

# *B*raman *Foundation of Charities*



The Fultonham United  
Methodist Church

## The Sermons of Richard W. Braman Vol. 11

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Love Thy Neighbor

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

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



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

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

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

In Christ,  
The Braman Foundation

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# **Unto You Is Born This Day a Savior**

## **Scripture: Luke 2:1-20**

Text is chosen from Luke 2:11: “For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” These words “you” - “this day” - “a Savior” - Contain the whole Christmas story.

“To you is born this day a Savior,” says the Angel of the Lord. This is already tremendously important.

For your sake God was not content to be God but willed to become man; for you he emptied himself that you may be exalted; for you he gave himself that you may be lifted up and drawn unto him. The wondrous deed brought him no gain, fulfilled no need of his. It was accomplished only for you, for us. The Christian story then is a story that is enacted with us and for us. The Christmas story then is a story that is enacted with us and for us.

Perhaps we have never thought of the birth of Jesus Christ in this light, but we certainly ought to for God’s word tells us this. “To you is born this day a Savior”- to you and to me.

You, regardless of who you are, whether or not you understand the message, whether or not you are good and pious people; whether or not you are deserving of it, whether or not you truly are a Christian and live your life as a Christian. The news is meant for you. For your benefit the Christian story happened. Again, it does not take place without us; we are involved in it.

Let us think for a moment of God’s unspeakable gift-Jesus Christ his Son. First let us consider the method of God’s gift. In Mary he picked a virgin to bear a child, his son so that God could become human and dwell among us. “There is born to you”.

Secondly, we can see the divine inclusiveness of God’s gift as we reread Luke 2:10; “And the angels said to him, be not afraid; For behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people.” No one isn’t excluded regardless of our position in life, poor or rich, healthy or sick, beggar or thief, or regardless of what we have made of our lives. Jesus Christ was born for all people everywhere.

Third, consider the uniqueness of God’s gift. Truly he gives us himself in Christ. Christ is our only way to God. We read in John’s Gospel 1:14: “And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, for full of grace and truth; We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only son from the Father.” Truly the birth of Jesus Christ which is Christmas is our unspeakable gift. There is a little poem entitled, The Way to Christmas - “Christmas never comes to us, to Christmas we must go-with yearning spirit, reaching out- the Prince of Peace to know.”

The news of the birth of the child in Bethlehem is not to be likened to a statement made in a textbook. The Angel of the Lord was no professor. A professor would perhaps have said: “to mankind is born is Savior”.

So what? We are apt to deduce that mankind in general does not include me, is only meant for others. It is like in a movie or play where we are confronted with people who are not ourselves. In contrast, the Angel of the Lord points to the shepherd and points to us. His news is directly addressed to us: "To you is born this day a Savior."

Let us also remember no one is first, no one is last, no one gets preference, no one gets shortchanged, and most important, not a single one goes wanting. He who was born in Bethlehem is the eldest brother of us all.

It is quite amusing how some of us think we have the inside track with God; that we, because of our large contributions and our large deeds, will certainly deserve a place at God's right hand. I'm afraid some of us are going to be mighty surprised when the time of judgment comes. Little do we seem to realize that big shows on our parts really matter very little to God because he actually knows our innermost thoughts and he knows what kind of persons we are even better than we ourselves. There is no pretending with God. He knows us for real.

"Unto you this day is born a Savior" regardless of you yourself.

Second- "To you- this day!" says the Angel of the Lord. When Christ was born it was "this day." A new day dawned in the middle of the night. Christ himself was and is the sun of this day and of every day. The new day is not only Christmas Day, it is the day of our life.

"This day" refers not only to the past, to "Once Upon a time." Far from it. We live in the new day which God has made. "This day" implies not only tomorrow. Certainly, also tomorrow. He who was born on that first Christmas Day will not die ever again but lives and reigns eternally. Yet we ought not to dwell on the morrow. We are told elsewhere: "Oh that today you would harken to hear his voice! Harden not your hearts!"

Today, now is the time to hear Christ's voice in your heart. You don't have to wait until Christmas to accept Christ. He is waiting for you and you can accept him into your life as your personal Lord and Savior now. "This day" means that nearly 2000 years ago Christ came to this earth "for you." It also means that you too will have eternal life with God if you are a true Christian and have accepted him who was born on what we call Christmas Day.

There is a poem entitled, "Questions Not Easy to Dismiss"

What profit should we win the race  
To solve the mysteries of space,  
To signal through ten thousand nights,  
If we neglect to read the star  
Shining forever from afar,

Of Jesus, cradled from his birth  
On the dark bosom of the earth?  
And what are victories of skill  
Unless exploring in God's will  
We prove the law we there have found  
In this our world- our holy ground?  
For God is now and God is here,  
Not hidden in some shadowy sphere.

Third - And now we hear: "To you this day is born a Savior!" This is the very heart of the Christmas story.  
To you this day is born a "Savior".

The Savior is he who brings us salvation.

The Savior is he who wrought salvation free of charge. Salvation is about the only thing I know of that cost us absolutely nothing. We do not have to pay God anything. It merely means that deep within our hearts and minds we accept Jesus Christ into our lives. We must acknowledge that we want to live differently. We want to become the kind of persons God wants us to become. Basically, this is what each one of us wants whether we know it or not. We all are for this peace and joy and contentment that can only come by the acceptance of Jesus Christ into our hearts. Many of us fight this for nearly all our earthly lives and then finally we realize what life is all about and we cannot understand why we have been so blind and unable to hear Christ's call.

The Savior is he who brings salvation to "all", without reservation or exception, simply because we all need him and because he is the Son of God who is the Father of us all. When he was made man, he became the brother of us all.

It is amazing to realize that we can be saved regardless of the color of our skin, regardless of position in society, regardless of our knowledge of God's word, regardless of our intelligence, regardless of how bad our lives may have been in the past. We can be a bum or on skid row or as socialite on Broadway, it matters little to our salvation, if we truly accept Christ into our lives.

"Unto you is born this day a Savior." People have indeed been saved. They have been saved from inordinate love of self and turned into devoted servants of the community. They have been saved from alcoholism and debasing lust and enabled to be more than conquerors. They have been saved from the hopelessness and despair and given the power to triumph over disaster.

Mankind, you and I, definitely need to be saved. One of the most inescapable observations of our time is the sinfulness of the human heart. Left alone to ourselves, without some redemptive hand to seize us, to teach us, to lay hold upon us, to what lengths man can degenerate! And yet, by subjecting our lives to

the redemptive power and disciplining influence of Christ, to what heights of moral and spiritual beauty we can rise! Man needs, as he has always needed, a Savior. He finds that he cannot lift himself by his own shoestrings. In Jesus we have one to whose friendships we capitulate; before whose cross we can find forgiveness; in whose fellowship we can find spiritual power; in whose life and teaching we can find incomparable ideals; one who can transform us, put within us something of himself, and impart us the life abundant.

This, then, is the Christmas story. You see, we cannot possibly hear the story and not look away from ourselves, from our own life with its cares and burdens. There he is, our great God and Savior, and here we are human beings, and now it is true that he is for me, is for us. Impossible to hear his story without hearing our own. It is the great transformation that has been worked in us once and for all, the great joy it has released in us, and the great calling we have received to set out on the way he shows us.

This Christmas and throughout the whole year, let each of us try to understand what Christmas really means in our lives let us catch the full impact of this great act God has performed for “Unto you is born this day- in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”



## **Living in a Time of Change**

### **Scripture: Romans 8:31-39**

Text is chosen from 102nd Psalm verses 25-27; “Of old thou didst lay the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They will perish, but thou dost endure; they will all wear out like a garment. Then changes them like raiment, and they pass away; but thou art the same, and thy years have no end.”

When we actually sit down and review the events of the year now closing it becomes plain that we live in a time of rapid changes.

There are changes in life that we look forward to.

There are changes that disturb us. They come upon us so suddenly, and we are not altogether sure at the moment exactly what they mean. They carry the possibility of even greater change, and some carry the possibility of great danger.

Overtaken by such changes, some people feel the way a man might feel if he went home from church and found nothing but a hole in the ground where he expected to see his home. There are changes all along the way something like that. They don't delight us they disturb us. This morning we shall try to discover how we can best live in a time of disturbing change.

When changes like these come upon us, the best thing we can do is turn to the 102nd Psalm. It ends with these familiar words, “Thou, Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; they shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy year shall not fail.” The Psalmist in these words strikes two notes that will steady us in a time of disturbing change. The first is the note of realistic candor; and the second, the note religious confidence.

First let us discuss the note of realistic candor.

If we are to be candid, we have to face the fact that change is one of the conditions of life. Everything changes. The city, town, or countryside where you live is changing rapidly. The church is changing.

The country is changing. It has been changing for the last 50 years from a predominantly rural society to an urban one. And along with these changes we are faced with all the problems that these changes bring forth. Many times, we feel how much more peaceful and satisfying were our childhoods. Why did we have to make so much progress and become involved in all these problems. I'm afraid we forgot to remember that in our childhoods we were in quite a different position than we are now as parents. Then we were children with fewer problems. Now we are parents and face I am sure the same types of problems our

parents faced.

Needless to say, we all are changing. Sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse.

I'm sure when some of us were in school we learned to draw the map of Europe in geography class. After the First World War the map changed and had to be learned again. Then again after World War II it changed and had to be altered. In 1950 the maps of Africa and Asia had changed because some nations were breaking loose from their colonial ties and asserting themselves as independent countries. So even maps change over the years.

Facing the fact of change, we see that this is not the first time that major changes have been made. Changes of all kinds have taken place down through the centuries from the beginning of time to the present day.

We can see that changes are never so sudden as they seem to be. Change works steadily, slowly, constantly. It sometimes appears suddenly.

Boston didn't change its skyline in a year. And Paul the apostle did not change from a prosecutor to a propagator of the gospel in a single day. The preparation for that change went far back into his life like the roots of a tree which run underground and reach farther out than any branch of the tree can possibly reach.

Many times a person expects too much of himself perhaps he is just accepted Jesus Christ into his life. He feels that immediately he will be a changed person. But little does he realize that it took him years and years to get that way and just habit alone takes time to break. Certainly, he has changed and perhaps he has taken the biggest step but the rest of the change will take time, perhaps the rest of his earthly life.

When we look candidly at the past the facts of change, we can see that we do not always like them. The familiar gives us a sense of security the unfamiliar and the new disturb us and often unsettle the security we need. This goes deep in us.

Things that are new, just naturally seem to put us on our guard and we hesitate to accept them until we are sure that eventually it will benefit us. Perhaps it might be a change in our job where we are afraid our job will be eliminated or downgraded. I think this is a natural reaction until we become familiar with the change. I specially noticed this in my work because I help in creating some of the job changes with new methods and means of manufacturing.

In your early life you may have gone through a time in which everything in your world went to pieces; everything except your father and mother. They were there and they were the same. They did not change, and you could accept and face the disturbing changes because you knew that you could always go to them; they would always be there.

That's the way the Christian feels towards God and Jesus Christ. Regardless of how much the world changes around us watching other people, God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. He is always there and his feeling of love towards us never changes. This is the real security we all need.

Secondly, let us discuss the note of religion confidence. The men who wrote the Old Testament had an almost inconceivable capacity to look at life and see it exactly as it was without losing either their hope or their joy.

They never said, as so many people do now, "there is no death." they said, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me."

They never said in a burst of optimism, "there will never be another war." They said, "though there rise up war against me, yet will I put my trust in him." They never said, as so many of us are tempted to say in our more optimistic moments, "things will always be the same. There will always be an England; there will always be a United States; there will always be the kind of society we enjoy," they never said that. They said, "they shall be changed, everything in heaven and earth, but thou art the same." Everything changes except God. God is the change whom self remains changeless, and this is the fact that gives us ground for our religious confidence.

It is not easy to grasp this until you lower it to the human level and, when you see what it means on that level, you can lift it up to the higher level where God is.

Henry Sloane Coffin in his book, "what is there in religion?", used the Hudson River as the metaphor of fleeting change in religion. The river is also a picture of permanence. Its water is forever flowing away, but this stream remains exhaustively replenished. If we can do this with our religion, then we have security, then changes can take place around us and we will have No Fear. In fact, we will want to be a part of the changes and perhaps make them better than they started out to be.

Note how things change in the church, and yet the church is the same in its spirit, in its purpose, in its intentions. Really the church changes because you and I change, and the church is you and I.

Think of persons whose outward life is completely changed, but they are the same, only greater. Generally, this is what happens to a person when he accepts Jesus Christ into his life.

Let us raise our level higher and think of Jesus, our Lord and Master. At a quick glance it might seem to you that Jesus has changed from century to century. At one time he was Christ the King of glory. In a later century he was Jesus the Man of Sorrows. In one period he was the Jesus of history; men tried to get behind all the veils that showed his life and put their finger on the real Jesus, what he really said and did. In the next generation he was the Christ of faith who died for men while they were yet sinners. These outward appearances of Jesus have changed but Jesus has not changed. He is the same- friend of sinners, healer of the sick, critic of the legalist, son of man, and son of his father God- he has not changed; he is the same.

And in whatever century he might appear with whatever particular account men might at the time speak his name, he would be recognized if by nothing else than the wounds in his hands and feet.

Rising still one level higher, God seems to us to change from time to time. Our ideas of God, to be sure, change. One generation talks about the transcendence of God, the high and lofty one over his creation, who from his throne beholds all the dwellers upon earth. The next generation sees him transcendent but also imminent., not only above but also in the very fabric of existence. At one time they speak intimately of God as a person, and they think of him as an enlarged human being; in the next generation they think of him more impersonally as the ground of all existence, as the ultimate reality.

But God does not change. We can learn more and more about God, but God is no different now than he has been for all eternity.

The love that moves the sun and all the other stars does not change. It remains the same though everything else changes and eventually perishes.

Psalm 55:19 reads; “Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.” The discipline of change is meant to drive us out beyond the changing hour to the thought of eternity out from the restless things of sense to find rest in God. The deepest lesson is that which the psalmist reached through all his troubled experience. “Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved: he is the changeless in the midst of change, a center of rest for the restless soul of man. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever; the same in nature, in character, in love, even as Jesus revealed him, the eternal father who yearns over his children in deathless love.

When you can hold in your two hands these two aspects of the truth, this realistic candor and this religious confidence, you can face any change without fear, and you can say with Paul the apostle, “though my outward man perishes, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”

In this new year coming let us all resolve to be disciples of Christ. Let us take him into our lives as our personal Lord and Savior and then notice the change that will take place in our lives. Christ is the same always, God is the same always. We are the ones that change. Let us pray that in our changing it will truly be for the better.

## **Many Meanings**

### **Scripture: I Corinthians 11: 23-32**

Text is chosen from I Corinthians 11:24; “Do this in remembrance of me.” we are now about to observe the ordinance of the Lord’s supper. This table of the Lord is open to all fellow Christians; and although none should partake of these sacred emblems impenitent or without faith in Jesus Christ, we cordially invite all who are sincerely seeking him to come to his table, in the assurance that he who came into the world to be the savior of all will in no wise cast them out. Come to the sacred table, not because you must, but because you may; come to testify, not that you are righteous, but you are sincerely love our Lord Jesus Christ; and desire to be his true disciples; Come, not because you are strong, but because you are weak; not because you have any claim on heaven’s rewards but because in your frailty and sin you stand in constant need of heaven’s mercy and help; calm, not to express an opinion, but to seek a Prince presence, and pray for a spirit.

True communion never ends with the benediction. To remember must be to serve it was after the upper room that Jesus gave the Great Commission to his disciples and his promise to be with them always. (to be with us always).

This communion service has been called by several names. These names- and the meaning behind them- gave a clear understanding of the place and the purpose of the Lord’s supper in the lives of Christians- in our lives.

Some call this meal a memorial. And so it is it is a memorial of Jesus Christ. As we come to the table we are called upon to remember him. As we partake of these elements we are called upon to remember another service more than 1900 years ago in an upper room- a Last Supper on the night in which he was betrayed.

Some call this meal a sacrament. And so it is. A sacrament is “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace period” in this service we have a present reality-the reality of God’s nearness to us. His presence stirs in us the realization of his love.

Some call this meal the Eucharist. And so it is. Eucharist” comes from a Greek word suggesting Thanksgiving. When we remember the life of Jesus Christ and how it was given for us, our hearts overflow with gratefulness.

Some call this meal the Lord supper. And so it is. This table not only commemorates Jesus Christ; It also has him as its host. This is not our table; It is Christ table. The invitation is his.

The Ethiopian church designates this event as the “consecration”. And so it is. Not only are the elements consecrated but much more important, the believers who partake of them make a renewal of their covenant with Christ. No communion service which is not an act of personal and corporate rededication is worthy of the name. Consecration in this connection means that a person consecrated is set apart as sacred, being wholly renewed and committed.

Some call this meal Holy Communion. And so it is. “communion” suggest intimate fellowship. This supper brings us into fellowship with fellow Christians, but even more, it is a Holy Communion, offering us fellowship and friendship with God.

Believing that Jesus took the occasion to create a very intimate relationship between himself and his followers, we believe that he takes this opportunity to bind us to himself in a very unique and personal way. To be invited to Christ table to share in the bread and wine is indeed an honor; One we should cherish.

When Christians commune they, at least for a few brief moments, think the same thoughts, speak the same language, and make the same high resolves.

We need to be reminded quite often that in God’s sight we are all equals. Social standing, wealth, skin color, having not a thing to do with it. We are all on the same level, the same plane. We are all brothers together in God’s world.

Meeting Christ at this feast at which he is the host and having, for at least a fleeting hour, “that meal which was in him,” we resolve to share his concerns for the Kingdom.

Communion is not intended to create fellowship in Christ but to embody it, to represent it, to express it. When communion is shared by people who are already bound together as members of the family of Christ, it is indeed the great sacrament of his presence.

The day of the Lord’s supper is an occasion of joy for the Christian community. Reconciled in the hearts with God and the brethren, the congregation receives the gift of the body in the blood of Jesus Christ, and receiving that, it receives forgiveness, new life and salvation. It is given new fellowship with God and men. The fellowship of the Lord’s supper is the superlative fulfillment of Christian fellowship. As the members of the congregation are united in body and blood at the table of the Lord so will they be together in eternity. Here the community has reached its goal. Here joy in Christ and his community is complete. The life of Christians together under the word has reached its perfection in the sacrament.

And so this community service has been and still is called by many names; “memorial, sacrament, Eucharist, Lord supper, consecration, Holy Communion. Basically they all have the same meaning and hopefully they all lead us to the same feat of our savior and Lord. Regardless of what we call it by name, if we come with the right spirit and the right attitude, we will find Christ here at his table. Remember we are the invited guest, he is the host. Truly we do this, “in remembrance of him” who died that our sins should be forgiven for all time.

## **Along Comes God**

### **Scripture: Genesis 28:10-19**

Text is chosen from Genesis 28:16; “Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it.”

