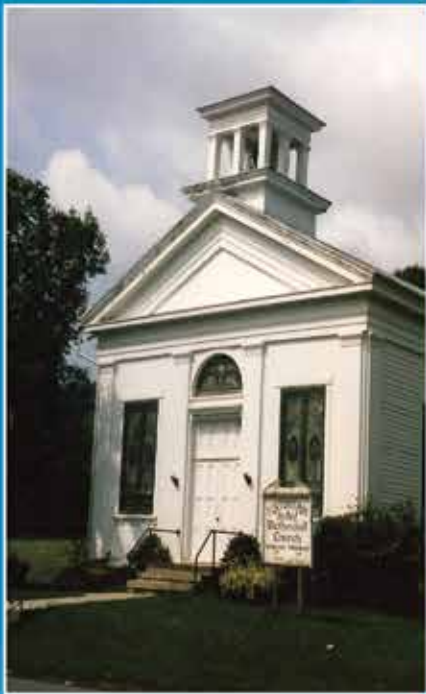


*B*raman

Foundation of Charities



The Fultonham United
Methodist Church

The Sermons of Richard W. Braman Vol. 14

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Love Thy Neighbor

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

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



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

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

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

**In Christ,
The Braman Foundation**

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Wanted: New Creatures?

Scripture: John 3:1-13

The text is chosen from II Corinthians. 5:17; “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: all things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

It is the insistent teaching of the New Testament that becoming a Christian is a revolutionizing experience. A man is presented as being fundamentally different after contact with Christ than he was before.

The language of Bible on this subject is explicit. Jesus told Nicodemus that he “must be born again”, if he was to enter the kingdom of God. And the Gospels and Epistles constantly refer to the believer as a “new creature” or a “new man”. Examples of this are Ephesians 4:24; “And put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” ; Colossians 3:9-10; “Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being received in knowledge after the image of its creator.” Perhaps the most indecisive and comprehensive statement of the truth appears in the text.

So, we are true to the Scriptures when we assert that when a person becomes united with Christ, he is changed, transformed, transfigured. Life is never the same after conversion. If it is then you were not converted. Jesus Christ makes a difference in a man-a profound difference. We cannot be found in him or he and us, and continue to think the same, feel the same, or look at life in the same way. I know from my own experience that Jesus Christ does make a great deal of difference in your life. Things that were important before now take the hind seat. The meaning of life is entirely different now. We begin to put the right perspective on the things of the spirit rather than on material things.

When God gets a hold of a man’s soul and revolutionizes his life, there’s likely to be some excitement. It takes an earthquake to get some people out of hell. Jesus Christ can cause that earthquake.

A man may join a church, attend its services, and engage in its activities; he may endorse the Christian ethic and admire the Master, and still retain his old manner of thought, and his old modes of behavior; but “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

The fact remains that the greatest drag on Christianity today is not the secularization without; it is the reduced Christianity within - the religious generalities and innocuous platitudes of a pallid, anemic Christianity.

Many feel to be a Christian is just to belong to a church. Actually, belonging to a church is and should be a direct result of being a Christian. If persons were only taken into the church after they became converted, there would not be very many members of churches.

So much of our boasted Christianity is only skin deep, and we know it. Many of our pews have never been truly converted; they have never been changed by the power of the Holy Spirit into the new creatures. And the same might be said about some who stand in our pulpits. That Englishman was about right when he wrote that, “the church is at present a field for evangelism rather than a force for evangelism.”

You know because your parents attended church every Sunday and you came with them. This doesn't make you a Christian. Certainly, it is helpful, but you yourself have to feel the touch of God's hand upon you and not your mother or father. We cannot live our lives based on another's faith and true experience.

Christians cannot be like the rest of the world. We have to be different. We have to be what Christ wants us to be.

We talk about people coming to church when they feel like it. What do you suppose is the church's worst enemy? Would you believe it? The church's worst enemy is the “empty pew”. Here are some reasons why.

A pew empty because of the indifference and slackness of a member is not silent. It speaks with a voice and language which men everywhere can hear and understand. It declares, “I know all about this Christianity business, and take it from me, it doesn't amount to much. I am a member of a church, I signed up as a follower of Jesus, but that doesn't mean anything. It's just something to do when you feel like it and get around to it. It doesn't matter much one way or another. An empty pew speaks as an enemy of the church.

A pew empty through the disloyalty of a member discourages other members of the church. Many times we say, “What's the use? I give up.” It tends to weaken their allegiance, dampen their enthusiasm, make more difficult their fight against sagging. No inspiring example, no spirit of fellowship and worship, no encouraging voice in song and prayer, no study companion for writing the world's wrongs, rises from an empty pew. It is a saboteur in the house of God.

Even more damaging to the church, an empty pew cheats and betrays the person who belongs to it. It is cheating someone of an opportunity to share in life's highest adventure, and noblest enterprise, without which man's life has neither purpose nor sanity. It is betraying someone into smug self-righteousness or careless neglect. It is the church's worst enemy because it is the wisest enemy of someone whom God loves.

According to our text, Christianity is not an amendment to a pagan way of life; it is a substitute. The new life in Christ is not an appendage to old life, for a man cannot be old and new at the same time. Conversion is not the sewing of a patch of holiness on old cloth. The real Christian is a new fabric from top to bottom. Truly, we are cleansed, our souls, our lives are cleaned when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Everything is put away and we take on everything new.

The genuine Christian Is living in a new universe. He recognizes the old things about him, but still, they

are different. There is a reevaluation. God is now the center of life. Nothing supremely matters, but his will.

It is interesting to know how many things are taking our center of interest today. Everything seems to come first except the Church and God. If we have any time left over, then we will give it to the church and God's work. If is the same way with our giving. Everything else comes first, then what is left we will share for God's work.

Actually, when Christ really matters in our lives, he comes first, and the rest of our lives center around him. We give to God's work first, and then we use the rest of our money for living our lives. Believe me this is true because I've seen it happen time and time again and speaking from my own life, I know it to be true.

Such words as these might comprise the testimony of one who is in union with Christ: "Christ has given me a new eyesight and a new insight."

"Practices I once considered right are abhorrent to me now."

"The worship in the sanctuary, which was once a tedious bore to me has become my chief joy."

The people whose religious zeal seemed madness to me are now my friends."

The drab has turned to gold, and the common place is glorified. Life wears a different face to me, since I found my Savior."

Being a Christian isn't being dull, lifeless, drab, or uninteresting. Being a Christian is being full of vitality, being pleasant, happy, joyful. It is entirely a different life than being of the world. It's really engaging life and living life to its fullest.

Dwight L Moody said, "I remember the morning on which I came out of my room after I had first trusted God. I thought the old sun shown a great deal brighter than it ever had before; I thought it was just smiling upon me. As I walked across Boston common and heard the bird singing in the trees, I thought they were all singing a song to me."

This is a wonderful testimony, isn't it? How about your testimony? Have you really met your Savior? Has your life been changed? Have you become a reborn person? If you haven't, it isn't too late, Christ is waiting for you. You make the next move; he will be more than glad to meet you halfway. And even if you have met your Savior, we need to renew our souls with him. Perhaps you have strayed a bit, now is the time to get back on the right path. Don't wait. Take the opportunity now that it is waiting for you.

What difference has Christ made in your life and mine?

In our churches, I want to see conversions which go down deep and transform lives. I want to see more people who love God, who love his house, who love his Book, and who love his cause well enough to sacrifice for it.

Such new creatures are the hope of the world. Without them, our ethical and social schemes, however, nobly conceived, and worked for, will fall apart in our hands. If our society is to be saved, individuals must be redeemed; they must be converted, regenerated, born again.

I know we modern day Christians think the word converted is old-fashioned and that just doesn't happen nowadays. Well I tell you right now, it isn't old-fashioned and you can call it what you want, but lives are changed by Christ, and they will continue to be changed, and we can all thank God that this does happen for it will be a sad world if new lives were never changed and redirected.

The moment you are converted to Christ, several dramatic things happened, whether you were aware of them or not. First, your sins were forgiven. Second, the new man is adopted and receives the divine nature of the son of God. Third, the new man is indwelt by the Spirit of God. Fourth, the new man has the possibility of victory over temptation and sin. The new man is actually Christ in the heart, and Christ in the heart means that he is in the center of our being. In the process of change into a new creature when Christ indwells the heart, the human personality is neither absorbed nor destroyed. Instead, it is enriched and empowered by this union with Christ.

A new social order is an idle pipe dream without new social units. Only new men can bring in the better day.

Let us pray that God's Holy Spirit, who walks when and where he pleases, may create in the church and across the world new creatures. Only he can perform this wonderful essential work. It is not in our power to regenerate and renew. God's Spirit can make these dry, old, tired, bones, alive, and really living.

That's why I believe conversion of men to Jesus Christ is the only hope we have for the world today. As Christians, I believe we are obligated to do our part in helping to spread of this "good news". Let us not hide our light under a bushel. Let us let it shine before men that they may have the opportunity to see and hear what a difference Christ does make in a human life. Indeed, the world does need "new creatures" in Christ.

When Religion Becomes Real

Scripture: Mark 12: 28-34

The text is chosen from Mark 12:30; “Thou shall love the Lord by God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all my strength.”

Religion is not real for most people primarily for one reason: it is not considered important. It does not command a place much less the place of vital worth in their lives. Far from being some sweeping experience which constantly affects their total life, often it is only an occasional thought or a superficial emotion.

Too many of us today, the most important thing is for us to earn enough money to support our families and have all the luxuries that are available. We want security-job or what have you. We want to retire at an early age and enjoy life, we want to go places and do the things everyone else is doing. We do not want to make any sacrifices; we just automatically want these things because we feel we deserve them. In many cases God never entered into our plans, except if we get in trouble or if some tragedy happens. Many put God secondary even when they do consider him. (I come first).

When therefore, Jesus insist that we love God with all our mind, strength, will, and heart, he is not merely putting his mental finger upon our spiritual failure; with unmistakable clarity he is indicating the one way religion can become real.

First of all, whatever commands our attention most counts most with us. For example young people going to college, college commands their attention most. A man interested in getting ahead, getting a better job, this commands his attention most. A preacher really preaching the gospel, this commands his attention most.

That is why Saint Paul said that we were to keep before us those things that are lovely, true, and good. They never become real to us until they have right of way at the center of our minds, until we focus our attention on them. Hosts of people today find it impossible to believe in the reality of religion, simply because they will not take Christ seriously. Truth to become meaningful must command our intellectual respect and evoke our mental esteem and appreciation or it never really challenges us.

We are noted for following leaders who have a good story to tell us, one that we believe in and especially if we think it is to our advantage to follow. Joshua 24:14-17 reads; “Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the river, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day, whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell; but as for me in my house, we will serve the Lord. Then the people answered, Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for it is the Lord, our God who brought

us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, and who did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the people through whom we passed.”

These Israelites had engaged on a great adventure: no less than a journey from slavery to freedom. Moses had been their trusted leader, and on the way to their new home which lay through the hardship and dangers of the wilderness, he had given them many rules and directions for their guidance and welfare, which he claimed to have received from his own leader, God. But now he was about to leave them. He was an old man and death claimed him. Before his death, he called the people together and told them that he now said before them a choice between life and good or death and evil. He told them they must make their own choice, but advise them to choose life. Then he passed on.

Now, in order to continue their journey, they required a new leader, so they selected a young man named Joshua. He had been an assistant to Moses and so had experience.

The people knew, and Joshua knew that successful leadership called for skill, strength, courage, bravery, and the determination to choose and live as Moses had commanded them. Joshua also knew that unless the Israelites agreed to this and promised to support him, he would have a little chance of success. So he, in his turn, called the people together and told them the choice lay with them “Choose ye this day whom ye serve.” But he warned them that as their leader. They must understand “that as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.”

Jesus wanted to establish the “Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven; so he selected certain men, fisherman, and other workmen, and said, “Follow me, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” He says to you and me, “I would be your leader: Follow me”, and if we do so we too become his disciples.

The disciples did not find the way easy or safe or ordinary. Jesus warned them it would not be so; but he knew it was the right way, the best way, and in the end, the happiest, most satisfactory way, if only they would make the venture. It was difficult. They misunderstood, sometimes they failed. But they tried again and again, and from such small beginnings, they achieved great results.

Is your religion real? Shall you take up this adventure? Jesus says, “Follow me”. It is worthwhile trying. Let us join his band of disciples.

Our religion really becomes real when we do not take the easy way out, and when we take the way, we know God wants us to take. I believe that he will not give us leaders to bear unless he gives a strength to bear them.

Your religion is good if it is vital and active, if it nourishes in your confidence, hope, love, and a sentiment of the infinite value of existence, if it is allied with what is best in you against what is worst and holds forever before you the necessity of becoming a new man, if it makes you understand that pain is a deliverer,

if it increases your respect for the conscience of others, if it renders forgiveness more easy, fortune less arrogant, duty dear, the beyond less visionary. If it does these things, it is good, little matter it's naïve; however, rudimentary it may be when it fills this place, it comes from the true source and binds you to man and God.

Secondly, Jesus insists that we are to love God with all the strength of our will. This is at least part of the cost of understanding what happened on Calvary-and of receiving its benefits. Much of our contemporary Christianity is apparently not relevant to the Cross. It can, therefore, be secured at bargain prices. When Christ offers comfort, but does not challenge, his purpose will hardly be a vital concern to us. If the declaration of Christ, that there is a God who loves humanity is accepted and believed, it is always as the result of our giving our strength and will to this God. Only in this way do spiritual facts and forces gain meaning.

Many of us today take God and Christ for granted. We know that he will be there when we need it, but we do not want him to interfere with our lives and our mode living. We want his help when we get in trouble, or some tragedy hits our lives. We make this religion all one sided, our side, the way we want it. We say we believe; we say we have faith, but we never actually put our faith to the test, and we certainly do not live our lives the way we claim to believe.

The humanist has derived his standards of value from a faith which he has discarded. A fly away coach goes on running after it has become detached from the train, and cut flowers remain beautiful. You can find men who have repudiated Christian belief who are shining examples of Christian conduct. But if we want a continuous supply of flowers, we must look to the garden, and carriages without engineers, don't go far. If the Christian God is denied, Christian moral standards will not long survive. And that's exactly what is happening today, our moral standards are becoming more and more relaxed. People are defying God and the Christian standards which are right and proper and good. We cannot stand, be successful, and happy if we do not go back to God.

The United States Is the richest country in the world materially, but what good is our wealth the way we are headed today.

Thirdly, religion becomes real when it is our sincere devotion, when we love God and our fellows with "all our heart." There is no way to dispense with feeling in religion. Certainly feelings never supplant the intellect when we heed the call of Christ. But neither are they excluded. Devotion of heart makes possible full and complete use of our mind and will and gives color, meaning, and resilience to the process of the mind and the efforts of the will. With throbbing affection, monotonous daily tasks become significant. The ordinary becomes extraordinary. Devotion that is given with all our heart changes and colors every relationship of life and every daily task.

You can separate the sodium and the chlorine that constitute salt, but when you finish, you no longer have

salt. And so, for purposes of discussion, you can talk now about a Christian's thoughts, then about his actions. But if you try to separate faith from behavior in daily life, you no longer have Christianity.

The most powerful transaction in the life of any human being is the one in which they become a child of God.

Think of what that implies. It implies that being God's creatures, which we all are, is not the same as being God's children. We are his creatures, but according to John 1:12 which reads, "As many as received him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God", we become his children.

It implies that the transition or change from being a rebellious creature of God to being a reconciled, forgiven, and reconstructed creature of God is so deep and great that it is like a new birth. Hence the term for the new relationship and the new life is "sons" or "children" of God. Still creatures, but now redeemed, obedient creatures, seeking the Father's will, loving the Father himself, and with him all his other children.

Think of what this indicates. It points to a change so fundamental and so radical that no power of ours can bring it about, but only the power of the Spirit of God.

The words of John 1:13; "...who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" – suggest three possible ways by which we might try to become the son of God, each of which is ruled out as inadequate and ineffectual.

The first is the way of natural ancestry: "not a blood" to be born and well bred is not enough to make us children of God.

The second is the way of personal aspiration; "not of the will of the flesh." In the place of "will" some of the other translations use "impulse". What is suggested includes all that we may mean by any man, struggling, striving, resolving, and determining within himself that he will be a child of God, an acceptable and useful member of the Father's family. Such exertions and resolutions may enable you to do certain things that are Christian, but they fail, utterly to make you a Christian.

The third is the way of human achievements: "not of the will of man." The expression, "the will of man" says Bishop Ryle, maybe be taken to mean "the acts and deeds of others" to whom you might look to give you this boon of the new birth. Social institutions cannot bestow it: neither home, school, government, lodge, nor service club. Religion institutions cannot impart it: neither church, clergy, nor Sunday school.

Think of what this involves.

Choice is involved. Mark the relationship between verses 11 and 12: "he came onto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them, gave he power to become the Sons of God." Some rejected; some accepted. It was theirs to choose which they would do when he was here in the body of his

flesh.

Challenge is involved. Receiving is more than believing at least it may be, though ideally the believing should include the receiving. Receiving is active believing. It is taking. It is this challenge that confronts you.

Change is involved. The believing and receiving are followed by the becoming.

And when we really start becoming, that is when our religion becomes real to us. During this period of Lent let us search our hearts and souls and reevaluate our relationship to Christ. Let us take this opportunity in this period of time to make our religion real. Our lives will be entirely different when we do.

The Good News of Sin

Scripture: 1John 2:5-10; 1 John 2:1-6

The text is chosen from 1John 1:8-9; “If we say, we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and we’ll forgive our sins and cleanse us from all on righteousness.”

If we are not sinners, if the evil in this world is not the direct result of our rebellion against God and the breaking of his law, then we are not responsible, and we can do nothing much about it. If man is not a sinner, he is a victim.

But if we are sinners, then there is room for repentance and forgiveness, room for a new life, room for the prodigal to return home in the great discovery of the Father’s love. The Gospel of the Cross, the gospel of the redemption, named by the grace of God, presupposes man sin.

