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The
Sermons of
Richard W. Braman

Vol. 1



The Fultonham
United
Methodist Church

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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A Conversion Experience

Delivered 2/24/63

If we say a person has been converted as it pertains to his religion, we mean that this person has had a spiritual experience which involves a drastic change in his beliefs. For example: A person who suddenly becomes interested in the church, in Jesus Christ and in helping other people, but before this experience he had absolutely no interest or little interest in these things pertaining to his spiritual life.

I believe a person can only be converted if he is willing to let the Holy Spirit come into his life and guide and direct his life. This Holy Spirit is always present with us if we are willing to accept it.

There are two (2) types of conversions that I know about. One would be sudden conversion where the person's spiritual beliefs and life are changed almost immediately. The other one is a gradual conversion where the person is never sure of the exact date he truly accepted Jesus Christ in his life. This could be a person who has gone to Sunday school and church all of his life. He has been taught about God and the church and he has come to love the Lord over a period of years. I doubt if one way has significant preference over the other. However I do know that all of us must experience a spiritual change sometime in our lives if we are truly to become a Christian and live as a Christian must live.

Tonight I would like to tell you about the conversion experience of a very close friend of mine. I grew up with this man

remember as a boy. This boy's father and mother were good people but they never attended church or Sunday school except on special days such as Christmas and Easter. This boy attended Sunday school rarely (almost never). He did try to attend a few weeks before Christmas, then he would be sure of getting a Christmas present from the Sunday school. I'm sure we can find the same situation today in our Sunday schools.

However, this boy did grow the same as any ordinary boy. I can remember one incident in grade school (he attended a two room rural school for the first seven years of his schooling) where some of the boys thought it would be smart to come in late, in the morning at noon time. This boy didn't want to be a part of this but rather than to be called a sissy he did join with these boys. He had a very miserable year— the last year at this grade school because he was forced to join with these other boys in doing things against the teacher. Later on these other boys quit school at the age of sixteen. It is also interesting to know that this boys' teacher during his grade school days is now his most respected friend.

During his years of growing up, his parents thought it would be nice for him to join the church. He did join the church with his brothers but this is as far as he went. He didn't join in any of the activities of the church or did he attend church very often. When he joined the church it wasn't necessary to belong to a membership class. In fact, he knew absolutely nothing about the church or why he should be interested in it. This is the end of his religious experience for a number of years.

In a few years he graduated from High School and went to work. He took a special training course in a large company and

graduated from that. During this time he was married to a fine young lady who was brought up in a religious home. However, she was unable to influence his beliefs as far as religion was concerned. In fact, he was the sort of fellow that was very independent and relied on no one for help. He could see no reason for helping anyone else who had troubles.

During these years his main concern was making money, acquiring material possessions and getting ahead socially and otherwise. His interest in the church was still nothing, in fact, he didn't even want to hear anything about God or the church. He was successful and did get ahead as far as material possessions and job were concerned.

In a few years their first child was born. When his wife came home from the hospital they hired a wonderful lady to take care of her and the baby for a few days. This lady was a fine Christian person and she talked to both of them about God and the church. This is when he started becoming interested in his spiritual life. He also made a vow with himself that he would read the bible from cover to cover. This was quite a long task, but each night he would read the bible for an hour or so until he finally finished reading it. Of course, he obtained very little value from it because he had the wrong purpose in mind. However, it was the beginning of a spiritual change in his life.

He also became interested in his church and started attending regularly and volunteered for specific duties in the church. This was something new for him and it took a lot of studying and preparation.

Shortly after this, this young man was drafted into the army. This was quite a drastic ordeal in his life because they

had moved into a new house about six months before this and of course his wife had had a baby just shortly before. This really shook them up but there was nothing that could be done about it. However, they both did pray to God and asked for His help and guidance because they could not possibly figure out how to work things out. They left the whole situation in God's hands.

The day came and he left for the induction center but to his amazement he was rejected for some physical defect which he had had while he was a child. Of course his wife was wonderfully surprised and all his friends. In fact, he was back home the same day he left.

This of course added to his spiritual change for he knew that God had taken care of this situation. Perhaps someone else would say that it would have happened whether they had left the situation in God's hands or not. Perhaps it would have, but I choose to believe God did help. This young man went on to study the bible - this time with a different purpose in mind. A purpose of finding out what God said to him about his own life and how God could help him in times of trouble. He began to be thankful for everything that he had because he knew it was only through God. His life had meaning and purpose. His church activities increased with new vim and vigor. His family life was changed. His wife can testify to this. Before, he had a terrible temper and little things upset him. In general, he made things very miserable for his wife. Now he is much more calm, pleasant and willing to work things out.

Please remember he wasn't changed overnight. It took time to transform this person into what he is today.

Each day that goes by helps to add to his new spiritual life. I would like all of us to remember that God is waiting for each of us. He has already made his move, He is now waiting for us to make the next move which is accepting Him into our lives. I am thoroughly convinced that each one of us has to have a spiritual experience of our own. We may not be able to recall the exact time it happened, but we will know because we will come to love God more each day of our lives. Please don't think that after you have a spiritual experience like this, that it is all that's necessary, because actually this is just the beginning of our new life with Christ.

Perhaps you are wondering how I could possibly know so much of the details about this person I have talked about. It's possible because the person I'm talking about is myself.

What kind of a church member are you?

Delivered 5/26/63

What kind of a church member are you? This morning I would like for each of us to take a good look at ourselves in regards to our church membership. When we joined the Central Bridge Methodist Church we took certain vows. Let each of us turn to our hymnals on page 543 and I will read the vows we took. These vows are important and if we didn't realize this at the time we joined the church, we should realize it now. Usually when we take a look at ourselves, we like to have someone or something to measure our performance with.

This morning we can measure or compare ourselves with the four men in our scripture reading who brought the lame and paralyzed man to Jesus to be healed. These four men possessed certain qualities in their characters which I believe we as Christians should possess in our lives. These qualities are conviction, concern, and confidence. I'm sure that all of us have at least one of these qualities, but I'm also sure none of us have all of them.

If we have conviction, it means we are in a state of being free from doubt. We have a belief in something that cannot be shaken and regardless of the consequences we will still hold on to our belief. This is real conviction. I'm sure you will agree with me that these four men were convinced that Jesus could heal this paralyzed friend. Regardless of the consequence to themselves, they were determined to get him to Jesus. The crowd was so huge they could get no where's near the door of the house. They removed part of the roof and let their friend down to Jesus on a pallet so that He could heal him. Their conviction was so strong that it stirred up hope within their friend. Hope that Jesus could heal him and make him well.

I wonder how many of us have this same sort of conviction today? Do we truly believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and has the right to forgive sins? Do we believe that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior?

Am I willing to make a personal sacrifice for my Lord? I'm convinced if we can answer yes to these questions we do truly have their same sort of conviction. However, I for one am sure that I have a long way to go before I can answer yes to all of these questions. But I also know that if I have truly accepted Jesus Christ in my heart, He will help and guide me to live a Christian Life.

We have to know what we believe and we have to be convinced of what we believe. Otherwise the first strong wind will blow our beliefs away. We have to be convinced that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior. We can be convinced of this only after we have had a spiritual experience with God. This spiritual experience with God is a conversion from our normal life to a spiritual life with God in which we realize that God must come first because He is the provider of all things. So when we have this kind of conviction we are starting to fulfill the first part of our vows for church membership.

The four men in our scripture reading this morning were concerned; concerned for their paralyzed friend. Their concern was great and deep, otherwise they would not have gone to all the trouble they did to get him to Jesus, where they knew he would be healed. They were concerned enough about their friend to do something about it besides talking.

I wonder how many of us are concerned for people outside of our families? Do we care if our neighbor is out of work and has no means of supporting his family? Yes I know we have a county welfare agency that takes care of these situations. I believe this is one thing that is wrong with our country today. We have all kinds of agencies in our government that takes care of all kinds of situations because we as individuals don't want to be bothered with them. We would rather pay for those kinds of services through increased taxes. In other words, we can stand to pay more taxes as long as we don't have to be inconvenienced. Don't get me wrong, I feel that our welfare department is essential and necessary but as Christians we have an obligation to help our fellow men.

Too many of us are willing to let other people take our responsibility.

Do you think we should be concerned because over half of the people in this world go to sleep each night without enough food to eat and without a roof over their heads? If the people that are hungry were lined up in single file, they would encircle the earth 25 times. Should we say, well, that's thousands of miles away and besides, what can we do about it? Did you ever stop to think that we belong to one of the biggest church's in the world and that we have missionaries all over the world trying to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people? I think we need to stop and look at these situations when we say we don't have enough money in our treasury to meet our "World Service" agendas. This is the primary responsibility of any church and when we stop contributing to world missions then I feel we should re-evaluate ourselves. Most of us cannot physically be in India, China or Africa to help these people so the only way we can help in the spreading of the gospel is through our world service and through prayers.

There are many areas of concern for Christians. One of the other ones is our young people. We hear about all the trouble our young people get into. We deplore these incidents we hear about. We talk about them but what do we do to help eliminate them? One of the worst conditions we hear about is teenage girls becoming pregnant before they even finish high school. We are the people who are living in this society today. If we can do nothing to improve it, then I don't know who can. We have no one to blame except ourselves.

We are concerned because our young people do not come to Sunday School or church or participate in our youth fellowship group. We are deeply concerned, but what do we ever do about it except talk? Did we ever stop to think about the purpose of our Sunday School? We certainly don't have one just because other church's do or because it's the right thing to do. Our Sunday school is a training ground in the Word of God for our children and adults. You will notice I said adults too because this is true. We are struggling at the present time to keep our adult section going because of a lack of interested people. Sunday school is not just for children. It is for all of us. First of all, we should set an example for our children by attending Sunday school ourselves.

How can we expect them to go if we aren't willing to attend ourselves? If we are concerned for our Sunday school, why not attend it and support it? We always have a need for teachers and leaders. This is your church, your children, your lives and I believe we each have an obligation to take some of the responsibilities that go along with church membership. You don't have to wait for someone to ask you. Don't be afraid to volunteer.

Concern for something or a situation means nothing unless we do something about it. We need action along with concern. Today we need the same kind of concern for other people and situations as the four men had for their paralyzed friend. With this type of concern we can fulfill more of our church membership vows.