Crossing a baren wilderness, Jacob, the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham, came by night to a lonely place where he lay down and slept, using a stone for a pillow. In his dreams, that night, he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, “and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.” He heard the God of his father’s calling him by name and making to him the very promise that he had made to Abraham and Isaac- that he would possess that whole land, that his descendants would be numberless and that through them all the families of the earth would be blessed. When Jacob awakened from his sleep, he could still feel that presence and hear the voice and be thought to himself, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” Then he was afraid and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

The story stirs us deeply as we read it. We have often longed for such a vision as that which God granted to Jacob, some vital, tangible, unmistakable experiences of God to confirm all that we believe about him. It is difficult just to have faith and to go on trusting a God we cannot see, the more difficult these days when so many voices make mockery of our simple faith. (It can be simple. We do not have to make it difficult.) If only God in a dream or a vision would come to us and once and for all dispel our uncertainty and doubt! Other people tell us how it happened to them, and we have always thought that it is supposed to happen in the religious life, but most of us cannot with all honesty say that it has ever happened to us. We cannot point to a single place, a single time, or a single experience in our past life and say with assurance, “There I saw and heard God.” Certainly, a person who has had such an experience has, perhaps, more faith and more easily can believe in God. But still such a person cannot tell us how to have this experience this is something we have to discover for ourselves.

Yet we still long for Jacob’s ladder to bridge the infinite distance between earth and heaven. We live in hope that one day God will take the initiative and bring us to the time and place where we can say, even with fear, “There is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” The story of Jacob speaks directly to our need.

The Old Testament story speaks a very important truth to man’s longing for a vision of God. It tells us that such a vision often contains the element of surprise. God takes us unaware. He makes himself known to us in the place, at the time, and in the experience which we least expect. We do not pick this time, place, or experience. God does this when we least expect it and we do not have any control over it.

That awareness of God came to Jacob in a dream is not very important. The same sort of awakening came to Isaiah in church; to John Wesley in a little prayer meeting in Alder gate Street; to Blaise Pascal one

night in his study; to Augustine in a moment of intense moral struggle; to Francis of Assisi in an act of lowly ministry to a leper on the Umbrian (original text illegible) plain; to Johann Kepler at work with his telescope. This awareness may come in any one of the thousand ways. It isn't the manner of its coming that matters; it is the fact that one wakes up to God that is important.

When we begin to realize there is a God who is Father of us all, a God who cares about you and me; a God who loves us deeply, deeply enough to sacrifice his only son; then we will have had such an experience as Jacob had. I believe these facts are rather plain that God does exist for you and me. We have only to look around us in all of nature. God's creative hand is in every living thing.

First of all – the vision of God comes to us in “an unlikely place.” For Jacob it was a rocky wilderness, bleak, forbidding, lonely, a place of craggy mountains and deep ravines, a dangerous place inhabited only by wild beasts, the last place in the world where a man felt close to God. We have our own ideas about the environment where God ought to be found – in a beautiful old church, for example, or a majestic mountain valley or a lovely flowers garden. But unless we ourselves deep within us want to truly find God there, he will not appear to us. It's pretty much up to each of us where we find God and how we find him.

Yet God came to Jacob in the most unideal surroundings. Not man but God picks the place of Divine visitation. It may indeed be a house of worship as it was for Isaiah; but it may be a penal colony as it was for the author of the Book of Revelation or the Island of Patmos.

The story of Jacob tells us, first, that we must be prepared for God in the place where we least expect him and that's one reason why being a Christian is a full-time job, every moment of everyday. God is not an actor who makes his entrance on the stage of life only when the props are perfectly placed, and the scene is set and the houselights dimmed and the audience hushed. God creates his own stage, and it may be one most disorganized and unlovely. It may be one that one day you will look back and say of some quite ordinary place, “Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it.”

There is a delightful touch in the make-believe story a small boy once told his father: “we were all going down the street, when suddenly along comes God.” Perhaps it wasn't as make-believe as everyone thought secondly, the story tells us that the vision of God came at an “Unlikely Time.” Take a closer look at this man Jacob sulking like a fugitive in the wilderness. He was a fugitive- Jacob was running away not only from his brother but from God. In the hour of his shame, he expected no favor from the most high.

Isn't that what is wrong with some people? We feel they are so bad that God would never accept them, and they probably get this impression from some of us who looked down our noses at people we think are bad and beneath us. But our God is a forgiving God and certainly will accept us as we are, and we then can go on from there. So, let's not let people use this for an excuse. Let us encourage them instead of discouraging them.



And yet God picked the hour of shame as the exact moment to come to Jacob and give him a vision of heaven and a gracious promise concerning his own destiny. It is really remarkable, but it characterizes God all through the Bible story. God has a way of tracking men down and bringing them his blessing when they least deserve it. The writer of the 139th Psalm poured out this conviction in a sublime prayer. "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me! Thou knows when I sit down and when I rise up; thou discernment my thoughts from afar. Thou searches out my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my way. Even before a word is on my tongue, low, oh Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou didst beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me."

Remember something, the God with whom we have to do is not a moral snob. If he were a snob, he would have sent his son to be born in the holy of holies, in the temple of Jerusalem, not in the cold and filth and darkness of a Bethlehem stable. If God were a snob, his son Jesus would have called fire from heaven upon the mulish people who rejected him; he would not have allowed them to put him to death upon a cross. Paul writes; "One will hardly die for a righteous man- though perhaps for a good man one will die will even dare to die. But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." God doesn't withhold his grace until we are worthy of it. He comes not when we deserve him but when we need him. Whether we think we need him or not. His coming may seem like judgment, but even as judgment it is still grace, and we can pray with hope, "forgive us our sins." It may be that one day you will look back on the hour of your greatest shame and say, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I did not know it."

God does not withhold his blessing until we have tidied up our minds and house cleaned our souls and put our lives in order so that we can receive him as an honored guest. God comes to us as unannounced as a friend who rings the doorbell first thing in the morning before you have had a time to make the beds or do the washing-up or even comb your hair and, like a good friend, God loves you in spite of the untidiness. It was the discovery of this amazing truth that led Francis Thompson to write his immortal ode in which he characterized God as "the Hound of Heaven." Thompson had sunk to the lowest gutters of moral degradation, lower than he believed any human being could sink. He felt forsaken by man, forsaken by God. He was a fugitive in the wilderness of his own shame but in that very wilderness the Hound of Heaven tracked him down, claimed him as his own, redeemed him for the enrichment of English literature and the world. God is like that and most definitely comes at a time in our life when we least expect him.

Thirdly, the Old Testament story tells us that the vision of God comes also in "an unlikely experience." Let us read Genesis 32:24-31; "And Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh; And Jacob's thigh was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me. "And he said to him, what's your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then he said, "Your name shall no more be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Tell me, I pray, your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So, Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." The sun

rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his thigh.”

Jacob went away limping from this violent encounter, but the lame Jacob was a better man and closer to God than the Jacob who had not been lame.

This is one of the hard lessons to learn. We have difficulty realizing that God may be in our pain and in many of the harsh and untoward experiences of life. We are not as realistic as the men who wrote the Bible. They believed that all of life comes under God’s sovereignty and that even in the dark and distressing experiences, if we look at them long and carefully enough, we may see a vision of God. These men saw God, they found his presence and heard his voice not only in sunshine but in storm, not only in the flower but in the earthquake, not only in health but in sickness, not only in victory but in defeat, not only in birth but in death. They recognized God in life’s sterner as well as its pleasant experiences; and they saw his relationship with them not in terms of comfort but in terms of power.

Failure, if we handle it constructively, is one of the most creative experiences in life. There was a Christian saint who gave thanks to God in these words: “Thou hast put aside my plans, but only that I might open my eyes to see the depths and clearness of thy plan for me. Thou hast broken my dreams, but only that I might learn to think in thy road today. Finish, then, thy discipline of me, even though it be by fire, and out of the flames will I praise thee.”

Many a man has been able to look back on the most disappointing, most frustrating, most humiliating experience in his life and because of what it did for him, say with conviction, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.” And some day when we are walking down the street or in the field we can say for certain “and along comes God” beside us.

## **Is Religion Relevant?**

### **Scripture: Matthew 5:13-20**

Text is chosen from Matthew 5:14; “You are the light of the world.” A college student said to his pastor, “Any God that exists seems to be quite in art, at least to me. The universe seems to function regularly, in the manner which science has described. Maybe God’s just triggered everything: and then sat back on his haunches to watch, I figure I can be indifferent to an indifferent God.”

A big question, a real question in many thoughtful minds these days, is not whether there is or is not a God, or whether or not Christianity or any other religion is true, but just this; Is religion relevant? Does it have any bearing on my problems? Is it pertinent in any way to the situation we are in?

It must be noticed that much of what poses in the current scene for “religion” is essentially irrelevant.

Many a religious issue has been joined on marginal matters when Lloyd George was Prime Minister of England, he once confided to an American clergyman that his church was divided on the question as to whether Christians are baptized in the name of Christ or into the name of Christ. “Can the issue be very important?”, the clergyman asked. “Extremely”, came the answer, “And I belong to one party - I am ready to fight for it.” “Which party do you belong to?” “That’s the trouble,” said thus statesman, “I can never remember which side I’m on.”

Many times, we let little irrelevant things interfere or take up a lot of our valuable time especially in the church. Somehow or other if we really are true Christians these little details work themselves out to everyone’s satisfaction.

It can be noted too, that religion has frequently proved incapable of solving specific and immediate problems. Here is the age-old question of war.

And yet, would you say that the radio beams our airliners fly are irrelevant? They too are incapable of solving many specific situations; they too failed to prevent many tragedies. A radio beam is powerless to guide a willful pilot; it is powerless to prevent a mid-air explosion; it is powerless to prevent the passenger on a plane from fighting one another. But I do not think that anyone would call it irrelevant so it is, in my judgment, with religion and in support of my contention I would like to enumerate some areas of our common life where religion’s beam is relevant to all who are obedient to it.

For one thing, religion is relevant to one of the chief problems of personal life: “How to live at the level of our best.”

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once asserted that there is in every person “a demand for the superlative.” But how to live on that level? How to live up to one’s ethical ideals? That’s the problem!

Examine life; You cannot live up to your best simply by your own inner desire, and religion reminds us of the external facts which correct our internal moral guidance system. It says to us that our course must be charted with reference to other persons who are not things and who must not be used as means but must be respected as values and ends in themselves. It brings us back again and again to the objective moral order in the universe. It makes possible a fellowship with kindred souls who inspire us to nobler ways. And it brings us face to face with a God who is never content with less than our best and who, at the same time, is willing and able to help us be our best.

A woman with a garage once wrote a number of crank letters to Muriel Lester's school in England. The Superintendent of the school guessed her identity and asked her to give up the libelous habit. At first the woman vowed innocence, but when the letters were produced, she broke down, dropped her head, wept, and remarked: "Oh miss! I'm as good a woman as God ever made- only I can't live up to it."

That's what's wrong with most of us, we just plain cannot live up to our best, except through the help and guidance of Jesus Christ. We all need his guidance and direction constantly and when we realize this in our lives then we are on the road to becoming the kind of person God wants us to become. We cannot possibly do it by ourselves. We need God's help.

Secondly-religion is relevant to what may be the chief problem of contemporary social life: "the achievement and maintenance of several liberties."

When we really get down to bedrock in analyzing the "way of life", we hold dear and wish that the whole world would discover that it is tied up in several liberties- freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, security of person and home from arbitrary search and seizure, trial by jury, security from interference in personal life, liberty, or property without due process of law, and so on it is upon a foundation of these, we believe, that human society can succeed.

An ugly situation was developing in a small town. The high school had been successfully integrated last year, but some were doing their best to have segregation restored. Thirteen Negroes had been frightened by the prospect of violence into staying away as school opened. Then at a public meeting Jesse Angeline Evans, 15, a grocer's daughter, a straight A student, and president of the Student Council, spoke up: "We think it is only fair that the Negroes be permitted to attend this high school." After a stunned silence she stood off a host of angry questions and the meeting finally broke up without taking any action. Why did she do it? "Someone had to speak up", she said. "I just do not think segregation is a Christian thing." Where had she learned that? In the Methodist Church.

I wonder how many of us feel that the freedom and liberties we have and enjoy are only for the white persons? Many, I'm sure. Why do we think we are the better of the races? I am sure and you too will admit that God loves the Negroes just as much as he does the white, yellow or red.

There was a boy who graduated from high school and went to college. He had been interested in astronomy and had built himself a small telescope. At college it was natural for him to hang around the observatory and take courses related to his great interest in the stars and other heavenly bodies. After some months of professor, the professor of the astronomy approached him and said, "Would you like to have a key to the observatory? You may enter when you wish and use the telescope, after a few instructions." The boy was delighted, accepted the gracious offer, and made good use of it. This incident teaches us a lesson that we need concerning freedom.

We note first of all that the boy's freedom in the observatory was something given. The professor gave him the key. He did not request a key and he made no attempts to enter the observatory uninvited. He asserted no right to use the telescope. This freedom was a high privilege and accepted as such.

Most of our real freedoms are like that. Take the key to the family car which many a boy earnestly desires to have. It is really something not to be demanded, it is given by another and should be so accepted.

Most of the freedoms that we have in our country are freedoms that have been wrought out and paid for by others than ourselves. It is a high privilege to accept them.

The key to the observatory was given to a boy because he showed some capability. He had shown an interest; he had built a telescope. There are many who complain that doors of opportunity do not open to them. They open to the capable. Keys are placed in their hands. Let us remember that opportunity always knocks. It's up to us to open the door and let it in. We cannot expect everything to be handed to us on a silver platter.

The key to the observatory was given to a boy who could bear responsibility. The professor undoubtedly had watched the young student. He knew that he not only had skill but also had good character.

Once Jesus said to one of his disciples named Peter, and "I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven." (As read in Matthew 16:19). What a gift! What ultimate trust in the capability and the character of his disciple!

Freedom- the symbol is the key. Someday the good master will touch your shoulder and say, I find you capable and responsible and worthy of every way to be given the key to a little corner of my Kingdom." It will be a great day in your life, as I know it must have been a great day in the life of the boy who was given a key to the observatory.

The third place where the relevance of religion shows is in connection with the perennial riddle of human affairs: "how can the best of the past be conserved without stifling the creativity of the future?" In every age an era, humanity is caught in the dilemma of a reactionary, inflexible holding to the past on the one

hand, or a revolutionary and sweeping break with all things old on the other. There are those who are certain “that the truly important in human experience is behind us; that the truly crucial battles have been fought, and that it is given to man from them,” and that these truths have in fact been embodied in the existing order. There are those who cry that only “by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions” can any good be accomplished.

Vital religion, however, has again and again produced champions of another way, a way you might call “dynamic conservation conservatism.” The dynamic conservative “penetrates to the core of the past and lays hold of the values it was trying to express.” Jesus Christ was such a person; he had profound respect for his heritage. “I have not come to destroy the law”- that was his conservatism. But it was not a dead or static respect; it was moving, dynamic, applying the values of the old to the present, “fulfilling” the law, as he put it.

Paul was such a person, he never lost his zeal for all that was holy and just and good in his tradition, but from new occasions he learned new duties.

This is what we as Christians have to do in our age. We certainly can apply the principles of the Bible to our lives today. When people say that the Bible doesn’t apply to us today, they are absolutely wrong, and they apparently do not understand the message of the Bible. God’s word applies to us today and will apply for all time. Certainly there are new and different situations that come up today that didn’t back in Christ’s day but basically human beings are the same today as they were then and thus the same principles of religion apply to us today.

I also agree that we have to make progress from year to year and that we cannot hold on to all the old things we had in the past but there are certain religious principles we should never get rid of in order to make progress and I believe if we do, we will soon find ourselves defeated and downtrodden. We most definitely need God and Jesus Christ in the middle of our everyday lives as well as at the heart of our government and our social organizations. Nothing I know of will ever take God’s place and if you think so I’m afraid you are in for a big surprise.

If we have faith and courage to seek it, we shall be shown new truths in the Gospel of real and immediate relevance to our time own time, and we shall be given new insight to understand the unescapable problems which arise, almost every day at home and abroad.

Is religion relevant? My answer of course yes, religion is relevant to our time, to us and it will always be such. On it, as on nothing else, hanging the critical issues of our and every generation. This it has always been, and I believe always will be.

## **The Domain of God's Grace**

### **Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-9**

Text is chosen from Galatians 5:4; "When you seek to be justified by way of law, your relationship with Christ is completely severed: you have fallen out of the domain of God's grace." What does that domain mean? It is the territory over which dominion is exerted, sphere of action, thought, influence, etc.

Those who have visited British cities around the world will have come to some conspicuous place for their "domains". The one perhaps most familiar to us is Sydney in Australia. Sydney's domain is an area of 125 acres. It is not much more than a stone's throw from government buildings and only a short walk from business. The domain's broad expanse encourages its use: here football and cricket are played, marching bands practice, family parties gather, and clerks from the nearby offices at noontime eat lunch upon the savard. There are many other activities. Many frequent the quiet resting places and the tree bordered lanes. Here is freedom, the joy of play, rest, refreshment. It is the city's gift to her people, with no charge of admittance; a place for young and old to pray. Our text speaks of the domain of God's grace.

First of all, it suggests a broad place. "Thou hast set my feet in a broad place," wrote David concerning God's dealings with him as we read from Psalm 31: 8. Again in the 14th Psalm, "Thou hast given me room when I was in distress."

In the domain of God's grace there is room for me. When then do I live a life that is "cabin'd", "crebb'd", "confined"? Why do I shut myself up within the narrow spaces of my petty thoughts, my imprisoning prejudices, my binding sins? Grace is for me. Grace is a continually renewable experience. Grace is new every morning; it is noon days freedom and night times peace. I live in a large place; even death itself cannot put up restraining bars against me. God's domain of grace has no boundaries.

Grace is God's gift to us without thought of what we can do, what we can achieve, how good we are, how bad we are. We might understand God's grace better if only we could pay for his favor. We are not used to receiving things for nothing. Our everyday life is lived mostly in the realm of transaction not gift. But transaction is not grace. God's domain of grace is the whole area of his love for men.

Isaac, a patriarch of the Hebrews, was driven from well to well by the Philistines, who seized each well after it had been dug. At last, he came to a place where he dug a well and was no longer harassed. He named that place "Rehoboth", which means "wide spaces" or "enlargement". And he said to his wife Rebecca, "The Lord hath made room for us." (This is recorded in Genesis 26: 22) The human spirit must have enlargement; its feet must be set in a large room, if it is to live. The pilgrims craved it; so they came to the great land. The Pioneers craved it; so they pushed West. Man still craves it; so he seeks to hurl himself into space.

In the domain of God's grace there is room for others, not only for me-for all other persons. Any citizen

of Sydney can enjoy the city's domain. Whosoever will, let him enter the domain of God's grace. And of course, this means that the domain is as wide as the world.