Sin must be interpreted first of all as something for which man is responsible, and yet as lying deeper than his freedom. Second, as something which springs from an inherited nature, yet a nature from which God did not create evil; third, as something, which God did not originate, yet which no other co-eternal power is called upon to explain; fourth, as something, which makes it possible to retain faith in man’s stature as a free, moral agent, and yet in which man is involved as a whole.

The modern man does not like to think of himself as a sinner. He talks about the survival of primitive fears from which he is now happily emancipated. Or he calls it a “psychopathic aspect of adolescence mentality.” Sin, according to modern views, is merely the sewing of wild oats, the friskiness of the young colt, the irresponsibility of a puppy, that dash and speed of the teenager. Sin is largely ignorance, and experience will teach us all virtue. However, regardless of what we modern day, persons want to call it, it is still sin in the site of God.

Or we lay our actions upon corrupt institutions, governments, philosophies. Like the Israelites of old, man, conveniently lays all his sins upon the scapegoat, and sends it away into the mountains while he goes about his daily duties with an easy conscious.

Regardless of what we do, even if we commit murder, we blame someone else or the conditions around us. People turn to drink as one way of escape, and how many other things do we turn to as means of escaping from the world of reality. We are unable to cope with situations and thus turn to other means of escape and supposedly satisfaction. We use all kinds of excuses for the way we behave. But regardless of what we do or excuse we use, we have committed sin, and in most cases we really, and truly in our own mind, know it, and this bothers us.

But none of the theories attempts to explain why evil finds so fertile a soil among all people. The modern man is trying to run away from his sin, but that trick will not work either; for we know this is not possible

in the sight of God.

The Sufferer suffers when he suffers just through seeing sin and sinners with God's eyes and feeling in reference to them with God's heart.

The Bible is the most realistic book in the world. On its very first pages, where it describes the glow of creation and the dignity of man, as the child of God, it also shows man in rebellion against his maker. According to the biblical interpretation, the heart of man's sin is overwhelming pride and self-centeredness. He forgot he was a finite man; having all the weaknesses of humanity and thought he could be a good god with none above him.

If men were merely a child of nature, he would not be a sinner; he would be, but another of the animals which swarm the earth. Only because he is a child of God, subject to the moral will of God, can he be a sinner in rebellion against that will, and likewise a candidate for repentance and forgiveness.

Truly, when we think of God's purity, we realize how far from it we ourselves are.

One winter day, a woman, proud of the whiteness of her newly washed linen, hung it up upon the line against a landscape covered with freshly fallen snow. When she looked out again at her linens, she exclaimed sadly "Ah, nothing can stand against God's almighty whiteness."

1 Thessalonians 2:4 reads; "We have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who test our hearts." It has become the custom among our Puritan and Pilgrim for bears to put weathervanes on the spiral of their meeting houses. The cross was considered to be too Romanish. The weathervane is a singularly appropriate symbol. The weathervane is a device for detecting which way the wind is already blowing. It cannot change the direction of the wind or imitate any change in the flow. Its only formation is to reflect what already is the primary pattern. The apostle Paul, who warned Christians about the dangers of being blown, "about by every strange wind" of events, would disapprove without reservation.

This is the background of the Cross and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the reason for his giving of himself to death for our sake. If we were not really responsible persons under judgment for our rebellion against the highest, we know, then we would need no Cross.

But more discerning observers have shown a different picture. Roman 7:24 says; "Watched man that I am! Who will deliver me from the body of death?" That man is honest, realistic. He knows his rebellion against the highest and best.

No sooner has Paul said this than he cries out as is recorded in Romans 7:25; "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord!" We do not talk about sin because it is hopeless, but because there is hope, forgiveness and redemption from that sin, and because there is a way to become a new person, because there is a Cross.

That's why Jesus Christ went to the Cross, so our sins could be forgiven for all time. That's what the Cross is all about.

John 1: 29 reads, "Behold the Lamb of God, which take it away the sin of the world."

The Cross awakens man to the reality and consciousness of sin. There was no other way of awakening the world, but for Christ to die, to let sin take its full course and come to its tragic culmination in the cross of Calvary.

The crucified Christ set us free from sin. Christ thus reveals the utter love and forgiveness of God and enables us to make forgiveness ours. In the heart awakened to the fact of sin, there is something that makes it terribly hard to realize and accept the forgiveness of God, but the vision of the One on the Cross brings home the amazing reality of God's forgiveness. Before that vision of love, sin cannot survive nor endure.

The taking away of sins is nothing if it be not the beginning of a new life and a recovered fellowship with God. On the faces of the early Christians, there was a "wonderful sort of gladness, the look of men in whom some all-subduing experience had wrought heroically, men with still remembered a great deliverance." Here is the dynamic of all great service. There is no life except through death and no resurrection saved through Calvary.

David Cairus, the Scott, tells of the difficulties that as a younger man, he faced in coming to Christian belief. One day, he found a little book which, in spite of all the good teaching that he had had, had really never come home to him. The fact was that "just as I was, and whether I loved him or believed him or not, God cared for me. It seemed extraordinary that I should have needed enlightenment on that final truth of religion."

In Christ, especially in the Cross, we Christians believe we see the grace of the love of God shared abroad over the world, taking our sins up into itself and disposing of it, like the tide which comes up over the picnic-strewn beach and washing it clean.

Truly, Christ can and will cleanse us if we are willing to accept him and confess our sins to him asking for forgiveness. What a wonderful feeling, and satisfaction to know that truly our sins can be forgiven.

You know many of us rebel when a minister's prayer includes "miserable offenders" or "miserable sinners." Thus we deny ourselves the benefits of confessing our sins.

To confess our sins means that we accept Jesus as the standard of life.

To confess our sins means that we accept our failures. We are all going to have plenty of failures through life.

To confess our sins means that we accept our fellow man as a brother. Something more of us should learn to do today.

We believe that in Christ, and especially in the Cross, God has disclosed his everlasting love for us, and that he did not forsake us in our rebellion, but he continued to love us while we were rebels and by that love, he wins us back to himself, for the power of his love is greater than the power of our stubborn insurrection.

The quality of God's gift in us is unexpected, unearned, undeserved, and unequal. We shall never have another gift to equal this gift God has given us.

We believe that where sin abounds, grace does much more abound, that there is forgiveness for our sins. Not an easy forgiveness of an indulgent father, who snaps his finger at evil, but the forgiveness of One who knows what sin really is.

Hubert Simpson tells of a picture painted for the Royal Corp of Signalers. It shows a signaler unarmed sent out into no man's land to repair a cable snapped by shell fire, sent out to restore the broken contact. The picture shows him dead in the fulfillment of his task, but in either hand, he holds a fragment of cable even in death, holding them together, the living current passing through the dead frame. That is a vivid illustration of what Jesus did for man by his death. Sin had severed the living contact between man and God. The fellowship was broken, the contact interrupted. Alone in no man's land, and with no weapon, save his love, Christ brought the two ends together. Beneath the cross one can write the one word. "through", through death to life, through from sin to the possibility of moral victory, through to the throne of grace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

It cost God something to forgive us; It cost him the Cross. So we really are sinners in the sight of God, whether we want to admit it or not. But if we really want to confess our sins, God will forgive us and cleanse us from unrighteousness.

The Gospel of the Cross

Scripture: Romans 3:9-26

The text is chosen from Romans 3:23; “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Evil has such a strong hold on human life, that not one of us can save himself. Only God in Christ can save us. However, God is holy and would not be worthy to be God if he condoned sin. But God will not abandon us, because he loves us. We may put a dilemma this way: God cannot accept man because of man’s sin. God will not abandon man, because of God’s love. The daring answer the Christian faith gives us is that God himself bears the punishment for us. This is the Atonement. Romans 5:8 reads; “But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

To understand this doctrine, we must remember that the one dying on Golgotha was both God and man. Only one who was truly man could take our place on the Cross and die for us. Only one who is truly God could make atonement for our sins. Exactly how Christ dying on the Cross saves us from our sins is one of the great problems of theology.

By this reconciling work of the Redeemer, men now can reach up to God and God can reach down to men.

Through the mediatorship of the Master, God has fellowship with men and men are enabled to commune with God.

Thus, Golgotha becomes the test of life; for everyone passes by to boast or to bow. Acceptance or rejection of the Lord is the test each soul faces. The Christ of humility becomes the Christ of blessing. To those who humble themselves under the mighty hand of God comes the blessing of eternal salvation.

The event that happened on the Cross at Calvary was a unique event in history. The Cross has changed the course of history and may change the course of your life today. In every age, the Cross looms up again against the Calvary sky, inevitable, incapable, demanding decision.

Authentic Christianity has always known that the Cross speaks the unique word of Christ, the climax of his teaching. The Cross is inseparable from his life. It is the past to which the whole Bible record leads, and from which the Christian Church starts out.

The Cross depicts the inevitability of God’s love. He came to die. Why? First, because there was no other way in which he could reach the depth of the human agony he came to endure, so as to “bear our griefs and carry our sorrows.” Secondly, because there was no other way, he could draw upon himself the hopeless weight of our sins and absorb the evil that blocks us from the holiness of God.

Here are some of the picture words the New Testament and the church have used to illustrate what theologians call “theories of the atonement.”

One picture comes from the word “ransom”. Mark 10:45 reads; “For the Son of Man also came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins. The figure comes from the old slave market, where a man would buy a slave and then set him free. That is what Christ has done for us. One word, “redemption” means, literally, “to buy back through the payment of a price.” To say that Christ is our redeemer is to picture the commercial transaction of buying a slave and setting him free. I Corinthians 6:19-20 read; “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” Christ paid the ransom for us, redeemed us, and set us free from the slavery of sin.

Jesus Christ stands before you pleading for your decision. You and I stand in Pilate’s place facing the inevitable Christ, this inevitable alternative, and this inevitable decision. Yet there is one vast difference between our case and that of Pilate. We see Jesus, as Pilate’s eyes never beheld him. He saw the simple Jewish enthusiast, the man of strength and bewildering speech, of such elevation of spirit that neither of the soldiers scourging, nor the working of the crown of thorns could rob him of his calm. But we see Christ, who was crucified and rose again from the dead. The alternative before us is clear and easier than it was for Pilate. What will you do with Jesus? One of the two things you are doing. You are giving him either a Cross or a throne.

A second picture comes out of the ancient law court.

Romans 4:25 reads; “Who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

We are guilty before the courts of God, and we deserve the sentence of death, by the law of God. But Christ, though innocent, pays with his death, the price of our sins, so we can go free. So men think of the atonement as a legal transaction, with Christ’s life as the price demanded for our sins before the bar of eternal justice.

Heine has described how once he stood before the great statue of the Venus of Milo and gazed on that matchless perfection of grace and dignity and beauty. “But Oh”, he cried, “What was it worth?” For she had no arms, the goddess, no hands to reach out and help poor beaten souls like me!” But God’s love in Christ has arms strong enough to lift the universe and hands - pierced hands - gentler than a mother’s when she tends her child.

A third picture of the atonement comes out of the ancient temple. The heart of worship was sacrifice. A lamb, pure white and without blemish, was sacrificed for the sins of the people. The worshipers identified

themselves with a lamb; it became their substitute. When Jesus appeared by the banks of the Jordan, John the Baptist pointed to him, and cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.”

There are some other verses in the Bible, which describe Jesus Christ as the sacrificial lamb. I Corinthians 5:7 reads; “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be fresh dough, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed.”

I Peter 1: 18-19 reads; “You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

Hebrews 9:12 reads; “He entered once for all the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves, but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.”

Just as in the ancient sacrifice, the lamb was substituted for the worshiper, so Christ took our place. Truly Christ was God’s supreme sacrifice for our sakes, one that can never be equaled. Our sacrifice has been made for us whether we know it or not. All we have to do to receive its benefits, is to accept Jesus Christ into our lives as our personal, Lord and Savior and repent of our sins. If we truly do this, our sins will be forgiven, and we can start living a new life from that point on.

Men, pondering the meaning of the atonement, have expressed it in other ways. It is at the Cross that we understand the magnitude of the love of God. Others emphasize what the Cross does to the hearts of men. There is a power in it, which shames our selfishness, rebukes our false pride, and leads us to humility and devotion.

George Young tells of his Chinese teacher, Mr. Lee, at first disdainful of this strange foreign tale of a peasant born within a stable. His interest quickened at the Master’s teaching, but still Confucius was superior. The parable of the prodigal moved him to confess, “I did not know God was like that.” But the story of the passion reduced him to silence, and the language lesson ended with a whispered, “Why did he die like that?” Young’s answer in imperfect Chinese: “He died for me, and you.” Wrapping his books in his blue cloth, Mr. Lee went out, deeply troubled. He returned the next day, a different man and said, “Mr. Young, I have become a disciple of your Jesus.”

Truly, we too, anyone of us, will become his disciple once we understand and really, and truly know the whole meaning of God’s love for us. When it happens to your life, you two will be forever grateful.

God’s truth is greater than any picture that we can paint of it, and there is a sense in which we are not completely satisfied with any human attempt to “explain” the atonement. What does this doctrine of theology mean for our practical daily living? How can we live this doctrine of our faith?

First of all, we can never look on evil as a matter of little concern. At the Cross, we see how seriously God regards sin. We cannot become complacent. We cannot close our eyes to it and hope it will go away. We have to speak out against evil. We have to do something about it.

Secondly, we can never lose sight of the glory of our new life in Christ. It is the most costly thing ever bought in all the history of the world. The glory of our redemption gives a radiance to life and challenges us to live it at its best every day.

Thirdly, we can never neglect the opportunity to share this incomparable good news with others. If God has done this for us, it is inconceivable that we would not tell others of the transforming power and joy which can be theirs as well. We just have to go out into our community and tell our friends about the wonderful power of God's Holy Spirit and what a difference it can make in your life.

Truly, we cannot save ourselves, only God can save us, and he does this through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the Cross. Accept Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, and become a disciple of Christ now.

The Necessity of the Cross

Scripture: Isaiah 53:4-12

The text is chosen from Isaiah 53:10; “Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief.”

Would it surprise you to learn that the Bible says that the Cross was God’s work? When Abraham was in the act of plunging a knife into his son’s heart, God provided another sacrifice, but God did not stop the sacrifice of his own son. Isaiah 53:4 reads; “Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God.” God wounded Christ for our transgressions; he bruised Christ for our iniquities.

In Charles Raun Kennedy’s drama, “The Terrible Meek”, Mary asked the Centurion, “What makes them do it?” To which the Centurion replies, “They want money: they want power. They want kingdom. They want to possess the earth” Mary says, “and they have won. They have it.” “Have they?” Asked the Centurion, adding, “not while your Son hangs there.” Truly God has won the victory as a result of Christ’s death. We have gained forgiveness of our sins as a result of Christ’s death.

The cross of Christ must be either the darkest spot of all the mystery of existence, or a searchlight by the aid of which we may penetrate the surrounding gloom.

Why did the Cross have to be?

First of all, because God permitted it. Surely if God did not want the Cross to happen, he would’ve stopped it. Got allowed it because he knew it was necessary for Christ to die on the Cross. Out of the defeat on the Cross, he brought victory; out of death came life; out of despair came hope. God defeated Satan by permitting Satan to defeat Christ. If Jesus had died a normal, natural death, there would have been no salvation.

Had Satan written the inscription (on the Cross), it would have read, “Jesus of Nazareth; whom I have overcome.” But if God had written the inscription, it would have read, “Here lies the sinful human race.”

Secondly, the Cross had to be, because God promised it. The Cross was foretold by the prophets. The Cross was no accident; it was not solely the work of evil men; it was God’s plan from the foundation of the world. This was the way Jesus explained his death as we read from Luke 22:37; “I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me and be resolved with transgressions; for what is written about me has its fulfillment.”

God told his people through leaders and prophets said he would come someday and save them from suffering in death. Gradually the people learned that this deliverance would be made possible through a God-sent Messiah. This promise was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

This was the world which executed the Life, subsequent generation until this hour reveres the best earth has seen. And plainly it is the world in which we still live. All those forces are present and active in our society: religious tolerance, commercial privilege, political expediency, pleasure-loving irresponsibility, unfaithfulness, the mad mind, militarism, public apathy.

We too, probably would kill the Christ today. In fact, we kill Jesus every time we are indifferent to the Christian faith, every time we commit a sin, every time we are relaxed about our church attendance, every time we do not want to take an active part in our church, every time our giving takes a backseat in our life. The attitude of the world isn't much different than it was in Jesus's day. We want all kinds of power, material power, not spiritual.

Since God fulfilled this most important promise, we can be certain that he will fulfill promises made to us first concerning our suffering, second our pardon, and third our eternal life.

Thirdly, the Cross had to be because God predestined it. It was a divine necessity. This was learned by Jesus in Gethsemane, "Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." This was the same as saying; "Father, I do not want to die. I want to avoid suffering. Is it really your will that I die this way?" The answer from God came clear and certain. It was God's will for Jesus to go to Calvary. Then Jesus said, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt." Jesus accepted his fate with courage and good cheer. When arrested, he offered information about himself. He surrendered without resistance. Pilate was amazed that he did not try to justify himself.

The greatest modern printing of our Lord's crucifixion is Salvador Dali's "Christ of St. John of the Cross." It represents the crucifix suspended against a dense black sky above a blue Italian lake and tilted forward so that you look upon the Savior from above. Our Lord's head is bowed, his face being hidden, and his body strains forward and downward from the great timbers of the Cross. A postcard reproduction evoked from two teenagers, one outstanding impression-the massive shoulders and muscled arms of the Carpenter of Nazareth. Once noted, they seem to hold the center of the painting. Is this Dali's meaning, that the whole weight of sin and sorrow of the race meets on those mighty shoulders and bows that noble head-that Jesus died, bearing the burdens of the world?

John 13: 32 reads, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

The Cross is a condemnation. It is a way of salvation and deliverance, but first of all it is a condemnation. Why did Christ die? Not for his own sins, but for the sin of man, in the place of man, as a substitute for man. If that is so, then that death of Christ on the Cross represents the penalty upon sin and shows what is the mind of God towards sin.

The Cross is a reconciliation. The judge who on the Cross condemns us becomes the Savior whose arms

are stretched out to save us. The sentence of death is changed into the promise of eternal life. If it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, it is also a faithful saying that he saves them by reconciling them to God on the Cross.

Why was the Cross God's will?

