of our condition is, “there is consensus.” You must have noticed that this word has been looted from the physiologist and applied to the areas of opinion and conviction.

There is, for instance, a huge consensus in the world today that war is an abomination that must be eliminated from the human scene, but there is no general agreement as to the best policies of peace.

Is there such a thing as a Christian consensus. In the world today everybody knows that there is no general agreement. There is disagreement about the form of church government, about the application of Christian ethics. (Birth control, war, church-state relations, etc.). It must sometimes appear as if, after 2000 years of diffused Christianity, it is no longer possible to speak of a Christian attitude or even a Christian conviction at all.

There are men and women of infinite variety held together by a master-conviction, inspired by the same spirit, who confronts the modern world with a unique and dauntless faith?

Let us look first for Christian consensus in the New Testament.

About 40 years after the crucifixion, there was a Christian church in the Roman World in every major city, men and women were bound together in a common faith that defied the tired philosophes, the brutal despotisms, and the decadent morals of the age. These churches contain people of every variety - housewives, merchants, soldiers, slaves, teachers, doctors, artisans, Jews, Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Celts. And by that time, they had not arrived at any articulate statement of their faith, or any firm agreement as to how the church should be governed. Their leaders were men of different outlook and temperament. There was a clash of opinions and personality. There was, however, a clear consensus of belief. By that, the young church made its amazing impact. These Christian ancestors of ours were clearly slept together in a com-

mon faith that blazed in the darkness and overturned the world.

That is what Luke is telling us in the elegant introduction to his gospel, written at this time. These words ring out in that introduction: “the things which are most surely believed among us.” the original Greek, is more accurately translated in modern versions, “the events which had happened among us,” the things most surely believed are the things that happened with the coming of Christ. The Christian consensus, then and now, is. Based on our apprehension and acceptance of the life, the teaching, the death, and the restoration of Jesus Christ. This is what our Christianity is and should be regardless of what type of organization, we use to govern the church, or what kind of ritual is used in the worship service, if it doesn’t center around Jesus Christ, then we are only kidding ourselves.

First of all, the consensus is Christ. Some might say., “the gist of the Christian faith is “love God and your neighbor.” That is certainly part of the faith, but it wasn’t there in the Old Testament before Christ came. It is part of the consensus we have with our Jewish friends. The Christian consensus surely concerns Jesus Christ, at least it had better if we call ourselves Christians. It cannot be truly described without him. It’s like leaving Christ out of Christmas and replace Christ with an X. If the church today is not making the impact on society that the first Christian church did, it may well be because we have obscured the distinctive center of the faith - the events that have happened among us, the coming, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

For the first Christians, this was the spiritual revolution that transformed their lives.

I know that quite often nowadays we hear that the church is not making its impact on society the way it has in the past. Did it ever occur to us that the church is you and I and if that statement is true, then apparently, we are not the Christians we profess to be. Apparently, we aren’t able to convey the “Good News” to other people in our society. I really feel that what’s wrong with us is that too many of us are materialistic in nature and we are more concerned about having new churches, with beautiful architecture, a beautiful building, and adding many names to our church membership rolls, (a good many that will never enter the church doors but to become members) planning suppers, etc. Where is Jesus Christ in the midst of all this confusion and glamour? Perhaps we have forgotten what the church stands for or perhaps we really never knew? Again, I have to stress the necessity for taking Christ into every part of our lives and let him help us to make decisions and give us direction in our lives.

When the question comes up in any group of laymen or theologians, what thank ye of Christ? Whose son is he? There are some who always begin with a statement in the creed, the statement of the Chaldean Council about the nature of Christ. They begin with a given, fixed, unalterable statement, and from that statement they think their way through to their answer.

There are others who always begin not with a statement in the creed, but with Jesus of Nazareth as they knew him, as they see him on the pages of the New Testament, as they see him in the community of all

faithful people. They begin with him. They do not proceed without any references to the principles that had been discovered in the past ages, but they begin with him, and from him they work towards some understanding of who he is. Do you see the difference? Both are concerned with principles and with persons; but one begins with an abstract principle, and the other always begins with the concrete person. Secondly, this consensus is the “Good News”. With all their varied backgrounds and their divergent views, the apostles were united in their discovery of Jesus Christ. Christ was their message. Listen to what Paul says from 1st Corinthians 15: 3, 4; “For, I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.”

Listen to Peter from 1 Peter 1:3; “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Listen to John as recorded in I John 4:14; “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his son as the Savior of the world.” Christ was the Consensus of the apostles; Christ was their gospel.

Is Jesus Christ the consensus of us so-called Christians today? Is Jesus Christ our gospel? I wonder if most of us really knows what it means to say Christ died for our sins, that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior? If we know what this means, have we really experienced it and felt it? Or do we say it with our life only? In spite of these doubts which I have about us so-called Christians today, I believe the Christian consensus is found in the continuing presence of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior in our world. Can we really give that concrete meaning?

Listen to this dialogue the materialist says: “All this talk about values and ideals and a spiritual world is for the birds. What matters is to grab enough of the world’s goods to have a good time before the curtain falls.” The Christian says: “I not only believe that there is an eternal world where truth and goodness and love and beauty are real. I not only believe that we can all hear a Word from that world. I believe that this Word became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus Christ is for me the guarantee that here and now we can be in touch with the source and the goal of our true life.”

Do you know materialistic people? I’m sure you do.

The moralist says: “Let’s set up new ethical codes and live by them. Let’s be the moral elite to lead society into a better way. Let’s make ourselves the saviors of the world.” Sounds familiar, doesn’t it? And the Christian says, “Something happened once - and it is happening now. We call it the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It means that in his presence, we admit that we are sinners and that we cannot save ourselves. It means that we make no claim to be good, but trust entirely in him who is good for us. Since he came to us, we cannot claim to be anything but grateful sinners who have been forgiven. But we believe that this grace is still the most powerful agent for good and all the world.”

Of course, we then have this sceptic who says; “Until you prove it to me. I do not go for the faith stuff.

The only one I can have faith in is me. I doubt very much if Jesus Christ was the son of God. The Christian, however, believes in his faith in God, in Jesus Christ, in God's holy word; what we read in the Bible, religion without faith is dead. True everything we believe cannot be proven scientifically, but I believe in God who created us and everything else in the world. I believe that Jesus Christ was the son of God and died and rose again. That our sins could be forgiven for all time, and that we might have eternal life with God our Father.

The consensus is Jesus Christ. This is the fellowship of the Spirit into which we are all invited. It is at work today through all our differences and divisions. It is found all kinds of unexpected places. It is the company of those on the battlefield and one particular soldier who was rugged, tough, unsentimental, but became a Christian in a prison camp. And when he did, said, "I looked into the face of Christ, and I can never be the same again." Believe me, he was right, you will never be the same, your life will never be the same after you have met Christ face to face. Try it and you will see and feel what I mean.

## **To Believe in Easter (Easter Sunrise Service)**

### **Scripture: Luke 24:1-16**

Text is chosen from Luke 24:34; “The Lord is risen indeed.” All of us know what it is to observe Easter. But let us think now of a matter far greater importance, namely, what it is to believe in Easter. Too many of us today celebrate things and occasion because it’s customary, and because everyone else does. Little do we realize why we are celebrating something. Sure, most of us know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Easter and that’s all we know about it. As Christians and so-called followers of Christ, I believe we should know what it means to believe in Easter.