God has told us that we do not need to be a prince or a saint to become a Christian. He is willing to accept us as we are. Then we can proceed from there. Our skin does not have to be yellow, black, red, or white. We are all the same to God. We do not have to live in a democracy or under a dictator, or in a socialized state. God comes to us; we can go to him wherever we are. Truly the domain of God's grace is as wide as the world and includes everyone.

In conversation a man said, "What is the most important thing in the world for a person to know?" His friend replied, "The meaning of the grace of God."

God's grace does not cost us anything. We do not have to pay God for it. Certainly, we should know what it is and how best to accept it.

Secondly, this domain of God's grace suggests freedom.

God freely gives. It is a message of freedom that Paul is trying in his letter to get across to the Galatian Christians. Their Jewish background was one of law. The extremist, of which Paul had been won, faced almost every act of every day as either prescribed or prevented by law. The ancient Jewish rite of circumcision demanded full keeping of the law. Well, says Paul, if you remain in this bondage, you are not in the domain of God's grace. "Your relationship with Christ is completely severed."

It's strange isn't it how many of us think all we have to do is to go to church on Sunday, if we feel like, contribute something to the church, as long as we have a surplus, serve on a committee, as long as we don't have to extend ourselves and we will be fulfilling our responsibilities to God and the church. If we think that's what being a Christian is, then we have better take a deeper look at Christianity and what the gospels are saying to us. I'm sure we all have our ideas of what religion can do for us but instead I think we had better see what we can do for religion.

We can put on our big acts in front of other people and in church, but God knows our innermost thoughts and he knows what kinds of persons we really are. We are not fooling anyone but ourselves when we act and live our lives as Sunday morning Christians. So, we can live our lives to the letter of the law but this is not good enough. We have to go that extra mile and turn the other cheek.

It was difficult for the Galatians to understand, reared as they were in the doctrine and under the discipline of the law. It is difficult for us to understand God's grace, so much of our lives is spent in the realm of transaction.

Many of us feel as if we give something we deserve something in return. Our children are brought up not



with the idea “it is more blessed to give,” but rather, “it is more blessed to receive.” Perhaps this is why we have difficulty understanding the meaning of God’s grace. God gives to us and doesn’t expect anything in return.

There is no admission charge to the Sydney domain. There is no entrance charge into the domain of God’s grace.

There is truly the royalty of receiving. First, a gift must be accepted. Once we accept a gift, it must be appreciated. So many times, we receive gifts only to store them away in the dresser drawer and not even thanking the giver. Perhaps we do not even know we are receiving God’s gift to us of his grace and therefore if we do not know we are receiving it we cannot appreciate it.

If we received a gift, we most definitely should use it. The gift will do us no good if it is not used. With God’s grace, his royalty of giving should be met with our royalty of receiving. Let us know what God’s grace is and how we should receive and use it in our lives.

In this domain we freely enjoy God’s grace. Paul advises the young preacher Timothy to charge the people to “trust in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.” Of course, many a person rest in the city domain who has a sad or even broken heart, but is there not healing in the broad expanse, the gentle sunshine, the quiet retreat?

Today we think we need all the modern conveniences. We think we need an automobile or two, a boat, a new house, new clothes, everything in order to live and be happy. We think if we have all these material things then we have it made. I’m willing to guarantee any person with all these things and not God, is still searching for something to satisfy himself and he will never know what it is until he finds God in his own life. God has created so many things around us that we could enjoy if we opened up our eyes and our ears. These will cost us nothing and we will be much more peaceful and joyful. We talk about the grace of God being free and when it is free and not to be earned by any merit of ours, does it not make the gift cheap? Perhaps in their eagerness to reach the hearts of men some have preached “cheap grace.” But is it a great danger? As men receive grace they will grow in grace. Their hearts will become repentant, their thoughts appreciative of the love of God, their wills disciplined by their thankfulness to God for his loving kindness. Grace received, every morning and every day, becomes the incentive to a life of true devotion.

Perhaps we feel that something for nothing it’s cheap and not worthwhile but when we talk about God’s grace perhaps it is the only thing in this world that’s really worthwhile and costs us absolutely nothing.

Freely share. That is the spirit of God’s domain of grace period there is plenty of room for all, if no one will claim too much. God’s gifts are adequate if all will share. Sharing is the spirit of God’s domain. This spirit is caught from him whose domain we enjoy. “Freely has God-given, freely we should give.” Why shouldn’t we share with others what God has given us. This is part of being a Christian. We cannot keep it

all to ourselves and we just naturally want others to share our joy, happiness, and peace. We want to spread the “good news” to everyone we come in contact with.

Perhaps God has endowed some of us with more fortune than others. We should be willing to share with the less fortunate. I’m sure this is what God wants us to do. I’m sure this is what he intended when some have more than others. If not I’m afraid this whole thing would not make sense or have any real true meaning.

Thirdly, the word domain suggests God’s sovereignty. A domain is a dominion. Dominion is controlled, rule: authority.

The domain of grace is God’s domain. Do we not then come back to the rule of law? Not at all. The rule of love is much stronger. God’s domain of grace is not without authority and control, but these are evidenced in the love of God, the fact of his favor, the depth of his concern, the gifts of his hand. Loves giving brings the response of love. By that response men freely and gladly disciplined themselves.

Here is a quotation made by Martin Luther; “the Gospel teaches me, not what I ought to do, but what Jesus Christ, “the Son of God” has done for me; to wit, that he suffered and died to deliver me from sin and death- most necessary it is therefore, that we should know this article well, teach it to others and beat it into their heads continually.”

Of course, some do not enter the domain of God’s grace. As the tech text tells us, some fall out. Paul wrote in the same message to the Galatians, “I do not nullify the grace of God.” It is altogether possible for a person to nullify the grace of God. Policemen walked through the Sydney domain to control those who refuse to honor and enjoy the city’s gift. There are those in the world who choose to live under God’s law rather than in the freedom of his grace. But the broad place of God’s domain still lies before them, ready to receive them when they will to enter. God waits for you and for me. We have to make the first move. He is willing to meet us more than halfway. And the cost to us is nothing. Accept it, accept God into your life.

# The Ordinary Man and the Good Life

## Scripture: Romans 12

Text is chosen from Romans 12:21; “Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.”

You may be a genius. You may have marvelous creative power. Or you may be a very talented man, with talents fine. But probe the genius and get beneath the talents and you will find him an ordinary man, not distinguished by superiority of any kind. Most men are not geniuses. Few have five talents.

There is a common run of men to which most of us belong. The words attributed to Lincoln, “God must love the common man because he has made so many of them,” lift us out of the depression of our ordinariness. To be an ordinary man is a great privilege.

The ordinary life has a great assist, by which it may be lifted out of its ordinariness. It has the capacity of response to nurture. We find analogies in nature: by its response to nurture the wild rose becomes the “American Beauty”, the crabapple becomes the “Delicious.” Nurture awakens response and by that life is lifted to a higher level.

A distinguished gentleman was once lamenting to Sir Walter Scott that he had never seen Byron. Scott then fell to talking on the beauty of Byron’s face. “Doctor,” he said, “the prints give you no idea of it: the luster is there, but it is not lighted up.” The ordinary man is a lusterless man however talented he may be. He needs lighting up to become a shining person.

Here, then, are some ways or guidelines by which an ordinary man may live the good life.

First of all- by the cultivation of receptivity an ordinary man may live the good life.

Imagine ourselves in the midst of a summer (which certainly is a good thing to imagine this time of year). How many summers have you missed in your life because you were not receptive? Think of the people who have gone to Europe without seeing Europe. Receptivity is the secret of becoming an educated man. “Receptiveness is a noble and massive virtue,” said George Elliott. We negate the finest things in life by our lack of receptivity; by its exercise we accept and simulate them into our persons.

When that little group of ordinary men that followed Jesus became concerned about becoming extraordinary, Jesus said to them, “Except you become as little children ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven.” The child has capacity to respond, receptiveness.

I know this is true of all of life, if we are not receptive to something, it most definitely will not be interesting to us. In the same way when we come to church on Sunday morning if we are not receptive to

the Holy Spirit, regardless of what the minister says, nothing will penetrate our minds, our interest.

Receptiveness is not the spirit of our times period rather do we cultivate self-reliance and practice self-culture. We rely more and more on ourselves and try to make ourselves the perfect one. Thus, we become critical of everyone and everything around us and not creative. We fail to rise above the dead level. The good life is not grasped. By receptivity of spirit, we may live the good life.

If we can be receptive to God's Holy Spirit in our lives, then we will have the guidance and direction we need to definitely live the good life. When we fail to receive the Holy Spirit and start relying on ourselves, our own judgement, then is when we get in trouble and make all kinds of mistakes because we start to make excuses for ourselves like, "I deserve to have a little fun. I've worked hard after all week and what harm can a little of this do and etcetera."

Secondly- by conversion the ordinary man may be able to live the good life. By conversion we mean a spiritual and moral change in a man. When a man becomes receptive to the finest and the best, it may grip his very soul. He sees the good, he believes in the good, he is convinced by the good, he surrenders to the good, he begins to live the good life. How many times ought a man be converted? As many times as are necessary to achieve the good life.

When a man is converted, he does not get new brains, he does not get new senses or capacities; he is still surrounded by the old relationships, and he still moves in the same world. But I have heard men tell the story of their conversion, and they said, "the stars seemed new to me, and even the sun alone differently." And I have known men, who had made every run around them miserable, develop into true gentlemen when God met with them.

Cosmetics will give a woman a beautiful face at 30; conversion will give her a beautiful face at 70.

What will the power of Christ due to us? It will make us better men as evidenced by reading the gospel and how Christ called his disciples- just ordinary men and made them good men. Christ power will give us greater vision. We will begin to understand what real life and real living is. We will be able to see a reason, a purpose for our lives. Christ power will empower us for great works. John 14: 12 reads, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than the these will he do, because I go to the Father." We will be able to do things we formally thought were impossible. We will help those that need help. We will spread the "good news" to those whom we come in contact with.

In more recent years nearly everyone seems to be afraid to use the word converted or conversion. Many of the young people do not believe such a thing can happen or if it does, the person affected must be insane or something else. Conversion you know, refers to be being reborn and if you read the gospels who will recall Christ said, "Unless you become reborn you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Speaking as a convert I can truthfully say conversion is something all of us should experience. Your life will be different. You will look at everything differently. Life will be more meaningful. You will find your place in life. And

you will not be insane or a nut, believe me. Most definitely by conversion the ordinary man may be able to live the good life.

Thirdly- by the kindling of love man rises out of ordinariness and lives the good life. God himself would have become ordinary like the pagan gods were if not for his love. Love is the distinction of the Christ. By the contagion of his love, men becoming loving, they become lights in the world. Ordinary men become shining personalities.

All we have to do is accept God's love. If we read "his word" and try to understand it, we can see the kind of love God has given and gives to us. John 3:16, tells us of the great love. "God so love the world that he gave his only begotten son..." How many of us would love that deeply? When we understand this and try to practice it in our lives then we will be living the kind of lives and become the kind of persons God intended for us to be.

The various forms of love are delivered from baseness by the love which Christ kindles in the heart. We are thinking of romantic love, conjugal love, parental love, fraternal love, patriotic love, and that most Christian love which crosses all the areas and class and race.

God does not love us because we are white, because we are rich, because we have a good job and are important people in the world. God's love has no distinction. We are all equal in God's sight and therefore deserve the same kind of love from God.

Fourthly- by the doing of his duty a man lifts life out of the ordinariness. A man must do his work in the world. By that he is saved from dissent in the scale and from becoming a parasite.

The work he does leaves its mark upon the man. The mechanic's tool makes calluses on the mechanic's hand. There is reaction of mind and heart and will to one's duty which may lift one out of ordinariness to the good life and cause the lusterless to shine. When a man's work is related to a great cause, life is marvelously enhanced.

I feel the greatest thrill in life comes from making something. It's a kind of sharing in the nature of God who made the world.

We share with God a creation when we take the things he gives us as raw materials and makes something out of them. Think of the thrill that a man had when he developed the big, luscious strawberry out of the little strawberry that he found by the roadside or in the field. Michelangelo bought a piece of marble that no one else wanted; he saw an angel in it, and with his sculptor tools released the angel. There is a man who visits the desert and gathers stones; he finds great joy in making them into gems. Another person gathers driftwood and fashions it into ornamental objects for the home. What deep satisfaction come to those who make the great inventions, with the understanding that the materials and forces used came ultimately from God. We could go on and on with our illustrations. All would emphasize the fact that there

is a great thrill in making something.

Then there is the thrill which comes from pride in having made it. No matter how often a craftsman has had an object of his craft makeshift in his hand, his latest product brings him joy. Here is a thing that wouldn't be if I hadn't made it! How different to feel, there was once an object of sentiment and beauty and value, but I destroyed it. Truly, I can't see the thrill in destruction the way some people always want to destroy someone else's property.

Then here is the added thrill of seeing someone use the product of your hands. Even the little girl, making her first cookies in the kitchen, gets a thrill when daddy takes his first bite. Many boys know the thrill of making and giving a Christmas gift to mother. It is the same thrill that a man who has written a book and finally holds a copy of it in his hand. It is the joy which God must give in the exercise of his creative powers: "God saw everything that he made and behold it was very good."

If ever you have the urge to destroy something, transmute it into or make it a part of the urge to make something.

Regardless of what we do, if we do it to the best of our ability, our lives will be lifted up out of ordinariness.

Fifthly-by the ennoblement of necessity a man rises out of ordinariness. Is this anti-climactic or climactic after considering conversion, love, and duty? Here we are under the necessity of eating and drinking and sleeping. Paul's words do not seem anticlimactic as taken from first Corinthians 10:31; "Whether therefore you eat, or drink or whosoever ye do or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God." And again, Paul says in Colossians 3:17; "Whatsoever you do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him."

Regardless of what we do it should always be done to the glory of Jesus Christ. This means regardless of what our job is, and it can be the lowest, we should always do our very best and if we also have God with us in everything we do, we will be much happier and those around us will be likewise.

We do also always give thanks to God for everything for we have aspired to nothing on our own but only through the grace of almighty God. When we understand this, we will become more humble and grateful, and we will really begin to understand the cross and its meaning in our lives. We will start to live the good life God intended for us to live.

From II Corinthians 6:8 we read; "Thou didst well in that it was in thine heart." Our purposes work, as well as the work itself. Desire is full of holy energy as well as frustration. The wish to do good is good stuff; the very longing is a minister in the Kingdom of our God. If, therefore, we are to be judged by our aspirations, there are multitudes of apparent failures who will one day be revealed as clothed in the radiance of spiritual victory.

And so by humble receptivity, by taking the necessities of life as gifts from God's hands, by true thanksgiving for them, and by using them in a sacramental manner as means of grace, all things and life itself, are lifted above the ordinary. And so even though we may be ordinary people, we can be and will be lifted out of our ordinariness by the help of God.

## **A True American**

### **Scripture: Hebrews 11:1-12, 32-40; 12:1-2**

Text is chosen from Jeremiah 9:23-24; “Thus says the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories, glory in this, that he who understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices kindness, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things, I delight, says the Lord.”

The month of February holds the birth dates of Abraham Lincoln and George Washington. It is fitting that we should honor the names of these our greatest Americans by considering the theme “A True American.”

Both of these men were men of prayer, and they believed that God’s hand was in history, that God had concern for the nation, and they accepted responsibility to do God’s will as they saw it. If America is indeed God’s concern, then our theme is a fitting one to be considered by the Christian pulpit. Who then is a true American?

First of all-I believe a true American is one who appreciates America.

We blend the definitions of appreciate as we use the word. Appreciate means to be thankful for, discover the true value of, increase the value of - opposite of depreciate. It is with such appreciation that a true American looks upon his heritage.

Most of us today really do not appreciate the pain, suffering, heartache, that went into making this country what it is today. Somehow or other what we read in the history books seems to be fiction instead of truth. We seem to want to forget about the part and the past and only think of the present and the future. But true Americans remember the past and what our heritage should mean to us.

A true American appreciates the land. This is “a land with the title of its own quality.” Hilaire Belloc, a European, said it is “not European, not African, not the Old World at all.”

The land is American.

Have you ever visualized the broad contours of this continent caught between two great oceans? Have you ever seen with the mind’s eye the great mountain ranges, the Appalachian, the Rockies, the Sierras? Have you ever followed the courses of America’s great rivers? At places the land intensifies America: a cape like Cod, a lake like George, a river like Susquehanna, a cataract like Niagara, a forest like the Great Smokies, a countryside like the Irish Hills, a Canyon named Grand, a valley like the Virgin River, a desert that is painted, a precipice that is sculpted like Yosemite, a geyser like Old Faithful, a mountain like Rainier. Where is America intensified for you?

America truly is a great land, one that has been built by prayers, sweat, and tears. Let us take the time to



appreciate this land as one that God has provided for us. For we know without God's help this country could not and would not be possible. A true American appreciates Americans.

Of course, we are well aware that many men and women wear the word American only as a label. They are not Americans at heart. They are here only to take what they can get and get nothing in return. They stand ready to stretch the laws as far as they can without violating them as long as it profits them individually, they came first and lived for self-satisfaction and self-gain.

We passed through a period when there was much so-called debunking of our American heroes. By falsifying values this may have done the nation great harm. Though this was a corrective for over identification, it is to be said that it is a great thing for a nation to have characters of such worth that they can be idealized. Let us appreciate great Americans. It is by the appreciation and idealization of greatness that we shall produce greatness.

The true American appreciates the ordinary man who exemplifies the so-called Christian virtues of honesty, industry, chastity, sobriety, etcetera. He is more numerous than you think. He is more important than you think. He is greater than you think. He is American.

It doesn't take much courage, strength, willpower to conform and follow the crowd. It is rather easy to go along with the gang. The hard part comes when you want to be different, when you want to live your life the very the way God intended you to live. This takes real strength, courage, faith, willpower for you may end up being left out of things, being alone without any so-called friends. But you might also be surprised at the number of people who are not conforming to the crowd try it and see the new friends, real friends you begin to meet. I believe this is more typical of the American.

A true American appreciates the American which is found in the great documents of our nation. For example, the Declaration of Independence, the Preamble to the Constitution of the US, and the Bill of Rights.

How many of you have reread these documents since you've studied them in school? Very few, I'm sure. It certainly would do us all good to read them now that we are older and can appreciate them more and understand them more.

Pericles (490- 429 BC) gave this advice to his fellow citizens: "That you should fix your eyes every day on the greatness of Athens as she really is and should fall in love with her period" and indeed, as he would have wished it so, Athens. "As she really is" has been our object of devotion not only to the Athenians and all Hellenes but to races of men of whose existence Pericles was unaware and in continents which still remained to be discovered.