First of all, only in and through the Cross could God reveal himself as pure love, agape love. It was a kind of love that led to suffering and sacrifice. Jesus died in love but also in sorrow, for the tragedy of the Cross is that his love was not returned. His own received him not. He was despised and rejected of men. Jesus died with a broken heart.

And if Christ was to do the same thing today, he would also die with a broken heart for indeed, are we are still rejecting him. We do not want him to interfere in our lives. We do not want to make many sacrifices. We want our lives to be the very way we want them.

Second, God willed the Cross that he might redeem mankind. "There was none other good enough to pay the price of sin." Man could be saved only by suffering and sacrifice. Hebrews 9: 22 reads; "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." God took upon himself all of the sins, the hatred, the cruelty, and the meanness of men. When Christ died, all of these things went down to death with him. As a result we should have a sense of having been died for. Take a long look at the Cross and know that God loved you that much. This truly is the marvel of the Cross.

I Corinthians 1: 23 says, "But we preach Christ crucified." Why preach Christ crucified?

First of all because we need to be reminded that small sins grow into large ones and that the way of the true Christian is not easy or smooth.

Second, because we need to be warned constantly of what can happen to honest, just, prophetic men and women in a militaristic state such as Palestine was under Rome.

Third, because we need to be reminded of what can happen in a nation which permits church and state to use each other for narrow, selfish and cruel ends.

Fourth, because any fair minded observer knows that periodically we need the damning indictment of human wickedness.

Fifth, because the Cross can help us face the whole truth about humankind.

Sixth, because that alone is an adequate testament of God's faith in us after such a story of human cruelty as our 20th century has written.

There is something glorious and unselfish about a brook. Unlike a lake, which gathers to itself and for itself streams and runoff waters from adjacent hills, a brook lives to serve, not to be served, to give, not to receive. It gathers groundwater and springs to itself but not for itself, only to suffer them again to the larger streams and the lakes and the seas. Wherever it goes, among the joyfully uplifted hills or the sad and somber swamps, the brook exists to open itself and to be spent, giving its water freely, asking nothing in return. The brook is going somewhere. It is water on a mission. About to present itself to other waters at its destination, it never neglects little wayside opportunities. On its way to make its final offering, it daily gives itself all along the way. Deer drink of its refreshing coolness with a deep content. Boys of seven years and of 70seventy probe its pools and eddies with their lures and return home at the day's end with the brook's gift of speckled trout. Fish, crustaceans, mollusks, and water insects are given a home in its swirling currents and tranquil pools. Flora, from its birth with bubbling springs to its arrival at its final goal; the brook is selfless and a happy appearing thing.

John 15: 11 reads; "These things have I spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full." Service and happiness belong together. We feel lowest when we are most self-centered, when we are most self-pitying. We are happiest when we are so busy doing for others that we forget ourselves. A person's circumstances may be ever so favorable, but he will be unhappy if he is self-centered. He his troubles may be many, but he may still achieve happiness if he lives by the service motive. In the shadow of the Cross, on the eve of his crucifixion, the Master said to his disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full." His joy? What reason did he have to be joyful with suffering confronting him on the morrow? Christ joyousness came from giving himself for others.

Like the brook, we are here not to get, but to give. Christ gave. He gave his life for our sakes. The least we can do is become his disciple, become a true Christian. Truly the Cross was God's work. He had Christ suffer and die so our sins could be forgiven. It was the only way. That is what the Cross is all about.

Lead On O King Eternal

Luke 19:29-46

Palm Sunday

The text is chosen from John 18:37; “Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world.”

When we hear the lesson read on Palm Sunday and hear how our Lord entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey, I expect you often think to yourself “Well, what a funny animal to choose! Why a donkey; I wonder? You would have expected a horse, wouldn’t you? A horse is the sort of animal you expect a king to ride. Or if not a horse, then at least a camel-after all, you can manage to look quite dignified on a camel. But who can look dignified on a donkey? Even the greatest king that ever lived wouldn’t quite look the part sitting on an animal like that. It makes you think of someone on vacation at the seaside, having a little jaunt along the sands. or of some poor peasant who couldn’t afford anything better.

But it wasn’t an accident that our Lord rode in on a donkey. He chose to do so. He picked a donkey on purpose. For at least two reasons I can think of. In the first place, because it was a custom in those days, that when a king went to war, he rode on a horse, but if he came in peace, then he rode on a donkey. It was to show man what sort of a king he really was: The Prince of Peace.

And in the second place, he wanted to act out that prophecy we find in the Book of Zachariah, 9:9, from which all the Gospel writers quote: the passage where it says that the Messiah will come to us to come to his people “meek and sitting upon an ass.” It was his way of telling them who he was; a last appeal to the whole city.

And perhaps, woven in with these two thoughts was a third: the rabbis had a saying, “When Israel is unworthy, Messiah will come riding upon an ass.” So it may be that, by entering Jerusalem in this way, our Lord was very gently reproving the people of his day, and telling them-in the most delicate manner possible how very disappointed he was with them.

Christ the King, coming to enlist new followers-to proclaim his rule, and to invite all who would to become his subjects. That’s what we see happening, as our Lord enters Jerusalem. And who was the very first recruit, that day? It was a donkey. Not much of a follower, that, you may say with a laugh. Ugly, with great big ears and rather moth-eaten fur, stupid and a slow runner- the exact opposite of a horse, which is a beautiful animal, well proportional, with a sleek, shiny coat and fleet powerful legs. But what are we told about this donkey? “The Lord hath need of him.” He wasn’t much to look at, he hadn’t many gifts- but he was willing for Christ to use him! Perhaps we ought to be so willing.

Compared with the other historic entrances, that Palm Sunday procession gave the least promise of lasting results to many an onlooker the whole proceeding seemed even ludicrous- a Nazarene carpenter riding on a lowly ass, surrounded by a company of poor countrymen waving palm branches. Yet the professed followers of that crucified King now number hundreds of millions, and the company grows with each passing year. Nineteen centuries have led our hymnwriters to sing of this Jesus, "Lead on, O King Eternal."

Jesus planned his entry into Jerusalem, not to arouse the populace to a frenzied demonstration, but as his last solemn appeal to be received as Savior and Lord.

The tears of Jesus, not hosannas of the throne, should claim our prayerful thought, for Jesus wept over a people who saw in him only a popular prophet, not a heaven-sent Redeemer.

The people stood to cheer him, but they did not kneel to surrender their hearts to him in repentance and in faith. And that's exactly our reaction to Jesus Christ today. We will not kneel to surrender our hearts to him in repentance and faith. Many of us feel we do not need him and thus we reject the Christian beliefs.

Why did Jesus pick Jerusalem? Because Jerusalem was not only the religious but also the political center of his nation's hopes. Jerusalem was the key to the situation, the crucial point. What happened in Nazareth or Capernaum was important, but what happened in Jerusalem was decisive. I share the view of those who believe that the Master was not content to keep his message just to individuals but was impelled to bear witness to the nation. He was not content that God's domain be limited to the periphery. God's claimed, too, the citadel, the center. Jesus therefore, wanted to bring the truth of his message into the open, into first hand contact with the powers. He did not regard the Gospel as a hothouse plant living a sheltered life. The Gospel rather was to be leaven influencing the whole lump of life. We do not, of course, mean to say that Palm Sunday was the only occasion on which Jesus made clear the social implications of his message. This idea is implicit in his ministry. The salvation he preached meant changed relationships. Not only to oneself and to God, but to one's fellow men. On Palm Sunday, however what was always implicit was expressed in concrete and climatic fashion.

Seldom in the world's history has there been such a display of magnificently deliberate coverage as the Trinity's triumphal entry. Jesus was an outlaw, and the authorities were determined to kill him. Prudence would have warned him to turn back, or if he was to enter Jerusalem at all, to enter secretly and to go into hiding. But he came in such a way that he focused every eye upon himself. It was not it was an act of the most superlative courage, for it was the defiance of all that man could do, and an act of the most superlative love, for it was love's last appeal before the end.

A decade or more after Palm Sunday, the early Christians were charged with disobeying Caesar because they said that there is another King, one Jesus. This Galilean King with his crown of thorns was to outlast the Caesars. And how and why do we keep hailing Christ as King?

First of all, one answer is to be found in the nature of Christ himself. Jesus said to Pilate, “My kingship is not of this world; If my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight.” Pilate was puzzled. Jesus answered, “I have come- to bear witness to the truth.” many of us are confused by our Lord’s answer. Christ stood calmly before his accusers and before Pilate because he knew that time and truth would vindicate his principles. And time does vindicate the truth of Christ’s claim. At first hearing many dismiss Christ as a dreamy theorist, but after experimenting with Christless living they wake up to the righteousness of Jesus. When we are false to Christ, we play false to ourselves.

Many of us become discouraged because we try very hard to live our lives the way Christ would have us live them. But we look at other people who seem to be happy, having a good time, doing things as they please, not going to church only when they feel like it, never contributing to God’s work, perhaps even living their lives with low moral standards. To us they seem much better off than we and we cannot understand it. We wonder what’s the use. I would practically guarantee that these people are not happy and they are putting on a front to appear as if they are happy. I believe that they are searching and have not as of yet found God. I firmly believe that in the end truth and right and Christ-like living is the only answer for living our lives. I’m sure there are fewer people (who live Christ like lives) who take tranquilizers, who visit psychiatrists, who commit suicide, who end up in jail or some other institution.

Christ rested his right to rule on the ultimate foundation of truth. Men may argue about him, run away from him, and fight against him, but their consciences come back to him, for there he stands, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Down over the hills of the centuries marches a slender line of pure and sincere Christians. That line has always been there, but always the Cross has gone on before and the influence has been beyond measure.

Consider a second reason for calling Christ, “O King Eternal”: the motive is of his rule. Christ sought rule over men in order that he might serve them. He reminded his followers that among the Gentiles the rulers lord it over their followers, but he said, “Whoever would be first among you must be slave to all.”

The contemporaries of Christ could not comprehend this service motive on the part of a king. If Jesus had led his disciples to the temple and taken over the revenues, the crowd would have understood him. If he had accepted a crown and called his followers to fight for political power and pay, Pilate would have understood that. But Jesus was a king who sought no prerequisites of office, no power of domination; he sought to rule purely for the sake of serving his people. And the people could not understand that. After nineteen centuries Christ’s motive of ruling to serve is hard for many to understand. When will we learn that Christ’s motives is the only one which last?

During that last week of the Masters life in Jerusalem two symbols stand out- palm branches and the Cross. The palm branches represent the acclaim of shouting crowds, greeting a Messiah coming to his own; the Cross represents tragedy. Why did not Christianity take this palm branch as its symbol, a joyful

token to be happy over, with its recollections of hosannas to the conquering Christ? That we know well that the Christian Church would never have survived the centuries with only a palm branch over its high altar. The cross goes deeper- much deeper- deeper than anything else into the heart of man's experience- need and deliverance; a rescue story; sin and saviorhood there on Calvary, locked in desperate encounter, with the fate of the world depending on which of those two in the end shall win.

Christ is the King Eternal because his rule of men's lives serves to make them masters of themselves. He took the turbulent and unstable fisherman, Simon, and made him Peter the Rock, master of his passions. He met a Samaritan woman whose tawdry living had sunk her in hopelessness and lifted her sullen spirit up to the sunlight of hope. They brought to Jesus a poor broken woman taken in the sin that called for death by stoning, and he restored her purity.

Jesus Christ, with truth as his foundation and service as his motive, has proven himself the ruler who redeems.

Is Jesus Christ the ruler in your life? Have you truly accepted him as your personal Lord and Savior? If you haven't, now is the time to accept Christ. Now is the time to repent of your sins and ask for forgiveness. This is what the Easter story is all about. Truly as Christians, we can say to Jesus Christ "Lead On, O King Eternal."

Understanding Jesus

Luke 22: 7-27

Maundy Thursday

The text is chosen from Romans 6:8; “But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.”

How can we estimate the life of another man? How can we discover the basic character of another man? How can we read his soul?

The first answer to these questions is you cannot. You cannot do it accurately and completely. Each man’s soul is a mystery. There is something each of us beyond the scrutiny of our closes associate and dearest friend. The depths of each man’s soul are open to God.

We can approximate a clear judgment of another. We can know another only in part.

However, in our attempts to understand another man it seems valid to ask questions real as these.

What is this uniqueness? That is, what is there in him that gives him his own personality?

How does he respond to life? That is, how does he react to flowers, little children, mountains, sweets, music, etc.? In other words what is he living for? What goal does he have in view? What end? What Purpose?

What does he consider to be his destiny? Does he reach for heaven or only grasp for earth?

What are his personal attachments? Whom does he love?

Ask these questions of another’s life and you will approximate a true estimate of his soul.

Ask these questions of another’s life:

First, what is his uniqueness? Countless books have been written to answer that question but put aside books. I want to understand Jesus for myself. What is his uniqueness to me? I can answer that question for myself. Each man must answer for his own self.

I discover the uniqueness of Jesus by my experience of his forgiveness of my sin. That is my Savior. Of course there is much more. His uniqueness for you may be different from what it is for me. But I understand Jesus best for his day-to-day forgiveness of my unworthy life.

Second, then, too, I understand Jesus when I look at his responses to the world and life and things.

We get only glimpses, but they are good glimpses. A flower – “Consider the lilies of the field,” he said.

A child – “Suffer the little children to come unto me”, he said.

A leper – “He stretched forth his hand and touched the leper. No other person at that time would have done that.

Ordinary men who walked the road of life – he washed the soil and tire from their feet.

Soldiers who followed commands and impaled him upon a cross- “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.”

What was his response? Ask that question and read the Gospels for the answer; the New Testament will become a new book to you.

Third, what were his intentions?

He gives them clarity – To preach good tidings to the poor; to proclaim release to the captives; to recover sight to the blind – “The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which is lost.” Such words reveal the intentions of the soul of Jesus Christ.

Fourth – If you wish to understand Jesus then you must watch him grasp his destiny. You must follow him to the secret place of prayer. You must hear him say, “My Father worketh and I work.” You must go to Gethsemane with him, to the Cross, and greet him on Resurrection morning. Your experience will be like that of an out trying to understand a man, but you will move in the direction of understanding.

Fifth, how to understand Jesus? Study his personal attachments – to his mother, to Peter, James, John, Andrew, Mary Magdalene, to every man that crossed his path, to God, to you.

Note how he loved – how deeply, how steadfastly, how purely, how sacrificially how eternally – he never invaded a man’s life, yet he never let go.

Now we come to Communion. He said, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

Truly let us so come to our Lord’s table. Let us remember his uniqueness, his responses, his intentions, his grasp of eternity, his personal attachment.

Especially his personal attachments to you, and your personal attachments to him.

Truly when we have Jesus Christ with us, we are really living. We can answer all these questions in the

affirmative and those around us can find the right answers to these questions.

What did it cost God to provide this table we care about to come to? This table is spread with the simplicities and sublimities of God, but we are reminded that this is all possible because God pauperized heaven.

This table means redemption. We do not sit here because we are worthy. Rather it is because of canceled unworthiness. We do not gather here to ask God to forgive us. We come because our sins are forgiven. Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins on the Cross of Calvary.

This table means relationships, a relationship based upon redemption. Our right to a place here is the right of children and of family guests. This intimacy ties God and his people into a blessed union.

This table also means responsibility. The receiving of God's gift calls for a response in giving. No one has any right to sit at this table who does not intend to be a channel through which redemptive life flows out into contemporary society and the community.

Let us come to Holy Communion in charity with each other and with all; determined henceforth to feel for each other, and with each other; to put ourselves in our neighbor's places; to see with their eyes, and feel with their hearts, far as God shall give us that great grace; determined to make allowances for their mistakes and failings; to give and forgive, each as God gives and forgives, forever; that so we may indeed children of our Father in heaven, whose name is love.

I am sure once we understand Jesus Christ, we will believe we will know that he lives with us and this Communion we be meaningful to us.

What Shall We Do with Death

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Easter Service

The text is chosen from John 14:19; “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

What shall we do with death? This is the positive, Christian way to ask this question. Our apprehension about death usually arises because we do not ask the question properly. We are usually wondering what death is going to do to us. Today we celebrate what we ought to celebrate every day, what our Lord and you and I can do with death. That is what the Easter celebration is all about.

It is good in the midst of life to think about death-good for our mental balance, good for our immortal souls. The Bible talks of death in nearly every page and also talks of life. Indeed, the idea of death, seen in perspective, intensifies our desire to live and sweeten our enjoyment of life. What, though, shall we do with death?

It is realistic to consider that death is not a question of if but when. Early in Genesis 2:17 the fact is stated, “Thou shalt surely die.” I’m sure we are all resolved to this fact. If we aren’t, we had better be.

The next step is to recognize that the more important question is not when but how. The question is not how will death come to me, but how will I come to death? Most of us want to end as a man, die as a Christian, enter the great adventure unafraid. We can, but to do so we must live with death as naturally as we live with sleep, that “little death.”

The first and most natural reaction to death is fear. Some are afraid to die. I’m sure I would be afraid to die if I believed there was nothing beyond death. But that’s what Easter means. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, rose from the dead, assuring us of eternal and everlasting life with our Father in heaven. As Christians, we have something to look forward to. Our lives do have meaning. Death is not the end, but merely the beginning of a more full life in Christ.

Thirdly, the answer to the question begins to take form when we ask not how but whether. In Job 14:14; Job asks, “If a man die, shall he live again?” “The grand perhaps,” is as far as some have followed it.

This longing after immortality has, even without the assurance of the scriptures, given mankind a wholesome respect for the question if not, or when, or how, but whether.

Indeed, Easter has showed us that once we die, we do live again in Christ. There is no if, and, or buts, we do.

Fourth, the question leads us into the garden, where the empty tomb is. In the presence of the risen Christ, we have this answer, not if, or when, or weather, but never.

We Christians are often disposed to treat the Resurrection as though it were an epilogue to the Gospel. Those of us who simply make an Easter duty of the day do more than that: we make it a shining unit of one day over the other 364, we multiply our lives by a high 1/365 as far as the basic Christian truth is concerned. Without the Resurrection, our preaching is as empty as Paul said he would be without it. And indeed so is life.