These four men had complete confidence in Jesus, that He would heal their paralyzed friend. What confidence it was! In other words, they had faith in God, that Jesus was the Son of God and had the power to forgive sins and to heal.

When we have real faith we have complete confidence in someone or something even though there is no physical proof or evidence in what we have faith in. These four men certainly must have had faith because our scripture says "when Jesus saw their faith, He turned to the paralytic and said, my son, your sins are forgiven." The key here is "faith" and this is true in all of the miracles Jesus performed. If a person has faith his sins can be forgiven and he can be healed.

What kind of faith do we have? Do we believe regardless of what happens God is supreme and that everything will turn out for the best? Sometimes we have the mistaken idea that when we truly accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior everything will be rosy, and that is all we have to do to obtain a life full of joy and happiness. Then something tragic happens in our lives, such as the losing of a loved one. If we cling to this mistaken idea, our faith will soon be shattered. We actually hate God for taking our loved one. We don't understand this situation. If we can understand that our Christian life just begins with the acceptance of Jesus Christ in our lives and that Christian people do have problems, sorrow and grief and because of their faith in Jesus Christ they are able to overcome these problems and situations and to come

out of these situations with a stronger faith.

Our faith can be as deep or as shallow as we want to make it. Our faith is like the seed in the “parable of the sower.” If we say we believe in Jesus Christ because others say it and we want to conform to what others say, then our faith is very shallow and it can be lost very easily (over the least little thing). Our faith can be deeper, like the seed sown on rocky ground but when something tragic happens in our lives our faith is gone because the roots of our faith are not deep enough to last. Our faith can also be like the seed sown in good soil with deep roots where nothing can shake it loose. The latter kind of faith is what we need to be good Christians and good church members.

Faith cannot be bought. It cannot be earned. All of the education in the world will not give us the kind of faith we need. We have to humble ourselves before God, ask for forgiveness of our sins (because we know we have sinned) and ask for guidance and direction in our lives. When we have had such a spiritual experience with God we are on the way to building the kind of faith that cannot be shaken regardless of what happens.

We have now discussed three qualities we as Christians and church members have to measure ourselves, “conviction, concern and confidence.” We have to measure ourselves in the presence of God, no one else can do this. What kind of a church member are you?

(Added for sermon at Hunters land Methodist Church on 9/15/63)

Often times we become quite concerned because our young people don't attend the church worship service and other affairs of the church. We are deeply concerned, but what do we ever do about it except talk? I think any church should think about the purpose of any organization it has. Certainly organizations aren't focused because other churches have them or because someone thinks it would be nice to have. Each organization should have a Christ-like purpose that will further the work of the individual church.

However, I do believe that each church should have a Sunday school with classes for children, youth and adults.

After all, the purpose of the Sunday School is to teach future and present members of the church the Word of God. If we are going to have future members, we are the ones that are responsible for training them, no one else is going to do it for us. Very frankly I believe that Sunday School is more important than church worship service. Adults can certainly benefit greatly from Sunday School too. I believe that we feel that Sunday School is just for children. We definitely have the wrong conception of Sunday School. Adults need to attend Sunday School if merely to set an example for our children.

If there are people in the congregation who are concerned because there is no Sunday School , then they should be willing to help get one started.

Pastoral Prayer 5/26/63

O' God, our heavenly Father, fill our hearts with thy Holy Spirit. Enrich our lives so that we can serve thee more fully. Our Father, we are thankful for life itself, for our families, for our health, for our jobs, for our food, for our houses. O' God the list of blessings is endless. We pray that we may never forget that these blessings are only possible through thy love and grace. O' Lord we pray that you will forgive us for the sins we have committed. O' God we always seem to fall short of thy goal for us. Forgive us and help us to become better Christians each day.

O' God we pray for this church, for this congregation. We pray that thou will bless each of us. Help each of us to truly understand what it means to be a Christian and a member of the church. We pray that thou will help this church to have compassion for other people, Christian outreach for those that need thy love and concern and help us to look further than our own Church. Help us to realize that our purpose is the same as any other church, the spreading of thy Gospel to all people. Our Father, we pray that peace will come to this earth but we know that this same peace has to come to each of our hearts first and this can only be possible through the acceptance of thee in our own hearts.

Bless our former Pastor and his family, we pray that he may truly preach thy Word in his new parish as he did here. Bless the Pastor that is coming to us O' God. Help each of us to have the proper understanding and guidance. Bless and guide us in this service of worship.

Religion in the home

Delivered 12/19/62

Today, the modern family is struggling against great difficulties. The tensions that are caused by various outside influences tends to uproot our families and puts us to some very great tests. I believe, it therefore follows that something additional is needed in each family to help overcome there difficulties and help us meet these situations with courage, strength and faith.

I sincerely believe that active religion in the home is essential. Religion and the family just naturally belong together. What religion is to accomplish it can do best in the family. What the family must do, it cannot do without religion.

I feel that we can best approach this subject by discussing and trying to answer these three questions.

1. What is religion in the home?
2. Is it necessary to have religion in the home?
3. What can we do to promote religion in our home?

First, what is religion in the home? We usually connect religion with reading the Bible, praying to God together, and saying Grace at meals. I believe that this is essential and good and we definitely should do this together as families, but I also believe the religion in the home should consist not only of these items but many other things as well. As a family , we should be doing things together. Our family should have a feeling of oneness and of togetherness. In many of our modern homes both the father and the mother are working. I know that in some cases it is necessary for both to work in order to provide the family with the necessities of life. I also know that in a good many other cases both parents work to increase their material possessions and thereby increase their social standing and prestige. Today many of us tend to place more importance on material things rather than spiritual. In a good many cases the oldest child in the family is left to baby sit and to do the various chores around the house while mom and dad go some place, or while they are working. In some families the father goes one direction while the mother goes in the opposite direction. Did you ever stop to think of the things that could happen at home while mom and dad are out enjoying themselves. It's true that some of these things could happen while the parents are home, but a mature person can act much more calmly and swiftly than an immature one , thus to avoid some of the tragedies that happen in the home every year. How can we say that the home has a family in it if the parents are never there, and if days go by without the whole family being together. Certainly no problems can be discussed or no decisions made unless the whole family is together. I believe that religion in the home is doing things together as a family, things that

We certainly should be attending Sunday School and church as a family.

Our second question is “Is it necessary to have religion in the home?” I know the answer to this question is “yes”, especially in our modern society today. There are many outside influences that affect our families and their relationship to each other. I definitely believe there are more such influences today than there were twenty five years ago. A few of these outside influences are television, automobiles, the world situation in general and the shifting of the population from one location to another because of job opportunities. Even though there are many advantages to television such as educational benefits, there are many disadvantages such as the type of programs that our children watch (murder, drunkenness, etc) It also tends to take away our conversations with each other within the family and we find that we don't have time to read good books. Automobiles have become to be a necessity to many families because of the locations where they live. But the teenager lives for the day when he or she becomes sixteen and he can learn to drive. The automobile has a definite influence on each family. The tense world situation definitely influences the family because the young man has to prepare himself for serving in the armed forces and regardless of what plans are made this is a must. When a family has to sell out and move because dad has to go where he can get a job and support his family, this tends to disrupt the family because new friends have to be made and usually the family has entirely different surroundings. With these many outside influences each family needs something basic in their lives, such as their religion which will help them keep on the right path. What better way or what better place for a family to meet new friends than at church. This is where the influence of the church is really felt.

I think in order to answer our question “Is it necessary to have religion in the home?” we should consider a few more facts we are facing in this country today. What about the increase in the divorce rate, the increase in number of unwed mothers, increase in number of alcoholic and dope addicts, the increase in juvenile delinquency and the lessening of our moral standards in general. As Christians we sit back and we say we deplore these conditions and yet what are we doing to eliminate them?

If we look at each one of these conditions we can plainly see they originate from the individual family. Naturally if our children see us as parents doing something, they feel that it must be alright. We as parents definitely set an example for our children. What do children think of parents who get a divorce? What do children think of parents that come home drunk? Do children have respect for parents that permit them to stay out all hours of the night not knowing where they are or whom they are with? Naturally our children are going to run wild if they have no guidance from us as parents. We expect our communities, our public schools and our churches to provide entertainment for our children but we are not willing to participate ourselves, not willing to take an interest, not willing to help in these programs.

I think we tend to let our children come and go as they please with guidance. If we have no religion in our homes, our children don't have anything basic to rely upon. They don't know the meaning of responsibility, the meaning of love and concern. They can never learn why we should be helping those that are less fortunate than we are.

In the time of crisis where a member of the family becomes seriously ill or dies, the rest of the family has nothing to lean on. They cannot possibly understand the meaning and need for suffering. In other words, if we aren't willing to teach our children anything we cannot expect them to know anything.

We are great people to sit back and criticize those who do spend their time teaching in our Sunday Schools, but are we willing to spend any of our time to help teach or to even attend Sunday School ourselves? Many of us are not willing to make sure our children attend regularly or to do their lessons before class. All of us need to work with our church in this area because we usually only receive one hour of religious instruction in Sunday School per week. It therefore follows that religious instruction in our homes is important. Our children will get out of Sunday School exactly what we as adults are willing to put into it. After all, the future members of the church or any church are its young people.

I believe that this country or any other country cannot hope to survive unless the individual families are willing to sacrifice some of their leisure time and material possessions to stress the importance of spiritual life in the home. The survival of any nation depends upon the life of each individual person in that nation. History has proven that any nation that isn't on the side of the Lord cannot possibly survive.

Finally, let us consider the last question, "What can we do to promote religion in our homes? First of all, I believe we have to place our religion ahead of everything else in our lives. We have to believe and we have to feel that our religion is more important than material possessions and social prestige. If we say we believe in Jesus Christ then we have to place Him first in our lives. Instead of just saying we believe something (saying it with our lips,) we have to show other people what we believe by our actions and our lives. In other words, we have to start practicing what we are preaching about. We need to set an example by our everyday living.