Certainly, a country is only as great as its people make it. It's up to us as citizens of the United States to

make our country such and I believe each one of us has to start with Christ in our lives. No country ever has or ever will succeed and prosper by getting and staying away from God.

Secondly- a true American is responsible for to America. Responsibility follows appreciation.

He is responsible to the land itself. The pollution of the lakes and rivers and the waste of natural resources are examples of irresponsibility.

How can we continually cut down forests and not replant new trees? Why do we continue to pollute our lakes, rivers, and streams? We know in the end our children and our children's children are the ones that will suffer.

He is responsible to his fellow Americans.

Abraham Lincoln's famous definition of American democracy, "government of the people, by the people, for the people, "makes the people sovereign. Irresponsibility to the people denies their sovereignty.

When Americans do not vote, when they are indifferent to the welfare of the nation, when government assumes powers without consent of the people, then Americans have abdicated their sovereignty and repudiated their responsibility.

Not voting in elections is the biggest show of indifference, the lack of really understanding what democracy is and what the country stands for and the foundations it was built on. The greater percentage of these people who do not vote are the biggest grippers and certainly would not want to live in a country where they had no say at all. But still we take these freedoms and privileges we enjoy in America for granted. What we are doing is giving up our power as individual citizens to have a say in the running of our government and I'm sure the majority of the people do not want to do this.

I am responsible to you to be a true American and you are responsible to me, we receive our responsibilities from our fathers, we are under obligation to hand them down to our children. We are under a solemn compact and covenant.

The true American is responsible to God. It is a basic assumption of the Declaration of Independence "that all men are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." If this basic assumption is true, if these rights are the endowment of God, it should also be true that we hold this endowment as responsible persons.

Benjamin Franklin said concerning the Declaration of Independence, "I can hardly conceive a transaction of such momentous importance to the welfare of one million now existing, and to exist in the posterity of a great nation, should be suffered to pass without being in some degree influenced, guided, and governed

by that omnipotent, omnipresent and beneficent ruler in whom all inferior spirits live and move and have their true being.”

Certainly, our forefathers who settled and developed this country and drew up the constitution where men of God, who had God in their hearts and who knew that a people in order to prosper had to be ruled by God above all.

Therefore, as Americans today and as Christians we most definitely are responsible to God, our Father.

Thirdly- a true American should be a repentant man.

Most of us are like the late Will Rogers who said, “All we know we read in the papers.” Our newspapers and magazines to a great extent inform us with the truth about our country.

It is difficult sometimes to bear that truth. Every morning and every evening there is spread before us an account of crime, social evil, urban decay, civic irresponsibility, political chicanery, and corruption, that makes of the newspapers an evening or morning headache.

It seems to me that this should also become a heartache. It should become an agony of soul. If we had been true Americans and better Christians such conditions would not have come to pass. Repentance which is sorrow and regret, and remorse should be ours. The times demand more. They demand an about face. They demand action in reverse direction. To us Sir Winston Churchill ‘s immortal words, they demand “blood and sweat and tears.” Only these will deliver America from moral debacle and achieve her greatness.

Regardless of how much we say we love God and our country, all of us are guilty of being indifferent to many things that go on around us and in our government. We close our eyes and ears many times because we do not want to get involved. All of us are selfish in our own ways and consider ourselves first above everything and everyone else. We should repent of these sins and promise and really try to do better in our lives. We cannot be lax and relax our religious principles that stand for what our forefathers stood for. We have to keep on fighting and praying and doing what is right in the sight of God. This is what is going to make this nation retain its greatness, not military might and being the most powerful nation in the world. Let us think about some of the things we have purposely overlooked in recent years. Let us voice our opinions and stand up and speak out for what we know to be right and true.

Fourthly- the true American must be courageous.

To be an American is more than being an American. One may be an American by the accident of birth; but to be American requires thought, effort, and especially courage. One may be American without being native. Alexander Hamilton and Carl Sandburg were born abroad, but no one doubts that they became American. On the other hand, one may be native, yet not thoroughly American. Henry James was born in

this country, but when a great emergency arose, turned British- this country swarms with people, native born who are not American. There are those who, although they are qualified to vote, will not take the trouble.

It takes courage to rise from lethargy. It takes courage to overcome fear, to implement a dream. It takes courage to make it the pattern of the ideal. It takes courage not to compromise with evil. It takes courage to be responsible. It takes courage to be a true American.

I believe we truly can be Americans, the right kind if we really take Jesus Christ into our lives and live good Christian lives. This and only this can help to make the country of ours great. Only this can bring an everlasting peace to our world. As Christians let us start spreading the “good news” to those in our world, let us practice it here in this country as we think of Lincoln and Washington during the month of February.

## **Beyond Mutual Affection**

### **Scripture: I John 3:14-24**

Text is chosen from Luke 6:32; “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.”

The questions Jesus asked his contemporaries searched the heights and depths of human experience. They are timeless. When he asked his disciples, “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?”, he illuminated the difference between his way and the way of the world in one flashing moment. It requires no ingenuity or particular grace for a man to love those who are kind and lovable in their response to him. But to go beyond mutual affection in obedience to the command, “Love your enemies,” requires something more than human nature. Let it be noted, too, that it was no easier for the disciples than for us to move beyond mutual affection to an unlimited liability in love for the unlovable.

It is significant, I believe, that the Greek language had no word to express what Jesus meant when he used the word “love”.

They had the word “eros”. It is not difficult to comprehend the meaning of the Greek word “eros”. It is love for another because the other is lovable.

“Eros” is attraction to the attractive. It is the natural attraction we feel towards those who give the warmth of friendship, whose interests coincide with ours, whose generosity is gratefully appreciated. There is nothing difficult about it. It is simply the mutual affection of the mutually attracted.

If we ask ourselves why we love someone or another we are likely to say one of a number of things. One response might be, “I love him because he loves me.” We simply share a mutual affection. Or, it may be that the response could be, “I love him because of his character. He is generous, sympathetic, tolerant, and humble.” But in each case the love implied is encompassed by the word “eros”. There is no strain in it, no demand that makes us unique or different in our relationships.

You say, “That’s human, isn’t it?” I agree heartily. Jesus would agree, too, but he would say to us humans, “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.”

There is a second Greek word which takes us a step further. It is the word “philia”. Philia is love that exists between two people who love the same things. Two people may have an affection for each other because both of them enjoy music. There could be any number of things that people enjoy and therefore have an affection for one another.

Within the church we are bound together by “philia”. We share tasks and purposes to which we are mutually devoted. A wide variety of personalities finds common ground serving the church and its work.

It may be that we have very little in common socially. We may differ in politics and points of view, but our affection for each other is primarily in the fact we are mutually devoted to the Church of Jesus Christ. We are bound together in affection for one another by God. We all come to church, at least we should, for the same reason and purpose. And, let it be said, a host of barriers come tumbling down in the church as we work together in “philia”.

There is “philia” in the relationships of families. Two persons devoted to their children and bound together by their mutual concern for their children, share love as “philia”.

Some of the great friendships of human experience come from the mutual loyalty of individuals to some cause or concern that challenges both of them.

One GI’s coming home from Korea after the decisive war in that sad country remarked, “The best friend I had was a boy who never finished high school. He was rough and tough and botched the King’s English, but we hiked over half of Korea together and each of us found strength in the other.” Normally the two men, one a college graduate, and the other almost illiterate, would have found little or nothing on which to build affection. Nevertheless, their common cause, their mutual struggle to survive, bound them together with “philia.”

It should be noted, however, that “philia” is not enough. At home our children grow up and leave home. Their need for us no longer holds us together. Causes may lose their significant or interest may change. Our interest in music may change to an interest in child psychology. The result is that when the object which binds us in “philia” disintegrates, the cement binding the relationship disintegrates too. Two people may be happily married sharing the affection of their children which actually brings them together but soon the children are grown up and gone away and if this is the only thing holding them together, they are soon found drifting apart. “Philia” is not enough to keep us together.

It is one thing, therefore, to love those who love us because we share a mutual concern but is something else to love people as people whether they are attractive or unattractive, and whether we have common interest or not. As Jesus asked, “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.”

That leads us, of course, back to “agape”, the word the New Testament uses for love as Jesus expressed it. It went far beyond the mutual affection of “eros”, and beyond the mutual devotion of a common object of concern expressed in “philia”. Jesus gave voice to the meaning of “agape” when he said, “Love your enemies”. He revealed its scope most profoundly on the cross when he said, “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” Even in his suffering he cared for those who hurt him and sought their good. This is real love and concern. This is “agape” and a little of what each of us needs in our lives.

A thoughtful director of a Chicago neighborhood house remarked discerningly, “Now and then I find

a youngster so full of hostility that he turns the place upside down. It isn't easy for me to love the troublemakers, but that is my most important assignment". So it is with all of our experience, but as Paul says, "Love never gives up." This is "agape", love that never gives up or lets go. It hangs on to the unlovable and the unattractive with undiscourageable hope.

"Agape" makes no social distinctions, but rather cares about persons as persons. It sees all men and women as children of God to be treated not as objects, but as persons; not as marketable integers to be used, but as centers of the love of God. It is one thing to love those who love us, but it is something else to "have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus." In one case we have "eros" or "philia", but in the other we have "agape".

Ruth M. Blue, a Chicago teacher, spent 35 years in one of the city's worst slum areas schools and never asked for a transfer. "I have always understood that teachers were trained to teach children with no regard for race, creed, or social standing," she wrote. She had caught something of the "agape" of the master.

Most definitely this is the kind of love we are all talking about when we refer to Christian love, the kind of love Christ showed towards those who he came in contact with during his earthly ministry. The same kind of love God has shown towards us by the sacrifice of his only son for our sakes.

Obviously, agape is costly. It takes us out of our way to be helpful. It makes U.S. Open to attack or vulnerable to the needs of others and turns unlovable strangers into objects of concern. Under its influence people are children of God, whether they are rich or poor, whether they can do anything for us or not.

Concerning Matthew 5:48. There is a suggestion of the Master's intent when he used the word "agape" in one of his often misunderstood sayings. According to Matthew he remarked, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." The word, "perfect" in our thought means "blameless", but the claim of men to perfection was exactly what Jesus condemned. Doctor Torrey wisely and helpfully translates the sentence, "Be, therefore, all including (in your goodwill), even as your heavenly Father includes all." As Jesus includes in his love both the lovable and the unlovable, so are we to embrace them all in our affection and good will.

I know this is difficult, to love and be concerned for someone who may have done you or your family harm. It is difficult for our servicemen to love the North Vietnam people who are killing us. But believe me if we all really and truly believed this and practiced it, we would not be fighting and killing each other in wars. This is why spreading the message of the Gospel around the world is important if we are ever to hope to achieve peace. Certainly, it is a big job and perhaps we will never live to see any results of our efforts but with God's help we have to try and keep on trying. It's our only hope.

That brings us to the heart of the Christian faith, to the question that troubles us all: how can we love the unattractive, the unlovable, and the disagreeable?

The truth of the matter is that “agape”, unselfishly seeking love, is our response to the love of Christ. “We love him,” as Paul said, “because he first loved us,” and in response we love those who are precious to him. We are vulnerable (open to attack) to the need of others because he was first vulnerable to our need.

When Peter had each time answered the question put to him by Jesus, “Lovest thou me?” Jesus firmly gave him a command, “Feed my lambs”; “Tend my sheep”, “Feed my sheep”. In the light of that command, we say that love is both a response to a person, who is God in Christ, and responsibility to our brother, who is our brother in Christ. That response and responsibility are related to one another.

We should love one another in order to satisfy the needs of our own personalities. Our humanity makes a certain demand upon us. We have innate needs to be long and to feel important which cannot be met by insulating oneself from others, or by fighting against them. The psychic needs of personality and the spiritual needs of the soul are stubbornly insistent that only through service shall we find satisfaction.

John tells us that entering into an experience of loving others it’s like passing from death to life. (One John 3: 14 ) the man who loves Little and the man who doesn’t love does not live.

We should love one another in order to meet the needs of others. There must be at least a flicker of love in us or else we would not care about the needs of others. All men have two basic needs. They need to love and the need to be loved. It is common knowledge that when a child or youth is not loved his personality becomes warped even to the extent of becoming defective, resulting often in the delinquent and criminal practices.

A pastor in a depressed urban area had many calls from people seeking help. Most often they had request for financial aid. He discovered that generally their real need was not for money but for someone who really cared for them. Perhaps the deepest need of the human soul is to the need to be loved.

We need to love one another because we have been loved. What a debt we owe to those who loved us in the past and to those who love us now. What a debt we owe to Christ who gave himself for us.

Your love for me begets my love for you. “We love, because Christ first loved us.” it is the love of Christ which kindles true love in our hearts. It is his love which is the motivation of our own. When we love one another, it is striking evidence that we have caught Christ’s spirit and are numbered among his disciples.

Stand yourself in the presence of the cross when you’re tempted to be inconsiderate or even brutal, and you will respond to the unlovely with grace and to the disagreeable with good will. You will do it not in your own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ, who died so that we might have eternal life.



## **Is There Any Word from the Lord**

### **Scripture: Isaiah 55:6-13**

Text is chosen from Jeremiah 37:17; “And the king asked him - “Is there any word from the Lord?”

That is the question asked by thoughtful men in all periods of history. We ask it now.

What keeps things going and where are they headed? Is there any progress discernible, or is progress a delusion, and we are caught up in a merciless merry ground? Is there any sense behind it at all? If so, is this sense behind the events malign, beneficent, or only capricious? Twenty-one cultures have been born and flourished in recorded history, and 16 have destroyed themselves. Of the five remaining, Arnold Toynbee speaks of their sickness.

What kind of a God is he that allows whole civilizations to tatter? What does this mean in the long story of human existence? Or more to the point, is there any meaning? We do not turn to God as an ignorant people would turn to an Oracle or a soothsayer. But we do turn in ask a sober question of our Christian faith: “Is there any word from the Lord?”

Thinking people have always been concerned about their world and there has always been that in the world to provoke concern. Certainly, our time is no exception. We are troubled by the growth in population problem, by the race problem, by the clash of ideologies. We are especially troubled by the fact of war. Along with these worldwide concerns are those that are focused on our nation, or in our community, or in our home, or in our own personal lives.

If we are responsible people at all, we all have plenty to be concerned about. One concern perhaps related to the church is the many new church buildings that are being erected each year, though there is a general decline in church attendance. It makes us wonder if people join the church for the prestige or influence and they have no desire to support it by their prayers and presence. Another concern I’m sure every pastor has wondered about, is how effective his preaching is and how many souls are really being saved for Jesus Christ which, of course, is the main purpose of any church.

Many solutions have been sought to these problems we have mentioned and one of the most encouraging signs is that some of the most intellectual speakers are convinced that man, of himself, is not sufficient for these things. We need the help, guidance, and direction of Jesus Christ. We cannot do it alone by ourselves.

Time and time again the church is asked, in effect, the same question that King Zedekiah put to Jeremiah. There were troubles in that day, too, and the king was at a loss how to solve them. (This story is told in Jeremiah 37: 1-17) Jerusalem was under heavy siege. Finally, King Zedekiah secretly asked the prophet a question, “Is there any word from the Lord?” And Jeremiah said, “There is.”

Zedekiah's question is in these days being asked of the church. In a time as troubled as this, and as dangerous as this, and as confused as this, is there any word from the Lord? And it's a great thing for the church to be able to say with Jeremiah that there is.

The first word is that God lives. It is a needed affirmation for we have heard in recent years that God is dead. It is a truism that Christianity throughout the world is facing a crisis as great as any which has come upon it in the course of its history. Christians are being compelled to face challenges to their basic beliefs which seem greater even than those in the time of the Renaissance and the Reformation.

God lives. The church does not produce the kind of proof for this that one might look for in the laboratory, but it is a kind of proof that probably Mahatma Gandhi expressed better than any churchman when he said, "I do perceive that whilst everything around me is ever changing and dying, there is underlying all that change a living power that is changeless; that holds together, that creates and recreates. That informing power and spirit is God. I see it as purely benevolent for I see that in the midst of death, life persists; in the midst of untruth, truth persist; in the midst of darkness, light persist. Hence, I gather that God is life, truth, and light. He is love. He is supreme good."

Amidst all the confusion, there is one who is not confused. The Lord God omnipotent reigneth! The church proclaims it in the preaching of the Word and in lifting from the earth Him in whom God lives.

A missionary in Brazil stirred the curiosity of the native residence when he sat reading his mail. So far as they could see he was just looking at pieces of paper. He told them that it was his mail, from these pieces of paper he got his news. When they saw him reading his Bible, he told them he was receiving news from God- and he started a new practice among them. For the people would approach him in the morning and ask, "Any news today from the great Father?"

I'm sure all of us have heard of the great Negro scientist, George Washington Carver. He was a man who asked, "Is there any word from the Lord?" This is what he once said in an address before a great audience.

"Years ago, said Doctor Carver, "I went into my laboratory and said, "Dear Mr. Creator, please tell me what the universe is made for."

"Then I asked, "Dear Mr. Creator, tell me what man is made for". Again the Great Creator replied, "Little man, you are still asking too much. Cut down the extent of your request and improve your intent."

"So then I asked, "please, Mr. creator, will you tell me why the peanut was made?"

"That's better, but even then, it's infinite. What do you want to know about the peanut?"

“Mr. Creator, can I make milk out of the peanut?”

“What kind of milk do you want, good jersey milk or plain boring house milk?”

“Good jersey milk.”

“And then the Great Creator taught me how to take the peanut apart and put it back together again. And out of this process have come all these products.”

For an hour Doctor Carver drew forth from his homemade box of samples some of the products he had made from the peanut; face powder, printers ink, butter, shampoo, create so, vinegar, dandruff cure, dyes, soaps, salads, wood stains, etc.

“What a remarkable man,” you might say. Yes, but how simple, too, in his approach to God. He did not wait until he had solved all the problems about God before he made his acquaintance. It is said that each morning at four, Dr. Carver I would walk away among the trees, talking with God, getting his orders for the day. I’m sure anyone had a hard job convincing him that God was not alive. To him, there most definitely was “an answer from the Lord.”

But more than that, there is from God a word of warning. Jeremiah persisted in this. The people, for the most part had brought persistent punishment on themselves for they would not listen to the words of the Lord which he spoke through the prophet. But still Jeremiah spoke the word of the Lord in warning, and so must the church today.

Is there any word from the Lord? Listen to him not through Jeremiah but Isaiah: “Come now, and let us reason together, sayeth the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if he refuses and rebels, ye shall be devoured with the sword.” There is a word from God for our time, and it is a word of warning. We may seem to prosper and have everything we need but eventually our prosperity will end, we will be crushed; for we cannot exist very long if we are not on God’s side. We may think we are happy, joyful, peaceful but we really never know what peace and happiness is until we have truly accepted Jesus Christ into our lives. It doesn’t matter as to our salvation what our past has been as long as we are repentant of our sins, for God will forgive them. He will cleanse us and make us pure and then we can start living the Christian life from that point. That’s why Christ died and rose again for us.