The Bible says much about death and dying, but it says more about life and living. Jesus Christ is presented as the victor over death. II Timothy 2:8 says; “Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.” In Acts 2:24; Peter said at Pentecost: “When God has raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.” Paul told Timothy of “Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death.”

Easter stands for victory of life over death.

Nothing absolutely nothing, escapes to death. Death, we are tempted to say, has the last word.

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

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

Everything that we know about life seems to indicate that God intends it to have the last word. Easter, then, is first and foremost, a celebration of the victory of life over death. We know this to be true because of Jesus’s resurrection from the dead. The Resurrection has marked the end of our fear over death because Jesus has gone beyond the horizon and come back. We can thank God for this victory over death.

We most definitely do not avoid death, nor do we deny it. We are victorious over death, as was our Lord,

for though he, too, died. Philippians 2:8 says, “Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”, he triumphed. And Jesus said, “Because I live, ye shall live also.” This is the Easter promise. This must be what Jesus meant when he called himself “the resurrection and the life.”

The assurance in Revelation, 21:4, is that beyond the black curtain, beyond the disputed barricade, “There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying.” Again, in Revelation 20:14 reads: “and death and hell were cast into the lake of fire”; gone, doubtless, forgotten, they are in the beyond.

But still, after all these words, we still have death to deal with, and we deal with death positively, asking not if but when, not only when, but how, not only how but whether, proclaiming not only whether, but never.

Easter is a time for rejoicing, a time for all Christians to praise God. Just think of the tremendous power God has gained as a result of what happened on that first Easter morning. Jesus Christ, our Lord, was raised from this death in the tomb. God had, indeed, conquered death. Just think what this means for us. We, too, as followers and believers in Christ have everlasting and eternal life. Our lives now have meaning and purpose. We have something to look forward to. We need not fear death now as the end. For death is just the beginning of a more full life with our Father in heaven. Indeed Christ has risen and we can eternally thank God for this promise of eternal life.

If we can feel and try to understand the true meaning of Easter, we will have no fear of death. If we have been saved and are true disciples, we can be assured God will take care of us in the life hereafter. Easter proclaims that God has conquered death as indeed we too have by believing. Bring Christ into your life and start living it the way God intended for you to live it.

Let us really start believing what Easter means and stands for; life everlasting, knowing a life that conquers death. Indeed to believe in Easter is to live in a new kind of climate. All things are passed away, behold all things become new.

The Mightiest Miracle

Luke 24:1-26

Easter Service

The text is chosen from Matthew 28: 5-6; “but the angel said to the woman, “do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has risen as he said.”

Since Easter is associated in our minds traditionally with Dan, we are quite rightfully drawn to think also of the dawn of the universe, of nature’s beginnings, and of God’s action with man.

There are three great miracles revealed in John 1:1-14, and certainly a serious study of miracles is not out of keeping as we contemplate Easter, the mightiest day in history and the highest point in a Christian’s life.

The first miracle is the “Majestic” miracle.” “In the beginning was the Word.” No force other than God could ever have produced the meticulously accurate system and synchronization that our universe has. Centrifugal force, gravity and speed can be calibrated so accurately that given the required trajectory, a man-made object traveling thousands of miles an hour will orbit the Earth. We all know that as evidence by our space travels today.

God created not only the structure, motion, and dynamics of a universe, tremendous as they are, but he created life, from the microcosmic cell to the largest mammals. The climax, certainly, of the majestic miracle of creation was man, created in God’s own image.

We have only to consider the conceiving and birth of a child to realize truly it is one of God’s greatest miracles.

Second, we have the “Magnificent” miracle. “The Word became flesh”. Paul says in Romans 1, that much which needs to be known about God can be learned through observing him in nature; and certainly that is true: all we have to do is look around us in this beautiful valley in which we live. The hills with its trees, the valley with its rich soil, the flowers, the birds, everything around us has indeed been created by our Father. But to communicate the personality, the will, and the love of God could be done only through a person, miraculously, divine and human.

The Bible says that God announced to common people, Mary and Joseph, that a child born to this young maiden in her virginity should be first conceived by the Holy Spirit. They believed the word and accepted the miracle. I wonder if we could’ve done the same. Wise men came and worshiped at his cradle. The shepherds came and glorified God. The political and religious enemies of God’s miraculous invasion, believed it, and they sought to know it through a bloody scourge. Godly prophets, Simeon and Anna, pronounced its reality. Got himself proclaimed it when Jesus stood with John the Baptist in the waters

of the Jordan. Jesus declared it on the Cross; four of his seven words from the cross declare his true relationship to the Father.

The magnificent miracle of the Incarnation stands as the only logical and reasonable method for the perfect revelation of God to mankind.

Thirdly, we have the mightiest miracle: “We beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father.” The resurrection of Jesus is the mightiest miracle because without it, the miracle of creation would still have produced only fallen man, lost in sin, able only to die, and the miracle of the incarnation would have produced only a magnificent, sinless life, and a noble, heroic death, that might indeed have had atoning that virtue for the forgiveness of sins, but would never have been able to bring a dead believer to life and glory. Indeed, without the miracle of Jesus’ resurrection, our lives would have little or no meaning. We would have nothing to look forward to. Death, indeed, would be the end, but because of the first Easter death, death is not the end, but merely the beginning of a more wonderful and beautiful life with our Father in Heaven.

The mightiest miracle occurred that first Easter dawn when Christ broke the bands of death. The first two great miracles began with new materials; this miracle restored and perfected what had been marred and debased. Could sinful man, so scarred by iniquity, be restored not only to life, but to perfection and glorification? In Jesus’s resurrection, the answer was a resounding, yes. The first creation, Adam, was good; the last creation, Christ was perfect. The stone was rolled away, not to let Jesus out, but to let me look in to see and believe.

The great Easter truth is not that we live newly after death—that is not the great thing, but that we are to be new here and now by the power of the Resurrection; not so much that we are to live forever, as that we are to, and may, live nobly now because we are to live forever.

What was actually accomplished by the mightiest miracle? First, Jesus Christ was “declared to be the son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” Romans 1:4 says, “and designated Son of God, in power, according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ, our Lord.” He proved by the resurrection that the word did become flesh and dwelt among us, for “truly this was the Son of God.”

Second, the Resurrection, validated Christ claims and promises of redemption. Romans 4:25 reads, “Who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”

Third, Christ’s resurrection broke the thralldom of death and Satan that held men captive. John Henry Jewett once called on a cobbler, whose home was in a little seaside town of England. The cobbler worked alone in an exceedingly tiny room. Jewett inquired if sometimes he did not feel oppressed by the imprisonment of his little chamber. “Oh no”, he replied, “if any feeling of that sort begins, I just open this door.” And he

opened a door that gave him a glorious view of the sea. Easter morning flings life's windows open towards God's omnipotent, purpose, and power. God confronts man with an empty tomb.

Fourth, the mightiest miracle opened the vista and reality of immortality. It proved that life was eternal, that this life which God has begun in the natural processes has as its ultimate hope an eternal being, perfect and glorified. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 reads, "So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sewn is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sewn in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sewn in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sewn, a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body."

Easter morning is not a mere declaration that we are immortal, but a declaration that we are immortal children of God

The Easter message tells us that our enemies-sin, the curse, and death-are beaten. Ultimately, they can no longer start mischief. They still behave as though the game were not decided, the battle not fought; we must still reckon with them, but fundamentally, we must cease to fear them anymore.

Though Jesus Christ is recognized as the most remarkable character of all time, yet, strange to say, he was not of the great. He was born among the lowly and the poor. He was a carpenter by profession, and nearly all his life was spent amid the humble surrounding of an obscure and despised village. He effected no military conquest. He left behind no colossal fortune (materially that is).

He gathered about himself a little handful of obscure and, for the most part, ignorant disciples who, at the time of his supreme crisis, deserted him and scattered in confusion and despair. His enemies completely triumphed over him, at least to all outward appearances. He was crucified between two thieves. His lifeless body was committed to a tomb that was not his own. To make sure that he would no longer harass them, his powerful foes had a guard of soldiers stationed at its mouth and the seal of Rome placed upon the stone.

Measured now by all historic precedent and by any human standard, what is to become of that Man, of his name, and of his influence? Under such circumstances he would be speedily forgotten even as the thousands of others before him who had died upon a cross.

But such is the case. The name of that humble Man now shines as the sun in the central dome of history. Though he was not of the great, yet he was supremely great. Without the learning of the schools, he has become the Teacher of the world. Without the aid of fortuitous circumstances, he has become the most vital force for righteousness ever known to mankind.

The mightiest achievements of the race in art, literature, science, and governmental relationships are traceable to his influence. The most majestic temples on earth stand in his honor. The greatest power and enlightenment of the world belong to the nations which follow him. About his personality, the tides

of interest and discussion down the centuries have flowed, and around his name have revolved the most vital events of the past two thousand years. He has literally changed the face of the earth, revolutionized religion, and given a new direction to the history of mankind. Indeed this is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, to whom we came here to this place to worship.

Through the majestic miracle God brought us into being for the purpose of having fellowship with him in a good and purposeful life. Through the magnificent miracle he revealed himself as a loving, caring Father who sent his Son to reclaim us and win us back from our sinful wanderings and rescue us from judgment. Through the mightiest miracle he has made available perfect redemption, the forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.

Indeed our Lord has risen from the dead. He is alive in you and in me. We do have the assurance and promise of eternal life with God our Father in Heaven. You can have these promises too by men accepting Jesus Christ into your life as your Lord and Savior. Become a disciple of Jesus Christ now and you will fully understand the true meaning of Easter.

The Proclamation of Faith

John 6:51-58

The text is chosen from 1 Corinthians 11:26; “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

As we gather at the Lord’s table today, we proclaim many things.

First of all, we proclaim that Jesus Christ is our Lord. That it is he who leads us spiritually and upon whom we depend in our hunger – spiritual hunger that is. “As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do proclaim the Lord’s death till he comes.” By our continual use of this service we proclaim that central to our faith is the fact that Christ suffered and died for man, for you and me. This is not just a historical reminder. This is a living proclamation that what happened then (nearly 2000 years ago) is just as real today. God’s love is not in history; it is a contemporary fact.

Indeed, the sacrifice that God made of his Son is evidence of the love he feels toward us. And as Christians we believe in the power of the resurrection. This answer assures us the promise of everlasting and eternal life with God. We proclaim this part of our faith by our attendance here at our Lord’s table.

Secondly, we proclaimed to the world our unity in Christ. Our unity is proclaimed by our common need and our common prayer and the common food. There is here one loaf of which we are fed. The Christian church has often lost its impact in the world because it has not been united. But when we hear the color of Christ to come to this suffer, suffer, we find ourselves to be one in Christ. We have not a unity which is created by history or by men’s striving, and thus at the mercy of the world. This is a unity, not of our creation, but of God’s because he has called us to be part of his family.

Regardless of whether we are reformed, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, or what have you, we all have a common unity in Jesus Christ and regardless of our denomination our first love is to be a Christian. Indeed we do and we have spent untold hours arguing about the ritualistic parts of our worship services. We spend untold hours worrying about our differences in petty little things that really have little meaning to God. We do this rather than spending this time studying God’s word, rather than going out into our community in the world witnessing for our Lord.

Actually when we put away these petty differences and get down to brass tacks we can come to our Lord’s table in real unity and purpose. Something I’m sure our Lord wants us to do.

Thirdly, this communion service is a proclamation of Thanksgiving. Some churches call it the “eucharist” which means “thanksgiving”. “After they had given thanks he broke bread.” The first communion was a thanksgiving to God, indeed the same as every communion should be.

Earth does not renew itself in spring. It is lifted sunward in its orbit and the added degrees registered by the thermometer set in motion the whole process of repair. You and I come to the Lord's table not merely to do something, however admirable, but to have something done to us and in us. We can learn much from the quietness of the earth in the momentous days of spring. We have an idea that we need to be up and busy, that as Christ followers we have vast tasks to accomplish; And so we have period but the best things in our world are never made; They are grown. Poetry is grown in a human soul; Its lines may be hammered and polished; But no amount of diligent versifying will produce poetry; that springs from the poet's soul. Friendships are never manufactured; they arise from some latest seed, when congenial lives touch, and storm and sunshine help them to flourish and blossom and bear fruit. Christian lives are not achieved by effort of ours; they are grown by contact with the Sun of righteousness. The best service we render we shall never know of; the finest things we shall ever do will probably be unintended. It is our part to let God shine on us, warm us with his love, and renew us into his likeness. Let's spring happen, and he will take care of the harvest. Here at his table we remember Christ, think upon him, and let God's light and love through him fall on our minds and hearts that the miracle of spring may occur, and we be renewed. Yes, we should find refreshing and rest when we come to the Lord's table. Our lives will be renewed, if we come with the right attitude. Let us come so come this day.

Certainly this does not exhaust the reasons why men come to the Lord's table. It has not been the purpose of this message to exhaust the reasons why men came but simply to ask the question, why do you come?

The Resurrection and the Life

John 11:17-44

Test is chosen from John 11:25; “Jesus said unto them, I am the resurrection and the life.”

Eternal life in the New Testament is not primarily an extension of the life we now enjoy beyond the inevitable grave, but primarily a quality of life here and now. Such a life, however, is no accident. It cannot be achieved by wishful thinking but is a result of the life of Christ in us.

We want to know that little things are little and the big things big, before it is too late; we want to see things now as the Forever – “in the light of eternity.”

In Christ there is offered to us a companionships that cleanses and lifts us up. He humbles us without discouragement. He makes us proud of being men, without conceit. He asks and will take no pretense from us. He shares with us his own large and generous purposes.

Resurrection is the consummation of hope and the completion of redemption. The New Testament does not parlay the future life and the ethereal survival of a disembodied ghost, nor is its viewpoint crossly materialistic. It resists exact definition because it is not an analogous to any existing state and consequently cannot be expressed in ordinary terminology. Perhaps the best way to understand this truth is to examine the metaphors used to describe it.

First, the figure of the grain from John 12:24 says; “Truly, Truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it does, it bears much fruit.” Although Christ stressed, the fruitfulness of sacrifice rather than the certainty of resurrection, the latter concept is latent in the words. The Pauline usage is plainer in 1st Corinthians 15:36-37; “You foolish man/ what you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body, which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or some other grain.” The living plant that springs from the inert kernel is a renewal of life from death.

Second the difference between the two bodies as we read from 1st Corinthians 15:39; “For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.” Within the animate creation are various kinds of bodies, which are tangible and visible, and which can make contact with each other. They are not identical in material, for the texture of chicken is not like that of beef, nor is beef like that of fish. The differences are not considered miraculous; they are normal features of nature. It is not incredible that God might produce another type of body, which would be as different from man’s as flesh from fowl, and which would yet be capable of maintaining human contacts. Just as birds and animals may exist in the same general environment and be adopted to different living conditions, so it may be possible for the Resurrection body to inhabit the human plane of existence to rise above it at Will.

Thirdly, a metaphor from astronomy is found in 1st Corinthians 15:41; “There is only one glory of the

sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star to glory.” The observation was not made from the viewpoint of an astronomer, but by a man who had often watched the stars and planets wheel overhead as he traveled across the Mediterranean by boat or along the Roman roads under the brilliant unclouded skies of the Middle East. He was impressed by the varying radiance of the heavenly bodies, some of which were so bright that they seemed like small suns, while others were mere pinpoints of light. As those differ in glory, so do the material and the resurrection body.

If this eternal life which is a result of the life of Christ in us is to be maintained, it must have its roots in several vital experiences.

First of all, there must be spiritual nourishment. We sometimes wonder why we lose interest in the church and the spiritual program for mankind to which Christ called us. All the while the solution to the mystery could be discovered in a form of spiritual anemia, which afflicts such a large proportion of our church membership. If one is to attain to a robust, spiritual stature, he must acquire the ability to reserve sufficient time and give sufficient thought to those techniques and experiences which give nourishment to the human spirit.

If we want our physical bodies to receive nourishment, we eat the proper foods at the proper times. Then why when we need spiritual enrichment, don't we come to God's house for it? Why don't we turn to God in prayer? Why don't we take the time to read God's word? Why don't we take time to have Christian fellowship with one another? How else are we going to enrich ourselves, spiritual, except through and by these ways? We tend to forget God except when we are really in trouble and everything else has failed.

An old and very lovely legend tells us that after God had created the garden of Eden, he gave the flowers and the trees their names.

Walking through the garden, he has assigned one name after another and told each flower and tree to remember the name given to it. At last he came to a little blue flower, which he named “Myososis. Then God went on his way.

The next day, God again visited the garden. He wanted to know how many of the trees and flowers remembered the names he had given them. They all remembered their names, except the little blue flower.

“My name is so long,” the blue flower explained, “that I have forgotten it.”

And God smiled in a kindly way at the little blue flower. Then God said, “dear little blue flower, do not fear what you forgot as long as you forget me not.” And that is how they forgot-me-not got its name.

We cannot afford to forget Jesus Christ and God. This is the basis for our spiritual enrichment.

Secondly, the triumphant Christian life requires intellectual enrichment. Again, and again in the account of the missionary journeys of Paul, we are told that he visited the synagogues and reasoned, or persuaded, or sought to convince the people that Jesus was the Christ. There is and every indication that his ministry was pitched upon a highly intellectual plane. The growing Christian, who would possess an indestructible faith, must see to it that his mind is being constantly enriched by the inspiring literature of all the ages.

As Christians, we can never stop growing spiritually or intellectually or we will be lost. As Christians it is our obligation to keep abreast of the happenings and to know what is going on. How can we even cast our vote intelligently if we do not keep up with the times. How can we decide what is good and what is bad, if we just listen to what the opinions of others are. I am not saying we have to be educated fools. I am saying we have to keep our minds alert, and one way is to keep abreast of the happenings around us and in our world. We cannot say, “now I’ve stopped learning,” “I’m all through for the rest of my life.” If this is our attitude, soon we will find ourselves, ignorant, and unlearned.

Especially we have an obligation to search and study the scriptures to discover the whole and real truth of what and how God wants us to live our lives. We also, I have an obligation to teach others.