We desperately need to set an example for our children. Our children look to us as being perfect and anything we do is good to them. This is why we should be doing the right things and living the right kind of lives. We should be practicing our religion seven days a week instead of one or two hours on Sunday. We need to practice our religion in our businesses, in our work, and in our social

events. If we believe something and we think it is right then we should practice it regardless of where we are or what we are doing. In some instances we can make compromises, but when it comes to our religion and our beliefs there are no compromises.

Our children need to be taught the love of Jesus Christ. They need to know why we should be concerned and show compassion for other people who are less fortunate than most of us. They need to be taught responsibility which will help themselves as well as others around them. They need to be taught why Jesus Christ came into the world and why He died for our sins and why He rose again. They need to understand, as we do, the promise of eternal life. Our children need to know that Christmas is more than a Christmas tree and more than receiving gifts. They need to know the true meaning of Easter, that it is more than Easter eggs and the Easter bunny.

However, I feel that if each of us will ponder over these three questions on our “religion in the home” and try to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, we can make our religion more meaningful for ourselves and our families. Religion is important in each home, especially at this time in our world. Believing in God and relying on God for our strength, guidance and comfort is the only salvation we have.

I would like to close by reading this hymn;

Happy is the home when God is there,
and love fills every breast;
when one their wish and one their prayer,
and one their heavenly rest.

Happy is the home when Jesus' name is sweet to every ear;
where children early praise His fame,
and parents hold Him dear.

Happy is the home where prayer is heard,
and praise is given to rise;
where parents love the sacred Word
and all its wisdom Prize.

Lord, let us in our homes agree
the blessed peace to gain;
reunite our hearts in love to thee,
and love to all will reign.

The call of wisdom

Delivery date unknown

The book of Proverbs which is a book of wisdom, calls upon all men to use their common sense. I'm sure that all of us agree that we need more and more people using common sense today. It calls us to use "prudence". Prudence is defined as "ability to regulate and discipline oneself through the exercise of reason."

Prudential wisdom is the wisdom of what is sometimes called "common sense". Prudence is the exact opposite of folly, the complete disregard of facts. The dullness of mind that will not learn the lessons that are quite obvious on the surface of life. In other words, prudence is wisdom governed by experience. It seems that none of us really believe the experience of others, we don't seem to benefit from other people's experiences. We love to find out for ourselves, which is usually the hard way. However, the book of Proverbs tells us the wise do benefit by the experience of other in the fact and that we should follow their wisdom today.

If we read the book of Proverbs we will find many expressions of common sense. Here are a few of their sayings:

1. "Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit."
2. "The simple believe everything, but the prudent looks where he is going".
3. "He who keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble".
4. "Partiality in judging another is not good".

This book not only issues a proclamation and cries out a call, but it issues a warning as expressed in these verses:

"Because I have called and you refused to listen, I have stretched out my hand and no one has needed, because you have ignored all my counsel. I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you like a storm. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; They will seek me diligently but will not find me".

Each one of us can make a partial list of our stupidities, but I suppose we are too near ourselves to make a complete list. Actually, all of us give some attention to the development of prudence. As we practice life we try to attain some sort of skill that we feel will help us to develop prudence. All of us have our slogans and mottos, rules and principles which we try to follow. Wisdom calls to the heart of man on a higher level.

"Proverbs" calls upon the prudence of man to exercise moral wisdom.

1. "Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil."
2. "Why should you be infatuated, my son, with a loose woman? For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord."
3. "Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth is full of gravel."
4. "False scales are not good."
5. "He who pursues righteousness and kindness will find life and honor."

Prudential wisdom is rooted in moral wisdom. If we make money under false pretences or by cheating someone else, the money will do us no good. In our business dealings we know it is morally wrong to deceive someone. We are morally obligated to our customers, our employees, to our business competitors and to ourselves. Recently we have had a good example of this by the price fixing by large companies. I do not think it is necessary to dwell on this point as we all know the results of what happened.

Morally, as employees of any company, we are obligated to give our companies a fair days work. I think each one of us should think about this obligation and make sure in our own minds we are doing the right thing.

We should also consider the moral living standards of our country today. Consider for a moment the ever increasing divorce rate. Marriage is supposed to be sacred and holy. Consider the increase each year of unwed mothers in this country. What are we doing about it? This seems to be the fashionable thing now-a-days. I think we all know the answer to whether it is or not. Also consider the number of persons that are killed each year in automobile accidents of which a big percentage is caused by drinking drivers. I think we need to consider this moral condition and I think we need to do something about it. I feel that truly seeking Jesus Christ in each one of our lives is the first step. You know there is more to being a Christian than just saying we are a Christian. We have to start living Christ-like lives.

If we try to succeed in our lives by lying about other people then this is morally wrong. Of course we all know people who have succeeded or at least they seem to have succeeded and we say what's the use of being morally right with ourselves and other people? Maybe these kinds of people will prosper for a time, but eventually things will start to go wrong and these immoral things they have done will come back to haunt them.

The freedom which men enjoy, especially in our country, makes it all the more necessary for us to heed this call of wisdom.

For example, freedom of speech should be the possession of truth-telling people. It should be based upon the simple morality of the commandment “Thou shalt not bear false witness.”

The place of man in his community and his nation in the family of nations calls for man and the nation to exercise the moral wisdom stated in the commandment “thou shalt not covet.”

This wisdom that deals with the moral basis of life, looks upon evil not simply as a mistake which a wise man would avoid, but as sin which perverts the depravers very nature. This wisdom sees that life is built on law. So if we break this law, punishment from the outside is only part of the result, for to break this law of our own life is to sin against our own nature and wrong our own self.

The book of Proverbs calls upon the prudence of men to exercise religious wisdom too. It not only calls out for prudence and morality but for true religion. This might be called theological wisdom. The dividing lines in this book are not sharp—prudential wisdom and moral wisdom waver into theological.

Wisdom is here set forth not only as a law but as a person—not a law to be adhered to, but a person to be loved and followed and obeyed. A person who loves those that love Him and is found of those that seek Him. This is actually God speaking to us as He says “Unto you O’ men I call and my voice is to the prudence of men.”

We can readily see how the Father of the Christian church used this eighth chapter of Proverbs to illustrate their thought about Christ, the Word of God, the incarnate wisdom and we can see how they should apply to Christ the beautiful Words of this passage “I love them that love me and they that seek me early shall find me. Who so ever findeth me findeth life and shall obtain favor of the Lord.

The call of wisdom to the sons of men is the call of common sense and reason; it is the call of the moral law; it is the call of God, He that sinned against me wronged his own soul; all that hate me love death.”

There are many ways that we can gain wisdom. First of all we can gain wisdom by reverent and intelligent use of the bible. We need to seek God’s guidance for help in understanding the bible. We certainly cannot understand it by reading it alone. Study is needed. Secondly, we can gain wisdom by using our common sense and learning from other people’s experience. They say that experience is the best teacher but if someone else has gone through an experience we should be able to learn from it.

As things happen to us in our daily lives we can hear the voice of wisdom speaking to us. We should take time to listen and to heed its advice. God is willing to speak to us and to guide us if we take the time to listen and hear.

In the book of Job there is a verse that has this to say about the vulture—"there is a path which the eye of the vulture hath not." The vulture has marvelous vision but it is only looking for something to satisfy its appetite and that makes it blind to everything else. The truth behind this is, we cannot find wisdom if our eye is blinded by our own advantage of self interest. In Boston stands a likeness of Phillips Brooks, that great preacher whose presence on the street reminded men of Jesus Christ. Behind Brooks the shadow of Christ is seen as if He were looking over Brooks' shoulder or whispering in his ear. This reminds me of the saying in Isaiah "Your ears shall hear a word behind you saying, This is the way, walk in it."

Can you hear the voice of wisdom whispering in your ear? Do you know the way and are you walking in it?

The mightiest force in the world

Delivered 8/19/62

Matthew 6:5 says “Jesus said, And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites.”

What is the mightiest force in the world? Most of us today would say that electric energy is the mightiest force. I believe as most Christians do, that prayer is the mightiest force in our world. As Christians we know and believe through prayer many marvelous and wonderful things can and do happen.

As Christians I believe we should know all there is to know about this mighty force and power. I have some suggestions which I believe will help us in our prayer life.

Prayer is our response to God. Because God loves us so much, He has created us and everything in the world. Through our daily experiences God takes the first step by trying to attract us to Him. The second step is our responding to God through prayer. This is the same as a person loving another person. The first person needs the second to respond to him. Likewise it is with God and us.

If we think for a moment of all of the good things in our lives that we are not responsible for, such as; our life, our family, our health, our work, our friends, we can plainly see that we are not responsible for them, God is. Next if we think of all the evil things in our lives such as; sickness, death of loved ones, failures, we can see that everything that we consider evil in our lives, God permits. Can you point to any evil in your life that is permitted by God for a special purpose? If your answer to either or both questions is yes, then that is exactly where God is touching you now. It is from this place that you can turn to God in response to Him. This is the beginning of a personal relationship which is started by God and which continues as you come to know and love and serve Him.

Our next step in prayer is to be ourselves and start where we are now. We can't go backwards and correct the past. We have to start from where we are. Be natural before God. Do not pretend because God knows our every thought inside and out. The important thing is to tell God exactly how you feel; whether it be thankful or bitter for something we feel God is responsible for.

Most people pray because they want peace of mind, power of mind so that you can accept life. You want to be calm when the going gets rough. You want to be able to accept things the way they are when they come. If this is your need, ask God to help you.

You may be looking for “power of living.” Your life has gone this far and you have run out of gas.

You have become bored with life and life has no meaning for you. If this is your need, ask God to help you.

Perhaps you may have a guilty feeling because of something you did in earlier years; such as hurting someone else. You need to be forgiven. God will forgive you and make you clean if you turn to Him and ask for forgiveness.

Actually, we all have difficulty in life because of our separation from God. The separation we have with God is our sin. Once we confess our sin, God takes it away and then we are right with Him. Once we have been made clean then we have the keys to peace of mind and power of living.

Thus our first three prayers are: "O' God help me" or "O' God help someone I love"; the second should be: "O' God forgive me" and our third should be: "O' God, thank you".

Sure we have come this far and know what we are praying for, it would be well to continue with "when to pray". It makes little or no difference when you pray as long as you pick a time and stick to it. Some people pray best in the morning just after rising. Their minds are clear and they can concentrate more fully on God. Other people prefer to pray just before going to bed at night. This leaves their last thoughts before going to sleep with God. Actually the time is not important as long as we stick to the one we choose.