It was Doctor Albert Einstein who made the first real breakthrough into the atomic age. He said shortly before his death, “The unleashed power of the atom has changed everything except our ways of thinking. Thus, we are drifting towards catastrophe beyond compassion. We shall require of substantially new manner of thinking if manhood is to survive.”

We have discovered a way of producing powers enough to blow up the entire earth and destroy all living things. We have to learn to use this power for peaceful means and for helping man instead of destroying him. We have to learn to live with each other we have to learn to compromise instead of fighting wars. If we do not learn these things and soon, we will virtually destroy ourselves completely.

The church has another word from God, and this one has to do with hope and salvation.

“We see Jesus.” There is a great passage in the book of Hebrews that speaks to this point. It was written in a difficult time in Rome, in her lust for conquest, had undone herself. She had gone at her task with more firmness than wisdom. As a consequence, there was peace but only on the surface. There was great hunger on earth, and terror, and wretchedness and hate. The writer of Hebrews had seen it all. He had seen the sorry job done by man in trying to save a tottering civilization. Then, with a remarkable flash of spiritual insight he said as is recorded in Hebrews 2: 8-9; “We see not yet all things put under him, but we see Jesus.” That word from God the church would proclaim to the world.

Certainly, we have not discovered everything yet and I believe God is letting us discover these things as we are ready to receive them. But I’m sure of one thing and that is we do not have to be concerned about discovering this or that if we have discovered Jesus Christ in our lives. This is what the church has to and shall proclaim to the world.

We are aware of God’s marching orders. “Is there any word from the Lord?” The church knows that there is. It is the word from God through Christ which says that we should go into all the world and preach the gospel. This is the distinctive task of the church.

Let us forget let us not forget who the church is. For truly it is you and I and Jesus was talking to you and I when he said “Go into all the world and preach the gospel.” It’s no one’s responsibility but our own and when we criticize the church, we are criticizing ourselves so why don’t we start living our lives as God wants us to live them. Let’s stop passing the buck and settle down and take care of our responsibilities.

A member of the House of Commons who had listened to the wartime speeches of Melville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill made this comment: “When Chamberlain said the fine, true thing, it was like a faint air played on a pipe and lost on the wind at once. When Mr. Chamberlain said it was like an organ filling the church, and we all went out refreshed and resolute to do or die.” And this is the difference between promises of men and the promises of God. Human promises are like piping which fade away quickly. But the promises of God are from everlasting to everlasting. They do not fade away. They are as steel girders in the framework of the universe, indestructible. Thus, it is that we can face the future with confidence, for we depend upon the almighty God whose plans include not only us but all mankind.

From every continent of the earth the question is being asked, “Is there any word from the Lord?” Because if there isn’t we’re in for the dark ages. Our community and our world must be reminded that God lives.

They must be reminded of God's warnings; they must be reminded of a way that has been given to us. And it is the task of the church to do that reminding. It is up to us as Christians and members of the church to do that reminding. Prayerfully, courageously, everlastingly, we must do these things working through God and the church.

## **Becoming a New Man**

### **Scripture: John 3:1-15; Rev. 21:1-5**

I have chosen two (2) texts for my sermon this morning. The first is from Revelation 21:5; “And he that sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” The second, from II Cor. 5:17; “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”

There is a tremendous yearning in the hearts of men for something new. All of us seem to like to have things change probably because change generally brings forth something new. With some of us it is a deep unrest of soul which we feel but do not understand. Many of us are bored by the daily grind. There are noble souls who long for a new earth of righteousness and peace.

In search for newness the old immorality is called the “new morality”; a new theology receives an old atheism; fads and fancies flourish in the arts; in manners, and in religion; there is much tinkering with the church.

It’s nice to have things change and have things new but we certainly cannot change the purpose and objective of the church which is to win souls to Jesus Christ. Perhaps our approach to soul winning can be different and even new, however the results had better be the same as long as we associate ourselves with the church and Jesus Christ.

But all these new things and changes are not evil, though some of it is, as when a man seeks a new morality only as a sanction for his immorality. Without the desire and search for the new, decadence and atrophy may set in. Yet many of our attempts to achieve the new are futile. Programs and policies for renewal become futile and fail. What then shall we do? Our text may help us to answer the question.

“Behold, I make all things new.”

These are the words which John heard from the throne of God. John was writing a track for hard times when men were yearning for something new. He writes, “All things new.” We wonder what he meant by “all things.” We want everything to have the quality of newness, life itself, manners, customs, art, technology (which manufacturers for war) religion, the church, the despoiled countryside, the polluted rivers, the deteriorating cities, the inefficient and often corrupt governments. Perhaps we need a new culture, a new civilization. John’s vision carries the suggestions, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.” (Revelation: 21:1)

But I wonder if we think we had a new culture, a new civilization, if we started over with everything new, that things would really be better and really be different? If we think so, I’m afraid we are wrong because unless you and I change, unless you and I become new creatures, things will end up just about the way they are now. So therefore, I believe just changing things around us is only part of the answer.

“Behold, I make all things new.” According to John this is God speaking from his throne. This speaks of the sovereignty of God. This speaks of the creativity of God. God can take old things and make out of them new things. That is the redemptive power of God.

Can hold on to God? Can we, in the midst of our yearning, of our feeling that this is an earth passing away, a civilization going to pieces, still affirm God is ruler, God is creator, God is Redeemer?

Then we can look for a new earth! Most certainly if we can hold on to God, I believe it means that we are to our changed persons and because of our change eventually there will be a new earth because of our influence and our guidance and direction.

John’s vision gives us further encouragement. He saw the new earth in the form of a new city. It is a new Jerusalem he sees. There was an old Jerusalem, he sees a new Jerusalem. “The new city is still Jerusalem.” The men who lived in the old city shall live in the new city.

By the vision of John, God is not going to smooth things to pieces. The earth is not to be dealt with after the manner of Noah’s time. Read the hopeful words of John, “And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, “Behold the Tabernacle of God is with me, with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” Continue reading if you will and see John’s vision of the new city, the new world. This is to be a glad new world, entirely different from the present world we live in. And naturally why shouldn’t it be for heaven is perfect because God has made it that way and besides, I’m sure that man will not make the same mistake twice and besides these people in this world are made real Christians once in this world.

Now let us turn aside from John and let Paul guide our thoughts for a few moments.

Paul says, “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, all things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

Please note an element of agreement between John and Paul - “All things are become new.” They may have differed in the scope of their “off things”, we give the idea even wider scope than did they.

But here comes the crux of the matter: “men are to become new creatures.” It is by this newness of life in the lives of men that there will be a renewal of “all things.” It is by new men that the new Jerusalem will be built. But the new men are actually the old ones that have accepted Jesus Christ into their lives, who have been reborn.

Is it not always so? Nothing rights itself; corrupt government will continue to be a corrupt government until new men rise to the task of establishing right business in the governmental halls. The city of darkness

becomes the city of light only when men of light let their lights shine. No amount of tinkering by legislation or appropriation of money will in itself establish righteousness and justice. Society needs new men and women.

Regardless of how much griping we do about our politicians in government, nothing will change unless we ourselves change, unless we are willing to devote some of our time to the party of our choice, unless we are willing to take the time and interest to vote, unless we make sure we support men we know are good and men that will stand up for the right things in life. We certainly cannot hide our light under a bushel. We have to let our light shine forth so that others can see the way, the way that leads to righteousness and good.

It is amazing how we think that good just comes automatically. Good can only come from and through Jesus Christ and we can only begin to be righteous people after we become reborn and accept Jesus Christ into our lives as our personal Lord and Savior.

As we read in the Gospel of John 3:7, “Jesus said, “You must be born again.” He would never have given such a challenge had it not been a possibility. Yes, man can be changed radically and permanently from the inside out. I know this to be a fact because I have experienced it myself and because I have seen other men experience. Never let it be said that a person cannot change for with God everything is possible and nothing impossible.

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” The man who thinks he can realize newness of life by himself alone is deceiving himself. The man who undertakes to build the new Jerusalem by his own plans and in his own strength will fail. The man who thinks that the renewal of a city, a neighborhood, or a person can be done without cost will find himself utterly mistaken. All newness in him and all newness accomplished through him is by the power of Jesus Christ.

The recreative work of God is pinpointed in the service of Holy Communion. Who are invited to share in the bread broken and the wine outpoured? Those who “intend to lead a new life.” This is committed to him until who alone can make us anew. This is abandonment of self to him who alone can forgive, and in whose power alone we can “serve and please” God in newness of life.”

There is no question about it that society today, right now, needs new men and women. We have only to read the facts. Crime in this country rose at a fantastic rate 16 to 18% over 1966. You know what the moral situation is in this country. There is no need for me to keep repeating these facts. However, the trend isn't going to change for the better by just talking about it. We have to do something. We will never survive unless this trend is reversed, unless we start going back to God and remain under his guidance and direction.

Paul was right. Jesus was right when he spoke of the new birth. They have been proven right 1000 times.



Livingston, a new man, opens up a dark continent. Grenfell, a new man, carried healing to the shores of Labrador. Wilberforce, a new man, rids Britain of the curse of slavery. Schweitzer, a new man, becomes the servant of Lambaréné.

Think of a single individual. Take a man. You saw him two years ago and, when you saw him, there was no light in his eye, no spring in his step, no lilt in his voice – just a blank look on his face. You said to yourself, there is a man with his future behind him; he's licked. Then you saw him yesterday. He was alive, alert, bright, full of interest, and you said to him, you're a new man! And when you said that you didn't mean that he was another man or a different man. He had the same body, the same features, the same life history, the same personality. He wasn't another man; he was a new man. And he replied, "I am." You said, "How?" What did you do? And he may very well have said, I didn't do anything. I had done everything I knew how for the last five years. I had turned every stone, but nothing turned up; it didn't do anything to change my life. But when I was least expecting it something happened to me, something was done to me. I fell in love. I walked into a job that I had been wanting all my life, and it put all my energy and talent to work. I saw what it was all about for the first time. I was picked up, so to speak, out of the dumps by God, and the tide came in. I am new.

This is what happens to a person when he really becomes reborn and accepts Jesus Christ. No experience is equal to this one and one that will never be forgotten.

Walter Lippman said: "We ourselves were so sure that at long last a generation had arisen, keen and eager, to put this disorderly earth to right and fit to do it- we meant so well, we tried so hard, and look what we have made it. We can only muddle into muddle. What is required is a new kind of man."

Note Paul's words. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The good news to the world is that Christ makes new men. That is the evangel. By that evangel all things will become new.

So, we can all hope and pray for a better world, a new Jerusalem but this is not enough and soon it would be like the one we are living in. However, if we can become new persons in Christ, we will have a new world a new Jerusalem. Let us become reborn persons so that we can have the assurance of eternal life, assurance of entering the Kingdom of heaven, and the assurance of living now in a better world.

## **The New Greatness**

### **Scripture: Luke 22:15-27**

The text is chosen from Luke 22:25-27; “And he said to them; the kings of the Gentiles exercises lordship over them--- but I am among you as he that serveth.

Of all the times for the disciples of Jesus to dispute about their personal greatness this was the worst, immediately after Jesus had instituted the Lord’s Supper, and a few hours before he would go to the cross to die. Their minds were entangled in contemporary ideas of greatness. Since they were human, and Jesus told them he was going to leave them, they were concerned about themselves and what would happen to them. The same, I’m sure anyone of us would react, if we had been close to our leader and we would want to know what was going to happen to us after he leaves. Indeed, their minds were entangled and they did not really understand the greatness Jesus was referring to.

First, let us discuss the contemporary idea of greatness.

When Jesus was born, the Caesar on the throne at Rome was titled Augustus, Majestic. The ruler at Jerusalem was Herod the Great; yet the annals of history carry few names that connote more wickedness than does his. A favorite title in Syria and Egypt was Benefactor. The Pharisees of Jerusalem, and the Galilean towns, were clothed in prestige, as were the temple Sadducees.

The disciples were confused by contemporary ideas of greatness, as shown by the desire of James and John to sit on Jesus’ right hand and left hand in his glory as we read in Mark 10:35-37. It may be that their heads had been turned by the crowds that had followed Jesus in Galilee. Then, too, each man had his own ambitions. These men needed a new idea of greatness. These men needed to be brought back to decency and unity again, they needed a new idea of greatness. This Jesus would give them.

And we too, most of us need a new idea of greatness. We associate greatness with power, prestige and money. Many think we can buy anything if we have enough money and after all this is how we measure success and greatness. If this truly is our idea of greatness then we most definitely need a new idea of greatness and this Jesus Christ will give us as he did his disciples.

Secondly, let us think together about this new idea that Jesus would give his disciples.

The new idea was exhibited by the act of Jesus. The host of the house where they gathered had omitted the courtesy of having a servant wash the feet of his guests. The soil of travel was still upon them. Of this Jesus was aware. He took a towel and a basin of water and went about his menial task.

Jesus was master in the handling of a true thought. It is made eloquent and incisive when exhibited in an act. This new idea of greatness was not a ‘poor ghost’ but flesh and blood in him who went from disciple

to disciple with basin and towel. The new idea was then put into words. Let us read John 13:3-17; this passage gives us the sequence of events. First, he gave them an example. Then he gave them his idea of greatness. By this idea their own idea was reversed. "He that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger (upon whom the unpleasant duty falls), and he that is chief as he that doth serve." There stands the idea: greatness is to be found in service. Jesus said, "I am among you as one who serves,"

Here is Napoleon's declaration; "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon love; and, at this hour, millions of men would die for him."

I know and I'm sure you know as Christians our attitude, our actions has to be one of serving. We cannot sit back and let someone serve us. We have to be in there doing our part and doing what we can to make sure the world becomes a better place in which to live.

Third – the new idea goes out into the world. The very men who had been in strife over greatness are the ones who, after this experience in the upper room and after they had seen the Servant die on the Cross, carry the idea into the life of the Christian Church. Since that day this idea of greatness has inspired a long line of Christian servants. Some have served in obscurity, known only to the few who have observed their lives, while wondering what was the secret of their selflessness. Many have served their Lord and their fellow men in quiet ways, with duty faithfully done and responsibilities bravely borne. Others belong to the noble line which begins with a Peter or John or Andrew and continues through a St. Francis to a Florence Nightingales and an Albert Schweizer. We gladly give them the chief places

It is a great thrill to belong to a line; there are family lines and professional lines of which we may be justly proud, but let us not forget that we are servants ever looking into the great Servant as our Example and Lord.

Who is it we really admire? The man who has carved his way to power and material success? Or the man who has given his life entirely to the service of his fellow men? Can the one be a stimulus for us, and not the other? If reading the life story of a successful statesman or industrialist could stimulate me to the pursuit of excellence in concentration, self-discipline, and hard work, then could reading the life of a saint, (and don't imagine that must be dull) not stimulate me to a new adventure of prayer, a new grasp of God's truth, a new dedication to real Christian service, a new discovery of the Christian life in daily practice? I'm sure it could. I'm also sure that it would do us all a lot of good to read the life's story of a man who has devoted his entire life to serving others. Too many of us today are constantly thinking about and working toward material success. This seems to be our only goal. We aren't concerned about how many people we harm along the ladder of success. We are interest only in No.1, ourselves.

Fourth – Let us discuss the contemporary ideas now. Wealth, status, prestige, position, power, and self-aggrandizement – these are the world's standards. And many of us today live by the world's standard. We

know and we have been taught what God's standards are but we do not want to make any sacrifices. We want to conform and be like the crowd. We do not want to be different. We want to take the easy road not looking forward to where it ends. The strife for position is often the shame of politics. How often the competition for wealth degrades the competitors. Man seems to be willing to do anything to gain wealth. He wants just a little more but that little more keeps on stretching into more and more and none of us are ever satisfied. A woman in charge of a city's social welfare work remarked, "What wonders we could do through these volunteers if only they did not want credit and prestige! Most of us are not willing to help someone unless we can gain in some way from it. We want recognition or something else so that others know what we are doing.

"Keeping-up-with-the-Jones" is the tragedy of many homes. Regardless of whether we can afford something or not, if our neighbor has it, we have to have it too. This is a very real problem in our country today. A people who have to buy luxuries to supplement or compliment their luxuries. We have gone far beyond the necessity stage. Many things that are truly luxuries are most definitely considered necessities because we wouldn't know how to get along without them.

Lloyd C. Douglas had this to say in his book entitled "Disputed Passage"; "when the whole legal profession acknowledged that Justice was its God; when attorneys and judges cast aside all their personal desires, their tedious bickerings, their envies, and bowed themselves before the calm, majestic face of Justice, the public would respect the law and obediently walk in its ways. When teachers left off thinking about their jobs in terms of monthly checks and promotions, swearing fealty to the cause of Education, their disciples would be ashamed not to follow them. When the people's elected representatives in legislative halls and executive offices abandoned their duplicities, their connivances, their unabashed knaveries, their lust for applause, front-page publicity, and indiscriminate loot; when these so-called statesmen were willing to serve Patriotism with something like the selfless devotion of the men who served science; well- the world would presently come out into the sunshine of a new day. What civilization needed was a crew that understood the nature of its obligation to the ship.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Ye shall not be so"- "not so with you." The Christian is not to be entangled in the contemporary idea. His greatness is to be found in service.

Not only does Christianity promise that we can be renewed through faith, and renewed in purpose but also that we can be renewed to service. The finest expression of Christian faith and Christian purpose, the splendid outcome of all this glory that is in the mind and heart and spirit, the glorious consequence of all this driving dynamic of the spiritual life, is the unselfish and constructive service that brings the powerful and compassionate grace of God to the places of the world's need. The most effective witness that the Christian church has had in the world is at this point. There is nothing like it in any other religion. Lives transformed by Christ have the power to transform other lives and to transform the life of the world."

Most certainly this is the purpose of our Christian faith; to win people to Christ.

The friends of Louis Pasteur reported the scientist as often saying: “In what way can I be of service to humanity? My time and energy belong to mankind.”

We need people with this kind of attitude and ambition in our world today instead of being for No.1.

Was there ever a day when the need for service was so great? We are always thrilled by those who answer the call. The Christian is called in these days to go into the world and be its servant. As Christians and Christ’s disciples we were born into the world to serve not to be served. In all that we do day by day, let us remember to practice this.

## **The New Motive**

### **Scripture: I John 4:7-21**

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

My car wouldn't start because of a dead battery. A motive is like a car battery. It is something inside and it prompts action.

A new motive is like a new battery. It is not something that never was before. It is something given, and therefore something received, that brings renewal of power. A man might say, “I feel like a new man this morning.” He had gone to sleep with depleted energies. Something was given him in his sleep. Now he has driving power.

Love is the new motive which we now consider. Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another,” but it is love itself as motive which holds our attention.

First, let us talk about the source.

We love, because he loved us.” The source of this new motive is the Christ, as his own motive power had its source in the infinite God, for God is love.