In the first place, to believe in Easter is to believe in a triumphant God. Easter proclaims that God rules and reigns; that he is in the beginning and the end of all, and above all.

To believe in Easter is not only to believe in personal survival after death, it is to believe in the triumph of God in the universe itself. God, who created the heavens and earth is alive and unconquerable. His plans may be thwarted, they cannot be permanently defeated.

Unless one cares for the Father whom Jesus revealed, unless one shares his interest and likes the purpose on which his heart is set, Easter is nothing but a happy festival. It’s victory of long ago declares so unmistakably who rules the world, and who succeeds in his world - not expedient. Pilate, not thieves, not cheaters, not persons who think they are getting away with something; for God truly does know our innermost thoughts as well as our natural actions.

To believe in Easter is to walk serenely in all circumstances of life with confidence that we are not alone, but that God is with us. It is to go into the “valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil.” It is to go forth on life missions, knowing that while we have to go, we don’t have to come back. It is to work and labor for life’s highest value - truth, beauty and goodness - freedom, justice and love, and know that we are not alone, but coworkers with God whose will is justice and whose heart is love. It is to know that “in all things we are more than conquerors.”

Easter affirms a universe into which Jesus fits, a spiritual world corresponding to his character - A universe in which plans discordant with his aims, motives offensive to his conscience, lives at variance with his love, are inevitably thwarted and fail. It gives assurance of victorious life to those who are in harmony with the purpose of his God.

To believe in Easter is to believe unfalteringly in God.

Secondly. then again, to believe in Easter is to believe that Jesus of Nazareth, who lived and taught in

Galilee, who shared with men a trust in God as Heavenly Father, healed the sick and transformed the sinful, was not only betrayed, tried and crucified, but is alive for evermore to bring light and life to all.

Knowledge of the living Christ comes to some one way and to some another, as the Gospels well illustrate. But whether it comes in an upper room, or at a lakeside, on a weary road, or in a restful garden, the unshakable truth is borne upon us that Christ is not dead, a mere incident in history, but a person to reckon with throughout all eternity. Truly Jesus Christ is a living Christ who lives forever.

The late Edgar DeWitt Jones tells of being in a company with a very dear kinsman standing on the sand dunes at Cape Henry. Here the waters of the Chesapeake Bay widen and deepen as they merge with the Atlantic Ocean. It was a gray, bleak day in middle autumn, the sun obscured by low-hanging clouds and a fine mist was falling. Back of them was a swamp, surrounded by a tangle of underbrush, from which the wild notes of a bird rose and fell in melancholy sadness. Off the ocean shore, a quarter of a mile distant, a bell buoy changed its warning signal at regular intervals.

Standing there on the sand dunes that somber afternoon, he saw a small schooner move proudly down the bay and turn her prow toward the musty deep. Silently they watched the little vessel until she merged with the misty distance and was lost to view. Then Dr. Jones spoke to his uncle. "What an adventure! So small a ship, so great an ocean." "No, not so much of an adventure as you think," replied the older man, "you see, the ocean is charted, there's a navigator on board and a pilot. The strong likelihood is that the ship will reach her port, despite thick weather, storm and rough waves.

To believe in Easter is to believe in something more. It is to see not only the smallness of the vessel and the vastness of the ocean, but it is to also know the Pilot who has charted the way. Yes, God has charted our way of life, through his Son Jesus Christ. It is up to us to come to know him as our personal Lord and Savior and Jesus Christ will lead us all through life.

So, to believe in Easter is to know the power of a living Christ.

The world as we know it is packed with power. Kinetic energy and atomic power are being harnessed daily to speed man on his way, drive his engine and machines, send satellites around the earth, fight disease, overcome poverty and conquer time and distance. This fact of power holds within itself the possibilities and perils of modern life.

To believe in Easter is to know spiritual power. This is the power to be found in the living presence of Christ. This power expends itself in terms of moral and spiritual values; exercises itself in character and personality. In the days of Jesus' earthly ministry this power was known only in his presence. In the dawn of the first Easter, it was discovered that this power of Christ was still alive.

Paul called it, "the power of the resurrection." This is a renewing power available to every man. It affirms

that no human situation, however bad is hopeless. No alcoholic, no drug addict, goes so far that God does not care. No man ever sinks so deep in sin and selfishness that God forsakes and forgets him. No child is ever born into such poverty, wickedness, and sin that he is beyond saving.

All we have to do is recognize our mistakes, our sins, repent of them, ask God for forgiveness and guidance and he will cleanse us and make us strong. Truly to believe in Easter is to know that there is a spiritual power that can always change and transform our lives. Thirdly - to believe in Easter is to hear not only good news about God, but also about man. Man can be saved, redeemed, reformed, born again. Man is brought to newness of life through the saving power of Jesus Christ.

Then, to believe in Easter is to believe in life everlasting. Just think of it, life that is from everlasting to everlasting. Do you see through the Easter message that death is not the end but just the beginning of a more full and beautiful life with our Father - God. To observe Easter is a social matter confined to the activities of a single day. To believe in Easter is to know a life that conquers death.

Here and now. The risen Lord says to everyone facing death, "let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my father's house are many rooms - I go and prepare a place for you - let not your hearts be troubled, Neither let them be afraid!"

Doctor Werner von Braun, a scientist, had this to say; "Many people seem to feel that science has somehow made religious ideas untimely or old fashioned. But I think science has a real surprise for the skeptics. Science, for instance, tells us that nothing in nature, not even the tiniest particle, can disappear without a trace. Nature does not know extinction. All it knows is transformation.

Now, If God applies this fundamental principle to the most minute and insignificant parts of his universe, doesn't it make sense to assume that he applies it also to the human soul? I think it does. And everything science has taught me - and continues to teach me - strengthens my belief in the continuity of our spiritual existence after death. Nothing disappears without a trace.

To believe in Easter is to live in a new kind of climate. Old things are passed away, behold all things become new. I know this is why God planned for the resurrection of our Lord in the Spring. What better corollary could be made that Spring, when everything in nature comes alive and Easter, when our Lord rose from the dead to go and be among the living. Truly our Lord is a loving Lord and dwells among us now and forever.

The late Bishop Francis J. McConnell says that as a boy, he was fascinated by a book in his father's library, filled with pictures of old dinosaurs and monstrous reptiles that once roamed the Earth; and that he used to wonder how they were got rid of in the end. Then, when he went to college, he found out; the climate changed; the old beast could no longer survive; And a new kind of life came upon the Earth. Yes, Easter truly is one of the greatest hours in the experience of man. Without Easter, our lives would be meaningless

and purposeless, for we would have nothing to look forward to. Death would become to the victory. So let us more than observe Easter. Let us believe in Easter and not just on this day, but every day. And let us give thanks unto God for this greatest of all, great events in history.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **Scripture: Acts 2: 1-8, 12-18**

The text is chosen from John 21: 25; “But there are also many other things which Jesus did; where every one of them to be written, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.”

John closes his gospel with intriguing words. He has tried to tell the story of Christ as vividly, as simply, as full as possible. But when he has done all, he still has to add the word, “There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, everyone, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” To be sure, he was speaking of the part of the story in his own time. But it also reminds us of the unfinished business which Christ has with every generation.

Our text, John 21: 25; is this fact or figure of speech? It could be fact. Suppose like many a writer since, John wrote the prologue or introduction of his Gospel after he wrote the narrative. Suppose the words, “all things were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made,” had been taking form in his mind. Every leaf and flavor, every star in stone, every drop of water and flake of snow, every living thing of the field, every person of humanity, could then become a story of the works creative power. Surely then, the world would not contain the books that should be written. Every stone would be a sermon; every leaf a poem; every word a biography.