"Where to pray" - The same rule applies here as it does with when to pray. The spot is not important but rather stick to that spot. We should pick a spot that is quiet where we can talk with God alone and not be disturbed. Of course, a natural, quiet place for prayer is in the church but that does not mean we can only pray here, for that is not true. We can pray to God wherever we may be. In our scripture lesson, Jesus tells us to enter into a closet and pray to our Father in secret.

"How to pray"- You should pray in your most natural and comfortable position, whether it be standing, sitting, kneeling or lying down. It makes no difference to God and the important thing is to be comfortable. When we are comfortable we are more at ease and it is easier for us to carry on a conversation with God. The words you use to carry on this conversation with God should be simple and your own.

As you continue in your prayer life, you might run into a time when you seem to be repeating yourself and your prayer seems to have little meaning. You seem to run out of phrases and words to say. When this happens, I suggest you read some prayers of other people who have walked with God. These prayers, when made over into your own words can be of a real help to you.

There are five basic kinds of prayers".

First is the prayer of adoration; this is a prayer where we tell God we love Him. We actually should thank God for God. We can adore God through prayers, words, moods and wisdom.

Second is the prayer of thanksgiving; here we thank God for what He does. We should think about the good things in our lives that we are not responsible for and thank God for them. We should ask God to help us accept the bad things in our lives as well as the good, and try to help correct them.

Third is the prayer of confession; in this type of prayer we should confess to God the sins in our lives and ask God for forgiveness. Actually, when we talk of sin, we should consider sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit.

Sins of the flesh are such things as eating too much, drinking too much, or committing an act of sexual immorality. Sins of the spirit are things such as anger which we don't control, or have so much pride we are afraid to admit our mistakes.

We should not fail to recognize both types of sins within ourselves. It is possible to correct one type of sin in our lives and let the other type go by unrecognized. For example, we could go on a diet and thus correct the sin of eating too much. One night you find yourself at a banquet. You have corrected your sin of eating too much but the person next to you has not. You say to yourself, I am better than them because I can control my eating and he cannot. As Christians we cannot afford to be complacent or self-satisfied with ourselves.

Fourth is the prayer of intercession; In this prayer we pray for others. We all have friends and we know their needs and desires in many situation. We should ask God to help them. When we pray for others we should expect the very best to happen to them. You should be specific as to the other person's name and needs. We should be persistent in our prayers (not just offer a prayer once for a person and then forget it). God does not always answer our prayers the way we feel they should be answered, but He answers them in a way He feels is best. Therefore, we should pray "that thy will be done" as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane.

We should remember, we are praying to a God that loves these people more than we do and He has the will to straighten out any situation no matter how dark it may seem to us.

Fifth is the prayer of petition; this is a prayer for ourselves. We can ask God for our needs as well as the needs of others and thus everything that I have said about intercessory prayer can be said about the prayer of petition. We should end our prayers by asking God to help us as He sees fit.

These then are the five foundation stones of prayer; 1. "O' God, I love you." 2. "O' God I thank you for..." 3. "O' God, I am sorry for..." 4. "O' God, please help." 5. "O' God, not my will, but thine be done."

Actually, there is more to prayer than just saying our prayers. People who do not advance beyond this point become discouraged and bogged down.

There are three types of prayers. First are prayers that we think. To think a prayer is to use your mind and direct it toward God. This is sometimes called meditation. This is to worship God fully. Second are prayers that we feel. This involves your emotions in your relationship to God. When you think about God in anyway, your emotions are involved. For example; remembering God's gifts, we are happy, reminded of our failures, we are ashamed and we tell God we are sorry. While we are praying and if our emotions are affected, we can express our feelings to God through words.

Third are prayers that you will. This is to direct your will to God whatever your feelings are. If we rely on our feeling 100% we can be led astray because one day we may feel very close to God and the next day we may feel far away from Go. Thus our feelings change day by day. The important question is, "Do we want God with us?" This has to do with our will. This is the reason that the prayers we will are the most important. Actually, although I have separated these three types of prayers, they are interwoven.

Many of us say we are too busy to pray. We can't take the time. We should learn to pray in and through our business and activities. We need to keep God present in our lives no matter where we are or what we are doing. We should make God the most important part of our lives. Remember, God knows our every thought and He is present with us always.

If we are to progress in our prayer life, we need aids to help us. By reading the bible we can find the living word of God. There are all kinds of commentaries to help us understand the bible more fully. We can also read the experiences of other people who have walked with God. Today many good books on Christian beliefs and faith are available.

Another way for us to progress in our prayer life is to join a prayer group. A prayer group is a group of Christian people who meet together at regular intervals to study the bible, discuss their Christian experiences and pray for themselves and others and situations that they know exist and need praying for. there are many examples of the effectiveness of prayer groups.

Family prayer in which all members of the family pray together is a good way for each member of the family to increase their spiritual life.

If we respond to God by prayer, and we know this is what we should do, then it is up to us individually to see to it that we take the time to pray. With the many temptations in our world, it is easy to stray from the goals we have set for

Ourselves, but with God's help we can and will make it.

Indeed prayer is the most powerful and mightiest force in the world. If we truly believe and have faith in God our prayers will be answered. With the many tense situations in our world and country today, prayer, I believe is the only answer. Just think if each Christian in the world would take a few minutes to pray each day what a difference there would be. I start each day with prayer. It helps me to get through the day calmly. It gives me guidance and direction. I firmly believe God helps those for whom I pray also.

Use prayer as response to God to bring good into your lives and the lives of those for whom you pray.

Indeed we cannot, if we want our prayers to be effective, pray like the hypocrites. We have to be sincere and honest with God and pray as Jesus taught us to pray. Try prayer in your life and I guarantee you will see the difference.

A new beginning for your life

Scripture reference— Romans 8:9-18

Delivered 6/2/63

Some people will say they don't need a new beginning for their life. "My life is going along alright the way it is, why should I wish to have it changed now?" Regardless of this feeling, there are several reasons why people do want or need a new beginning for their lives.

First of all, some of us may feel that we have failed as parents. Maybe our children haven't turned out exactly the way we as parents feel they should have turned out. Maybe our children didn't choose the career we felt were best for them. Maybe they aren't raising our grandchildren the way we feel they should. Maybe we had great expectations for our children and very few of these actually came to pass. We feel that we have failed as parents in raising our children and even setting an example for them. We feel that we need a new beginning for our lives.

Secondly, Maybe some of us have a guilty conscience for something we did to someone else years ago. For example, maybe we pushed someone aside or overrode someone in our work so that we could better ourselves. Maybe we feel that at that time we set our Christian ideals aside for personal gain and we knew that this wasn't right. We want to start life anew.

Third, maybe some of us really did accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior years ago but we never did anything about it. We have sort of forgotten what acceptance of Christ in our lives means or actually is. We would like to start a new life because we knew the old one just does not satisfy our inward feelings. To have accepted something in our lives or to believe something actually means nothing when we have done or are doing nothing about our acceptance or beliefs.

Fourth, the way my life is now seems to have no meaning. I seem to be searching for something that I cannot reach. My life, the way it is, is meaningless. I actually do not care what happens. I'm not concerned for other people or situations I know about. But still in my heart I know I should be concerned and I should care. I need to find Jesus Christ and He has to make a difference in my life. I do want a new beginning for my life.

Fifth, I go to Sunday School and church each week. I join in all the activities of my church. I help wherever I am needed. I feel that I am a good church member, that I am a good person. But there is something I can't understand, nothing happens to me in a worship service. I take communion because it's part of the

I do need a new beginning for my life.

Sixth, I believe that our young people feel quite often that a new beginning would help them. They are called on, especially today, to make decisions in their lives. For example, the problem of social drinking has to be faced by our youth. Maybe they feel that their parents have been too strict about this and still they don't want to conform to what other people are doing. Of course I can say that social drinking or any kind of drinking isn't keeping with our beliefs. However I do believe that each person has to decide this for himself. So our young people are challenged with making many decisions that will affect their lives. They don't want to conform to what other people are doing but still they want to be right. They do need a new beginning for their lives.

I believe that a new beginning is possible. It is possible if it is with God. God can help each of us to make a new beginning in our lives. If a man is in Christ and committed his life to Christ, united with Christ through his absolute trust in his truth and love, he becomes a new person altogether—the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new. This is how each of us can make a new beginning in our lives.

There is a power available to make us actually more than we are or ever hoped to be. This power will give us new confidence, courage and loveableness, with a deep peace at the center. By this power we really come to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves in our scripture reading this morning Paul says "therefore, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creature; the old has passed away, behold the new has come." And again in 2 Corinthians Paul says "For if a man is in Christ he becomes a new person altogether, the past is finished and gone, everything has become fresh and new."

How do we make contact with this power? The only answer is prayer. Prayer is a means of making contact and talking with God. Our prayers are our response to God. Prayer is not a method of using God, but rather a means of conversing with God. Prayer is the soul's response to God. Prayer is cooperation with God who desires to cooperate with us.

How shall we pray so that the power of God can change our lives and give us a new beginning? How can we experience the reality behind that almost impossible claim, that if a person is "in Christ" he becomes a new person altogether with the past finished and gone, everything becomes new and fresh? This experience I'm talking about is conversion. A conversion in our life involves a drastic change in our beliefs. At least I would say it is drastic if we put Jesus Christ first in our lives. If Christ isn't first in our lives, He may as well be last because anything that isn't first takes the back seat.

If we are interested in a new beginning for our lives, then the first step has been accomplished. First we have to want and know that we do need a new beginning. Secondly, we have to realize that this new beginning can only come from God through the power of prayer that we can have with Him. I believe that next we have to “be still and know that there is a God.” We are always so busy that even if we do take time to pray we are in such a hurry that we cannot do anything but offer our prayer. We don’t have time to stop and listen to God for a moment. Maybe this is why we say our prayers never get answered. Maybe if we stopped long enough to listen to God, He would give us guidance and direction.