Is there love your heart, the merest bit of love which sometimes moves your area of service of another? It proves your contact with the great God, the God of love from whom come this driving power in your inner self.

Second, what is the nature of this love which is motive in a life? Paul gives an answer in I Cor.13; but today we turn to the love of God, that by it we may discover that nature of true love in a man's heart. We go to the Spring that we may find out the nature of the water that flows in the river.

God's love is forgiving and God's love in a man's heart has the same motive character. This forgiving power is stated and illustrated in God's dealings with his people in the Old Testament, but it becomes more vivid and dynamic in the life and words of Jesus. We hear him say, “until seventy times seven; as he tells Peter how often a man should forgive his brother who has sinned against him. He taught his disciples to pray, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” He advised worshippers to leave their gifts at the altar and first go and be reconciled to their brother and then offer worship.

As the service of Holy Communion proceeded, reverent Ethiopian and Māori worshippers knelt side by side to receive the broken bread and the red wine out poured. Presently, from among those gathered at the

Communion table one was seen to withdraw and retire to a seat at the back of the church. At the end of a few minutes, he returned and took his place kneeling. When asked later, he explained his conduct. Said he: "When I approached the table, I did not know with whom I should have to kneel. Then suddenly I saw that I was next to a man who years ago slew my father. That man I had sworn to kill the moment I met him. So, I went back to my seat. "But as I sat there," he added reverently, "I saw in the spirit the sanctuary on high, and I seemed to hear a voice saying, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to another." And I thought I saw another sight, a cross and a man nailed upon it; and I heard Him say, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Then I went back to the altar.

I wonder how many of us could have that much forgiveness in our hearts? You will have to answer that question for yourselves.

Forgiveness is a mighty force. It is the grace of God. It comes from a great deep. Men greatly forgiven, greatly forgive. Once we experience God's forgiveness in our lives, once we know what God's forgiveness really is, we will have no trouble forgiving our brother.

God's love is giving and wherever true love is found it has this nature! "God so loved that he gave...", so the great text puts it. This is our reaction also when we truly accept this love from God, we automatically want to share it with others. We want our brother to know of this love also and therefore show forth this love by living example.

This brings love into contrast with other motives. Pride may be a motive in a man but pride moves a man to get or to give for the sake of getting. Ambition is similar to pride. Greed's motive is to get and get. Lust drags the very word love in the gutter. So, really, there is no motive exactly like love.

Jesus adds a word to his commandment to love one another, which statement consummates love in giving, as we read from John 15: 12; "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life from his friends." Thus, Jesus consummated the love of God.

Love is not only forgiving and giving in its nature; Jesus revealed another characteristic which gives it driving power. He said in his prayer, as is read in John 17:19, "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth." Here we find it a quality of love to be what it wants others to be. God's very being is loving; Christ's being is loving; love is to become the very being of the disciples of Christ. This is a most dynamic thing; for example; when a man becomes what he want his children to become.

All of us are good preachers and we tell our children how to behave and what kind of persons we want them to become but perhaps we ourselves have never set a very good example for them. We teach them to love everyone as Christ has loved us but do we really love everyone ourselves? Perhaps we live by the motto – "do as I say not what I do". This doesn't go very far with young people today. They like to see

living examples of what we try to teach them.

Third, let us discover the motivation of love. How does love motivate? How does one who loves, cause another to love, for love does not move more things; love moves people. Or shall we say love moves the person so another person loves? We are too love one another as Christ has taught us.

During hostilities in a certain country, a journalist was visiting a field hospital. He discovered a Christian woman spending her day dressing the wounds of soldiers. He said: "I wouldn't do that for any amount of money." Her quick reply was: "Neither would I!" Only the love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ could supply the motivation, the compassion.

Love motivates by contagion. "One loving heart sets another on fire." It's almost like a contagious disease that just keeps on spreading. It's too bad we couldn't have it keep spreading and spreading all over our world. Once we get this disease of love we will never be able to get rid of it.

Love also motivates by example. "As I have loved you – you also love one another."

Here is a definition of a Christian. It is sometimes claimed that Jesus never gave us a definition of a Christian. Yet he has given us this simple test, which is quite sufficient. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Truly this is loving by example. If we show love toward each other, others can see this and begin to know and realize what the love of Christ really is.

Love also motivates by direct endowment. My battery may be directly recharged by connecting it with another highly charged battery. If young people live with parents that have the love of Christ in their hearts and lives, they cannot but help to understand and see what a difference this makes in our world. That's one reason why parents have such a great responsibility.

Love motivated thankfulness in another heart. The spirit of thanksgiving is a dynamic spirit. Much has been done in this world by people with thankful hearts.

Once we understand Christ's love, we become thankful for what God has given us and what he continues to give us each day for truly we would be nothing by ourselves.

Fourth, we have a definite need in our world today for the new motive. How many live their later years in disillusionment and boredom because their lives, however outwardly successful they may appear to be, were and are motivated by pride or greed. Many of us are sure that we should live our lives for No. 1 - ourselves. We should come first and let us not be concerned about anyone else. But soon such people will have everything they need materially but they will have no one to share it with. They will have no



friends. They will be all alone living in their luxury but internally miserable and with an unfulfilled life. It may not be too late for them to turn and realize this new motive which will give them new life – all things made new. Regardless of how far a person may have gone, it is never too late for him to turn to God. God is always waiting and willing to forgive us.

This is the true “Note of the Church”; not miracles not formalities, not numbers, but love. If the church were really like that, if every community had for every other a love like that of Christ for him, the power of its witness would be irresistible.

Young men and women need to know that there is a motive that is higher than all others. This motive carries a person into no blind alleys, into no disillusionments, but uses a man in noble enterprise and by that saves his soul.

Speaking about a right motive, I think it would be fitting to talk about St. Patrick’s Day. Our Irish friends celebrate this day, March 17, as St. Patrick’s Day. Green is the color to be worn with a shamrock on the coat’s lapel. What do we know about St. Patrick?

In the first place he was not an Irishman. He was a British lad who, when he was a teenager, captured by Scotch-Irish pirates and carried to Ireland where he served for six years herding cattle. He was a religious lad and in a strange land found on the open hillsides of Ireland the Christ whom he had rejected when he felt no need of his friendship.

Finally, he escaped from Ireland on a ship for France, loaded with Irish dogs. Little is known of what happened to him in France. But there he heard the call of Christ to return to Ireland to strengthen the Christians in that land and break the power of pagan worship. He prepared himself to do this. For 30 years or more he labored in Ireland. He baptized thousands. He founded many churches. He established schools.

The legend of the shamrock is that one day a group of his followers came to him and said that it was difficult for them to believe in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity; God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Patrick thought a moment then, stooping down, he plucked a leaf from the shamrock, which is made up of three leaves, and held it before them. He told them to behold the living example of the ‘three-in-one’, the simple beauty of this explanation was convincing, and from that day the shamrock has been revered in all Ireland, and Irishmen everywhere proudly wear it as a symbol of their faith.

St. Patrick was a great believer in the mystery of the Trinity, which is also beyond our perfect understanding. He wrote a poem called “The Deer’s Cry” which begins –

“I rise today  
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity.”

In this poem he also wrote,

“I rise today  
Through God’s strength to pilot me:  
God’s might to uphold me.  
God’s wisdom to guide me.”

That’s a good way for any person to face a day, isn’t it?

Truly St. Patrick had caught the love of God in his own heart. He knew what it was and he had to share it with others.

“By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Jesus’ words proved true in the early centuries. When men saw Christians loving one another, they believed and joined their company. Love is no less dynamic today. We are tested by this motive. Do you have this driving power or is your battery dead?

## **The New Responsibility**

### **Scripture: Ephesians 5:5-21**

The text is chosen from Ephesians 5:15; “Live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life, but as those who do.”

J.B. Phillips has a way of translating the scriptures into language that is meaningful for contemporary life. Here we have two major themes that run through the editorials, essays, and sermons of our time. The first is a sermon to responsible living and the second is an urgent quest for meaning and purpose. The two themes are inescapably linked to each other. We live responsibly when we are aware of the meaning and the purpose of our lives and we live irresponsibly when life has no meaning for us beyond what William James called “our convulsive little egos.”

Most Sunday Schools are happy places. Little or no discipline is necessary. The secret I believe is that each of us is given responsibilities. Children especially love the task of responsibility if it is given to them wisely and within their powers. Bearing responsibility is living life and loving to live it. As Dr. Frank W. Boreham said, “The child is never so happy as when he is loaded. If his appetite for the love is not humored, he will exhaust his unconsecrated energies in pushing the chairs, tugging at tables, and carrying the cat.”

The youth must bear a load if he is not to become restless, bored, a nuisance to his elders, and often times delinquent. That is why, I believe, it is necessary for each child in the family to have certain responsibilities and carry them out. Life becomes meaningless, boring, almost unlivable to men and women who carry no load. Older people who have lost all responsibility are pathetic, to say the least. How often have we seen men retire and do absolutely nothing who have worked every day all their lives. They soon wither up and fade away. From full active lives to nothing is not good for anyone.

“Live, then, with a due sense of responsibility; the fact is that without responsibility we are not fully alive. We may not be aware of it, and we may do a bit of grumbling about it, but actually we love our load. To live life, bear responsibility; to love life, bear responsibility.

Now in this Lenten series of sermons we have been thinking of “The New Man”, “The New Greatness”, and the New Motive.” These lead to “The New Responsibility.” By these we know something of the meaning and purpose life.

First of all – live life then, with a due sense of the responsibility of a new man. A man should be responsible to his new self. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature – all things become new.”

Let us review the responsibilities of the old man; responsible to others- parents, mate, children’

responsibilities to self, to work or profession; responsibilities to the nation and its government. These are all illuminated when a man finds himself a new creature in Christ. Old burdensome duties are transformed into shining privileges.

The old man when he discovers Christ in his life has the responsibility to develop Christian character in himself.

They tell me that when I dislike another person because of some trait of character in him that offends me, then I had better look at my own character for that same trait. I think there is some truth to be found here. Jesus once said, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and fail to notice the plank in your own? The thing that you criticize in the other fellow is the very thing that often makes you open to criticism.

Now this being true I think there is also a good side to the matter. Why do you admire a certain man? Because of some fine trait of character that is his? Then it means that you very likely have that same trait of character in you, in great measure or in small. The boy that admires Abraham Lincoln for his honesty is very likely to be deep down in his heart an honest boy.

There was a boy in New York City who found his hero in a certain great man. This boy would often go and stand near the door of the building where his hero had his office; he just wanted to see Robert Speer pass by. This boy thus nurtured in his own life the fine qualities of character which his hero possessed. He himself became a great man. He had it in him in the first place.

So, with those who admire Jesus. They admire him because there are qualities of character in their own lives which are like his. What is more, it is the Christian belief that everyone has in him a quality of character which makes Jesus attractive. By that a man has possibilities of greatness in his own soul.

There may be some who do not feel this. It is because, I think, they do not know Jesus. If they knew him, they would admire him. When they admire Jesus, they develop Christian character. And so, the old man who has discovered Christ in his life and becomes new, is responsible for developing Christian character.

The new man discovers that he has new responsibilities.

He carries a new responsibility for his own person. The new creature has a new respect for his own manhood. He feels that he must be a better man. He actually knows he must be a better man. He has a responsibility to acquire virtue in larger measure. This is really a burden. But in carrying this burden he is really living.

Most of us, whether we want to admit it or not, would not really be living if we had no burdens or crosses to bear.

The new man realizes that he has a new responsibility to God.

When God does anything for a man, he expects a response. It is the responsibility of the man to meet God's expectations. By meeting this responsibility man is lifted to a higher level of living. He really lives life. And many of the old things he used to do in life, he no longer wants to do because they do not interest him, because things pertaining to God and his life comes first. He actually starts putting God first in his life as all Christian must and should be.

Response to God, who acts upon us. "Responsibility affirms-God is acting in all actions upon you. So, respond to all actions upon you as to respond to his action."

Secondly - live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility which comes from the new idea of greatness. A man should be responsible to his new ideal. The new ideal is service. The old man without Christ may have felt the urge to get on in the world; to really push everyone out of the way on his way to the top; the new man feels the responsibility to serve in the world. He has the obligation not only too self and God, but to others.

As Christ said, "He came as one to serve, not too be served." Regardless of our job or occupation, we should in some way feel that what we are doing is of service to someone, it is going to help someone and therefore I should do my very best in quantity and quality of work.

Now the new man bears the burdens of others as well as his own. We are our brother's keeper. This is a new responsibility and he learns to love it. By this his lives...his previous attitude may have been, "I couldn't care less." Now he does care, and for someone to care as one of the greatest needs of others. In fulfilling that need he finds his happiness and his greatness. He really has a feeling of doing something worthwhile which benefits his fellowman.

Halford Luccock noted that in an Eastern state some time ago the telephone company advertised that 15,000 new telephones had been added. The advertisement went on the say: "You are in touch with more people and more people are in touch with you than ever before." That is much more than a telephone statistic. It is a measure of individual responsibility and of our relatedness to one another.

Certainly because of all the new modern means of communication we are all much closer to each other and therefore our responsibility to one another has deepened and broadened.

Look about you and discover that those who love or are bearing the responsibilities of service are the men and women who are living greatly living joyfully, and living abundantly. God gives us happiness by putting burdens on our shoulders.

I'm sure all of us can think of persons who are always helping others and always willing to help others. Truly, they find peace and happiness in their service to others.

Trainees in the army are taught, "Where you are is the most important place. If you aren't holding your place with strength, then no sector is safe, no place on the line strong enough."

Regardless of where we are, or what we do, we have responsibility to others, to God and to ourselves.

Thirdly, live life, then, with a due sense of responsibility under the new motive. A man should be responsible to his new motive. That new motive you remember we talked about last week was love. It is love of God channeled through his Son to his new creatures.

Love is not a stagnant affection of the heart. Love is a dynamic thing which moves and causes motion. Love gets into our hands and feet. To love is the meaning and purpose of life. We are men who know this to be true; live life, then with a due sense of love's responsibility. This will be living life to the glory of God. You remember that before we stated that man has two great needs. The need to be love and the need to be loved. Becoming new creatures in God, we can live our lives to the fullest.

And so, we should as new persons live life with a due sense of the responsibility of a new man, live life with a due sense of responsibility which comes from the new idea of greatness, through serving instead of being served, and live life with a due sense of responsibility under the new motive of love.

When we do become reborn and new persons in Christ, our responsibilities are greater and cover much broader areas of living. Let us as true disciples of Christ face up to these responsibilities and really start living fuller, more joyful, more peaceful lives.

## **Where is the Answer?**

### **Scripture: Mark 5:1-20**

The text is chosen from the 27th Psalm verse 1; “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?”

Our scripture lesson this morning and, also the Gospels of Matthew and Luke give us an incident in the life of our Lord which throws a flood of light on every segment of human life. This unfortunate man of the country of the Gerasene’s, thwarted and baffled of soul, is typical of men and women in our present day and generation. This man had a three-fold predicament and, as we proceed to examine these, notice the parallel with our own time.

First all – this man was at war with himself. When Jesus came to the man in order to establish contact with him, he said, “What is thy name.” The man answered, “Legion” – “My name is many” – at one and the same moment he was an individual and he was also a multitude. It may be that in his early years some tremendous emotional shock was registered in his soul, in his body, and in every fiber of his being.

Like him, we come to Christ conscious of the innumerable sins which inhibit our hearts and lives; but in Christ we are made whole and single-minded-and we are given the name of the redeemable.

This man, like many moderns, was a disoriented person. Today there is an appalling disorientation of life. Many have lost their bearings. They are confused as to the truth and the right.

A young high school student talked with her pastor and said, “You know, I am terribly confused. I have lost the power of distinguishing between right and wrong.” The plight of that young high school student is shared by millions in this nation today. When a newspaper can say, when a famous actress is busily engaged in search of still another husband, that it will be a big boost to her movies because the American people want to see it, it means that there is a moral disease at the heart of this nation. We have lost the power of discrimination.

And why the big discussion about whether marijuana is harmful or not? It’s a narcotic and its habit forming, isn’t that enough to make it immoral and illegal? And how about the hippys who think all they have to do is have meetings and demonstrate and let the rest of the people support them? What they really need is a good boot in the pants, perhaps then they could see what living really means. With these many things going on in this country today, apparently many of us adults have really failed to convey the real meaning to life and living. We have been too busily engaged in taking care of ourselves and letting our children seed their own answers to questions of everyday living. Morally we are going and have gone to pot. We apparently have become so prosperous materially that we think we do not need God any more, that we can get along without him.

Getting back to the demonic man in our scripture lesson, this business of being one and a multitude simply means that the centrifugal forces have taken over in many lives. We need something to integrate these scattered lives of ours. Our generation is in desperate need of healing and orientation. So, this man was at war with himself.

Secondly, the man was estranged from other people. He had broken completely with the society of his fellows. Wounded, alone amid the tombs and the mountain solitude, he made the night hideous with his cries. People forsook that whole area and were afraid of him. Why shouldn't they be? He was reckless and destructive. What a parable of our generation.

When we open our magazines and newspapers, we marvel at the hate that is in the hearts of people. There is hatred of races, nations, classes and person. Even good people are capable of intense hate, and at that point there is desperate failure. Everyone who hates her an inner conflict, because the hate is but a projection of the inner evil that rages within.

It is, alas, no far cry from the man who had demons to people now afflicted with the mental and nervous disorders. In the U.S. an estimated million men, women, and children are in mental hospitals, and other millions, although at large, suffer from some kind of mental illness. Still more widespread is the restless, dissatisfied, confused, unhappy mind; and this sometimes leads to mental breakdown. The testimony of CC Jung, world-famed psychologist and psychiatrist, is often quoted:

“During the past thirty years, people from all the civilized countries of the earth have consulted me – among all my patients in the second half of life – that is to say, over thirty- five – there has not been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and not one of them has been really healed who did not regain his religion outlook.”

As I have said many times, all of us are searching for something and we will never know what it is until we have truly found God in our lives.

Our adjustment to our fellow man is one of the basic tests of our mental health as well as our spiritual health. Here, as everywhere, the love of Christ is the answer, the only sufficient answer. Once we find and understand the love of hrist in our own lives, we will not be estranged from other people. We will want to share this love with others.

The demonic was alienated from God. This was his third predicament. “What have you to do with me, Jesus Son of the most High God?” The man cannot be at peace with his fellowman or with the world until his heart is at peace with God. Isn't this really what we mean when we pray for peace to come to our world. We must know by now that each individual must find this peace in his own life first through the acceptance of Jesus Christ into his life. No life can be right until its center is right. When God created man, he placed within the very core of his being a need for the Creator. We may deny this but when we have searched and



tried our ways, we will finally realize that what we have been searching for is God and we will never be satisfied and happy until we find him.