But we feel that this was a figure of speech. John’s testimony to be the omnipotence and inexhaustible Ness of Christ, his life and deeds, bringing light and love and life to men by his spiritual presence long after the days when he was in the flesh, even unto the days of the writing of the Gospel.

We, too, can bear testimony that the work of Christ goes on and on, and in faith we believe it shall go on through all time and eternity. We add to the records, we increase the number of the living books which tell of this matchless life, the creative, redeeming, saving, comforting, inexhaustible, life of the son of God, so full of grace and truth, ever the word of light and love and life.

William Temple said, “to tell the whole story of Jesus’ love and power would exhaust the capacities of the universe.”

Last Sunday, the Christian Church observed the anniversary called Pentecost. It commemorates that great day when the gift of the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples of Christ. We think of it as the birthday of the Christian Church. And one of the meanings of that day was exactly at this point: It gave men the assurance that though Christ’s earthly ministry had come to an end, the work he had done in the hearts of men would go on with power and growth. For God gave the Holy Spirit to continue the work of Christ in our hearts and minds. So, at Pentecost we look forward with faith. That God will continue for us his unfinished business.

First of all, let us discuss the unfinished Gospel. There is an unfinished Gospel, and we are a part of it. In

the New Testament, the Gospels tell the story of Christ in all that he meant to people. It is the story of the fisherman called from the nets; of a tax gatherer called from his work. We call this the gospel, for it is the good news of the nearness of God's help in Christ.

One skillful leader would say to a group who came together for sharing and testimony, "if your experience is more than a week old, forget it. In short, he wanted freshness and the expectation that God is doing something now in everyone's life.

There is, indeed, an unfinished gospel, and your story must be a part of it. Christ has some work to do in and through each of us. His story will never be fully told until there shall be added the story of our own lives and what it means to us.

There is a real point in the humorous little story about the elderly lady who had saved her money to take a trip to Europe. As she went around Westminster Abbey, she was thrilled to stand in the historic spot. But as she went from place to place in the Great Old Church and saw the monuments to those who had gone before, her face reflected that she was inwardly troubled. At last, she could stand it no longer. As the guide spoke again of the number of people in the past who were commemorated here, she burst forth, "but what I want to know has anyone been saved here recently?" It is a good question. The church in the minds of some easily becomes a museum of past experience instead of God's seedbed for new experience in our lives.

We most definitely should consider this right here in our own church. It is nice to have a history of that past, like this church does have. But the past experiences of others cannot readily do us much good today. We need the same experiences in our lives as our forefathers have. We need to come alive and be reborn Christians. We need to be a part of the Gospel of Christ.

Secondly - let us discuss an unfinished book of Acts. Indeed, there is an unfinished book of Acts. In the New Testament the book of Acts is the story of the church's beginning. It tells of the day at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came and revealed that Christ's church was to be everywhere and for all time. There never has been written a finish to that story. It is still going on, and we can still be a part of it.

Truly, as Christians and followers of Christ, we want to be a part of it, supporting Christ's work all over this world of ours. How exciting and what an experience it must be to bring the Good News to people who have never heard it. It must be an experience to see a people start to prosper and really take a life with new meaning and purpose after receiving the Gospel of Christ. It is wonderful to know that truly we have played a small part in bringing this forth, which indeed is part of our discipleship.

No new paragraph However, this does rest upon us a great responsibility. In some ways it would be easier not to be held accountable for the acts of the church in our times. It may be painful for the Church to follow Christ, often in spite of the customs of the community or of the inherited ways of living and thinking. Yet,

we have no escape from that responsibility. You remember Christ's charge to the disciples, "Ye shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in Samaria and to the uttermost part of the earth."

It is the utmost importance that we see that the word of Christ is obeyed in the church, cost what it may, that his commandment to love God first and our brothers as ourselves is heard above all that we want or think or desire. In our time, as in every generation, we are not men and women free to do as we wish. We are under orders. We are under the command of Jesus Christ. We are writing a part of the unfinished book of Acts.

In the new book of Acts, some of the most dramatic chapters were written in the days through which we have lived. Here is an example: It is the little-known story of the churches of Holland in the days immediately after the war. Holland had suffered bitterly from the bombs in the occupation of the Nazi forces. Yet, one of the first acts at the close of the war on the part of the Churches of Holland was to send several carloads of grain to the churches of Germany, remembering the word of Christ, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him." And now the bombers at the moment are silent and the occupation forces gone, but the testimony of the year will be that the few carloads sent in loving compassion will affect the future more than all the physical might of men. The book of Acts is still going on and will continue to go on as long as men have dedicated their lives to following Christ and carrying out his plans for the world.

Thirdly, and finally, let us discuss an unfinished revelation. Indeed, there is also an unfinished revelation. God has so much more of himself to reveal. The writer of John closed his gospel, "There are many other things."

What a thrilling faith this is, to think that God always has more of himself to disclose! Yet, it is true. Certainly, our generation ought to have a more awesome understanding of God's goodness, even than the biblical writers. The Psalmist looked out upon the stars he could see with his naked eye and said, "The heavens desire the glory of God." That was true as far as he could see it. But today we know that it is infinitely more true than even the Psalmist knew. He thought the world was flat and the sky above it was like an inverted bowl. His astronomy was wrong, but his faith was right. Today we know how much greater God's majesty is than the Psalmist could have known. I also know, the closer we get to God, the better we come to know him, the more of himself he reveals to us. The older we get, the more we appreciate God's handiwork, in nature, the flowers, trees, grass, snow and rain, virtually everything that surrounds us we most definitely owe to God, our Father.

Someone has estimated that in the world as we see it, if we make a model of our particular universe, and the model was the size of our planet, our earth would be likened unto the size of a single bean. This is the magnitude of this universe as we now see it. There indeed is a new revelation.

But it is not God's greatness which is the real revelation. It is the depth of his love. Do you suppose that anyone could possibly know all that there is to know about God's love? How much better than to live in

the expectation that every day can disclose new understanding of it.

Does not one see a parable of this in his relationship to his earthly father?

There is a story told of an incident that took place in one of the churches in this country. A visitor from a foreign country was lecturing about life in his native land. During the discussion period following his talk, someone asked, "Is there anything in this country which you envy?"

The man answered, "You are asking if there is anything here in your country I envy? You want to know what I would like to take into my own life from yours?"

"Let me say frankly that I do not envy you your great cities or your fine buildings, your powerful industries, your fine educational system, your wonderful schools; I do not envy your gracious hospitals, your almost universal medical service."

"Yet there is one thing I do envy you. Something I cannot have whether I remain here or return to my home; it is yours, and it cannot, to the longest day I live, ever be mine. I envy you the memory of your Christian childhood."

"You have known a world unto which children come as a gift, a trust from God. In your world, even the poorest child would be at least clean and cared for to the best of his parents' abilities. In your world, parents live for their children. You have had care, teaching, training for life from your first years. The love of Christ in the heart of your parents has sheltered you. From the years of your childhood, you have heard of the love of God."

"More than anything else that I may be able to give my children, I am determined that they shall have what I shall always lack, the memory of a Christian childhood."

Truly, God's love is revealed more and more to us as we get closer to Jesus Christ.