Some people say that it isn’t necessary to be quiet to pray to God and I believe that this is true. I believe that we can think about a situation and refer it to God while we are working, while we are driving or while we are resting or eating or whatever we are doing. However, I also know that we each need a quiet time in our lives when we can be alone with God, when we can meditate with Him, when we can listen to what He has to say to us. God wants and deserves a little of our attention.

When we come before God in prayer we have to be honest with Him and with ourselves. We shouldn’t just say “God forgive me for the sins I have committed.” If we are going to clear our souls and our consciences we need to be specific as to what the sins are. We have to mention them by name so that God knows we truly want to be forgiven and start life anew. If we ever are honest in our lives it should be at this time because honesty and sincerity in what we are doing are important. We have to be willing to accept God’s forgiveness of the sins we have committed. From that very moment our life will be changed. The past will be laid aside and your life will start anew. Don’t dwell on the past. Your sins have been forgiven and you are a better person for admitting your mistakes and wanting forgiveness.

The next step is to thank God for the gift of forgiveness. Do you realize how thankful we must be for this gift? If God couldn’t forgive us for the sins we commit, I’m afraid there wouldn’t be very many of us going to heaven. But God can forgive us. He knows that we are human and we do make mistakes and it’s wonderful to go before God and confess our sins and know that God has forgiven us.

Each one of us have many things to be thankful for. Whatever it might be, let God know that you are thankful by actually naming your blessings and thanking Him for them. Just start naming your blessings and you will become amazed at the number of blessings you have to be thankful for. I also know that all of life is not easy. There are hardships, sorrows, grief, and disappointments. Through prayer with God He will give us the strength and courage to go through these troubled

Times and to come out of these situations with more faith than we had when we started.

As human beings we all have certain needs, I believe that we have a right to ask God for what we need. We all know the needs of our families, our friends, our neighbors. We should ask God to fulfill these needs according to His will. God's Will should always prevail and be supreme. When we pray we should pray that "Thy Will be done" or furnish our needs according to thy Will.

We need to be persistent in our prayers. We can't expect God to answer our prayers the first time we pray. It's very possible that God won't answer our prayers, at least in the way we feel they should be answered. He naturally won't acknowledge them or answer them if we are not sincere and truly mean what we are saying.

Probably one of the most important thing is to pray to God each day. We need to pray daily so God can give us daily help and guidance. We can't pray when we feel like it and when every other source of help has failed. We have to pray daily.

Through daily, meaningful prayer, lives have had a new beginning. You can have a new beginning for life if you are willing to spend a few minutes each day in conversation with God. Try it and see how God can change your life through prayer.

Pastoral Prayer 6/2/63

Almighty God, Our heavenly Father and creator of all things, how wonderful are thy creations. For this thy day we are thankful. Help us to rejoice in what thou has created for us. Our Father we need to appreciate what surrounds us, what we have instead of being uneasy and dissatisfied.

We pray that thy Holy Spirit may be present with us here this day and that it may guide and direct us in this worship service.

O' God, we pray for the leaders of all the countries of this world. We pray that they may truly turn to thee for guidance and direction in making the decisions they must make.

We pray for the church universal and that someday we may be able to be together as one. Our Father we pray for all those that need your help this day, especially those that are sick. Heal them and make them well if that be thy will.

O' God, we pray that thy will help us to become better Christians each day. We pray that each of us may truly accept thee in our hearts and in our lives. Help us O' God to work together for the spreading of thy Gospel to people everywhere on the earth.

Help us O' God to remember those that are hungry in the world, those that don't have a place to stay at night.

Our Father, help us to share some of our abundance with those people. O' God, we have so many blessings and we take so much for granted that we truly are sinful the way we abuse those things which thou has given us. O' God, we do have so many things that we are thankful to thee for. We pray that we may be able to name our blessings before thee and to know that they are only possible through thy love and grace.

Our Father, we realize that we are sinners. We are sorry for the sins we have committed. Please forgive us and make us clean so that we may start our lives anew.

Guide and direct our every thought. In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior we pray. Amen

Is God Good?
Delivered 8/26/62

How can we say that God is good? Not only say it but feel it and believe it? With all the suffering in the world, with all the wars that have occurred with thousands of people being killed, how can we say God is good? How could a good God create a world with so much suffering in it?

I'm sure that each one of us at some time in our lives has asked this question. I'm sure that we have asked the question when something tragic has happened to us. Especially when a loved one has passed away or when we have been stricken with a disease or when we have lost our job or when our house has burned to the ground. You will notice all of these tragic things I have mentioned afflicted suffering upon us and we are unable to understand why God has permitted these things to happen to us. I believe that we concentrate only on the bad things in our lives and we fail to recognize the good in our lives that God has provided for us.

Before we begin our discussion of the question "How can you say God is good?" I would like to make two statements. First, if and when you ask this question, do not be ashamed, do not feel guilty about it. I know that in the past some of the greatest Christians in our world have asked this very question. It is natural for us to ask this question, especially if something tragic has happened in our lives and we can see no logical reason or conclusion for it. As a matter of fact, if we do not ask this question and we always seem to be sure of our beliefs and our faith, it may be a sign of spiritual sluggishness. As Christians we have to grow and learn in our faith and we can only do this by asking questions and trying to discover the answer. Secondly, do not expect an easy answer to this question because it speaks to us individually and what we believe and have faith in is up to each of us individually. Other people can tell you what you should believe but only God can tell you from your heart and after all this is what counts.

I think it would be best to pick three typical illustrations that could happen to any of us in our daily lives in which we could ask the question "how can you say God is good?"

You have a good job, you are happy and everything seems to be going your way. Suddenly one day you are struck with a disease that paralyzes you. You lose your job which is more than a job, it is your career. You can imagine how you would feel if this happened to you. Your future and everything you have planned crashes to the ground. You become depressed and you have about all you can take. This is when you ask the question, "If God is good, how could He let this happen to me?" I just know if God were good, and if He was for me instead of against me, He wouldn't let this happen to me. He would protect me from the shocks of life, sorrow, disappointment and disability. Do you really believe that God would do this? Is that your most mature understanding of goodness, that if God were good He would spare you all the things that make life difficult?

Do parents who love their children most, make life easy for them? We all know if we truly love our children, we have to prepare them for the hard knocks in life. Life isn't always easy. If it were, it wouldn't be worth living. We all need things in our lives that will challenge us. We all need to be prepared for the bad things in our lives as well as the good. I know that most all of us have not had things easy in our lives. We all have had our hard knocks. If each of us would stop and think for a moment, I am sure that we would realize although something tragic has happened in our lives that everything usually turns out for the best. It is also possible that this tragedy has turned us on the right path whether it be toward being a Christian or our occupation in which we have found much satisfaction and happiness. We many not realize it at the time, but eventually we will be able to see the light which God shows us.

Would Beethoven's music be any more beautiful if he hadn't been deaf?
Would Melton's poetry be any more moving if he hadn't been blind?

I think we should remember that because God doesn't make life easy for us is not sign that God isn't good. We wouldn't want life to be easy because we would have nothing to challenge us. We would become lazy and life wouldn't be worth living.

The second illustration could apply to some of us. You have been attending a New Year's eve party. Everyone has had a wonderful time but you have taken one drink too many which you know you shouldn't have done. This drink makes you want to show off and do foolish things. On the way home you decide to see how fast your car will go. In the process of excessive speed and too much to drink, you suddenly see someone walking along the road. Your reflexes have slowed down and you hit this person and kill him instantly. As a result of this tragedy the person's family suffers because they have lost a loved one. You suffer because your conscience bothers you besides, you lose your driver's license.

A question you ask yourself is, “if God were good, why did He let this happen to me ?” Again, you imply that if God is good, He would have stepped in and stopped you from drinking too much which in turn would have stopped you from driving too fast. God would have prevented this tragedy from happening. Would you really want God to stop you from doing these foolish things? Is this the kind of people we are? People who need to be told exactly what to do and when to do it? Would you want God to take away your personal responsibility for the consequences of your own actions? I don’t believe that any of us want God to take away our freedom of moral judgment which has been given to us.

Actually, instead of questioning God’s goodness in this situation, I feel we should be questioning our own. We have been given the freedom to make decisions and to choose our own way of life, up to a certain point, and if we choose to use our freedom in the wrong way, then it is our fault and not God’s. In most cases, like this one, we blame God for the consequences of our own sins. You are the one who chose to drink too much, drive too fast which resulted in the death of another person. You are to blame. Why blame God?

As our third illustration, let’s take the example of a young man who is in love with a fine young girl. They are very happy together and they are making all sorts of plans for the future, marriage, home, family, etc. Suddenly one day this girl decides to leave town and to leave the young man behind. She gives him no logical reason other than she feels she has to do this. Naturally, the boy is disappointed. In fact, he is so distressed by this situation that life has no meaning to him. He blames all his disappointments on God. About a year later he meets a fine young lady who later is to become his wife. This young lady is perfect for him and he begins a life with her that is full of joy and happiness. Later he finds that he is thanking God, where a year ago he was cursing Him.

I believe this illustration proves that God doesn’t act in ways that we understand. It could have turned out quite differently if the first girl had stayed. They could have been married and been very unhappy and their marriage could have ended in divorce. But instead, he did meet the right girl and they made each other very happy.

If each of us will go back a few years, I’m sure that we will all agree our parents didn’t act in a way which we understood at the time. But as we matured in years, we could understand why they acted the way they did and we then hope that we have the wisdom and understanding to raise our own children. All through our lives there are people who because of their past experiences and wisdom try to guide us and help us. At the time we think that these people are interfering in our lives and we wish they would mind their own business.

In fact, we sometimes tell them to mind their own business. Sometimes we ask people for advice and if they don't give us the advice we think they should, we become very angry.

Many times the crosses we bear in our lives turn out to be our crowns. I think it is well worth remembering when you are wondering to yourself whether God is good or not, His ways are greater than ours, His thoughts are greater than ours and things that seem bad to us at the time turn out to be for our good.

I know that we all wonder why God permits wars. Actually these wars are not caused by God, they are caused by men and their desires and selfishness. I really don't know why God permits war but I do know that God is with all of the boys on both sides of the battlefield. God is there comforting them and guiding them. If they want His guidance, He is there willing to help them.