Thirdly, the Christian, who would maintain a vital spiritual life, must give to his faith some practical exercise. The abilities to do a thing is ours only as long as we exercise that ability. Any degree of proficiency in the act of being a disciple of Christ rest upon the disciple’s willingness to translate into every area of life, the ideals which come to him from personal fellowship with the Lord.

We cannot possibly hope to convey the message of the Gospel to others if we ourselves do not live our lives the way we know God wants us to live them. How can we tell others that the real down to earth experiences came to us when we are in quiet fellowship with God alone, when we take time to let God speak directly to us? We must have had or are having now these experiences or we cannot tell others of them.

Fourth, the Christian life must develop through the means of cooperative activity. Someone has said that it is impossible for a person to be a Christian alone on a desert isle, because being a Christian involves so much more than one’s own personally relationship to God, however, vital and meaningful that relationship may be. One cannot study the New Testament with any degree of thoroughness without discovering to what extent every follower of Christ is under an inescapable obligation to translate his Christianity into all of life’s relationships. The Gospel which Jesus came to share with men has social implications. Christians must share this “good news” with others.

Fifth, the Christian who would bring his spiritual experience to a full fruition, must also provide for some sacrificial expression. It is eternally true as we read from Matthew 16:25; “whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake, shall find it.” The rich young ruler stood on the threshold of a tremendously rewarding experience, but because he could not grasp the full impact of

the sacrificial element in the gospel, he went away sorrowful. Paul, on the other hand, came to sense the wisdom of placing all he had upon the altar of Christ: in Philippians 3:8, he says; “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord.”

It Is true that it cost us something to be a Christian. Perhaps it might be popularity. A Christian doesn't do all the things the majority in a crowd do. Some of our so-called friends might not be so friendly. Perhaps we cannot have all the luxuries in our homes because we know we must give a certain proportion of our income to God. Perhaps we don't have time to bowl, ski, hunt, fish, and many of the other things people like to do on Sundays. As Christians, we know we have to be in God's house. I really do not believe these are sacrifices. When the time comes that we really put our lives on the line for our Christian beliefs as the early Christians did, then we are making sacrifices for our religion.

One of the biographers of Samuel Rutherford has left us in an illuminating insight into the man. “His whole heart and life”, he says, “we're just one vast window through which he looked to one surpassing face beyond.” For him, Jesus Christ was the altogether lovely one.

Paul says that four things follow if Christ is not risen. 1) our preaching is in vain. 2) our faith is vain, empty. 3) forgiveness is empty talk. 4) the inevitable conclusion of life is death and the grave.

As Christians, we rejoice in the Resurrection, not only because of what it tells us concerning Christ or our own future destiny, but also because of what it implies concerning life for us in this strategic hour of the world's history. In order for the resurrection to have its full meaning in the Christian's life, it must be a continually unfolding experience, producing in those who share it the manifold fruits of God's in dwelling spirit.

We need to practice what we preach and not just for an hour on Sunday morning, but every moment of every day. Our Christian witnessing is best accomplished by the example we set in our daily lives.

The House of Seven Pillars

Proverbs Chapter 9

Text is chosen from Proverbs 9:1; “Wisdom hath built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars.

All of us are in the construction business, whether we think so or not. It may not be physically, but spiritually such as the building of a home, which is different than building a house, and the raising of a family. Good construction or building requires a good foundation and the use of good solid pillars, which can withstand the weight and pounding of wind and bad weather over the years. Our lives and the lives of our children must withstand hard knocks and so we need good, sound pillars in the building of our lives and the lives of our family.

Our first pillar is the pillar of knowledge. Your house of wisdom will collapse unless it has the support of knowledge. Because this pillar must be hewn out by the sweat of one’s brain, I deplore the intrusion of lazy shortcuts which fool a student into thinking he is learning something when he is not.

John 7:15 says, “How knoweth with this man letters, having never learned?” Jesus had never been at any rabbinic school and never graduated from any university. He wore the garments of a common man and was evidently a provincial from Galilee. Yet as they listen to him, they recognized the student, the cultivated, educated man.

The nearer men got to him the more they felt this to be true. When men were in close contact with the Lord, they found to their cost his scholarly exactitude. The proudest scholar of the rabbi’s invariably was convinced of incompetence by the strange provincial from Galilee.

Nor did our Lord create that deep impression by any elaborate parade of learning. All parade was abhorrent to his soul. Over against the pharisaical pedantry stands the perfect simplicity of Christ.

This so perfect student had always the quiet courage to be himself, and the quiet courage just to be oneself is one of the finest kinds of courage in the world.

Our Lord never was a leisure student. All that he won from scripture and from nature was won in scanty intervals of toil. Not for him the leisure of the morning, that golden season for the student; not for him the “endless afternoon”, nor the roomy and large hours of evening. And the marvelous thing is that when at length he went out to his public ministry he was perfect in intellectual equipment. The world had yielded all her treasure to him.

Having a good education does not necessarily make a smart nor do we know everything. Being able to wisely use what knowledge we do have perhaps is much more important. In other words, having common sense and using it.

The second one is the pillar of freedom. Freedom means to be untrammelled, free from restraint, from fetters. The free student is not limited by patented dogma, fainthearted consideration, inherited tradition, or acquired prejudices. He does not need to bend the knee to error, nor fawn before flattery, nor to cringe before denunciation, nor to yield to the lawless impulse of his own self.

It is wonderful to have an open mind and to be able to judge a situation on its own merit and not by any other opinion or prejudices. I believe that belief and trust in Jesus Christ can help us to become free persons. We become free from the bonds of the past experiences and look only to the present in the future and with new insight.

Third, we have the pillar of democracy. Democracy means that a just government is established with the consent of the governed and is under their control. Government is the servant of the people and not their master. We crusade not only for political democracy, but also for the ethical conception and application of democracy.

Can you imagine living in an undemocratic country, one in which the people had no voice? I can't and hope we never do. If we can carry the same principle with us, even into our families, what a much better relationship there can be. Naturally, there have to be rules and regulations in a family that would not necessarily apply to government, but certainly the same principles can prevail and should prevail.

From our short experience with a Democratic type of government, we know that it is not perfect. Many things could be changed for the better and I believe we are slowly making these changes. At least we know and believe it is better than any form of government which has been conceived so far in history.

Fourth, we have the pillar of solid attainment of character. These include honesty, love, reverence, loyalty, industry, intelligence, a moral sense, courage, justice, self-control, and patience.

Perhaps many of these qualities, I just mentioned needed for good character building, are lacking in our world today. If they are, then I am afraid we adults have to take the blame for not stressing them and teaching them to our young people. Most of these qualities aren't something that a person automatically acquires by himself. Indeed, it is the way we raise our children.

I truly believe when many of these qualities start disappearing, that we become lax in teaching them when our thoughts and minds and deeds turn towards materialistic things. When the material things of life become more important to us than the spiritual, our character building takes the back seat. That's exactly what is happening in our society today. The many luxuries that are available for us to purchase to make life easier tends to make us think of ways we too can have these luxuries. Easy credit has made the purchase of such items easier. I am not saying we shouldn't have these luxuries. I am saying when they start taking the most important part in our lives, rather than spiritual things, something has to take the backseat and this something are traits that make for the building of good character.

Some of us are wise builders, and others are foolish builders. Matthew 7:24-27 reads; “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat up on that house, but it did not fall, because it has been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.”

All men are builders. Wise or foolish, we are all engaged in the construction business, whether we will or not, for time and eternity.

Actually, our construction business, as adults and parents, is the building of character in our young people. This is our responsibility, not the schools, not the church, but we parents.

We must choose the foundations on which to build and select the materials with which to construct our character house.

The only foundation for building this character house is Jesus Christ. And the materials we select are good, down to earth Christian living. The example we ourselves set for our children is very important and certainly cannot be taken lightly. Perhaps you think that grace before meals and daily Bible reading and prayer with God is old-fashioned, but I believe you will find that children raised in this kind of an atmosphere will get on much better in our world and they will be prepared to meet the crisis in life on a more even keel than those who have never been exposed to God and the Bible. Our building will be tested by the storms and floods of life. There is no doubt about that and perhaps is even more true today with the many temptations our young people must face and the choices which they have to make when they go out on their own. All we can do is raise our children to the best of our ability with God’s help and pray that God will guide them and look over them in the years ahead.

The fifth (5th) pillar is the pillar of understanding. The spirit of understanding is an essential element in any true education and is indispensable to harmonious living. The fruits of peace, love, and fellowship grow out of the soil of understanding. Understanding is reason expanded and glorified.

If we can possibly put ourselves in the other person shoes and try to understand his point of view, and the reasons why he feels and acts the way he does, half the battle will be over. Naturally, this should work in the opposite direction too, for complete understanding.

I believe this is also true as we study and read God’s word. We should try to find out the background and try to understand why things were said and done the way they were. If we can do this, we can obtain much more appreciation and understanding for the problem or the point that is trying to be made. It will also help us to apply God’s word and teachings to our own lives.

Sixth, we have the pillar of wholesome philosophy of life. There are five points of fellowship, which a wise individual may have with abundant living. (1) contentment based upon a firm faith in the overruling Providence of a good God, (2) love of God, which means that my practices square with a will of God and that I trust him to make all things work together for good, (3) find the remedy for every evil, (4) realize your ideal or idolize, the real, and (5) real greatness is service to others.

Psalms 23:3 says, “he leadth me in the past of righteousness for his namesake” when is a man lost? When he doesn’t know where he is? No. A hunter knows where he is, but he doesn’t know where his camp is. Being lost means not knowing the relationship of where you are to where you ought to be. It is losing your sense of direction.

You need objective guidance, to be led by something outside yourself. Unless a person is true to something outside himself, less fallible than himself, he is headed for trouble.

The least panicky people in these changing, bewildering times are those who are true to something more vital, lasting, and authentic than a passing urge, any ephemeral whim, or a hasty hunch. They have a sense of direction, knowing not only where they have where they are, but where they are headed. They are led by the great moral and spiritual polls, and they are guided by the fixed stars of our moral firmament such as the 10 Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.

Our philosophy of life has a lot to do with the direction we are headed in.

A homeless, Bad Habit went searching one day for a spot where it could smugly settle in and stay. It hung around Fred’s door for three hours by the clock but never found courage to step up and knock.

The place was too busy and crowded. There was really no minute that seemed to be free. There were lessons and games; there were books to read, and no time to be idle from breakfast to bed.

“I might push my way in,” thought Bad Habit, “but then every corner is filled. I’d be turned out again. It’s no place to hang around; this is no place for me.” And it went off as downcast could be!

But Jimmy’s door stood open, not far down the road. No crowd was about it; no bustle it showed. The hall was deserted, the study bare. And Bad Habit stepped in with a satisfied air!

“Here’s where I want,” it remarked with a grin. “I can still settle in peace and grow in sin! Jimmy’s life was so idle and empty, I see, that it’s just the right home for an inmate like me.”

So it stayed, and it grew till it filled the whole place, and owned Jim in the bargain, and brought him disgrace.

Poor Jimmy! Other boys, and girls too, should keep a lookout, for many bad habits to go searching about. Ephesians 6:13-17 says, “But when anything is exposed to the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it is said, “Awake, O Sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light! Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

The 7th is the pillar of an efficient and rightly integrated personality. Such a person is at home in the physical world. (2) At home in the world of men, (3) At home with himself; (4) At home in the world of thought, and (5) At home, not only in the actual world in which he lives, but also with the ultimate spiritual forces that lie back of the visible phenomenon of the physical universe.

Men today, work less, make more money, have more leisure time, enjoys better health, retires younger, and lives longer than any of his predecessors. Yet these things have not brought into his life peace of mind, contentment of soul, self-discipline, or nobility of purpose. What will lead to a life that is more than length of years? (1) Socrates said, “know thyself.” (2) Marcus Aurelius said, “control thyself.” (3) Jesus Christ said, “Give yourself.”

To take God seriously means to take him at his word and to give him the opportunity to respond in the way he has promised to do his Word. We can never receive anything with clenched fists or drooping arms. We must be willing to stretch out our hands and “open your mantle wide,” as Luther once said. Take time and thought to check your house over. Is it built with the seven (7) pillars?

The God of Hope

Romans 8:18-28

The text is chosen from Romans 8:24; “We are saved by hope.” These words are very characteristic of the great Apostle Paul. The hope that sustains him is based on God. It has little or nothing to do with temperament or environment. Nor is the hope of which Paul writes related to life’s palpable and tangible securities. Paul held to a maximum faith. That is the only sort of religious faith worth holding. His faith was based on the belief that the God and Father of Christ is omnipotent and that he is sovereign in his creation. For Paul this world is a sphere in which God’s mighty purposes are being slowly but inevitably worked out. All of us have some part in the working of that cosmic purpose. Paul in our text represents the tread of the New Testament documents that ring with hope of which God is the source and inspiration. Central to its message are these words, “We are saved by hope.”

Let us now turn to ourselves. These are days of fear, foreboding, and frustration. Circumstances and events tend to confound hope rather than to inspire it. All of this was familiar language to the great men and women of the Bible. The prophets arose to rebuke this very mood and to bid their hearers to have faith and hope in God. Jesus bade his disciples to live in hope of achieving even greater things than he had been able to accomplish. We, too, must live in that mood. We, too, must cultivate the thought that in an ever-expanding world, a world where the horizons of truth are forever being enlarged, where new discoveries seem but to be indications of still greater things to come, God’s mighty creative activity does not diminish.

If we can read aright the signs of our times, if we can see even but a little way through the dust, if we can pierce the veil of events, we live in hope.

If we consider our life as a ship at sea, then hope is our anchor; if as a pilgrimage, then hope is like a star that never fails to guide us home; if as warfare, then hope is our helmet of salvation; if as temporal, then hope is one of the trinity of treasures that abide.

We do live in an expanding world and in that world God is unceasingly at work. Were Paul alive today, he would be keenly and sensitively aware of all the tears and tragedy of our times, but he would also see the spirit of Christ haunting our world. It may appear at times as if the world had forgotten Jesus, but Jesus is not forgotten because he is unforgettable.

God is in our history, not just as a vague life force but as a redeeming and life-giving power.

God is in our humanity, such as it is, in the person of his Son.

In Christ, God is in the world to stay.

Only Jesus Christ can show us what we may become. II Corinthians 5:17 reads, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.”

Here is God's model man. All the processes of the universe tend toward the fulfillment of the eternal purpose to make Jesus Christ the first-born among many brethren. Here is our highest hope and our main aim; "to be confirmed to the image of his Son." Only Jesus can and does bring God and man together. That man and God should be at one with each other is the secret of the answer to our problem.

A German soldier in World War II wrote this to his mother. "If you should hear that our cruiser has been sunk and that no one has been saved, do not weep. The area in which my body sinks is also the hollow of the hand of my Savior from which nothing can separate me."

Christian people are finding more and more opportunities for doing things together. God is undoubtedly at work in the world where the Gospel is making an ever-expanding impact upon more and more peoples the Church of his Son, universal and comprehensive moves on the unity. In its keeping is a gospel message that will save the world.

Romans 8:18 says, "the suffering of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us."

The Christian's hope, being fixed and eternal, should carry with a definite reaction in outlook, personality, and action. Unfortunately, this is often not the case.

Like Peter, we look at the waves. Like Martha, we may be burdened with much serving, losing sight of the Lord of glory when it is our privilege to serve. Like Thomas, we magnify doubts rather than exercise the faith which dissolves them into the assurance of things not seen.

The church is rediscovering her message and its saving power. Small wonder that we are rediscovering the virtues of the word "salvation." Salvation is nowadays the preoccupation of all who have keenly pondered human nature, and also the nature of our world. The church is its custodian. Apart from it, the church could not justify her existence. Christianity is more than good advice; it is good news; it is glad tidings of redemption. By the mighty power of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, men's love can be changed.

From our own experience, I know that men's lives are changed by God. Your life can be changed to if you will let Christ enter your heart and speak to you. If this wasn't possible, there would be no point to our Christianity; for only after men's lives are changed does our world become a better place in which to live. Indeed as Christians, this is our hope.

Have you ever known a person who was looking for a perfect church? Respond to the man who says, "Show me a perfect church, and I will join it." (1) Such a church would not admit any of us. (2) Such a church would be a tremendous embarrassment to us. (3) Such a church would cease at once to be perfect if we were admitted to join it. The church is the hope of the world, but even in the church tares grow among the wheat.

I've heard some people say they do not come to church because the people in it are a bunch of hypocrites. You know this very, very well to be true, but how can we make the church better by staying away? We

cannot. If we think we are that good, we should be there to set an example for the others. Frankly, this statement is just another excuse people use for not having to get involved. If we cannot have hope through the church, there is no hope.

We are saved by hope, for God's great purpose is being worked out in our times. True, this is sometimes hard to discern. Many people find it difficult in the light of events to believe that God is love. "How can God be love?" they ask, "in the light of the cruelty of our times?" One feels the force of that question, yet the very state of the world is proof, if we regard it aright, that God is love. God's love is the ultimate reality with which we must all deal. Any offense of lovelessness is bound to bring suffering. In a world where our wills are free within wide limits to choose our own way, it is always a gain given possibility that by our folly and stupid pride, we should bring terrifying disaster upon ourselves in our fellow men. Yet God, in his love, persist in the pursuit of his purpose.

During the battle of Britain, someone said to a man on the street in London, "things look pretty dark don't they?" The man replied, "but the King says there's hope, sir,"

The rainbow shown a million years ago in the midst of Niagara as it shines today. It shines on the surface of every sun lit bubble. It shines in the dew and above all, in the happy thoughts of young people, and in the ambitions of earnest, men and women. Through centuries of struggle, human beings have studied and viewed the rainbow, wondering at it, rejoicing in it. The races of the world have given it different meanings, but always in the same way it has represented hope-the storm departed, the sun is shining again.

Yes, the purpose is being worked out by God. Paul, that cosmic-minded man, got a great glimpse of it when he wrote that the whole creation in travail, waiting for the sons of God to be revealed. God is so great, so sure of himself, that he makes the very follies of mankind to serve him.

Out of a tragedy great good has come. See what tribulations did for Jacob. See what the exile did for Israel. God knows how to turn, shame, and defeat, and frustration, and even tragedy, into victory. See what he did with the cross of Jesus Christ. There is the quintessence of tragedy, yet the cross, for long centuries now has been the symbol of radiant victorious faith. Consider how the blood of martyrs became the seeds of the church.