Now look at the climax. Let us go back in imagination and see how graciously and gently our Lord dealt with this sick man of the long ago. This creature was weird, uncanny, sinister, devilish, and the disciples may have fled to the fishing boat. But Jesus did not run. He stood his ground, calm, relaxed, unafraid and the man came up to him. I can picture to myself the look on the face of that demonic, gazing into the eyes of Jesus. He had never met anything like this. What was new about it? Here was a man in whose face he saw not a trace of fear or hate, only kindness and understanding. A great quietness came over this wild man. When at last the disciples plucked up courage to move forward, there was the wild man of Gerosa, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind. And they marveled at what had happened.

He had found God again in the person of Jesus. He was now ready to return to the fellowship of his neighbors and friends. And Jesus said go right back home. The man said, "I want to follow you and go with you everywhere." But Jesus said, "Go back to your friends and neighbors. Join them and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you."

It was Christ's purpose that this man should be a man and not a maniac. It was his purpose that this man's life should be integrated and not divided against itself. It was his purpose that this man should once again look upon other men through wholesome, normal eyes, and find his place in the life of the world and look up to God with wholesome trust and love.

It would seem to be reasonable to give the Gospels credit for being genuine and not fraudulent, to recognize that in the person of Jesus we are in contact with someone who was in every way unique and who may therefore be expected to have a unique effect upon men and upon His environment; and to admit that these are some things which science cannot yet explain about the interaction of the ministry, that cannot be explained by science today and he is still performing many miracles in the lives of people right now.

Those that faithfully follow Jesus Christ can and will testify to this fact.

One morning when I stepped out from my house a small boy leaped out from behind a bush and threatened me with a toy pistol. He was wearing the boots and spurs, the shirt and neckerchief and the hat of a cowboy. It was evident that the boy next door had a cowboy hero and he was imitating him in all the ways he knew how.

Persons older than this boy do the same thing. They imitate their heroes. There was once a noted preacher who had a very effective gesture; it was noticed that many young preachers developed that same gesture. Of course, this isn't bad at all, there is virtue in imitating the good. There is, however a further step to make. It is of this I wish to speak. Let me illustrate this step from the life of Jesus.

Many persons have made of Jesus a hero and some have tried to imitate him. Jesus never asked his followers to imitate him. He asked them to follow him. He didn't say to the four fishermen he called at the

seashore, "Imitate me." He said, "Follow me."

When you follow a hero you let his whole personality influence your life. By imitation you try to duplicate another. It cannot be done. Each one of us is different. We want to be ourselves. It is important that we be our finest and best selves. And this comes to pass by letting the finest and best persons influence us by their own personalities. Just persistently follow Christ, day in and day out, and it will come to pass that the best and finest will appear in you.

Jesus called men to follow him because he wanted his whole personality to influence them.

Then he wanted to teach them. He wanted to teach his followers the foundations, principles, and purposes of his life. That cannot be done in an hour or a day, not even in a year. The teaching of Jesus passes to his followers when they read the Gospels, when they meditate and pray and feel the presence of his spirit. By this Jesus develops in his followers the kind of persons he wants them to be.

Then Jesus called men to follow him because he wanted his spirit to go out into the world through them. His love, his forgiveness, his power, his spirit passes through the persons who follow him, on out into the lives of men.

Jesus truly calls each of us to follow him. Isn't this really the answer to living?

In the Lenten period, a time of rededication and recommitment for all of us, have we found real peace with God? Peace with our fellow men? Happy relationships with those around us? I beg of you, look out over this world and see the hate and the anguish and the fear and the dread. Where is the answer? On the whole world's horizon, I see but one, that towering cross of Jesus Christ, our Lord. And in the healing and brotherhood of that cross, there is hope and salvation for mankind and I believe nowhere else. In the Lord, in Jesus Christ we have nothing to fear and nothing to be afraid of. Let us truly put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

## **His City and Our City**

### **Scripture: Luke 19: 28-44**

I have chosen (2) texts this morning: First, from Luke 18:41; “And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it.” Second, from Acts 1:8; “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”

From a turn in the road that goes from Bethany to Jerusalem Jesus looked out upon a scene which even today is one of the most interesting in the world. The city of Jerusalem lay before him. From the higher vantage point of Olivet, he could see the city walls, the temple, the palaces, the roofs of the house of the poor.

This was his city. It was the city of his people. Here was the great temple. Its name Jerusalem, suggested it was “founded in peace”. He had gone up to the city when he was a boy of twelve amid all the excitement of a Passover season. That same season was now at hand. How many times since his boyhood he had walked its streets we do not know, but geographically and psychologically Jerusalem was the city of Jesus.

Everyone one of us has a city. It might be a small town like Fultonham or a large city like New York but we all have a city. We live in an age when everyone of us comes under urban influences. We are close to Schenectady and Albany and we can see foresee their problems. Often times these problems are transmitted to us, here in the country, so to speak. Communications has so greatly improved that none of us cities are remote or away from it all. We are a part of it whether we like it or not. And we know that the urban problem is taking on serious proportions. Areas around the tri-city area are expanding so rapidly that planning of all kinds is lacking, services that these people require are not available, new schools and new churches are necessary and all these things create many problems. And of course, the biggest problems in these areas including the cities are the people themselves.

There is a poem by Lon Woodrum entitled “Cities”.

Cities are more than steel and stone,  
Or humming wheels and towers a  
Or busy shops and boulevards,  
Or parks, or homes with well-kept yards.  
Cities are more than block-long stores  
With neon-signs and countless doors.  
Cities have eyes a fire with tears  
And hearts that flee the mocking years;  
Ears that stumble on streets of wrong.  
Cities are full of children crying,

Cities are full of people dying.  
Cities are more than stone-steel towers  
Proudly proclaiming this time of ours.  
Cities are men for whom Christ cried;  
Cities are men for whom he died.”

Jesus wept over his city. Luke gives us in a few words that prophetic vision of Jesus, the fulfillment of which was described by Josephus in detail which brings tears to our eyes.

Was it the battering of the city walls, the destruction of the temple, the fall of palaces, that brought sobs to the breast of the Master? The terrible tragedy of the city of Peace would fall most heavily upon the poor and especially upon the children; it was for these he wept and for all others that suffered from this tragedy of ignorance.

Uncle George heard Mary-Jo make a remark to her brother Jimmy, “What you don’t know won’t hurt you.” He didn’t know what they were talking about, but he decided to bring the remark up for discussion at a convenient time.

On Palm Sunday morning he brought a postcard to the breakfast table and said, “I have a postcard from Ed and Joan Porter. They are traveling in Europe. They know a lot more than they knew when I first met them.”

Mary-Jo knew that her uncle was leading up to something, so she said, “tell us about it, Uncle George.”

He had his opening and proceeded, “Ed Porter and Joan Scott met at a school which they attended. They liked each other and soon Ed was taking Joan around in his old car. One day they drove down to the seashore and parked their car on the hard sand, and went for a walk up around a point of land that extended a short distance out to sea. I should have maintained that Ed was from Kansas and Joan from Illinois and neither of them knew anything about the ocean. They walked for about two hours and when they came back, they found the car almost completely covered by the tide. And what is more the tide came in a second time before they got that car out of the sand and up on high ground. Though a friend took it apart and cleaned the sand out of the parts, it never amounted to much after that. But they learned a lesson. I heard someone say, “What you don’t know won’t hurt you.” But it does. Ed didn’t know about the tide, and he sure got hurt.

“Ignorance is not just a negative passive thing,” said Mr. Babcock, “it is positive and often has disastrous results. I am thinking about Joe Brown’s death from cancer caused by cigarette smoking. Joe just didn’t know any better. Now he’s dead at thirty-five.

“I’ve just come from a meeting, said Mrs. Babcock, “where they told of conditions in India. Ignorance surely has positive results in famine in that sad land.”

Mary-Jo then made her confession, “I said that to Jimmy the other day, “who you don’t know won’t hurt you. I was wrong. I’ll never say it again.

Uncle George burst out with a happy thought. “I just remembered that this is Palm Sunday. It is the very day when Jesus said that if the people had only known the things that belong to peace, the troubles that lay ahead of them would not have happened.

We cannot plead ignorance because we do not know the problems that lay before us. We cannot stick our heads in the sand and hope the problems will go away. We have to find the cause and prescribe a remedy.

Before God’s presence the evils of the world must fly away, and no place be found for them. At certain time in human history God draws peculiarly near, to demand either a change or destruction. Our day is such a time. It may not be the end of the world, but then it must be the end of an era!

Strategically, your city is at the center of American life. (Whether it be a small hamlet or a large city) American life is now central to world history. Who can foretell your city’s place and power in American thought and life?

Viewing our own city, or town, or community we have heaviness of heart. It might well bring tears to our eyes. Think of your community, our community, the one you live in which influences your life and thoughts a hundred times a day. How many people live here in righteousness and peace and well-being. How about the nearby cities of Schenectady and Albany. There are mansions and palaces of trade and government and art. But from the vantage point of Olivet these only throw into contrast other people who live in ignorance and poverty, who suffer from injustice and hopelessness.

Suppose we talk with Jesus for a moment about our community, our town, our city. Jesus of Nazareth, if you had ridden through my city this day, if you stood here now, or in sight of New York or San Francisco, or London or Bengal or Hong Kong or Paris or even Jerusalem would you weep? How would you feel to know that the old shames are still with us and multiplied ten thousand-fold. For every despised Samaritan, we give you ten thousand despised Negroes or Arabs or paradoxically, Jews. For every beggar fed by crumbs from the rich man’s table, we give you ten thousand tranquilized demons in our institutions. For every sniggering little farthing steals looked down upon, we give you ten thousand swaggering big operators looked up to. For every soldier felled by the sword, we give you ten thousand civilians blown to smithereens, and we are about to give you millions crawling hideously to extinction by radiation.

This is our city. All cities, towns, and communities. The world Jesus said, “Ye shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem.” Almost seven weeks after his day of Triumph, when he wept over Jerusalem, Jesus again stood on Olivet with his disciples. It was the time for his departure. Among his last words were these: “Ye shall be my witness in Jerusalem, to the uttermost parts of the earth.” Yes, also in Jerusalem. Did he still have hope for Jerusalem? If not for the city, there were men and women and children in Jerusalem. These disciples

were to follow through that which he had begun and continued: the preaching of the gospel to the poor and the healing of the broken-hearted.

The kingdom is wide, and for everyone. But Jesus' strategy was, "beginning at Jerusalem." We are not in Jerusalem, we are in Fultonham. Does he not say to us, "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all nations, beginning at Fultonham?"

In our community – the word of Jesus comes down to us. "Ye shall be my witnesses."

We are to be witnesses to Jesus as Victor. These words of Jesus were spoken only a few weeks after the Resurrection. By that, victory sin and death were defeated, and, as Harvey Cox points out in "The Secular City", all the principalities and powers which corrupt and cripple human freedom were defeated, though not annihilated.

By the victory of Christ men were given their true dignity and value as "sons of God." This is the message of the church; this is the witness that Christians should give in Jerusalem; this is the good news which all men can accept.

We are to witness to Jesus as Savior – He is the Savior of all men, without distinction of class or race. By the Saviorhood of Jesus each disciple is enabled to extend his heart and his hand to every other man and call him brother. He is not one man's Christ; he is the Christ of all. He does not reveal God as the God of one race or nation but as the God and Father of us all. We serve and redeem the city by our attitudes and acts of brotherhood.

We are to witness to Christ as Lord. How this takes the hopelessness out of life! Christ has purpose; Christ is leader; his disciples are called to follow. The people of the city are called on to treasure the dream of a better city in a better day. By visions and dreams, by faith and works, by toil and travel by labors of love and patience of hope, in the Master's name, the city will be redeemed from its doom.

Let us work together as Christians and Christ's disciples to make our community a better place in which to live. Only working through the power and spirit of Jesus Christ can we ever hope to accomplish this.

## **The Walk to Emmaus**

### **Scripture: Luke 24:13-35**

Text is chosen from Luke 24:34; “The Lord has risen indeed.”

Why were Cleopas and his friend tired going to 7 miles to Emmaus on that Sunday afternoon? Someone suggests that they were trying to escape from a bitter experience. Who could blame them? It is hard to have one's faith laid low and one's hopes shattered. It may be that they had actually seen Jesus nailed to the cross. That would leave them in misery and despair. They were bewildered to buy the rumors of his resurrection. Discussing these things as they journeyed, a stranger appeared and walked along with them.

We know that the stranger was the resurrected Lord. However, they did not recognize him.

If Jesus was to appear before us today, at this very moment, I wonder how many of us would recognize him? Not too many, I'm sure. Too many of us are unbelieving. We celebrate Easter. We know what Easter stands for and what it means, but we do not really and truly in our hearts believe it. It is just like a story in a book or on TV. We will never know and feel the true meaning of Easter in our own lives until we really accept Jesus Christ into our hearts as our Savior and Lord.

The story we read for our scripture reading this morning is a lovely one. Joseph Fort Newton said that if the Bible were about to be destroyed, and he could save only one flying leaf, it would be the story of the walk to Emmaus. He wrote, “this story never fails me. Weary, dejected; or disheveled, I have only to turn to that page, and there is a human accent as a friend standing near. The words thrall me. A radiant personality touches me. Ages of doubt and cruelty may lie between, but the light shines, and there are footsteps by my side. The scene on the road to Emmaus is not a bit of ancient history; it is a picture of them biting reality. The Pilgrim Christ is an eternal contemporary of humanity.”

I feel that this is a good reminder for all of us. Jesus Christ is constantly at our side whatever we may be doing. We need to only turn and ask him and he will give us strength, courage, faith that we need in all of life. Truly Christ is with us always.

First of all, with Jesus by their side they saw things in a true light and with better perspective. Jesus “explained to them everything in the Scriptures that referred to himself.” The scriptures were those of the Old Testament. Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he drew out the significance of his suffering. His cross was the means of finding his glory. Their faith was revived and their hopes rekindled.

Likewise, would not our faith be revived and hopes rekindled if our Lord suddenly appeared to us? I'm sure they would.

How many times his followers, in the day since that Sunday long ago, have had their darkness illuminated and their perceptions quickened by the presence of Jesus. Sometimes they knew it was he by their side; at other times he was unrecognized. This we know, that when we need him most, he is by our side to give us understanding.

It is true that Christ may not always give us that direct answer or direction but he most definitely does give us a place to start from and points us in the proper direction.

Secondly, with Christ by their side they felt his touch upon their hearts. “Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?”

Ever since that, the distinctive march of Christianity has been the burning hearts of its followers. Its deepest appeal is to the human heart. “What set their hearts a burning was not the mere word of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the Christ who was behind the word. It was their immediate contact with that personality, and the mysterious outflow of his life upon their them, which stirred them, as only personality can do, and moved their nature to its very depths. The order of Christianity, its life and its enthusiasm, its countless efforts, its unwearied service, all that is rooted, not in any creed, but in the immediate presence of a living Christ.”

We can remember that John Wesley, at the time of his conversion, said his heart was strangely warmed. Truly the Christ does set our hearts on fire. His gentle touch in our lives comes us and gives us a place that cannot be described but only felt. Each individual has to experience this for himself.

Truly we are Christians to believe, as Easter represents, that Jesus Christ does live, that he is constantly at our side, that we can turn to him anytime. There are no Christians that I know of that are lonely. They always have the company of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, with the breaking of the bread “their eyes were opened wide and they knew him.” The eyes of their memory were opened. They had seen him break bread before. This may have been a flashback to the great miracle of feeding the 5000, or to a wayside lunch one day in Galilee. That’s the breaking of bread came sacramental, an outward sign of a spiritual grace, a revelation of the Lord, a token of the burning heart. They would never forget that evening hour and meal; that afterwards these two, the hour and the meal, would be sacramental avenues of meaning which would usher them into the unseen but real presence of the living Christ.

We too, as his followers, when we come to this table with the right attitude and spirit, can find Christ here. We can feel and hear his presence. Our eyes will be opened and we will know him as our living Lord.

There is something lovely about moonlight, but judging from its photographs the moon looks like a rather dreary place. Why should anyone want to go to the moon? Because men have wonder. Everything is the



object of wonder, even the dreary moon. Now the Earth, that's different. How fascinating is the Earth. Christopher Fry, the playwright, was once talking to a group of high school boys about the wonder of the Earth, where pigs fly, and flowers eat whoever passes by, and little containers the size of your fingernails open and let out green, gigantic things. He was talking about the vampire bat, and the sea anemone that catches and eats the little fish that pass by and the acorn that releases the great oak. There are so many things to wonder about. how does a dolphin balance a ball on the end of its nose? Einstein, one of the greatest minds in our modern world said, "he who can no longer wonder and stand in rapt awe is as good as dead."

And this Easter Sunday we recall that on the evening of the day that Jesus rose from the dead he showed himself alive to his disciples who are gathered in the upper room. Luke says that "they yet believed not for joy, and wondered." The disciples wondered and they had a lot to wonder about. A man who died on the cross and was buried rose from the grave and lived again. Just think about that sometime today. Go off by yourself and read about it in your Bible. Jesus Christ rose from the dead!

Such wonders brings our mind and hearts in touch with mystery, and that is a part of our greatness. Young people face great mysteries – who am I? Why am I? Where am I going? There are still great mysteries – the mystery of God, the mystery of Christ, the mystery of life, of death, I've eternal life. These mysteries stimulate our wonder, they increase our joy, they lead to knowledge, they awaken our faith, they kindle our hope, they bow our souls in worship don't miss the wonder of Easter. For Truly the wonder of Easter is that Christ is alive. "Indeed, the Lord has risen."

## **The Climax of the Gospels**

### **Scripture: Luke 23:50-24:10**

Text is chosen from Matthew 28:7; “He is risen from the dead.”

Let us imagine this morning that an evening newspaper called “The Jerusalem Times”, had been published in Jerusalem during this last week some nineteen hundred and seventy-nine years ago. Imagine an up-to-date reporter following the events.

Perhaps the headlines would have read as follows: Last Monday’s headline: “Jesus of Nazareth Cleanses the Temple”: Jerusalem April 9, this morning Jesus the Nazarene entered the temple and cleaned the place out. He drove out the oxen and sheep for the sacrifice. He knocked down the tables of the money changers, resulting in a wild scramble.

For some time, Anais, the ex-high priest and his son-in-law Caiaphas, have had a monopoly on the business of supplying beast for the Jewish sacrifice. The temple tax cannot be paid in Roman, Greek, or Egyptian coins because they bare the image of their rulers. Jews from abroad was changed their money into the Jewish half-shekel. It is reported that the graft of the priests amounts to \$150,000 a year from their two sources.

Jesus said they made the temple a den of thieves instead of a house of prayer. The priests were completely flabbergasted by the action of the Galilean carpenter.”

Tuesday, April 9, paper headline could have read, “Caiaphas Out To get Jesus: The Nazarene visited the temple this morning and met the opposition of the high priest. Their agents tried to find charges against him. When asked by what authority he cleansed the temple yesterday he refused to answer.