God is love, too. Spurgeon, the noted English pastor once noted a weather vane on the roof of a barn. This wasn't unusual but the inscription on it was "God is love." He asked the farmer what he meant by putting that text there and did he think God's love is changeable like that. The farmer replied, "you don't get it. What I mean is no matter which way the wind blows, God is still love." God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, so that we may be saved."

God doesn't create the situations we get ourselves into. However, He does try to make the best out of these situations if we are willing to let Him help us.

I know I have not answered all the questions pertaining to God's goodness. In fact, there are many areas I haven't even touched on. In the long run, however, it is not an argument you must win, but a choice you must make.

There are only three possibilities. If God is not good, He must be evil or neutral. If God is evil then how about all the beautiful things He has created? The sunshine and rain, the trees and flowers with their blossoms and all the other natural beauty which we enjoy. What about the beauty and goodness of life? I recognize the mystery of the evil in the world and I certainly am baffled by it, but when I think about the mystery of goodness, then goodness is by far the greatest mystery.

The thought of God being neutral I cannot believe. Here is God who is the very heart of the universe and Him not caring whether evil or good wins and it making no difference. This is a God that I believe doesn't exist.

I know that sooner or later all of us have to make a choice on whether God is good or evil. This choice is something that has to be personally made by each individual. If we believe there is a God, and I'm sure we all do or we wouldn't be here today, then we have to believe that God is good, God is just and God is love.

Religious foundations of our government

Delivered 6/28/64

Everything that has ever amounted to anything has had a good foundation. Our institutions have foundations. They do not and cannot rest on thin air. A house that is not built on a good foundation will soon deteriorate and fall down. So it is with our institutions if the foundation is weakened or destroyed, the institution is weakened and destroyed. Therefore, anyone concerned with the preservation of the institutions of free and democratic government, must be concerned with its foundations. In a period of crisis and trouble, the Psalmist cried, “when the foundations are destroyed, what are the righteous to do?”

Therefore let us think for a few minutes on “the religious foundations of our government.

Again you will notice that we will go back to each individual because each institution, each nation, regardless of size is made up of individuals like you and I. How we live our lives, how we act in life sets an example for the whole, whether it be an institution or a nation or whatever it is. God can and does work through individuals like you and I.

The first religious foundation of our government we need to stress is a deep, personal faith in God. Among other things, to believe in God, is to believe that there is objective truth and objective good, to be known and obeyed. It also means there is justice and right that belongs to the very nature and order of things. There is a truth which cannot and shouldn't be changed with each generation. We need to allow for freedom of conscience and discussion in arriving at a conclusion of the final truth. But believing in God we must believe in an unchanging, objective truth.

We need to educate our children in democracy. They need to be taught where the foundations of democracy are. They need to know the background of why our forefathers fought for liberty in 1776. If our education is purely of a secular nature with no discussion of the religious roots of western civilization and freedom, it is partially false. Democracy as we think of it in the west in terms of its highest ideals, is the servant of justice and freedom and human dignity because he is made in the image of God. If we separate our highest democratic values from the religious soil which produced them, we will become as “cut flowers” and wither up and die.

Along with this type of education, goes our Sunday Schools where our children learn about God. Who He is, what He has done and what He can do in our lives. We have Sunday School so that we can come to know God and Jesus Christ as our personal savior. So that our faith can be strengthened and especially so our

Actually, all of the education in the world without God is useless. Our human lives here on earth are very short compared to eternal life with God. Since our lives are so short on earth, and as Christians we have to set an example for others, especially our children; we should remember that our children are the future members of our churches and the one that will be running our government in a few years to come.

A second religious foundation of our government lies in the belief that “righteousness exalteth the nation and sin is a reproach to any people.” The sin of man which leads him to object power and to use this power over other people is what led our forefathers to establish our type of government in which the power be distributed and balanced with checks and counterchecks. These men that established our government feared what power in the hands of the wrong type of men could do to people. Some of these people had been living under this type of government in Europe where the government was controlled by a few. Jefferson wrote “man has never proved himself worthy of a unrestrained control of his fellows, nor has any special group of men ever been dominant without injustice to others?”

We have some good examples of these types of governments in our day. Hitler in Germany, Mussolini in Italy, Castro in Cuba, and the Russian form of government. As history tells us these types of governments will finally fail because of their oppression to the people and because there is no justice or religious foundation for these types of governments. This type of government was able to originate because usually the countries were low economically and the people were promised all sorts of things to raise their standard of living if they would follow them. Once these men have gained full control of the government, they then start running it for their own benefit with the greed of power within them and the people are secondary. That’s why it is important for us in our country to let our representatives know how we feel about important issues and that’s why it is important for every citizen who is eligible to vote at election time. This is the heart of our government and why we are able to say democracy is a government of the people, for the people and by the people.

A third religious foundation of our government is freedom. We have always heard that our forefathers came to this country for religious freedom. This does not mean that they wanted to be free from religion. It means they wanted to be free to worship God as they chose, not the way their government told them they should. In other words, in Europe the church was the government. There was no separation between church and state. However, even with separation of church and state which we have in this country, it does not mean that the church goes one way and the state the other. Again, we get back to the individual. If we are Christians, we have certain moral beliefs that go along with our religion. There is no reason that I know of why these moral beliefs should not be carried into our government.

Should our moral standards in our government be lower than in our church? For example, a Christian person becomes governor of our state, shouldn't he take his moral beliefs with him into his office? Again, I will say we sometimes feel that Christianity is something for Sunday and the rest of the week we practice something else. Being a Christian involves seven days a week, twenty four hours a day every moment of our lives.

Freedom is not something that man has in his own right. It is not something that belongs to man, as man apart from God. The Declaration of Independence reads, "endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." All freedom is freedom from God. Because government doesn't give this freedom it cannot take it away because it comes from God who is above all governments. It comes from God whom government must serve and whose purpose it ought to further.

Our fourth foundation is in people who are informed, literate, and of good manners. On July 4, 1776, fifty six serious minded and dedicated men signed their names to a document which they named the "Declaration of Independence." They were fully aware that this document would either bring freedom to all Americans or else it would leave all fifty six of them hanging from a gallows to prove their dream of national sovereignty had been folly. Only time would tell. It is up to us to make sure our democracy is not a folly.

Our freedom as Christians is in Jesus Christ. He and He alone can make us free when we truly accept Him into our lives as our Lord and Savior. This means a responsible freedom. Paul wrote, "you were called to freedom, brethren, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity of the flesh, but through love be servants of one another.

In a government where everyone is part of it, everyone should be competent. It's true everyone of us cannot be leaders but at least we can try to understand the problems of government. Since our democratic government is made up of each of us, we have the duty to be fully informed, to know what is going on, to know what the issues are and to make our views known to our representatives in government. It's our duty to stand up and speak out for what we believe to be right and just. We cannot afford to be uninterested, uninformed, or indifferent. If we are, then our type of government will some day not exist. For these reasons everyone has the right to obtain an education so he can be fully informed and so he can vote intelligently in all elections. This is the reason the problem of racial segregation going on now in this country is so important. I'm sure I do not have the answer to this problem, but I do know that God and God alone is the one that will help us solve it.

In a nation like ours, it is important that the news be printed correctly and that all of the news be printed so the people know exactly what is going on.

It means that we need responsible public schools where all issues can be discussed freely and openly.

It also means a responsible church that looks honestly at our social surroundings. A church that denounces those social issues that are against our Christian ideals and beliefs. A church that speaks out and stands behind the social issues that go along with our Christian faith.

Jefferson said, "it is the manners and spirit of a people that preserve a republic in vigor. Without ethical character, no democracy can survive."

The manners of the people should permit and encourage open and honest controversy. One of the differences between the east and the west is the right to think that is ours and the freedom to investigate and read what we will. We have a right to voice our opinion and to engage in creative discussion.

The foundations of our government are laid deep in the Judeo-Christian faith. However, we have to remember to put God first in our lives and not our nation or our democratic government. Our nation and democracy is an outgrowth of our Christian faith. Let's truly make the United State of America a "nation under God" by each of us just seeking His kingdom and His righteous and all of the other things will be added on to us. Our nation and our form of government cannot possibly survive unless God is with us. God can only be with us if each of us has taken Him into our lives and declared Him our Lord and Savior.

Prayer

O' God, our Heavenly Father, who is creator of all things and overseer of all, we are eternally thankful for all the blessings which thou does provide for us. We know that there blessings are possible only through thy love and grace. Enlighten our minds and fill our hearts with thy Holy Spirit. O' God, help us to become better Christians each day of our lives. Help us to remember that Christianity is truly to be practiced every moment of our lives and not just for Sunday.

Our Father, we pray that thou will bless the Pastor of this church. Help him to be well and we pray that he may truly preach thy Word. We pray thy blessing upon this congregation and we pray that they may work with the Pastor in help to build this church in thy kingdom.

O' God, we pray for all those that need your help this day, especially those that are sick, those that are lonely and those that are grieving the loss of loved ones. We pray that they may truly turn to thee, for thou are the only one that can help them. Help them to realize that thou are there to help them.

O' God, forgive us for the sins we have committed. Help us to actually place our short-comings before thee so thou knows we truly want to be forgiven. Cleanse us and make us clean so that we can be right with thee.

Our Father, we pray that peace may come to this earth. Help us to find this peace in our own lives which we know can only come by each of us truly accepting thee in our lives first.

We pray for the leaders of all the countries of the world. We pray that they may truly turn to thee so thou can help them to make the decisions they must make. We pray for the president of this country and his advisors. O' God, this racial situation we are presently engaged in is an example of the guidance we need from thee.

Help each of us to erase the prejudice from our minds because I know if we all looked and searched our souls deep enough we would find this prejudice if we would admit it. O' God, we know that all men are equal in thy sight regardless of race or creed or amount of material possessions or our standing socially.

We pray that thou will help us to guide us through this service of worship and when we leave this place we pray that our minds and souls will be closer to thee.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior we pray. Amen.

What it means to be a Christian

Delivered 9/29/63

If Jesus Christ was to walk in that door at this very moment, I wonder how many of us would recognize Him? Yet still, we call ourselves Christians and yet as Christians we know that Christ is with us always. We have only to ask Christ and He will respond to us.