It is written on a sundial on a pier at Brighton, England; "Tis always morning somewhere in the world": Someday it is going to be morning everywhere. The days of sin and pain cannot last always. Psalm 30:5 says, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Paul wrote, "We are all saved by hope." Will you try it out? Will you put your hope in God? Do not give way to despair. You may have failed, but that is not the end. With God, failure is never at final. Do not imagine that it all depends on you. It does not. God counts, too. Prove this truth. Put your trust in God's power, and in his love. These truly are the basis of real hope.

Jesus Christ alone can show us God. We must know ourselves and see ourselves in a light which really reveals. Jesus only is that light. It is Jesus only, among all mankind's teachers, who unto each of us frankly

exposes “the lower world within him, moods of tiger, and ape.” None other than he who taught, “That which come out of the man, that defileth the man”, is worthy to be trusted as the soul’s Physician.

Jesus only can make bad people good, good people humble, and sweet, weak people strong, and strong people tender, because he alone, being just, is able to bear the sins of the unjust; and because, being the Lamb who was plain and is alive forevermore, he lives to make intercession for us and is able to make his abode within us.

Because what Jesus has to offer us reaches the very soul of our being and he alone can enter there-it is in Jesus only that we have the life more abundant. The more abundant life is a gift of Jesus only, because it is found in “righteousness and joy and peace,” and they are the fruits of the spirit, even the indwelling Christ.

Jesus Christ only can make the future bright. He is the only hope for the world, for this life, for you and for me. The kingdoms of this world are to become the kingdoms of our Lord, but only when every knee shall bow before him. There is “sunrise tomorrow” with Jesus Christ. He only can make the ultimate future bright. One day we shall find earth fading and see nothing-save Jesus only.

Make sure that you do have hope. Accept Jesus Christ into your life now and know the hope that Truly is possible he alone can save this world of ours and us with it.

Our Children's Religion

Matthew 18:1-6, 10-14

Our text is chosen from Proverbs 22:6; "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

All of us are hopeful that our boys and girls may grow up into men and women of strong, faith, men and women of character, men and women who follow in God's way, are obedient to him, and consider their first duty is to love him and their neighbor as themselves. There is no one thing that will guarantee such results, but there are five steps, that will certainly help, a father and mother must take if they want to be sure that their children follow in the way that leads to life.

First, the parents must have some religion. This seems self-evident, yet in practice it is often overlooked. Many people who seem to be very concerned that their children shall have a knowledge of God and love and devotion for him, give little or no evidence that they have any faith themselves. You cannot hand onto your children that which you do not have yourself. Our children become what we are.

There are many, many parents who drive their children to Sunday school or church, but who never come themselves. The example, we as parents set is very important. How can we expect our children to do something if we ourselves do not do it.

Second, the faith which parents possess, they must express in worship and in life.

Nothing so convinces a child of the reality of God and of the worth of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as to see his father and mother, bowing their heads in worship, singing praises unto the living God, and being active in the Cause that seeks to make the world into the Kingdom. No matter how much preaching parents do, the children know how important God and the things of God seem to parents. Children come to think important those things that loom large in the importance to their family.

It's like the preacher who doesn't believe or practice what he preaches. How long do you think his congregation will respect him? Not very long. I'm sure and the role of the parent is the same way.

Beyond worshiping, we must live our faith. Preaching and talking about our faith is not enough. We must live it day by day, every moment of every day. Whatever a child may repeat every Sunday, it is unlikely that the child will ever grow into a man or a woman of devotion and goodwill, if the parent in the home lives by a pattern altogether different. The faith that we possess must live so that our children can see it, and seeing it, will come to follow it. They will have respect for and give time to those things which we demonstrate to be important for us.

Sometimes we wonder how the church is related to the youth of today. Basically the church, which is you

and I, is dealing with four kinds of youth. (1) The youth for whom the church does have meaning and there are plenty of such youth today, even without folk services and etc. (2) The church “dropout” who rejects the local church, has become disillusioned, feels bored or rejected or has outgrown Sunday school. We have some of these kind too. (3) The one for whom the ministry is a holding process: neither hot or cold, involved but merely going through the motions and sometimes I believe this is better than nothing at all. (4) The youth we do not know, for he is outside and without any relationship to the church. Perhaps you can think of other kinds of youth, but I believe these four pretty well cover the kinds of young people we are dealing with today.

Actually, the youth of today deserve far more sympathy, then condemnation, for the pressures and expectations of home, school, church, and society are greater than they have ever been. They need our support if they are to make positive responses to the challenges they have to confront.

How can we help our youth? By becoming aware of their needs; by recognizing them as being capable of loving and being loved; by accepting them for what they are and for their capacity to become more than they are; by sensing their needs, which they must fill: meaning in life, identity in this world, courage, to make decision, and finding God.

What role can the church play in their lives? Helping them to learn the value of relationship, especially between God and man; showing them that Christian love is practical; making them feel they are worthwhile, and that somebody loves them; letting them know that the church has faith in them.

The answer to our relationship with young people isn't easy. There are many distractions and temptations in our world today, but the way we ourselves live our lives is perhaps the best example and teacher we can have. The young people certainly are not all bad and naturally, we hear the most about their bad side and about the minority.

Third, we must be willing to devote time to our children. There are no shortcuts to Christian character for either children or parents. Our children deserve our time in order that together as a family, we may enjoy some of the fine things in life. In the hurry and scurry of life, we are always putting off until tomorrow what which cannot wait - working and playing with them, teaching them, reading with them, going on excursions with them. The time that our children are in our homes is very short and is soon over. Companionship is part of the price of their growing into good character, into men and women of God.

What is a real home? A real home is a gymnasium because it has a program to give the child a healthy body. It is a lighthouse because it reveals breakers ahead and shows a clear way past them. It is a playground, providing for innocent games and sports. It is a workshop where the child is taught to do things. It is a forum, where honest and open discussion of life's great problems are helpfully conducted. It is a secret society where families together are sacred. It is a health resort where mother are natural physicians. It is a cooperative league where the interest of each is made the interest of all. It is a temple of worship where

the child learns of a healthy father, whose love finds a ready response in the heart of the child.

Of course, the first, the most fundamental right of childhood is the right to be loved. The child comes into the world alone, defenseless, without recourse. Only love can stand between his infant helplessness and the savagery of a harsh world. So the real home, has love, plenty of love and compassion in it.

How true it is, that we became so busy over the material things of life that we neglect the spiritual, that which is important to a child growing up. We need homes with parents in them who take time to be with their children and teach and work and play together.

Fourth, if our children are to grow up in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord”, we must do some direct teaching. It is necessary that they have teaching in religious matters if they are to inherit the faith of the ages. The primary place for that teaching is the home. True, religion can, and is taught in Sunday school and church, but do you realize that not all children attend and besides, they are here for only a part of one hour each week. Religion, Christ teachings, are best learned at the mother’s knee, the table conversations of a family, the reading aloud of the stories of the Bible, and praying together in family worship, and studying together the doctrine of the church, and learning about the church and the great Christian leaders of every age, including this one.

How often have your children asked you questions about your faith that you couldn’t supply a good, satisfactory answer? Perhaps as parents and adults we ought to be doing some studying of our own. Perhaps we ought to search and find out what we really believe and why we believe it? Young people are inquisitive and like to have parents know all the answers to questions that they seek.

The 78th psalm verses three and four read; “Things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from our children, but tell to the coming generation, the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders which he has wrought.”

“Let Children Hear” is the title of a hymn sung to the Scottish tune, “Dundee”.

“Let children hear the mighty deeds which God performed of old;
which, in our younger years we saw, and which our fathers’ told.
He bids to make his glories known, his works of power and grace;
and we’ll convey his wonders down through each succeeding race.
Our lips shall tell them to our sons, and they again to theirs;
that generations yet unborn, may teach them to their heirs.
Thus shall they learn in God alone, their hope securely stands,
that they may never forget his works but practice his commands.”

Scripture is deeply concerned with the passing of information to the next generation.

Religious education begins and ends at home, and the father has as much responsibility as the mother for the religious education of the children. The content of the message, and the action of the parents should always glorify God.

We could run an ad in the wanted column of the newspapers, “Wanted; Parents”. Parents who will be as diligent to get their children to Sunday school as they are to get them to public school.

Parents who are as concerned about the spiritual development of their children as they are about their social standing.

Parents who will set the right example before their children by attending the Sunday service with their children.

Parents who love their children enough to practice, family worship, and to seek to lead their children to know and love the Lord.

I Samuel 10:2 reads; “The asses which you went to seek are found, and now your father is anxious about you, saying, “what shall I do about my son?” Like Saul’s father, we are concerned about our sons and all youth. It is important to acknowledge that there are some things we can do for those in our homes.

We can give them a life, for young persons need encouragement. We can live by a standard that reveals the choice of high values. We can give them awareness of appreciation for their independence and freedom. We can help them find a faith to live by. This is what we can do to help our young people find a place in the world and in this life.

Fifth, if our children are to grow up into good men and women, they must recognize in us, and from us, the fact that Christianity is a religion of joy, satisfaction, and happiness. Christianity no longer is a religion where we sit in the corner in a dark room and never even speak to each other. We ought to have some fun in our Christian life. Somehow, mistakenly, many people have the idea that Christianity is a drab, dreary, melancholy affair. In Philippians, 4:4, Paul wrote; “Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, rejoice.” One of the distinguishing marks of a Christian hymn is the great number of songs of rejoicing. Certainly, Jesus Christ was one to whom little children were eager to go. This emphasis must shine through their lives. No matter what happens or how many task are to be accomplished, God’s strength, and God’s promises are available to us. The promises of God are as bright as the morning star. Truly through us, our children must catch the joy of our faith.

It Isn’t easy being parents, and there are many people telling us how, but I believe there is only one person who can truly help and that is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Ask him to help and guidance, and working together in and through his church we can succeed, we can have homes that he will be proud of.

The Christian Task

Matthew 18:21-35

Our text is chosen from Matthew 18:21; “Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother send against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

This is a good question that Peter asked of Jesus, isn't it? Can you answer the question from your own experience? How can we hope to be Christians if we cannot forgive someone who has wronged us, even as Christ says, forgive us? How can we hope to convey to others Christ love and concern for all people if we ourselves as his followers do not show the same love and concern towards others? Obviously, we cannot.

Christ made it clear that the redemption from lovelessness can only be accomplished by God. The Christian gospel is the story of the redeeming activity of God in Christ. But God's redeeming activity must find a channel. His love is never an unmediated gift. It comes to us always through personality, through men and women whose hearts have been set on fire with God's love and are burning to serve his purpose. The central Christian task is to mediate this redeeming love of God, to become centers through which his love can break into the world. This is our task, if we call ourselves Christians, and if we believe, and have felt the love of God in our own hearts.

First of all, how is this task accomplished? Part of the task must be done by telling the story of God's adventurous love in Christ. We can all be witnesses when occasion offers to the truth of what God has done for us. This is what these men have been doing as they come to us from Altamont. In all cases, God has touched their hearts, and he was able to touch their hearts through the person of Jesus Christ and their pastor. I would say that their pastor has really been witnessing to his utmost.

The present poverty of the church and the lovelessness of the world is due to the lack of Christians of this passion to propagate their faith. As Christians, we are afraid of being unpopular. We do not want to be the oddball in the crowd. We do not want people to think we are some kind of a nut. We have traded our beliefs and principles for popularity. Our church, God's church, needs to show fourth to our community and the world what our truth mean to us. I know it is, and I also know our world will never become any better until we as Christians start fulfilling our task.

The gospel must also be carried by the quality of the life it produces, which really means the quality of our love. I know and you know that we cannot just be Christians on Sunday morning in church. If we are true followers of Christ and really believe what we profess to believe and what we say we believe in the Apostles Creed, we just have to be Christians in all phases of our lives, work, play, social and church. It doesn't take very long for our children to see through us and to actually know what kind of persons we are.

The love and concern we show towards others is important, not only to them, but to ourselves.

Secondly, how do we overcome lovelessness? The Christian offensive on the lovelessness of the world is one of constructive friendship. The method is that a forgiveness. Much of the antagonism that divides men is due to some wrong, which has been done or is being done. It is here that love reaches its highest power and makes it most costly effort.

How do we forgive? Forgiveness is not mere indifference to right or wrong. If something is going on around us and it's wrong, we do not bury our head in the sand and hope the wrong will go away. We stand up for what we know is right and we try to find the cause of the wrong and correct it. True many of the wrongs in our world today are too big for one person to correct but if everyone takes an indifferent attitude or an attitude of "what can I do?" the situation will just keep on getting worse. This is how minorities with their radical ideas of life takeover a people because you and I do not care or are we do not have the time to try to help find out what is going on. It is also true, that it isn't easy to forgive someone or some group that is doing something wrong. That's why Christianity and the beliefs and principles of Christianity must be strong enough to prevail, and that other people through us can see the advantages of being a Christian. Our Christianity must flow into the hearts of others. Crisis, love and concern must also fill our hearts and lives. That is just automatically overflows into other hearts.

Forgiveness is not an avoidance of issues. It is meeting them head on and versing the direction. Forgiveness represents a positiveness of character. We have to know what we believe. We cannot be wisely wishy-washy about it. Forgiveness means that we banish from our hearts, resentment and bitterness. This isn't very easy either, but I know with God's help this can be overcome.

The magnitude of God's forgiveness should be an indication of how we should forgive. Just think of what God did so we could be forgiven, and if we really believe the power of the cross and understand its meaning for us, we cannot help but have forgiveness in our hearts.

Forgiveness is more than the refusal to retaliate on those against whom we have a grudge. It is an active spirit of goodwill. If we say, I'll just forget what that person has done to me, we have only licked part of the battle. We must try to find out why he did it and try to help him.

Charles Anderson, a character in James Hilton's novel, "Time and Time Again", says, "if you forgive people enough, you belong to them, and they to you, whether either person likes it or not -the squatter's rights of the heart.

And this also goes a great deal, further than merely condoning a fault. Jesus Christ was not interested in the mere condoning of faults. He was interested in the person who did the fault and how he could be changed. Sometimes the mere act of forgiving a person for a fault, will help to change that person into a better person.

We think of pardoning the fault. Christ thinks of the person who has done the wrong, how he may be brought to a better mind and restored to fellowship. That effort of reconciliation is the real meaning of

forgiveness. This seems unreasonable, and Peter, in our scripture lesson this morning, could not understand it. But if we read and try to understand what Kris says, we will understand it, we will try to have real forgiveness in our heart.

Forgiveness is not so much an act as a spirit that must be shown in all our actions towards those who have wronged us. It is the spirit that seeks to be reconciled and to win them into a better mind. This kind of love is the only spirit towards others that has in any redeeming power.

We certainly cannot hope to win people to Christ by condemning them and criticizing them for their actions. We have to show them that Christian living and being a true Christian is a better way of life. It is the kind of life that God wants us all to live.

In the rebuilt Coventry Cathedral is a large cross made from wood salvaged from the ruins of the former bombed building. On it is this one word, "forgiven." The people responsible for the destruction of the cathedral have been forgiven.

Thirdly, but how does God's love become active in our lives?

When we are living as God's children, seeking reconciliation, meeting evil with good, God's love becomes active through us, for it is he who changes hearts. (Note: read Colossians 3:8-17) When we look at Christ Jesus, we see (1) what God surely is, for Christ is God's son. (2) what he wants us to be, (3) what deep within our souls at our best moments, we know we ought to be and, (4) what by God's gracious forgiveness can we become.

It is all spelled out for us, if we will read and understand, and if we truly believe God's word.

God's love finds a channel through the forgiving spirit to reveal itself in convicting and redeeming power, and especially where forgiveness reaches the level of costly sacrifice in the throne of selfishness and pride in ourselves.

This is also the power of the cross.

G.A. Johnston Ross told of an incident that occurred years ago during the celebration of the Lord's Supper in a little mission church in New Zealand. There was a line of worshipers kneeling at the altar rail when suddenly from among them, a young native arose and returned to his pew. Some minutes later, however, he returned to his place at the rail. Afterwards, a friend inquired why he had done this. He replied, "when I went forward, and now, I found myself side-by-side with a man who some years ago had slain my father and whom I had vowed to kill. I felt I could not partake with him, so I returned to my pew. But as I sat there, my mind went back to the picture of the upper room, with its table set, and I heard a voice saying, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another" and then I saw a cross with a man nailed upon it and the same voice saying, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what

they do.” It was then I arose in return to the alter rail.”

Forgiveness, in Christ’s sense of the word, not only completes reconciliation; it produces in others, the spirit that seeks to be forgiven.

Edwin Maeve said, “as I look back on the part of the mystery which is my own life, my own favor, what I am most aware of is that we receive more than we can ever give; we receive it from the past, on which we draw with every breath, but also, and this is a point of faith from the source of the mystery itself, by the means which religious people called grace.

Constructive friendship is the key to all the problems of individual redemption and social reconciliation, including class, nationality, and race barriers. As Christ followers, let us get on with our Christian task. Let us go out into our community and proclaim what we profess to be. We all want a better world in which to live, and this is the only way we can have it. I know you will be blessed as you witness for your Lord.

Firsthand Religion

34th Psalm

Our text is chosen from the 34th Psalm; “O, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man that trusted in him.”

A secondhand religion does have some value. Of course, by secondhand I mean, a religion that has been handed down to us by our parents. (1) We must all begin with tradition, the church and its ceremonies, if we are to develop a religious life. (2) There is always a possibility that those who possess only a secondhand religion may someday come to know God more intimately. (3) A secondhand religion may be a value in helping to preserve some of life’s decencies and may assist in keeping the salt of society from losing its savor.

But when we have said all that can be said about the worth of secondhand religion, it’s still remains very inadequate for the life of the church and the propagation of the Christian faith. Without large element of firsthand religion, even that religion which is secondhand will vanish away. If a church is to be a living witness for God in a community, it’s people must possess a firsthand knowledge of God.

Ralph. W Sockman said, “The best and greatest things in life have been seen by those who first believed.”

Let us consider some of the positive values of a firsthand religion.