If it is an unfolding and growing experience to know the meaning of human love, must it not be so all our days as we seek to know more about God's love? Indeed, we live with an unfinished revelation. Yes, there is an unfinished Gospel in our lives, unfinished book of Acts as we attempt to follow Jesus Christ and an unfinished revelation as God reveals more and more of himself to us.

"There are many other things which Jesus did." Yes, and he is doing them now in the souls of those who really will receive him.

## **We know Christ Rose from the Dead (Easter)**

### **Scripture: I Cor. 15:1-20; Mark 16:1-8**

Text is chosen from I Cor.15:20; “Now is Christ risen from the dead.” As is recorded in Luke 24:10,11; “Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles; but these words seemed to them as idle-talk, and they did not believe them.” These women were telling the eleven apostles of Jesus’ resurrection and it seemed to them nonsense. Just how that could be I don’t understand. How could they have followed him through a period of (2) or (3) years, become intimate with him as Leader and Master, heard him teach and preach and engage in casual conversation, seen him doing good and observed- even afar off – his death upon the cross- and then believe that his life was ended? Apparently, they did not fully understand what Jesus had been teaching them over the years of his ministry.

The New Testament is a book of singing triumph, telling of a victory over life’s worst; of a victory which changed forever our understanding of life and God, and of what we can become at God’s hands.

See the transformation that came in these eleven disillusioned, beaten men - the disciples. They came to realize that the Jesus whom they had lived with, and whom they had loved, still lived. His body had been broken. His dead body had been sealed in a tomb. But that was not the end! The Spirit which had used the body to reveal God’s purpose still lived; it was still real to them; it still companioned with them. In that realization, these men went out to live for him with far more power after Jesus’ death than when they had simply known him in the flesh. And the Christian faith empowered by the resurrection experience, was on its way down the centuries.

The resurrection of Jesus is not just an incident in the life of a man to be accepted by others as true or false. It is an event in context which includes the creation of man, the sweep of history, the redemption and salvation of man, victory won over evil and death. It is a revelation of God’s purpose and will. It is an exhibition of God’s righteousness and justice. It is a disclosure of God’s love and a manifestation of his power.

It is a profound thing, which was written by of all people, George Bernard Shaw, in a letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury: “I rate a man or a church, not by the reasons they give for things, but by the things for which they give reasons.” Our faith is not in the reasons we give for things but in the experiences for which we impelled to give reasons. The experience of Easter comes first. The finding of reasons for it comes afterward. The experience is the response to the tremendous affirmation that Christ has brought life and immortality to light.

Yes, many of us say, “We know that Christ rose from the dead,” in the same spirit. As was Paul’s, when he said this, as recorded in 1 Timothy 1:12: “I know whom I have believed, and I am assured that he is able to

guard until that day what has been entrusted to me.” We no longer need proof of the resurrection. We no longer need explanations. We know that Christ is risen and now alive, because we encounter him, not as we encounter George Washington and Abraham Lincoln as characters in a book, but as a living power in our lives.

Nor is our statement, “We know that Christ rose from the dead,” pure dogmatism. We have our doubts. We accuse ourselves of credulity and wishful thinking. We question our convictions and all the time we go on living in the knowledge and power of the resurrection. Not to believe, not to be convinced, not to know, would deny too much. Life would lose its luster. And so, we say in faith, with conviction and with knowledge based upon the living Christ in the experiences of men - “Now is Christ risen from the dead.”

Perhaps we cannot really prove it to others that Christ is not dead, that he is risen, but as Christians, and if we have really come to know him, we know that he has risen and that he is alive. We know what the resurrection means to us personally, because we have felt its power in our own lives. We have faith and we believe in Jesus’ resurrection.

Call it what you will, this faith, this conviction, this knowledge has many results in our thinking and living. Here are some of them. First of all, we believe in the triumph of goodness. By this we also mean the triumph of love, of truth, of justice; for these are good. They are bound together. Let one fall and they fall together. When Jesus rose from the dead there were myriads of other victories implicit in the event. Our own victories over sin and death were there. How could one expect to win by goodness and love, if he could not win, if his life ended with his burial in a garden tomb? Surely this was not the end of his life, but the very beginning. Even though Jesus was put to death by wrong thinking and acting people, and even though he died a terrible death, God make sure that in the end goodness and love always win out and prevail. Goodness really does prevail, and in the end is the victor over evil and wrongdoing.

Secondly, we believe that life has meaning. Life is more than existence and extinction. Life and death are not enough. There is what Laredo Taft called, “the hint of eternity” in every human life. Jesus’ resurrection is to that hint of eternity what the springtime sun is to the seed or bud in the garden. It grows, it expands, it flowers. Beyond life and death is eternal life. The hint grows into assurance.

Surely Jesus’ resurrection guarantees to us Christians eternal life with God our Father. Without his resurrection, this life of ours would be meaningless and purposeless. But now we have new hope, new assurances, and a new life to look forward to.

By that assurance our daily acts are no longer futile. Paul’s great chapter on the resurrection. (I Corinthians 15), climaxes in the words, “You know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Every word and every act become significant.

By that assurance the relationships of life are not eternally severed. From II Timothy 1:10 we read, “by the

appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light,” we are assured of eternal life.

The church today needs to recapture the faith of that first generation of Christian disciples. This faith transformed a desolate and broken group into a fearless band of missionaries, changed a Jewish Sabbath into a Lord’s Day, transmuted a close-bound faith into a worldwide mission, and set faces alight with the inner assurance that Christ was alive in the heart of the believer.

We have assurance that imperfection shall move into perfection, incompleteness into completion. We find this life too short, something more must be given. Whether measured by time or some other standard of measurement, this something must be assured.

By Jesus’ resurrection, we have discovered that this earthly life is short. Compared with our promise of everlasting eternal life. We discover that we need to make this earthly life really count for something. We suddenly realize that we are not perfect, that we are sinners in the sight of God. However, God will forgive us if we really are sorry and ask him for forgiveness. What a wonderful feeling to know that God loves us regardless of what our sins are. True, he is disappointed and wants us to become better persons, but he is still willing to give us another chance if we really repent and try to live a better life.

And thirdly, we believe in the power of the resurrection. The power of the resurrection is a phrase from Paul’s writings as recorded in Philippians 3:10, “that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.” Of course, the power of the resurrection includes that of which we have spoken; it is power to triumph over evil; it is the power to give life meaning, but it is more. It is the power which comes to men through the presence of the living Christ in their midst. By his presence, all the small powers we possess are enlarged. A man’s capacities for living, thinking, loving, and giving are marvelously increased. Courage, patience, and endurance become qualities of the personality. By the power of the resurrection. A man can say, “thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Because of the power of the resurrection, Easter doesn’t recede and fall away, but it is an everyday experience. Paul writes that Christ was seen of him also. Now it could not have been that Paul saw Christ in the same way that his disciples saw him. He knew Christ as a power in his life. We may not see Christ as did the disciples, nor as Paul saw him on the Damascus Road, but in all sincerity, we can testify to his presence and power in our daily lives; not only on one day of the year, but on every day of the year. We truly do live in the power of the resurrection.

Carl F. Sueg, had this to say in an article in “The Upper Room”: “As we were leaving the church one Easter Sunday evening, our small son asked, ‘Daddy, what happened after Easter?’ Having heard the news of the New Testament, ‘He is risen’, he wanted to know what happened next. After all, to bring the curtain down with the trumpets blowing would be like ending a story just when it becomes interesting.