The word “Christian” means a believer in Christ, a follower of His example or teachings. I’m sure that everyone here this morning believes in Jesus Christ or we wouldn’t be here. But how many of us really believe enough in Christ to follow His teachings? We all want to be considered Christians and be a part of, and associated with the Christian religion but not if we have to sacrifice too much. Not if we have to be concerned for other people or if we have to devote too much time to our church or if we have to read the Bible and ask God for forgiveness of our sins. We say this is carrying our religion too far. And after all, we are pretty good people. We come to church (when we feel like it, we give to our church (not as much as we should), but enough. Yes it is easy to be called a Christian, but difficult to be a Christian.

In the Gospel of Matthew chapter 5 Jesus says, “Let your light so shine before man, that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in Heaven.” As Christians we should set an example for other people in our every day living. We shouldn’t be setting this example just on Sunday morning for one hour, but every hour of every day every day of the week. Our Christian religion is not just for church and Sunday School, but should be applied to every activity in our lives. When we do this, life has meaning and a purpose. If other people can see that our religion makes a difference in our lives and that we have something that they don’t have, then we are really witnessing for Christ. Witnessing is one of the things we should be doing as Christians.

One of Christ’s disciples said to Him “Lord, let me first go and bury my father. Jesus said to him, “follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead.” As Christians we cannot put off following Him. We have to follow Christ now. There isn’t any half way in between. We either follow Christ or we don’t. If we follow Him, the road ahead will not be easy, but it will be rewarding. If we don’t follow Him, there is no road ahead. In Christ, we find a faith that is unshakeable, one that cannot be destroyed.

In times of trouble, we can rely on a Christ that is with us and a Christ that will guide us through all troubles.

At the time of the death of a loved one, there seems to be no answer, no way to turn, but Christ is with us and when we ask, He will guide us and comfort us. At a time like this, we need all the faith that we have. So when the road ahead is rough and there seems to be no end, Christ walks with us.

In Matthew chapter 22 Jesus says, “the second greatest commandment is—you shall love your neighbor as yourself!”

Christians should be concerned about other people. We should help other people in times of troubles. There are plenty of people here in our own community that need our help. It is true that Christ will look after them in time of trouble, but working through us Christ can do a better job.

We seem to be eager to criticize other people. We aren't willing to pitch in and help ourselves, but we are not satisfied with what other people do either. We all have an opportunity to do our part and this is what Christ expects of us. I feel that love and concern for other people is the greatest characteristic of a Christian. Without love for our neighbors, we cannot possibly walk with Christ.

We seem to delight in hurting other people by talking about them. Our mouths are the most vicious weapon of all time, if used for this purpose. I personally feel if we have anything to say about a person we should say it to his face rather than to other people. It isn't up to us to judge people but rather to help them.

Being a Christian is forgiving other people for the sins they have committed and asking God for forgiveness of the sins we have committed. Jesus says we are to forgive our brothers seventy times seven for sinning against us. None of us are perfect and therefore have no right to condemn other people for the sins they commit. A good example is forgiving the person who has committed a crime and has paid his debt to society. This type of person, when he comes back to society needs our help and assurance that we will accept him. Too often we are not willing to forgive and forget.

The alcoholic is another person we try to stay away from, condemning him instead of helping him. Even when he has found help and straightened out his life, we are reluctant to forgive and forget.

Jesus did most of his associating with sinners not with people who were church goers. If we are to be effective in our witnessing, we have to associate with people who are committing these sins. We cannot forget about them.

As we become Christians, we realize that we have someone to share our burdens with, someone to turn to in time of trouble. Before we were Christians, we felt that all things and all power was man made.

In some cases, the decisions that have to be made are too much and too big and these people just give up. As Christians, we realize that if we let Christ help us and guide us, the answers aren't always what we think they should be, but they are best for us and for others around us.

I believe that to really be a Christian, Christ's Holy Spirit must come to us. We have to experience a change in our lives and really let Christ guide us. This experience doesn't come to us once, but several times during our lives, and without this experience we become too satisfied with ourselves, we try to judge other people and we set ourselves up higher than other people. As Christians we have to humble ourselves before Christ. We have to admit and confess our shortcomings and we have to strive to pattern our lives after our one example, Jesus Christ.

There are many other characteristics that go into making a person a real Christian. I Have just mentioned a very few of them.

We have talked about peace in the world for many years. We have prayed that peace will come to this earth. I believe that before peace can come to this world it has to come to each of us individually. When we have truly become re-born Christians, and let the Holy Spirit guide and direct our lives, then the feeling of peace will come to each of us and finally peace will come to the world.

As Christians, we have at least two tools that can help us and guide us. One is prayer. Prayer that will help us when we need help and prayer to thank Him who directs us. The other tool is the bible. Daily reading and studying of the scriptures will enrich our lives. It will give us a better understanding of why Christ died for our sins and what is expected of us as Christian.

So by being Christians, and following Christ, we obtain this feeling of inner peace within ourselves and the reward of eternal life is God's kingdom.

Prayer

O' God our heavenly Father, we are thankful to thee for our many blessings. We are thankful for this church and all that it stands for.

Our Father, help us never to forget that only through thee are all of these things possible.

We pray that thy Holy Spirit may be among us here this morning and may enter each of our hearts and help make us each better Christians.

We pray that thy Spirit may be with our speaker this morning and that thy will guide him through the years ahead.

Our heavenly Father, help those that are sick. Comfort and guide them, be with all people that need thy help this day O' God. Give them the courage, the faith and the strength to carry them through all of the problems they have.

O' God, we pray that thy Spirit may be with the world leaders. We pray that they may turn to thee for guidance in this time of world tension. May their actions truly reflect thy ways. We pray that through thy Spirit and guidance, peace will come into each individuals heart and finally peace to the entire world.

We pray that thou will guide us through the coming week and help each of us in our daily tasks. Help us to become better Christians and to fill our hearts with love and concern for other people.

O' God, we pray that thou will forgive us for all the sins we have committed. Enlighten us as we read thy Gospel and help us to become better witnesses for thee.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior we pray. Amen

Prayer

O' God, we know that all things come of thee. Help us to share our blessings and we pray that these gifts will be used to spread Christian love throughout the world. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Prayer

Our Heavenly Father, who is above all things, we thank thee for our many blessings for the air we breathe, for our food and shelter, for our families, and for life itself. We pray that thy Holy Spirit is among us here this morning as we worship thee and that thy Holy Spirit may touch each of our hearts.

Our Father, we pray that thou will help us to become better Christians and to live our lives as Christians should. Lord, help us to love God and one another. We pray that Christ will always be first in our lives and that we will consider Christ first in all our everyday affairs. O' God, we know that we are sinners, but we pray that thou will help us to be more like Christ each day.

We thank thee for thy Holy Word and we pray that thy Spirit will give us more understanding as we read it.

We know that all things are possible through Christ-centered prayer, reading the bible, and love will give us faith so we will be able to withstand any trial.

Lord Jesus, we pray that peace may come upon this earth and that the leaders of the various nations throughout the world will consider Christ in all affairs.

We pray that Christ will be considered in settling the steel strike and we pray that thou will be with the leaders of both parties to help reach a satisfactory settlement.

Our Father, we pray that thou will be with those that are not present here this morning. Bless and help them. Be with those that are sick and help to heal them.

We ask for these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.
Amen

A Layman's Privilege Delivered 10/61

As lay people of our Church, we have certain responsibilities to carry out, but I would rather consider it an opportunity and a privilege to serve Jesus Christ.

Unless we get a feeling of joy and accomplishment within ourselves, in serving Christ, it will not benefit ourselves or anyone else. We have to remove the feeling that it is our duty or responsibility because other people expect me to do it.

Most of us here this morning are members of this church. When we joined the church we agreed to:

1. Renew the solemn promise and vow that was made for us at the time of our baptism: which was: A) to truly repent of our sins and accept and confess Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. B) To earnestly endeavor to keep God's Holy will and commandments.
2. To pledge our allegiance to Christ's Kingdom.
3. Receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the new testament of our Lord, Jesus Christ.
4. Be loyal to the Methodist Church, uphold it by our prayers, our presence, our gifts and our service.

Have you and I carried out our agreement? Each one of us has to answer this for ourselves. At the time we became members, Christ or the Minister didn't expect us to know all about this Christian religion, but they did expect us to have a desire to learn more by reading the bible, prayers, fellowship together and discussing our religion together.

If we hope to increase our faith spiritually to the point where nothing can destroy it we have to read our bibles, share our Christian experiences together and pray for guidance and forgiveness. In other words, the Lord help them who help themselves.

How often we let other activities interfere with church. We say "we can go to church next week" or "I can't afford to give very much this week." With this kind of attitude, we are not considering it our responsibility, let alone a privilege.

Teaching in church school is certainly a layman's privilege. How many excuses I have heard why people couldn't teach: 1) I don't have the time. 2) I don't know enough about the bible. 3) I can't be tied down every Sunday. 4) It takes too long to prepare a lesson. These are our children and we need to be

Some of us enjoy singing. Why not give of ourselves and sing in the choir? Next week we will be celebrating our 100th anniversary. Who do you think is responsible for the building of our church and maintaining it for these past 100 years? The lay people certainly were.

We should never lose sight of the fact that all the disciples were ordinary lay people. They were fishermen, tax collectors, and the like. Their hearts became filled with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit directed their lives as it should direct ours. In Matthew Jesus says to Peter and Andrew, "follow me and I will make you fishers of men". They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Jesus is saying the same to us today. He is at our side every moment to help us and to guide us if we will listen and let Him.

We consider it the Ministers responsibility to visit the sick and to obtain new members. Well, it is part of his ministry, but shouldn't we take advantage of the opportunity to witness for Christ? In the acts of the apostles, Jesus appears to the apostles after His resurrection and says, "you shall receive when the Holy Spirit has come upon you: You shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth."

We have to give of ourselves by serving as counselors for the church, as officers of the church school, as members of the various organizations in our church. This isn't a one man show. We have to work together with the same objective in mind if we are to even come close to our goals. Not only do we have to give of ourselves, we have to contribute our money. Our church is an organization the same as any business. Our financial support is needed to maintain and improve our property, to pay the pastor's salary, fuel and lights, and world missions. When we give our money, we shouldn't give it grudgingly and because we want more to say than the person who doesn't give as much. Remember this is another layman's privilege. In Luke, Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw a poor widow put in two copper coins. He said, "truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she gave out of her poverty and put in all the living that she had".