First, it is only a firsthand religion that can maintain the spiritual glow. Because our fathers and mothers really and truly experienced the spirit of God in their lives, that doesn’t make us Christians. True it helped with our bringing up, but we have to have this experience for ourselves, firsthand. Many Christians have forgotten the necessary and continuing process of sanctification. Alexander Whyte said, “The perseverance of the saints is made up of ever new beginnings.” The man who is saved is the man who endures to the end. Such endurance requires grace for every day, to carry life duties into conquer boredom, to master trials and to be victorious over temptations.

As long as Christian believers seek evidence for the truth of Christianity outside themselves, they are betraying the absence of a firsthand knowledge of the “act of God in and for man.” For neither the holy scriptures with their grand tour and simplicity, northern nobility of the earthly life of Jesus of Nazareth. Our evidence is strong enough to confute doubt. God makes sure his Christ is authentic by what he does within us; he makes all things new. Indeed, we are new persons, we begin living new lives when Jesus Christ finally comes into our hearts. Then we are actually and really, first hand know there is a Christ who cares for each one of us.

We most definitely need a firsthand acquaintance with God and his saving grace in Christ as he is revealed in the Bible, worshiped in the church, and made real in the fellowship of the faithful. These means of grace make possible, a fresh apprehension of God, which will enable the believer to maintain the spiritual glow.

Each time that Christ makes appeal to us, and especially each time we are moved, and convinced and

drawn to him, and nothing positive happens, but it all ends in stubborn refusal or evaporates in empty, feeling, and emotion; each time we leap to our feet, meaning to clinch things here and now, and then sit down again each time it grows less and less likely that anything will ever come of it in us. So where we have the opportunity to get acquainted with Christ, we should take advantage of it and not make some excuse of not having time or “I’m a good person, I don’t need all that religion.”

Secondly, a firsthand religion verifies its truth in everyday living. If a person has had the firsthand experience, you can tell it from the way he loves his life. The way he acts in his social, business, and play activities. There is an immediacy and a freshness about firsthand religion that cannot be duplicated by any other means. Izaak Walton decided John Donne in the pulpit of Saint Paul’s London, “preaching the Word so, as he showed his own heart was possessed with those very thoughts and joys that he labored to distill into others.” Christian living that is based on a firsthand knowledge of God will witness to the truth in a similar manner in our time.

The God of the Bible Is the God who acts. This is what distinguishes him from the god of the philosophies, and from the gods of all the other religions. He is the God who commits himself. He commits himself in every man’s life. He does not interest in himself only in men’s religious life, but in his whole life, in his work, in his occupation-as porter, as farmer, as office worker, as carpenter, as housewife-and he turns that occupation into a variable adventure. He is a God who works. The Bible uses a powerful image when it speaks of the hands of God. Isaiah chapter 45 verse 12 reads, “I made the earth, and created man upon it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens, and I commanded all their host. God has committed himself to us. Have you committed yourself to him? That’s the question each one of us should ask ourselves.

Third, only at firsthand religion has redemptive power. The motivating, constraining and directing agent in all of Saint Paul’s actions was the living Lord. Paul knew whom he had believed, and this knowledge, together with its spiritual compulsion, made him a missionary of the cross. Christianity exists by mission as a fire exist by burning, and there is no sense of mission in our faith, apart from a heartwarming experience of God in Christ, who causes his disciples to think, speak, and work for him.

It Is our task as Christians to spread the “Good News” to others. It is our task to bring the message of our Lord to all people. It is our task to be concerned for others and to actually help others who need help. This is how the message has been spread down through the centuries. This is how it will continue to be spread in the future. Matthew 28:19 and 20 tells us what to do today as his followers, as well as Christ first disciples; “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I will be with you always, to the close of the age.”

Christian people must have a true sense of direction, a high and genuine purpose, a love that endures, and a power that will enable them to execute Christian responsibilities in the midst of a largely anti-Christian environment. This means that they must be equipped with the whole armor of God for their holy warfare. Religion to them must be experimental. We must have faith in God and Jesus Christ, that God will endure. We back away from situations too easily because we are afraid of being criticized, of being unpopular. We are too willing to go along with the crowd. We are willing to compromise our Christian principles and

beliefs for modern, worldly beliefs. We desperately need to stand up and preach the gospel to others. We need to live our everyday lives as Christ wants us to live them. I know, and believe we will, if we have had this firsthand experience of religion in our own lives.

How can we really come to know Jesus Christ? (1) We can know him by reading the Bible, as if it had been written, especially for us, as a most intimate personal letter would be. That is what the inspiration of the Bible at least partially means. Due to the action of the Holy Ghost, the word of Holy Scripture is a unique word, speaking directly to us. It is a presentation to us of the living Word of God. The 119th Psalm verse 130 reads, "The unfolding of thy words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple." (2) We can know Christ in the concrete, historical event of his life as these events are preserved for us, and that witness of the church which we call Holy Scriptures. (3) We can know him in the witness of the church in the lives of all the people throughout the centuries in whom that historical action began by God in Christ is continued. (4) We can know him in the sacraments, those especially instituted actions Christ commended to us in his name. (5) We can discover Jesus Christ in human need, (Matthew 28:40; "And the King will answer them, truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it for me." We can find Christ where people are gathered together in his name. (Matthew 18:20 reads, and Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there I am in the midst of them." And we can find Christ where the means of life are produced; "Luke 22:19 says, "And Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, "this is my body."

Fourth, only a firsthand religion puts a song in the heart. The church has "come singing down through the ages," because she has received Good News from God in Jesus Christ. She is directed to sing because of the momentous tidings she has for sinful men. When a person finds Christ, or rather is found of him, his joy cannot be hemmed in. He must express his emotions in song. He breaks forth into praise at the miracle. God has wrought in his own soul. Only firsthand religion will sing its way into the life of mankind. The Psalmist praised God continually because he had tasted and seen that the Lord is good. Religion for him was not hearsay, but personal relationship with God.

Some years ago, a busy layman wistfully told a friend who was a minister that he would like to find God and follow Jesus Christ. Then he added it, "How should I go about it?" The minister replied, "I would start by worshiping God in church and by studying the Gospels." To this the layman replied, "Well, I'm sorry, but I haven't the time for that." I shall never forget the minister's reply: "You cannot find God in your spare moments."

How very true that is. We cannot expect to find God or request him at our convenience. We need to set apart a few minutes each day and devote it to God and his word. When we become so busy that we cannot spare a few minutes each day, I'm afraid we will never have an experience with firsthand religion. We will have to live our lives from here say.

The other day, a man was heard imitating the songs of certain birds. It should be said that he was trying to imitate their songs, for he wasn't very successful in the attempts he made. Some of the birds he tried to imitate were the canary, the blackbird, the thrush, the lark, and the robin. His imitation of the canary was very good, but, sad to say, his blackbird, thrush, lark, and robin were just canaries all over again. He just

couldn't warble as they did. He hadn't learned their songs properly. He didn't know them well enough to imitate them. Listening to him you couldn't say, "yes, that really is a blackbird; that really is a robin and so on. His imitation couldn't deceive you. He wasn't a bird warbling, he was just a man whistling.

It Is the very same with Christian life. If you make it only a game of "let's pretend," if you make it just an imitation, you make it what it is what is called a hypocrisy. The word comes from a Greek word, which means "actor", one who plays a part, and therefore, one who is not really what he appears to be. This imitation Christianity cannot deceive anybody. But it can harm you, and, worse than that, it can bring shame on the name of Jesus. You see, if people love Jesus, they wouldn't just pretend to follow him. If you love him, you will follow him anywhere; not merely imitating him but being really like Him. He is able to make you really like himself; and to be really like Jesus is to be redeemed. That is what we are meant to understand when we are told that the angel song can be learned only by the redeemed. You may try to look like an angel, but can you sing like one? You may try very hard, and your imitation may be very good, but after all, it will only be an imitation. No one can learn that song and sing it as it should be sung, but the redeemed, those who love Christ and who, by their love for him have become like him.

When we really love Jesus Christ like this, then our religious experience is firsthand. What kind of experience in religion do you have?

That Your Faith Should Stand

I Corinthians 2

Our text is chosen from I Corinthians 2:5; “That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.”

In the desperate need that faces us this day, all of us are in need of a faith that will not collapse – a faith that can stand before the banishments of evil, the hard knocks and trials of life, and the probing of the clever secular minds of our day.

And that precisely is what the Christian faith is – a faith which under God stands on its own feet. The human mind, however clever, is ultimately undependable. The wisdom that God has given us in Christ stands fast forever.

Faith faces everything that makes the world uncomfortable – pain, fear, loneliness, shame, death – and acts with a compassion by which these things are transformed, even exalted.

If we have a deep, sincere faith, these things in life that trouble us can soon be determined. They can be made a little easier and our lives can become a lot more pleasant.

At Athens, Paul faced the sceptics of the day. Their religion was something to argue about, a random speculation, a philosophy conjured up by the human mind. But Paul tells them of a “central, funded, founded faith” – one with a Cross, a Resurrection, and a Pentecost at the heart of it. He is frank to tell the Corinthians Christians that he did not come to them with cleverness of speech or wisdom. Rather did he come to declare a testimony and to proclaim a faith.

This is a faith. To live one’s best today, believing that God will give us strength for the responsibilities of tomorrow when they come.

To use one’s best judgement in each emergency, refusing thereafter to reproach oneself for not having used better judgment.

To invest all one has on the side of right, confiding in God, that the investment shall be eternally safe.

To meet each rising sun with the knowledge that the temptation will come during the day which will be more than we can meet, if we talk with Christ at our side.

To do the duty that we now see clearly, trusting that each new day will be clear when we come to it.

Let us look in a few directions in which we can find our Christian faith, confirmed, and strengthened.

First, let us look at the hungers and longings of our own hearts. None of us is complete in ourselves. We are complete only within the revelation of God in Christ. Colossians 2:10 says; “and ye are complete in him.” We are creatures born for a revelation. “Jesus Christ and the human heart are made for each other.”

What we have in the New Testament is not a people with speculative ideas about God, but rather a people, rooted and grounded in a saving experience of God’s love in Christ. II Timothy 1:12 says; “I know whom I have believed.” The Christian faith is not a what, but a whom. It is something intensely personal. A visible faith begins with man’s deepest and innermost longing to root himself in something beyond himself.

Faith is found only on the other side of death. It is only when we die to all esteem of self that the life-giving spirit comes.

When we become willing to put ourselves last in Jesus Christ first, when we become willing to make God the center of our lives, other people, second and ourselves last, then our faith will take on a real, and true meaning.

Second, the Christian looks to the holy Bible with its unfolding of a divine and unique history of assurance. We are to read it to get the divine point of view, to hear what God has to say about himself, to receive the cumulative evidence of the Old and New Testament. As we read, we become aware of a creator-God who speaks in the events of history and above all in the supreme events of the life and death and resurrection of his Son.

The importance and necessity of reading our Bible cannot be over emphasized if we are to have a continuing faith. We need to read of the experiences of others God has dealt with. We need to try to understand the promises God made to his people. We need to try to understand some of the punishment imposed upon those who yield it to temptation. We most definitely need to look on the other side of things because everything cannot be rosy all the time. We need to read and try to understand the message of the gospels and how Christ has told us to live our lives. There are examples and evidences of people being healed and cured by Jesus because they believed, because they had faith, the kind of faith we need today. As we read Paul’s letter, we see the kind of faith the early Christians had and the pain and suffering they endured for Christ sake. The more we read and the more we ask God for understanding the more this Christian way of living starts to unfold for us in the pages of God’s word. The Bible is invaluable to our growth in our faith.

Third, we look to the inspiring fellowship of the Christian church. The word, “brethren” runs like a motif through the New Testament. Christianity is never a solo flight into the stratosphere. It is togetherness in Christ, turned toward great ends. This inspired fellowship began at the empty tomb of Jesus and was reborn and crystallized on the day of Pentecost. The church became the new Israel of God, rooted in the unquestionable, Hope and truth of which the Bible speaks. Within this fellowship, the gospel is and acted,

and the miracles of redemption and healing are constantly taking place. It is an inspiration to come into a church filled with devoted Christian people, people who are not afraid to tell of their own Christian experience, people who are worshiping together in harmony for the upbuilding of God's kingdom.

Frequently many of us put the high values on wrong things. We place money and the ability to have the luxuries of life ahead of our spiritual needs. Often a person thinks of if only he could someday be able to buy anything he wants he will be rich, but how very wrong he is because in a flash he can be gone, then what good are his riches. Will his riches help him to get into heaven?

When I was a small boy, I remember reading a story of a couple who lived in Switzerland. They had four children and were very poor. A wealthy uncle said, "if you will let me adopt one of the children, I will make you wealthy."

That night, when the children were asleep, the couple talked of the offer. It would mean so much to the other children-there would be food, clothing, education, and many other good things in life. They had almost decided to accept the offer when they were confronted with the question, "which of the children would they permit to be adopted?"

They went into the room of the baby girl, and the mother shook her head. She was so tiny and needed a mother. The boy at five years was frail and needed love and care. The 10 year old daughter was so much needed around the house. At the bed of their eldest son, the father said thinking, "ay, we cannot part with John." And they returned to their fireside to write the uncle of their decision: they could not part with their dear children for mere gold.

All of us are rich, though we may not think it. Our family and friends are priceless possessions; and the beauties of nature end of life are inestimable in value. Indeed we are rich.

Placing the proper values on the right things in life is important to our continual growing faith.

Fourth, ultimately, we must maintain our faith in relationship to a person. We are made "wise and to salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus." Carole Barth has said that God addresses his truth to us in a life.

We are not speaking now, just of the Christ of history, although certainly he appears there like some Himalayan Peak. We are thinking primarily of the living, risen, personally experienced Christ of faith. This experience must be gathered up, lovingly, into the heart of the believer.

Traveling through Wales, two Americans, overtaken by a severe thunderstorm, found shelter in a cottage, where an old woman lived alone. When they complained of the storm, the woman drew herself up and said, "I'm proud to have a God who can shake the world like that."

Perhaps we ourselves sometimes need to be shaken to help us realize how fortunate we are to have Christ beside us constantly through thick and thin.

We get into trouble, intellectually, speaking, when it comes to our ideas about God, Christ, and other disturbances of the Christian creed. We must dare to go deeper in life-giving faith by means of daily personal existential commitment to Jesus Christ himself. Only in and through him are we sure.

I Corinthians 15:57 reads; “Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(1) The Christian victory that the faithfulness of his love is more dependable than the faithfulness of our fears: indeed we can depend on God's love. We have faith that he does love us regardless of ourselves. We need to have no fear in this direction. (2) that's the length of his love outlast the stubbornness of our sin. Regardless of our sin, if we truly repent it, God will forgive us and still love us. (3) that the strength of his purpose is more durable than the strength of our aimlessness. God does have a purpose for each of us whether we think so or whether we ever find this purpose or not. Many times we wander around aimlessly, trying to find God's purpose for our lives, but regardless God is always there to guide us. (4) That the rest in his peace is more than the restlessness of our conflicts. All persons are looking for peace, not only in our world, but in our hearts. We find the peace we all seek if we would accept Christ into our hearts and lives. We will obtain a peace we never thought possible. (5) That the height of his hope erases the depth of our hopelessness. There is hope with Christ within us. (6) That the surety of his promises is surer than the struggle of our doubts. Even Christians have doubts, but with Christ at our side, these doubts are soon dispelled, and we can be sure that what God has promised us will be fulfilled. (7) That the freedom of his service is more liberating than the fancy of our willfulness. (8) That the certainty of his health is more healing than the coddling of our sorrow. We can feel sorry for ourselves, in fact, work ourselves into such a state that our health is placed in jeopardy. If we turn over our lives to Christ, we will be healed, our sorrow, our fears will be taken away. (9) That the light of the everlasting refutes the lee of our death. Christians believe, and rightly so, that when a person leaves this earthly life, he goes onto a more full and beautiful life with our Lord in the life hereafter. Indeed, this is what we look forward to. This is our purpose to this earthly life. Looking forward to the life, eternal with God. Yes, we say the same as Paul, “Thanks to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our faith is strengthened and confirmed when Jesus Christ becomes the center of our lives. When something happens in our lives, we actually fall back on our faith, and it carries us to the rough spot of life and again our faith is strengthened and indeed confirmed. Let us not rely on our father's and mother's faith for our lives. Let us strengthen our own faith through Jesus Christ. Let us obtain and maintain a faith that will endure to the end.

Effective Evangelism

Mark 16: 9-20

The text is chosen from Mark 16:15-16; “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

The primary task of the church is evangelism. Evangelism is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, with the main purpose of converting those who hear to become Christians. I wonder if that is the purpose of our church and are we truly performing our purpose and objective? For this very purpose, the church was born, with that passion it grew, and in that power it must, it must cover the earth. The Church was commissioned to work, to witness and to win. There can be no rest for the Church until we have gone to the very ends of the earth with this Gospel of love and redemption. The commission that Jesus left with his disciple (and most certainly with us), commanding that they go into all the world with this glorious Gospel, cannot be viewed by the modern disciple as in elective (something we can do if we feel like it). It is a command. It is not a comment to be debated but to be obeyed.

Evangelism means Christianity functioning fully in all its manifold forms as the world’s single redemptive religion. (1) Christianity is a personal faith. It is intensely vital, communicative life, changes and enriches the inner resources of the individual, develops the spiritual qualities of the person, and creates a more vivid and significant person – “a new man in Christ Jesus.” (2) Christianity is a pragmatic faith. By pragmatic I mean practical, a faith springing from firsthand experience. It is eager to be judged by its results, is admirably workable, applies the Golden Rule and gets results, and interprets the mind of Christ and produces the fruitage in character, happiness, and service. (3) Christianity is an ethical faith. It emphasizes that only the pure in heart will see God, that the moral requirements of Christ’s law are an integral part of his gospel and that his disciples are to crucify for Christ’s sake of the world and of the flesh. (4) Christianity is a progressive faith. Christians are to grow up in Christ and move by the guidance of the Holy Spirit from strength to strength. (5) Christianity is a cosmopolitan faith. It is designed for world-wide acceptance, transcends all other religions infinitely, and meets the needy spirit of man in every age and land with the abounding and the redemptive resources of the Spirit of God. These characteristics inspire a competent evangelism dynamic and victorious.