On this Easter day, what is our response to the day? So Jesus Christ is risen, what does it mean to you personally? Don't let it end there. Don't let Easter be a time of new clothing, and Easter eggs and the Easter Bunny. These things are alright, but they are only surface shows with no meaning and purpose. Now that you know Christ has risen and why, attach its meaning to your own life and make your response that of all Christians. It truly should be a response and joy, a response of confidence, a response of hope, a response of commitment. Dedicate your life to Jesus Christ and you will be amazed at the results.

## **We Know Him**

### **Scripture: Mark 1:16-22, 2:14-15**

Text chosen from Philippians 3:10, "That I may know him." Name in your mind someone who you know very well. It may be the one whom you knew best in all the world. After you have recited his qualities of character as you see them, his virtues and failings, his temperament and disposition, his complexes, his strong points, his weak points, after all is said, isn't there something else that remains, some point of uniqueness that you can't quite read, some depth of character which is a mystery, which perhaps is the most important element in his personality?

More individuality may be defined by limitations. But personality is expressed within them by transcending, overflowing, and utilizing them. The individual may be a circle or plot, walled off from others, but the person is a bubbling spring, among them that overflows them. The one is an area; the other is a center of power. The sum is not a measurable round hole in the sky, but a power-center so active that when we face it most, we cannot see its rim and limit, which we yet know to be there. It is over-flowed and irradiated. The limitation is lost in the power. So, with the limitations on the glory of Christ. They give it feature and enhance it.

This morning, let us consider the personality of Jesus Christ, without seeking to probe into the mystery of his person. Let us look at him as we know him.

First of all, he is a person with extraordinary wealth of personality. We sometimes speak of someone as having personality plus. Jesus has personality with many pluses.

We find his personality the more remarkable because that is all that he had. He had no wealth, no money, no property. He had no station in life from which he could wield authority. He wrote no parchment or book to influence his times. He had himself. That is the most important thing about him today - himself.

It is possible to tabulate his virtues, his sincerity, his humility, his compassion. It is possible to draw these virtues out to their utmost limits, without reaching beyond him; he is always beyond them. And yet he is not what we call a "goody-goody", though no virtue in him is offset with a fault.

His virtues are genuine.

He is a wise person. Wisdom is spiritual wealth like unto gold and rubies in the physical realm. Great knowledge may make a man self-sufficient and vain; Jesus' knowledge seems to be only the current knowledge of the times, though we cannot be too sure of that. Of his wisdom, we are sure. The wisdom which belongs to his Jewish heritage is at his command. But his wisdom runs beyond any such heritage. The ancient wisdom is accepted by him and appreciated; at the same time, it is enlarged and fulfilled by

wisdom that is greater.

Enough to say, his personality is one of extraordinary wealth. Secondly - we know Jesus as a unified personality.

We know one another as fractional personalities. Today you see your neighbor as a most generous person, the sun is shining, and he is feeling fine; but tomorrow you may see an entirely different fraction of the man. We all know that conditions around us change our personalities, perhaps I should qualify that and say that in general, most people's personalities are affected by the changing conditions around them. When you see Jesus, however, you see the whole man. Even when he becomes indignant, as when he cleansed the temple, it is the whole man that is indignant.

Then we always see him in balance. How often we size up a person with the words, "He's a fine fellow, but I think he's a little unbalanced." Even a man's virtues may become extreme. Extremism runs beyond perfection. It is a characteristic of great personality that it can include qualities that seem opposed to each other, meekness and dignity, breadth and narrowness, judgment and kindness, indignation, and passion.

The unity of Jesus personality. Amazes us.

How rarely do we find well balanced men! But when we come to Jesus, we find ourselves in the presence of a man without a flaw. He was enthusiastic, blazing with enthusiasm, but he never became fanatical. He was emotional, men could feel the throbbing of his heart, but he never became hysterical. He was imaginative, full of poetry and music, seeing pictures everywhere, throwing upon everything he touched a light that never was on land or sea, the inspiration and the poet's dream - but he was never flighty. He was practical, hardheaded, matter of fact, but he was never prosaic, never dull. His life always had in it the glamour of romance. He was courageous but never reckless, prudent, but never a coward, unique but not eccentric, sympathetic, but never sentimental. Great streams of sympathy flowed down from his tender heart towards those who needed sympathy, but at the same time streams of lava flowed from the same heart. To scorch and overwhelm the workers of iniquity. He was pious, but there was not a trace about him of sanctimoniousness or hypocriticalness. Truly Jesus Christ has a well-balanced personality, the perfect personality. Thirdly - we know him as an irresistible personality.

The word "irresistible" is carefully chosen. We describe our fellows as attractive or charming personalities, sometimes we find them repulsive. Then we are apt to let the word stand, without any action or retreat on our part.

However, Jesus Christ is not easily dismissed. It is difficult to pass him up with a phrase. Indifference toward him is neither neutral nor negative. It is deliberately positive; or it is hypocritical; the real attitude towards the Christ is covered up.

I believe it is true that nearly everyone has some kind of attitude toward Christ, even though we may think we do not. It may be one of indifference, but at least we have some kind of thought. And if some of our friends start talking about him or start to really take Christ seriously, it is going to start us thinking that perhaps there is something to this Christ. That's why I believe it's important that our witnessing is necessary and perhaps sometimes more effective than we realize.

Jesus personally incites some to oppose him. People do not oppose nonentities. Strong characters arouse opposition. Jesus' personality judges and condemns heresies. When he walks through the temple courts, he stirs the ire of the Sadducees. This is an indication of his irresistibility. I'm sure of one thing and that is if we take enough interest to find out what or who Jesus Christ is, we will be drawn to him. True, some of us may oppose his ideas, we may be jealous of his ability to attract others to him and just naturally throw up a barrier to oppose him. And his personality may prick our consciousness and cause us to naturally rebel against him. But I'm sure that in the end we will be drawn to him, and Christ will become our Lord and Savior.

If Jesus is to be judged by the effects which he produced and still produces, then his name is indeed Wonderful. Wherever he went, he left men seething and bubbling. There are a few men - his apostles - who came close to him. Upon these he exerted an influence which extended to the roots of their being. One of these men - Thomas - was unusually slow and cool. He was not made of inflammable stuff. He was not easily carried away by emotion, for the tides of emotion in him were not strong. But this man when Jesus one day suggested going to a certain place beset with danger, exclaimed, "let us go and die with him." It is not easy to die at 30. No normal man in his ordinary mood wants to die before the sun has reached the Meridian. But this man, Thomas, had been so wrought upon by the personality of Jesus that he was ready to die with him. And so were all the other apostles.

I know from my own experiences that Jesus Christ will change your whole being. Also, when you get to know him, you will want to do things in his name that you never thought of doing before. Once Christ comes into your heart and you accept him, your personality will be changed, you will become a different person. Perhaps this will not happen overnight, but it will happen. Your whole attitude and your whole outlook on life will change completely. You yourself will be a different person. It can and will happen to you if you let Christ become your personal Lord and Savior.

Who are these that are attracted by him? They are children, youths, fishermen, tax gatherers, lawyers, officials, outcast, women of means, fathers, mothers, the crippled, the blind, the lepers. Regardless of what our position in life, our profession, our wealth, our race, our age, our looks, our anything, all of us are attracted by Jesus Christ. Once, he said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." Is it not true that the magnetism of his personality, like that of the magnetic pole, pervades the whole earth.? Jesus Christ because of his magnetic personality surely does attract all of us to him in one way or the other.