One lawyer asked him whether it was right to pay taxes to Caesar. If he had said “no”, the Roman governor would have put him under arrest. If he had said “yes”, the Jewish crowd would have mobbed him. The lawyer thought he had caught him. But the Nazarene was clever. He said, “bring me a coin.” They placed a Roman coin in his hand. He asked, “who’s image and superscription is this?” The agent said, “Caesars.” Then said Jesus, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and render unto God the things that are God’s”.

At 4 o’clock this afternoon Jesus was still free.”

Jerusalem Times, Wednesday, April 11, “Jesus has Disappeared”: “The temple priest cannot find the Galilean who cleared the temple and destroyed their business last Monday. They can make no charges against him. There are two rumors. One that he and his 12 disciples spent the night at the home in the

village of Bethany. The other rumor is that one of his disciples' named Judas was seen entering a side door at Caiaphas' palace."

Thursday's headline, April 12: "Will Jesus Keep Passover?"

"The officials at the temple are wondering whether Jesus will appear in Jerusalem to eat the Passover meal with his disciples."

Friday's addition, April 13 "Jesus Crucified": "Jesus of Nazareth was crucified at Golgotha today. After celebrating the Passover with his disciples at the home of a widow named Mary he withdrew to Gethsemane for prayer. Here he was betrayed to the chief priest by Judas, one of his followers. They trumped up a charge of blasphemy against him in an illegal trial. A Roman guard crucified him between two thieves. The Nazarene spoke seven times from the cross before he died. It is true that he claimed to be the Christ, the son of God, the Messiah of the Jews and the Savior of the world.

The High Priest are said to be happy over the outcome of the last week. Pilot could not be found for an interview."

Headline for Saturday, April 14: "Two Officials Inter Body of Jesus": "Two members of the Jewish governing Council asked permission of pilot yesterday afternoon to inter the body of Jesus. They were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. They took him down from the cross and placed him in a new tomb in a garden near Gogotha, owned by Joseph. A stone was rolled across the entrance to the sepulcher and sealed with the Roman seal. A guard of soldiers was placed at the tomb to protect it from interference by his disciples."

Now we come to Sunday, April 15, of the Jerusalem Times, the headlines read; "Christ is risen! His tomb is empty."

"The Roman soldiers on guard report that during the earthquake which was felt throughout the city early this morning, an angel rolled away the stone. They became is dead men.

Mary Magdalene, one of Christ followers, claims to have seen him.

"Two men met him on the road as they were going to Emmaus. The priests are at their wits end. The Roman governor is confused by the strange events. There is no doubt that the Nazarene is alive."

These are the events of the Holy Week and they made perfect news. When something as big as the whole world is related to an event in the life of a single person, then you have perfect news. Something as big as the whole world end the salvation of the world, the hope of eternal life, is related to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection is the very acme and pinnacle of news, perfect news, good news."

First, of all the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is the climax of the Gospel, “Good News”, because it answers life’s ultimate question. That question is this: “If a man die, shall he live again?”

If we read our Bible and believe what God has to say to us, we will believe, for in the Gospel of John 11:25 & 26 we read that Jesus said, “I am the Resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet he shall live. And whatsoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”

These words were only words before his resurrection. On Easter morning they were given the backing and assurance of his own victory over death.

That’s why celebrate Easter for we too can have the assurance of victory over death by believing in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It behooves us to be prepared to meet our Savior for if we are prepared, we will have no fear of death, but always looking forward to eternal life with our Father in Heaven. Before Easter we had no real purpose to our earthly lives and nothing to look forward to. With the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have this assurance that we too can have everlasting and eternal life.

Secondly, by the Resurrection of Jesus the most searching demand is made. It is a more searching demand than that of the Ten Commandments, and perhaps of the two Great Commandments, to love God and your neighbor. On Resurrection morning Jesus met Mary Magdalene and said, “Mary, go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father and to my God, and your God.” Here is something of tremendous significance. His disciples are in the same relationship with God as is Jesus. They are “Sons”. The demand of the Resurrection is the fulfillment of this relationship.

Truly as a result of the Resurrection, as followers of Jesus Christ, we can have the same privilege as he and that is being with our God after death. We too can be resurrected and enjoy this same relationship with God as Jesus does. Truly we too are ‘sons’ of God the most high.

Thirdly, by the resurrection of Jesus the deepest peace is given. That night the ten, Judas is gone and Thomas missing, were gathered in the upper room, afraid, dissolutioned, bitter, cynical, doubting, despairing – and then the living Christ entered the room. “Peace be onto you,” were his first words - a common phrase spoken with uncommon significance.

Look at this group of despairing men on Easter evening to whom Jesus said, “Peace be onto you.” Simon, called the Zealot, was there – a revolutionary, a man with a rebellious heart. Nathaniel, a cynic with a sharp tongue, also James and John, men of insistent and intensified desire, were there. Peter had a lashing conscience, since he had denied the Lord. It is the living Christ who can touch a man’s mind, probe into and heal his heart, deliver him from sin and guilt. It is the living Christ who brings peace to all sorts and conditions of men.

All of us constantly are thinking and talking about peace in our world. Many feel that a lasting peace can be achieved through the United Nations and through men sitting down and talking about their differences. Certainly, this is going to help. But if we really want peace and I am sure we do, we should do everything in our power to help people come to personally know Jesus Christ. Once we do know him, within ourselves we will obtain a peace that everyone is seeking. I'm sure we now can see the importance and necessity for all Christian missionaries. Men having obtained this peace within their own lives, can sit down at a negotiating table, and really talk about their differences and come up with a peaceful solution. Truly Easter; the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, has brought the deepest possible peace which all of us can obtain by accepting him into our lives.

Fourthly, and finally, by the Resurrection of Christ the most urgent commission is given to his disciples. We read from Matthew 28:19; "Jesus said, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." This commission becomes more urgent as the days go by if we ever hope to live in a peaceful world.

Just think what a different world this would be to live in if we had no fear of wars, if our young people everywhere begin their lives as ordinary people instead of having to fight in wars and lose their lives, in many cases not even knowing what they are fighting for. I would say, we Christians had better get busy and make sure others know of our Lord and Savior.

The story of passion week was not written by the quick fingers of newspaper reporters who must write in popular phrase and meet a deadline the story did have its reporters, three of whom were eyewitnesses of the events: Matthew and John, who belong to the disciple band; also, Mark, who was the son of Mary in whose house the Passover meal was eaten. Luke, the physician later investigated the events and wrote them down most carefully.

These men did not supply us with newspaper columns; they wrote the classic gospels which have been in the hands of men about 1900 years. They make the resurrection the climax of the day because of the gospels, remembering that the word "Gospel" is Greek for "Good News."

We have heard the "Good News" of the risen Christ. Is it really good news to our souls? Do we really know and understand what Christ resurrection means to each of us? Have we really discovered Christ's love in our own hearts? If we haven't then we had better start searching.

Our living Lord calls us to carry this news by word, act, life, to others. It is this "Good News" which meets the urgent need of our world today. It's time we so-called Christians started living our lives as Christians and become the kind of persons Chris wants us to become. It is never too late to confess our sins and start living a new life. Let Christ come into your life and then you can start fulfilling your responsibility as Christians.

## **Sharing the Victory of Christ**

### **Scripture: Romans 8:11-14, 35, 37-39**

Text is chosen from John 16:33; “I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In this world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” Each of us has thrilled to many victories. We began young, when we yelled for a winning team. Many of us, young and old, became excited over the winning of a basketball pennant. Basketball, football, golf and many sports stir the enthusiasm of the people. We know men and women whose personal victories over handicaps and against terrific odds never cease to strengthen our souls. We have known people that have had all kinds of tragedy happen in their lives and who came out of it stronger than before. We admire these people for their strength and courage and faith.

Most recently we have kept another Lent, witnessed from afar the crucifixion of Jesus, and rejoice in another Easter. The purpose of this hour is to share more deeply the victory of Jesus Christ. We consider his words this morning: “I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” These words have particular significance because they were among the last spoken in the upper room, before his crucifixion, “I have overcome the world,” he said; how then can we share his victory?

“In the world you have tribulation.” We share his victory in a hard, hard world. That is where he lived. That is where we live – in a world of tribulation.

A woman came to her pastor with an unusual problem. She was perplexed because her life till then had been so easy, never any financial worry, never any serious illness, never any great discomfort, never any deep bereavement, never any burden too great to bear. I know what you were thinking. How can any one person be so fortunate? Why is she complaining? With all our crosses to bear, I’m sure if we had our choice, we would not want it to be any different. However, the sensitive person was wise enough to look about her and wonder whether there was not something wrong with her life because it showed nothing of tribulation. Later tribulations came and she bore them well. We have to be prepared for the unexpected. Jesus Christ is the only one I know who can prepare us.

The manifesto of Jesus of Nazareth, which we read in Luke 4:18 &19, reveals the awareness of the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blind, the bruised. His word and the acts which followed faced squarely the fact of tribulation. Nor did he sidestep men suffering from sin and his fear of death.

The Bible always portrays life as it is. It is a compendium of tribulation. How varied is the record: poverty appears here and there; thwarted ambition, a Moses could not enter the promised land with his people, a David who wanted to build the temple was not permitted to do so; deception and treachery appear in the life of Jacob; a king steals a vineyard from one of his subjects. In depicting the world of long ago, the Old

Testament illustrates the world of today.

Christ victory was one in a world of tribulations; in that world we share his victory. It is no victory where there are no odds.

Secondly, “Be of good cheer.” We share his victory by showing courage. It should be noted that these words were spoken before the crucifixion and resurrection. It is slim sharing of a victory to greet it only after the victory has been won.

“Be of good cheer”. Once Jesus had spoken these words to a man whose sin had defeated him, a not uncommon condition. Here they re-echo the forgiveness and release of the previous hour. And Jesus spoke these words to a woman suffering from an incurable disease. They re-echo even unto us the fact that in facing the tribulation of sickness he is our friend. Again, they were spoken to the disciples one night when on the Sea of Galilee. The wind was contrary and they found themselves in distress. In circumstances of danger, he proves his mastery.

The scholars tell us that to the despairing thief upon the cross he spoke from his own cross the same words, “Be of good cheer.”

“Courage,” Jesus said. He said it then. We hear him saying “courage”, now. We still live in a world of tribulation. The old enemies, the principalities and powers,” still rear their heads.

It certainly takes courage to live in our world today. Nothing is easy. Everywhere we turn there are problems, problems that human beings generally bring on themselves. It certainly isn't easy to raise children today. The many temptations that are put in their way such as in moral acts, alcohol and many other road blocks make raising a child to be a good Christian and citizen increasingly difficult as the years go by. Have we ever stopped to think of the terrific pressure that is placed upon our young people today, especially in school. They are expected and really have to get good marks if they intend on furthering their education. They are expected to participate in the extracurricular activities in school. We expect them to be active in their church activities. We expect them to take care of the responsibilities at home. Is it any wonder that we have never had more and more young people visiting and talking with psychiatrist? We need to remember; we live one day at a time. Certainly, we have to make plans for the future but also remember, we can be gone this instant and our plans are just so much paper. Live a day a time and to the glory of God and with his help we will be able to live that day, this day.

Don't plunge into pessimism. Gautama Buddha taught his followers to do that; Jesus Christ calls for courage.

Don't cultivate a stoic spirit. Jesus did not go to the cross with his hands clenched and his teeth set. By a stoic's death he would not have become our Savior.

Nor are we to compensate hours of suffering with hours of pleasure. Life is not like a pair of scales, balanced by tribulation in one pan and compensating pleasure in the other. Nor are we to firm it inside, becoming bitter of spirit. The master calls courage; by heating his car we share his victory.

The battle cry of the believing church is “but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” It was this that kindled the answering faith that breaks out in the battle cry of the believing church in the first epistle of John. “This is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. And who is he that overcometh, the world, but he that believe it that Jesus is the Son of God.”

Thirdly, “I have overcome the world.” We share his victory by putting faith in the victor. John wrote, “this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.”

We must believe to share; how can we keep believing? Have we not followed him as he walked in Galilee, watched him on the cross, celebrated his victory in the resurrection? He has conquered sin and death. He faces the world. Gives life meaning, purpose and joy.

Paul puts the sharing of Christ victory into words that thrills our souls: “In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The other day I heard a man say, “I feel like a hole-in-the-ground.” What did he mean? I feel sure that all of us have sometime had the feeling of being up in the air, floating in the clouds with the sun shining above us; all is right with the world and all is right with me. It’s the joy of living. It belongs to us especially when we are young.

I suppose that a person who feels like a hole in the ground is having the opposite experience. Instead of being lifted up, he is depressed. There is heaviness of spirit instead of lightness. He is living in shadows instead of sunshine. Things are not all right either with the world or with him. And I have the idea that young people sometimes have this experience as well as the one of Joy and exhilaration.

The whole in the ground feeling comes when we are ashamed of ourselves, when we have hurt another person, when we have made a failure, when we have sinned. That football player who ran with the ball towards his opponent’s goal must have felt like a hole-in-the-ground. That boy who acted towards that lovely girl on his first and only date with her so that he can never ask her for another, must feel like a hole-in-the-ground. That girl who lost her temper and said unkind things to her mother, must feel like a hole-in-the-ground. The student who frittered away his time and would not study and then failed in the exam must feel like a hole-in-the-ground.

We have an interesting example in the Bible of a man who felt this way, his name was Peter, the man who



denied Jesus three times at the time of Jesus' crucifixion. He went out and wept bitterly because he had been disloyal and faithless.

But now we come to a turning point in our thinking. Peter became one of the great men of the church and of Christian history. The skyscraper rises from a great hole-in-the-ground. Out of a great depression little by little, is developed the great character in life of the apostle Peter.

I am sure that you see the point – don't let a hole-in-the-ground mistake or failure or sin keep you there. Little by little the greater person grows. The master, the very person to whom we have been disloyal, will extend his hand and lift us out of our hole in the ground. Truly we need God in our lives constantly.

Fourth, "In me you may have peace." The words of Jesus in the Upper Room were spoken that in him his disciples might have peace. "I have overcome the world" is an affirmation of peace. Sharing his victory, we have spiritual resources adequate to win all life's battles. Sharing his victory ensures his followers that they too, shall conquer. His words are an affirmation of their peace and their joy.

The grand fact is that Christ's victory is the victory of his followers and ensures that they too shall conquer. Peace – the greatest need of the world and of the soul: "In me ye may have peace." Only in him: not in the world, till the world takes him for its Lord. We have talked, prayed and hoped for peace to come to our world and I believe it will never happen until each of us finds this piece in our own lives first.

Truly as followers of Christ we can share his victory over sin and death. Our sins can and will be forgiven and we are assured of everlasting and eternal life with God our father. Accept Christ into your heart. Become the kind of Christian Christ wants us to become.

# 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.

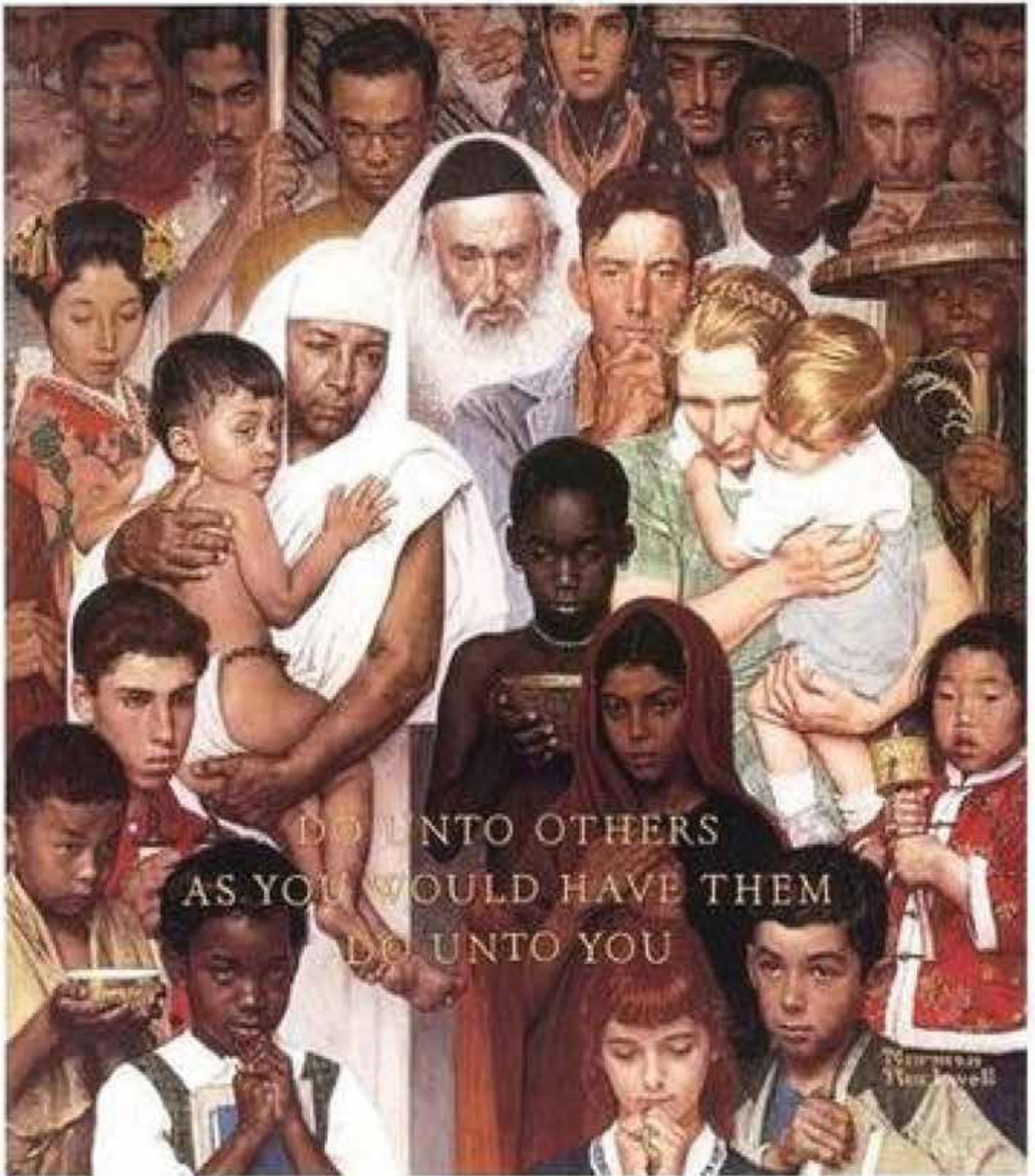
Learn about the journey of Love for some of the children in the state of Assam, India. In 1944 the late Julia Rose founded a school and boarding facility called Asapalli (A Village of Hope). Learn how you, your church or organization can donate to support the children of Asapalli. Write, fax, or e-mail 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"**