Warming souls for Jesus Christ is not easy. To be a “fisher of men” requires desire and discipline on the part of the fisherman. It must be proceeded by prayer and preparation, and the soul winner must be empowered by the Spirit of God, because only Christ can make you fishers of men.”

When Bishop Francis Ashbury rode from Maine to South Carolina and from the Atlantic coast to Ohio and back, he often spent nights in lovely mountain cabins. While he preached to large crowds at times, he often held services for one family. He was ruled by one purpose, which was to bear witness to the meaning of Jesus Christ whether he talked to one or to a thousand. He wrote in his journal, “we must preach the

gospel in every kitchen.”

To do this work effectively and efficiently it becomes apparent that there are certain essentials that cannot be overlooked.

First, we need convictions that command us. To be effective in our evangelism, we need the conviction that sin is real and its consequences are devastating. We also need a revival of the convictions that man without God is lost. The parables of Jesus on the Lost Coin, the Lost Sheep, and the Lost Son were no idle chatter, but were meant to convey a stark reality which is as old as mankind and to which the earnest soul winner must give his undivided attention.

In order for us to be Christ’s disciples to be effective evangelists we must have belief in convictions of our own before we can hope to convince someone else. We have to practice what we preach to be effective with others.

And then we also need some basic and fundamental convictions about Jesus Christ. As to his person, his purpose, and his power, there can be no doubts. He is more than a signpost to a way of life; He is life. He is more than a teacher of truth; He is truth. He does more than point out the way; He has become for us the way.

Billy Graham said, “There are three little men that live down inside of every one of us. One is intellect, another is emotion, and the third is will. Intellectually, you may accept Jesus Christ. Emotionally, you may feel that you can love him. However, until you have surrendered to Jesus Christ by a definite act of your will, you are not a Christian.”

“How many were converted tonight in the meeting,” a friend asked Dwight L Moody. “Two and a half,” Moody replied. The friend asked, “two adults and a child,” “No,” said the evangelist, “it was two children and an adult. The children have given their lives to Christ in their youth, while the adult has come with only half of his life. Our conviction must be total and complete there is no halfway with Christ. It’s either all the way or nothing. Too many of us today are half-hearted Christians.

Secondly, to do the work effectively we have to have a compassion that compels us. The Church cannot simply take an objective view of the condition of mankind and of the power of God to redeem through Christ. It must be propelled by a compelling compassion which sends us out into the wilderness where that sheep wanders, down into the ditch where he has fallen, and into the highways and hedges where he stands in confusion.

Essentially compassion carries with it the capacity to care. It means getting out into the road of life where people talk with their burdens, fall with their loads, bleed with their wounds, and suffer with their sins.

This compassion also means the capacity to convey. Certainly, we must carry the Gospel to all the world.

This commission, furthermore, means the capacity to cure. The power to cure is in the hands of Christ but in a real sense, we become his hands and feet. We heal with his hands, and we love with his heart.

Compassion also means we are willing to help others in trouble. Help others over the rough spots in life.

An old legend relates that long ago God had a great many burdens which he wished to have transported from one place to another upon the earth, so he requested the animals to lend a hand. Where upon all of them began to make excuses for not helping. The elephant was too dignified, the lion, too proud, the giraffe, too tall, etcetera.

Finally the birds came to God and said: "if you will tie the burdens in small bundles, we shall be glad to take them for you. We are small, but we should like to help.

So God fastened upon the back of each one a small bundle. They all set out across the vast plain towards their destination. Singing as they went, they did not seem to feel the weight of the burdens at all.

Every day the burden seemed light and lighter, until the load seemed to be lifting the birds instead of the birds carrying the burdens. When at last the birds arrived at their destination, they discovered to their amazement that when they removed their loads, in their place were wings - wings to enable them to live in the beautiful sky and the treetops. They had learned how to carry their burdens, and their loads had become wings to lift them nearer to God.

The burdens that we carry, if they are home for others, may become wings of the spirit to lift us into happiness such as we have never known. Let us try it and see how much happiness and peace we obtain by helping others.

Thirdly, to be effective evangelist we need a consecration that conditions us. Before we go into all the world with this Gospel, we must tarry at Jerusalem until we are endowed with the power from on high. While we cannot explain it, we must experience it before we can either witness or win effectively. (1) This consecration begins with a cleansing. Over and over again the evangelist must pray his prayer of confession. The soul-winner must find his way to the altar of confession before he is ready to go out, to win others. Truly we must have confessed our sins and received cleansing from God before we can ask others to do likewise. First-hand experience is valuable to us so we can relate such experiences to others. (2) This consecration also means that always we must listen to the voice of God and from him take our instruction. That's what is wrong with most of us today; We want to do all the talking, even to God, and we do not wait, to sit still long enough to listen. If we would, I'm sure we would probably stay out of a lot of trouble. If Jesus found it necessary during his earthly ministry to go apart for prayer often, how much more must the contemporary disciple of our Lord find it necessary to be alone with God. Through meditation do

we get our message, through prayer do we get our power. Through waiting on God do we get our witness from God. (3) Consecration involves the total surrender of self to the Savior. To be with the church in spirit, when we could be with the church in body, is not enough. Everyone who is a church member I'm sure remembers the membership vows and this requires certain things on our parts. We should renew these vows periodically and ask ourselves if we are really living up to them. If "Christ has no hands but our hands", then we must fully concentrate our bodies as living sacrifices unto God, which is our reasonable service. Many today are unwilling to go all the way with Christ. Perhaps they feel it isn't necessary, that all we have to do is go to church, support it meekly, and try to be a good person. Christ requires our complete selves, body and spirit.

The way to salvation is Jesus Christ: not only Christ for us but also Christ with us and Christ in us. This means the way to salvation entails not only Christian belief but also Christian life- life that is grounded in the Cross of Christ and empowered by the Spirit of Christ, life that shares in the love and outreach of Christ to all peoples, life that is separated from the world in its sin and selfishness and concentrated unto God. Yet it is also an involved life, one that is solidarity with the world in its suffering and anguish. It's fine to rattle off a lot of words, but after all is said what is the conclusion? With the true vision of the God above us, the need for cleansing within us, the hunger of the world about us, and the magnitude of the task before us, can we this day with the deepest possible meaning say, "Here am I; send me"? Let us take our tasks as Christians, and as members of the Fultonham United Methodist Church more seriously. Let us make this place a place God will be proud to have in his Kingdom. Let us each become true evangelists and go out witnessing for Christ and winning people to him. Let us fulfill the objective of the Christian Church.

Five Steps to Certainty

II Timothy 1:1-14

The text is chosen from II Timothy 1:12; “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able.”

The search for certainty is a part of life but some seem to find it more readily than others. When someone tells us something, we want to be certain what they have said is fact. We usually are not satisfied from hearsay, we want to find out for ourselves, firsthand. Perhaps the only exception to this is the Christian faith. We are willing to live from our parents’ faith, not willing to firsthand find out what God is like.

Paul found certainty after much struggle. Some won’t hear words such as those in our text without literally wishing to God that they could find that kind of certainty.

Notice the way Paul puts it. He doesn’t boast, “I know what I have believed. He confesses, “I know whom I have believed.” Today we search for certainty not that we may be convinced in the mind but that we may be secure of souls.

It seems to me that there are at least five (5) steppingstones to certainty. First, Need says, It ought to be so. Some certainty is as necessary for your life as oxygen is to the body. Unless there is something to which you can cling, life come apart at the center.

What is it we cling to, if a tragedy happens in lives, if a loved one passed away, if we find ourselves disabled for the rest of our lives? If we don’t have anything, we ought to think about it because if these things have never happened to you, you had better be prepared for them. And the thing, the person we really fall back on is Jesus Christ. He gives us the strength we need to see us through all hardships.

It is an old argument of theology that a hunger in itself is evidence that there is something to appease it. As far as we know a man does not hunger for that which he has never tasted. So the very depth of my need for some certainty by which to live seems to give me promise that it is here to be found.

Joseph Priestly in his book entitled, “Angel Pavement”, tells of a clerk who had a secure job in the city hall. Outwardly he appeared at ease, by invisibly he was haunted with the fear of losing his job. Always this fear logged his steps, upsetting his security, and in moments of depression it almost drove him to panic. And Priestly writes, “He lived in a world from which gods had been banished but not the devils.”

We need not have fear of any kind in our lives if we truly believe and have faith in Jesus Christ. I know this to be a fact from my own experience. Christ take away our fear and gives us a certainty that comforts.

Second, Reason says, It may be so.

Obviously, we will never prove God’s love by logic, or reason, yet honest and reverent thought can lead us closer to that assurance. It is not our belief in God that violates reason, but the attempt to explain our

world without him. To be sure, we will not see God perfectly with the mind – Paul said that we will see but baffling reflection in a mirror, but we see enough to know of the power and the love of God.

All we have to do is look around us in the beautiful valley to know there is a God, a God who has created everything that surrounds us. I doubt if anyone can prove to our satisfaction that something or someone other than God has created the mountains, trees, flowers, and soil that surrounds us. Nor that the four seasons are caused accidentally. I wonder if we have ever stopped long enough to wonder and appreciate what God has done and is doing for us? Indeed reason says, it may be so.

Third, Experience says, It has been so. It is striking to remember that one of the words we have in common between our religious faith and a court of law is the term ‘witness’. “Ye shall be my witnesses,” says the New Testament, reminding us thereby how often God takes the experience of man to awaken the experience of another. When Experience says, it has been so, we shall admit the evidence of witnesses and believe their word.

Christ has commanded us to go out into the world and proclaim the message of the Gospel to others. This is our task as Christians. Indeed the Christian experience we ourselves have, has valuable for relating to others. If Christ has made a difference in our lives, we automatically want to tell others of it. This is how the message of the Gospel has been conveyed down through the ages, and how it will continue to be spread in the future.

There is, in John Drinkwater’s drama, “Abraham Lincoln,” an impressive scene which represents the Great emancipation sitting at a table with a document before him and fear in his hand. It is a night in September, 1862. The document is the Emancipation Proclamation, which awaits the president’s signature. Although this is the act for which Lincoln has lived, he cannot bring himself to offer his name to this instrument. Years before, he had fixed one resolute purpose in his heart to destroy the institution of slavery. But now that the moment has come, he is perplexed in mind and assaulted by questions and doubts. The anguish of his spirit is written upon his countenance as these tormenting questions thrust themselves upon him: Is this the best way? Is this the right moment? Will the act fail? And it is only after a long night’s vigil and after intense anguish of mind and spirit, that he finally brings himself to perform the epic-making deed. From past experience he knew that this had to be so. This was the right document to do what he dreamed would be done.

Fourth, Faith says, it shall be so.

We now pass from something outside us to something inside. Faith says yes to life, all of it. It says yes because you dare to believe that God is at work in all of it; the agony and the assurance; times of doubt, and hours of knowing, the pain and the freedom from pain. This is life, God’s ground working in us. Because of him life is to be trusted. There is no step to certainty that will push a no in your own heart and mind. So Faith alone can say, it shall be so.

We Christians are not followers of an economical barometer. We are followers of a cross. When we were baptized, we were signed with that man fully to fight under Christ’s banner against sin, the world, and the

devil- and to continue Christ's faithful soldiers and servant unto our life's end.

I Corinthians 2: 2-5 says, "For I have decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in much fear and trembling; and my speech- and my message were not implausible words of wisdom, but demonstration of the spirit and power, that you your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God."

Faith is belief in action; a way of living, sustained by belief. Faith is putting to test the things we hope are true. There are only two foundations for any belief that leads to action. (1) The recognition and acceptance of conclusions made by men who are perhaps wise in their several fields, but who have reached their conclusions or beliefs, leaving God out of their thoughts. (2) The recognition of the power of God has overall, and the acceptance of only those beliefs that harmonize with the sovereignty of God. (3) One leads to faith in the wisdom of men, the other to faith in the power of God.

Christianity is not a mode of organization, a church; it is not a formulated statement of belief - a creed; It is not even a standard of conduct - an idealized way of living. Christianity is the power of God, molding the lives of believing men. (1) To believe in Jesus as Lord is to give him the complete control of one's life. (2) To believe in Jesus is to accept his way of living as the pattern of daily conduct and to take up one's cross and follow him. (3) To believe in Jesus as the Christ, the anointed of God, is to see in him the fulfillment of all the high and holy hopes of mankind and to face the future, happy in the assurance that all things are working together for one's good.

The Christian religion offers a spiritual dynamic which, functioning inexperience, brings a man into vital relation with the eternal God, so that his faith may truly be in the power of God. The Christian religion is not an explanation of the power and the love of God; it is an experience of the power and love of God. Indeed Faith does say, It shall be so.

Fifth, God says, It is so.

Undoubtedly, to say this is to let some people down. You have followed hopefully this far in our thought, but now you protest that you are not the kind of person to whom God speaks.

There is nothing more real than the misery of man when separated from God and the grandeur of man when restored to God.

Over and over a person who thinks he has heard God's reassuring word in his life is waiting for the wrong thing. You suffice that somehow it has to be something different than you have ever heard. To the contrary, a great insight of the Christian faith is that God uses ordinary things to bring his extraordinary word. The language of assurance is all here. The sound of it is everywhere.

If we do not hear the voice of God bringing reassurance, be sure that it is not because God is not speaking. It is because we have not taken the time to learn the meaning of what he is saying. His voice is the over tone of all the great music that men have given us. It is the still small voice in a quiet

moment of contemplation. It is the restlessness that helps us looking for something better. It is the task that you ought to be doing. It is a love that you ought to be sharing. It is the time of prayer, the hour of worship, the reading of God's word, the fellowship of your Church.

The architect builds a great cathedral with the chancel towards the east so that the worshipping congregation faces the dawn. It is a beautiful symbol of our Christian faith. The church must always keep mankind facing the morning light.

Indeed there are timeless ways by which God does speak that word. Believe in it. Listen for it. Expect it. And one day you will be able to say: It is so. I have heard his word in my life, and it is so. Then you will come to say with Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able."

And indeed when we have heard God's voice in our lives. we can be certain. Are you certain or do you still have doubts.

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.

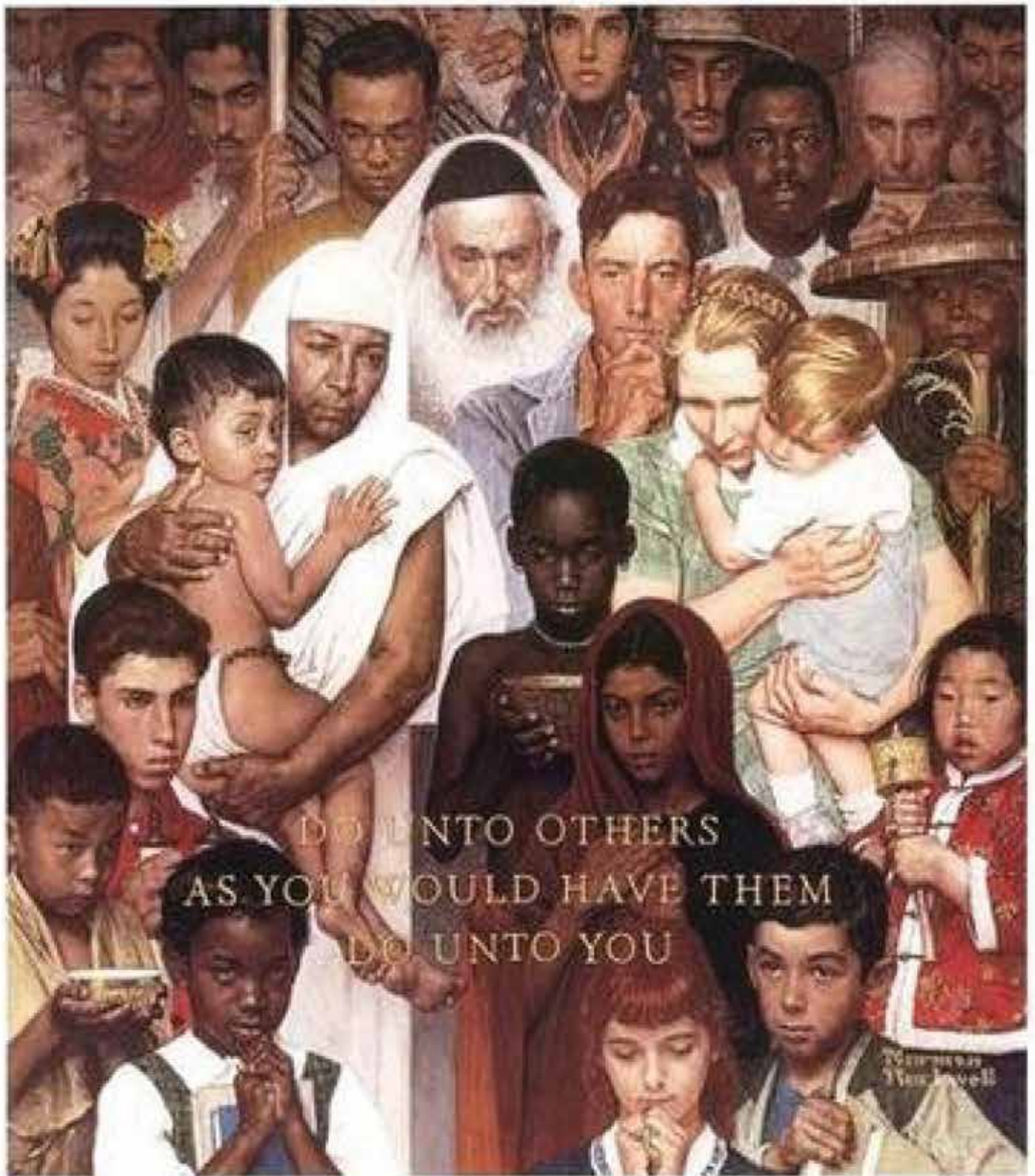


Millions of us suffer needlessly from addiction & depression. The reasons for this are many. In this program we emphasize the 12 step method of Recovery, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Meditation techniques to overcome difficulties. We also rely on God's grace to help you be lifted from your dilemma.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