The power of Jesus still grows, both in the way of drawing men, and uniting them; and no less in the way

of dividing them. Where does it lie? It is something grand to recognize that it does not lie in novel truth, but that it lies in the new divine personality, and the redeeming, consummating act of God affected in it. The religious power of the world is not in ideas or truth, powerful as they are, but in personalities and their deeds.

The rediscovery of Jesus Christ will point the way to the rediscovery of God.

And so, we do know Jesus Christ by his personality - a person with extraordinary wealth of personality, a person with a unified personality, and a person with an irresistible personality. Through Jesus Christ, we can come to know God, our Father. Jesus Christ points the way for us to follow, a way that leads to God, to eternal life, a way that is the only way for Christians to go.

Now let me point out a strange thing. In this sermon. It is all in the present tense, with a minor digression into the past period. His personality lives and moves among us today, rich and unified and irresistible. Jesus Christ is alive within us today as he was to those first apostles. He is always with us, regardless of where we go, regardless of what we do, or who we are with.

During this Lenten season, may each of us try to discover if we already haven't and if we have let us rediscover Jesus Christ again. Once we do, I'm sure that we will be drawn to him as many millions of people have been in the past. Let him change your life and live a life worthy of God's love and grace. I know this is the only hope this world of ours has - Jesus Christ is our only hope - the light and the truth of the world.

May God truly bless you in your rediscovery of Jesus Christ.

## **We Know that Christ Died on the Cross**

### **Scripture: Luke 19: 29-44**

Text chosen from John 3:16; “For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” This is the gospel; this is the glad news the preacher has to proclaim - the announcement to men that God is a God of forgiving and redeeming love. The Christian preacher may vary his text from week to week, but he has really only one theme - and that is the amazing and unsearchable love of God.

On Palm Sunday morning, Jesus was not sitting down with a group of friends discussing the situation: “yes, times are bad, the Romans here are gouging every penny of taxes out of us that they can; the whole world is as selfish as can be; a cloud of evil lies over the whole scene; But that is the way things are, - good comes out of evil. In the long run, it is the part of the philosopher to wait.” No, he was not sitting there, nor was he saying those words. He was riding into Jerusalem towards Good Friday. Jesus clearly knew what he must do, and he was on his way to do it. There was no time for talking for the situation had gone past the talking stage. It now was time for action.

This morning I want to talk to you about the cross as the supreme disclosure of the love of God. That is the central message of the cross. It is not the only message, and they err who make it the only one. This cross, which is the supreme disclosure of the love of God, is also the supreme disclosure of the holiness of God as it is also the final disclosure of the sinfulness of sin. Now I confine myself to speaking of the cross of Jesus as the supreme revelation of the love of God.

It's not this insistent craving for love, but the call of our nature for a supreme love? I remember reading of a lonely man in London who, driven almost insane by the yearning for love, that tugged at his heartstrings, and unable to find its gratification, resolved to end his misery by leaping into the Thames. But as he mounted the parapet of the bridge, his eye caught sight of the cross on the Dome of Saint Paul's Cathedral, gilded with the dazzling splendor by the rays of the setting sun. And with the force of a sudden revelation, the thought swept into his darkened mind, “I am loved! What else does that cross mean? But that I am loved!” And climbing down, he went back to face life that was full of new and deeper meaning. That cross means, if it means anything, that God loves men. God loves every man, God loves me!

Why should the Cross of Jesus be a disclosure of the love of God? I am not going to discuss or debate the question. I accept the New Testament assumption. It underlies such a great word as that of the apostles as described in Romans 5:8, “God commanded his own love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” That verse would have no meaning unless it meant as much as this, that in all that Jesus did - even in his dying, especially, I ought to have said, in his dying, he was just revealing his father's heart.

First let us discuss the proof of the love of God - here, then is the proof of the love of God - He gave his only begotten son. The proof of the love is in the giving.

I do not think we become sure of the love of God anywhere save in the Cross of Jesus. I do not think that nature would make us sure of the love of God. Nor do I think that human life and history would make us sure of the love of God. The only place where we can become sure is at the Cross of Jesus. We can believe with the apostle that somehow or another all things must work together for good when we accept humbly and believingly in the assertion of our text.

Love is always self-imparting. That is its very nature and characteristics - it gives. It proves itself in giving. A love that never poured itself out in lavish giving could scarcely be recognized to be love at all. Well, God's love proved itself by his gift. "God so loved - that he gave." And for what a gift? It was! "He gave his only begotten Son."

I wonder if we love enough to give something or are we always waiting to take or receive. As Christians do we love God enough to give of our service, our talents, our time, our money? Or are we just Christian in name only? If God still loved enough to give his son, what do we do to return that love? Do we really believe this or again, do we just say it with our lips? Do we know from our own experiences that Christ died for us? Or are we recalling other's experiences that we have heard? If you have doubts you had better let Christ help you to find the truth.

Some commentators on the verse, which is our text, draw a distinction between what God did with the prophets and what he did with Jesus. God sent John the Baptist, but he gave his Son. Giving is at once a more complete and a more costly thing than sending. You may send a thing and withdraw it. But when you give, there is no withdrawal. Well, God gave his son.

So loved! The gift of the Son is the measure of love. But fully to realize the content of that phrase "so loved", we must remember to what it was God gave him. He gave him up to rejection and shame and death. He gave him to be remembered among the transgressors. He left nothing back but gave his best. God held nothing back. Such as labor negotiators do today that hold things back. And then when things are at a standstill, they offer something. More to make it look as if the people were really getting something. But not so with God. He gave his all at the first shot, nothing was held back. And that is the gospel! It is the core of it. It is the beating heart of it. Believe it and it will change the whole aspect of things. It will flood life like sunshine and fill the soul with glorious and immortal hope.

Christians do believe this and men from centuries from the time of Jesus Christ to this very day, have had their lives changed by the gospel, by the saving power of Jesus Christ. Life has taken on new meaning and purpose; life has become worth living because people have discovered the truth. And have been set free. What a wonderful feeling to be free in Christ.

Secondly - let's discuss for a few moments the extent of the love of God. God's love is universal in its extent. This love is universal in its 'flesh.' it is not only that all people are embraced by it, but all conditions of people are embraced in it as well.

God does not just pick out certain individuals to show forth his love. God loves us all. It doesn't matter to him whether we are rich or poor, white, or black, minister or lay men; he gave his son for all people everywhere for all time.

Oh, the depth! cried St. Paul, and perhaps it's depth is the most wonderful thing about the love of God, for it reaches down to the vilest and the worst.

Yes, we can commit the worst sins. We can't even deny our belief in God, and he will still love us. He will love us regardless of how low we get our living.

And herein lies our hope. If it were not for all the comprehensive words used in such a verse as this, there are some of us who might feel that we were altogether unworthy of the love of God. Some people do feel like that, even as it is. Some people have sunk so low, committed, so many sins, and been away from God so long, that they are sure that God will not even consider them. But they are wrong; for if they truly repent, ask for forgiveness and believe, they will be forgiven, and God still does care and love them. The working of this great verse seems deliberately designed to take away any excuse for despair. "Whosoever." Whosoever means everybody, anybody. It is all inclusive.

Finally - let us talk about the purpose of God's love.

Our text reveals the purpose and design of the love of God. "That whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have eternal life."

On its negative side, the blighted lives, the broken characters, the defiled souls of men, the loss of honor, purity, aspiration, truth, all proclaim that the wages of sin is death. And that was God's design in sending his Son to the cross, that the wages of sin. That you and I might not perish. No one but Christ himself would be saved if it were not for God's great gift of. His son. Have we really ever stopped to think about the cross, about the sacrifice of Jesus, and what it means to us as Christians? Let us think about these things and be thankful and grateful to our father, God. The greatest gift of all time has been and can be received by us if we are willing to accept it. Perhaps you think it old-fashioned or silly stuff, if someone asks you if you have been saved? Well, first of all, do you know what it means? And if you know its meaning, dash, are you saved?

But salvation is not negative, simply, It is positive also. "should not perish" he saves us from death. That is. Salvage. But that is only half the story. "Have eternal life". That is salvation. It is a new quality of life we get from Christ - a life which death cannot touch and which sin cannot stain because it is the life of

God in the soul.

You know, salvation, as many people construe it, is deliverance from death and hell. But it is infinitely more than that. Salvation is not the same thing as salvage. A vessel is found in the mid-Atlantic, battered and dismantled, and is towed by another vessel into the safety of some harbor. I say that is salvage. But the vessel thus rescued is a poor and shattered hulk. Salvation is much more than that. If I may continue, the nautical figure - it is the restoration of a battered hull into all its original strength and grace and beauty of line.

God did more than salvage us when he gave us his son, he gave us salvation - complete restoration of our souls.

That is what the love of God designs to give us all and has made possible for all of us, by the gifts of his Son, eternal and everlasting life. Yes, we know that Jesus died on the cross. But do we really know why? Have you felt him in your life?

## **We Know that Christ Went About Doing Good**

### **Scripture: Luke 18:35-19:10**

Text chosen from Luke 19:10; “To seek and to save the lost;” though many people in the world would never have heard the name of Jesus, though multitudes who know his name know little more about him, while millions have read the gospel narrative, and many of these know him as Savior and Lord; there is a great consensus concerning him in the world. It is not as broad as humanity, but it reaches far and wide. Here it is in five words: Jesus went about doing good.

Regardless of what we have to say about Jesus, all of us have to admit, if we know anything at all about his life, that Jesus truly did do good wherever he went and whatever he did.

This is the first message of the missionary. It is remembered by men and women who are lost in sin and shame. It is a fact over which the selfish and indifferent stumble. Certain theologians may deny much that is found in the New Testament, but not this - Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good.

In this fact lies much of the fascination that Jesus has for us. Let us discuss Jesus going about doing good this morning, in reference to three stages. First, the dream before the deed.

We know that doing good is contemplated in the mind and meditated in the heart before it becomes an act of will. In other words, we usually think about something, plan how we are going to do it before we actually do the act. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.”

That is one reason why the boyhood and young manhood of Jesus becomes so fascinating to us. We know so very little about his silent years; we surmise so much. Where is there one of us, even in the jungle, who has not had some inkling of a dream of doing good? We read in newspapers and magazines, see on TV and in movies pictures of starvation, disease, poverty, helplessness that is present in our world and we all want in some way to help, to do our part. We dream, perhaps of what we would do in the middle of some of these situations. Actually, some people dream and plan and then give up all to actually follow out their dreams.

Jesus apparently dreamed and thoroughly planned with God’s help the good deeds he was going to do in the world. Finally, Jesus’ dreaming was disclosed on the day he stood before his fellow townsman and announced his purposes: “To preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” This was the dream that preceded the deed.

For we are called, first of all, to belong to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and to keep our lives warmed at the hearth of life. It is in these the fire will be lit which will create new structures and programs of service that will draw others into the circle to dream dreams and have visions.

There will be no question about it, if we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior, we will have dreams and visions and plans of going about doing good in his name. And moreover, we will actually go about doing that good. The talk and dreams will lead to actions through the guidance of Jesus Christ.

The second stage is the deed after the dream. If we are really serious about doing good in our world, first we will dream and plan what we will do and then we will go out and do it, just as Jesus Christ went about doing good. His dreams didn't dissolve like morning mist. Those were not empty words he spoke at Nazareth. Here, again is a fascinating fact concerning Jesus: He actually went about doing good.

Too many of us are called dreamers. We dream about something, and that's as far as it goes. I'm sure that all of us know people who talk a good fight, but they have no action to back up what they say. Actually, it's like "faith without works is dead."

To illustrate the fact that "Jesus did go about doing good," we could open the Gospel narrative almost anywhere but let us open it where it tells of Jesus entering and passing through Jericho (Luke 18:35-19:9, which was our scripture reading this morning.) This is a short page in my Bible. Jesus entered, passed through, and left Jericho. What happened in that city because of his visit? He did good in Jericho. He opened the eyes of a blind man; he restored a dishonest man to honest life and purpose. How many other men crossed the city that day and failed in their responsibility to do good while passing through? The human cry for help was unheard, a soul's deep longing for restorative kindness was unnoticed. Toyohiko Kagawa once researched that Jesus went about doing good, while many of us occupy ourselves with just going about.

As I wrote this sermon and came to this point, I wondered just what happens in our community as a result of our presence? Are we really an addition in the community in which we live? Or are we just there like another stick or stone? In any place that we go, our work, our school, our social activities, are others glad we came? Do we really add something to the group? Or are we just there for the ride and for what we can get out of it, and never intending to add any of ourselves?

You know, there is so much good any of us can do right here in this community. We don't have to dream about it anymore. We can actually do it. I've noticed in the last few years that the spirit of people seems to be gone. Many people are not interested in anything, except to keep themselves going and to provide primarily for themselves. They seem to want to let the rest of the world go by and everything is OK as long as no one bothers them or interferes with their plans. It seems too bad that people can't have more enthusiasm and real down-to-earth interest in what is going on around them. The good that needs to be done and can be done is tremendous. There is quite a difference in living a life rather than just existing. The third stage of our doing good and even of Jesus doing good is motivation. What is it that stimulates the dream and purpose of doing good? What is it that transmutes the into deed? Can we have consensus in our answers? Is it not love? It is love that we see in Jesus Christ. When a young man approached Jesus to

ask him a question, Mark's account says, "Then Jesus beholding him loved him." We feel that the sentence reveals Jesus' mind and heart in every contact that he had with men. Love tumbled in his dream; love prompted his deeds.

Jesus has just finished dining with some of his disciples, when he asks Simon Peter, "Lovest thou me more than all else?" With slight variation the question is twice repeated. Each time Peter answers with increasing vehemence, "Yes, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." On each occasion Jesus replies with a command, "Feed my sheep", varied on the two subsequent occasions to the former, "Love my sheep." There, then, is the character of the supreme response to Jesus Christ – that of love, and there too is the character of the obligation which Jesus himself lays briefly upon us, the moment we declare that love.

What is the source of this love Jesus Christ had that prompted his deeds; his going around doing good? Love is not something that man just has or hasn't. It is not an apple picked from a tree; love is something nurtured in the human heart. Children from homes where there is no love, unless they find love somewhere else, become unloving and delinquent. "One loving heart set another on fire." Jesus dreamed his dreams and did his loving deeds because his life was rooted in the love of God. It was because "God so loved", that Jesus went about doing good. So close was the Source of his love that his life and deeds was God himself loving humanity.

To those who learn love and to those only, come abundance of life. We cannot gain life in any other way. We may multiply the days through which we live. But length of days does not mean life. It may mean only a dragging wretchedness. We may increase the things which life is supposed to have need of, but life cannot feed on things. Life is inseparable from the satisfaction a man has in his own soul. How much of that satisfaction comes from going about doing good?

I think probably this is why most of us today are not interested in going about doing good! Instead of having the love of God in our hearts, we have the love of money, the love of material things – new house, car, furniture, boat, the love of self- (I come first, then after me you might come). Since we do agree that the love of God in our hearts is the motivation for us going about doing good, we certainly cannot do much good unless we do have the love in our hearts. Actually, the many temptations in our world today has taken ahold us. We have fallen into this trap. We have gotten away from God. O sure there are more church members than ever. Thousands of new church buildings are being built each year. This really means very little unless we have accepted Jesus Christ into our lives as our personal Lord and Savior. Unless we become reborn Christians and have a true real life Christian experience, church membership, attending church or anything else really doesn't matter too much. Apparently, we are afraid to get involved too deeply for fear we will be called on to contribute something of ourselves, our talents, our time to God and the church. Apparently church membership is just a prestige affair, everyone else is doing it, and besides, it looks good on my record.

Believe me, it's about time we started taking our church membership seriously, that we seriously think

about God, about Jesus Christ, about what being a Christian means. The good we go about doing will never really matter very much or amount to very much until we do this good because we feel the need and we must do it because of God's love for us. Certainly, all of us could use some of God's love in our lives.

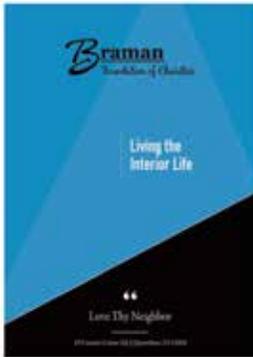
Do we see why this sermon is being preached? By it we see Jesus going about doing good. We see Jesus is a loving person. We see Jesus manifesting the love of God. We see Jesus loving us. And by the love we love, "We love, because he first loved us."

Words come easily, actions more slowly. Yet a man is measured not by what he says, but by what he does. A farmer asked his sons to work in the vineyard. He went to the first and said, "Go and work in my vineyard today, my son." He said, "Alright Sir" - but he never went near it. Then the father approached the second son with the same request. He said, "I won't," but afterward he changed his mind and went. Jesus' question is rhetorical. Which of these two did what their father wanted? The chief priest and elders answered, "The second one." Then Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go on to the Kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots believed him; and even when you saw it, you did not afterwards repent and believe him."

From 1John 3:18 we read, "Let us not love, in a word, neither in tongues; but in deed." Truly Jesus Christ, our Lord, who went about doing good, who still goes about doing good, prompts us, moves us, vitalizes us to do the same.

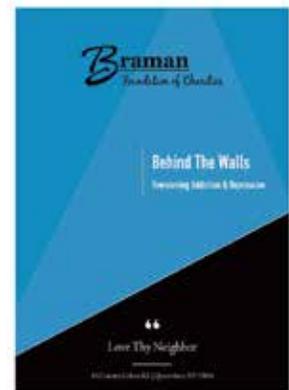


# Ways In Which B.F.C. Serves the Community



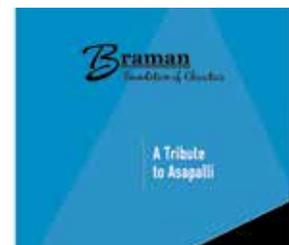
Many of us struggle with stress, depression, our weight, and other debilitating issues. "Living the Interior Life" is a program that teaches the individual affirmative prayer, meditation techniques, cognitive behavior therapy, overcoming addiction, physical exercise and proper nutrition. In addition,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

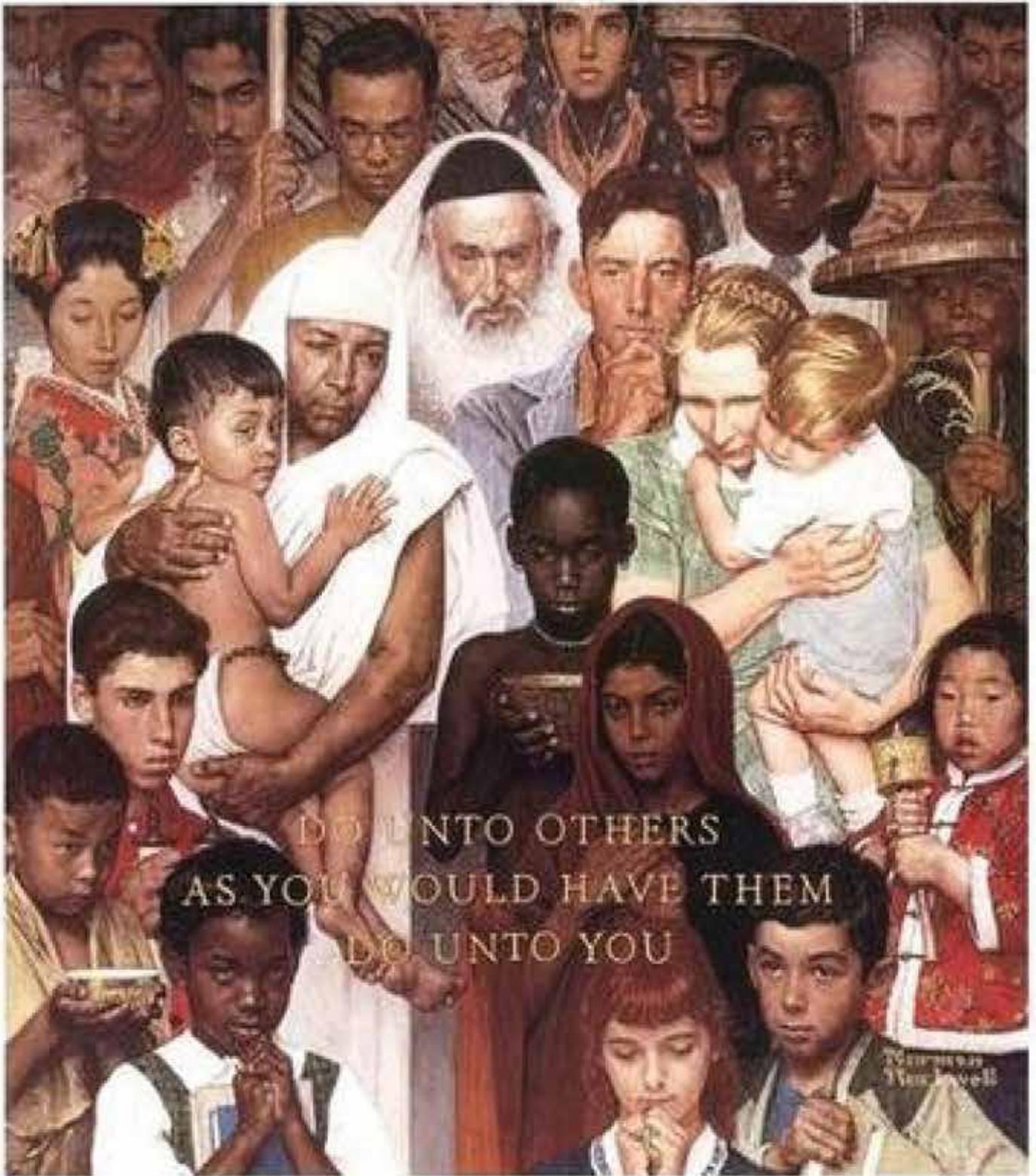


Millions of us suffer needlessly from addiction & depression. The reasons for this are many. In this program we emphasize the 12 step method of Recovery, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Meditation techniques to overcome difficulties. We also rely on God's grace to help you be lifted from your dilemma.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