I realize we cannot participate in all of these activities but the least we can do is help where our talents are best suited. Don't forget we have time to go bowling, hunting, fishing and belong to other outside organizations. Usually church comes last.

We have to put Christ first in our lives and at the center of all things, then these privileges will come automatically and we will truly feel joy through serving Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “But seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all of these things shall be added unto you.”

Wanted: People 10/20/63

Usually when we read an employment ad in the newspaper it reads, “wanted” people who are trained in certain occupations or professions—such as electrical engineers, typists, machinists, farmers or sometimes these ads request people who are willing to be trained in various fields. I’m sure if our church were to run an ad that read, “wanted; people”, we wouldn’t be too happy about it. However, regardless of how we feel about it the church does need people. But what kind of people does the church need? Does the church need people who join the church and that’s as far as it goes? Does the church need people who come to church on Sunday and that’s it? Does the church need people who just practice their religion on Sunday and the rest of the week they practice something else? I believe the answer to all of these questions is no. The church doesn’t need these kinds of people. This church or any church couldn’t possibly exist with those types of persons. What types of persons does a church need then?

First of all, I believe our church or any church needs people with vision and positive thinking. A person with vision has ideas and imagination, has insight and is foreseeing. People with vision can rise above all prejudices. They are able to see the needs of the present and the future. These kinds of people live in the present and look to the future. However, the past is never ignored for they realize they owe plenty to the past and experience that has been gained. People with vision can see what might be, and what ought to be in the future. We should not call a person with vision a dreamer because such a person is not impracticable or unrealistic or one who ignores hard facts. We should remember “where there is no vision the people perish.”

Do we have vision in our church? Do we see our church as a family affair where old and young, or any age share in worship and witness by their love for Christ and His for them? Is it a fellowship of people who are asking for forgiveness and willing to forgive? Are the people in our church willing to help those in trouble and those that need our help? Does our church set an example of righteousness in this community?

We need vision and positive thinking when we prepare our annual budget. We need vision when we accept our world service asking. We need vision to go ahead with our renovation plans for our church hall. Without vision,

Second, the church needs people with enthusiasm. I know that all of us admire people who are full of enthusiasm. Usually we associate enthusiasm with youth, but I feel we should remember Paul when he was in prison and he wrote "I press on". Also we can remember John Wesley and his enthusiasm for his beliefs right up to his time of death in his 80's.

The early Methodists were charged with being enthusiasts. Although it was meant as a sneer, it really turned out to be a compliment. The business of being a Christian, of knowing God's saving power in their lives, of doing God's will absorbed their lives. They really found it thrilling. There was nothing lukewarm about them.

A lukewarm Christianity will never do much good. It will not challenge or confirm the world. It is like salt that has lost its savor. Our lukewarmness will not impress our neighbors either. In order to witness for Jesus Christ, we have to show other people through our everyday living that our Christianity does make a difference in our lives and that we have something they don't have.

Regardless of what we do, whether it be medicine, sports, engineering, without enthusiasm it really doesn't amount to very much and it has very little meaning. Jesus said "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness." He meant those who really care, care deeply and intensely. We need enthusiasm in our church.

Third, the church needs people with endurance. Endurance is the determination to see a thing through to a conclusion. We admire those who are not only good starters but also good finishers. We like to see a man having put his hand to the plow, keeps on. Actually, endurance is enthusiasm at its highest. Remember Paul's appeal to the Galatians "let us not grow tired of doing good, for unless we throw in our hand, the ultimate harvest is assured." (Galatians 6:9).

In our church as in any church we need people who have vision, enthusiasm and endurance. Logically, the next question is where do we get people like this? Again I believe we have to go back to each individual and his relationship with God. I believe that God and God alone can give us these qualities. When we truly become reborn Christians and accept Jesus Christ into our lives, we will obtain these qualities. It's true we will not get them all at once, but God will help us to grow as Christians. After accepting Jesus Christ into our lives it will not be a question of half-heartedness or lukewarmness. So I believe each one of us can obtain these qualities.

Just stop to think if our church was filled with persons having vision who were full of enthusiasm and who would keep on steadily in their Christian work and witness, never throwing in their hands. The persons who would endure to the end. What a church we would have. People would find such a church hard to ignore.

I believe that the Christian movement is again looking to lay leadership. An active and enlightened laymen's group in any church can become an investment of God's own grace. I believe that today the real battle of faith is being fought in the factories and offices, in political parties and government agencies, in countless homes, in the press, radio and television, in the relationships of nations. We have often heard it said that the church shall not enter into these spheres, but if we stop to look at this situation, it is already in them in the form of us. How can we be a Christian at church and something else the rest of the week? Christianity is a full time business.

The church does need people and we are responsible for obtaining them for Jesus Christ. God is calling us. It is we who must lead the world. Not rule it—serve it! And so lead it to Christ.

Growing as Christians Delivered 2/2/64

Spiritual growth is a proper objection for all Christian people. I know that most of us like to think we are growing spiritually but I wonder how many of us really are. If we rely on the experiences we had years and years ago and don't have any new and recent experiences with God, then we probably are not growing as Christians should. We cannot grow unless we are continually dissatisfied with our progress. If we feel we are good people and have learned everything there is to know about God, Christ, our Christian religion, then I'm afraid we are standing still instead of growing spiritually.

Truly accepting Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior is the first step to becoming a Christian. If we don't progress beyond this point in our lives then we have lost everything that was gained by this commitment. We have to grow spiritually because if we stand still our faith will not be strong enough to help us withstand the tragic incidents in our lives. Our faith will be like the seed that was sown in shallow ground with shallow roots that could not withstand the drought.

After a child is born we expect this child to grow physically and mentally over a period of time. In fact, if the child doesn't grow the way we as parents feel he should, we become quite concerned and try to find the cause and a cure, if possible. Our spiritual growth as Christians is the same thing. After we have truly accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and savior, we are re-born Christians and God expects us to grow spiritually over the rest of our life here on earth. He doesn't expect us to know everything about Christianity immediately.

There are many hindrances to spiritual growth. Pride is something that will hinder our growth. A man may feel that reading the Bible, praying to God, helping other people is a sign of weakness and this could prevent him from progressing in his Christian life. Some of us, probably a big percent of us, try to keep our Christian experiences to ourselves because we don't want others to laugh and make fun of us. Perhaps we feel that we would lose our popularity with our friends. Maybe in some cases we feel that others would think we are crazy. People sometimes do have a drastic change from their normal selves and people who know them very well could think this. However, if people ridicule us, and make fun of us, are they really our friends?

They live and act differently and they enjoy life more fully than non-Christians.

Another hindrance to our spiritual growth is always looking back to the old days and comparing them to what we know we should be doing. For example, I know that years ago it was believed to be that a Christian person had to be stern without a smile. Certain rules had to be observed. The ladies had to let their hair grow, they could wear no makeup. On Sunday afternoon after church, the whole family had to stay in the living room and remain quiet. Although I respect these people for their beliefs, I cannot believe that God wants us to act this way. I can think of no better way to turn young people away from the Christian religion than by observing rules like I have mentioned. I believe that all of these rules are outward acts and not necessarily a reflection on a person's actual beliefs.

Some of us say that our parents only attended church occasionally and they were good Christian people. Why should I attend church, I can be just as good a Christian at home. I believe that a person can be a good Christian without attending church, but I also believe that if a person is a Christian, he will be in church (if possible) worshipping God with other Christians and sharing his Christian experience.

Some of us keep so involved in church work that we don't have time to look at our own lives. Perhaps we feel since we are doing church related work we automatically grow in our own faith. Actually we have to stop once in a while and take a look at our own spiritual growth. Growth is necessary because it is easy for us to think we have gone far enough.

We can compare ourselves to a tree. A tree has to be sound. The minute a tree stops growing, it has a tendency to get hollow inside.

In Philippians 3, Paul gives us some wonderful help to spiritual growth. First, He puts spiritual growth in the framework of the crucifixion and the resurrection. Great Christians always live within a great framework. Paul tells us that he is not looking for "a righteousness based on law, but which is through a faith in Christ." Jesus tells the same when He said "The Son of God didn't come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it."

Secondly, Paul's growth is based on humility. "not that I have always obtained this or am already perfect," He says, "I do not consider that I have made it my own." Most of us have been taught that we should not be so proud of ourselves that we annoy other people around us. Generally, our actions speak louder than words. This kind of humility is different than Christian humility.

You feel it's only because of the greatness and holiness of God. If a person does not have a God, then pride tends to fill the person's life as a substitute. Humility is natural for those who believe in God and know His greatness; above all, we feel thankful to God for sending Christ into the world. I believe we should cultivate gratitude, then humility will take care of itself.

Along with Paul's humility also went a great determination. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own. One thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and pushing forward to what lies ahead, I press on." "I keep going on," is the way Philippians translates the words. What kept a man "going on" like that, through endless hardship, persecution and imprisonment? Paul says that he grasps evermore firmly that purpose for which Christ grasped me. Quite often we think we are "holding on" with our human willpower and then we finally find out that a divine power is "holding on" for us. When our faith is such that we have to struggle to keep it, then we don't have very much. When we realize that Christ has taken hold of our life, with His firm grasp, we can almost never fall from that grasp. This has a great deal to do with our trust in God, and not our own strength or virtue. If we are to grow in grace there will be times in our lives when we will have to make new decisions that stand behind the original decision we made. There will also be times that we will be ridiculed and criticized severely for the decisions we have to make, but we will know they are right because God has guided us. Someone has said G-R-O-W stands for "go right on walking". Spiritual growth isn't easy and there will be times when we feel very near to God and other times when we feel far away. Generally when we feel far away, an experience will take place in our lives that will bring us back to God stronger in faith than we were before.

Paul gives us one step beyond growth that concerns maturity. Philippians translates it "all of us who are spiritually adult, should set ourselves this sort of ambition, and if at first you cannot see this, yet you will find that this is the attitude that God is leading you to adopt. " We can become so busy on the lower levels of life that we forget the importance of such things as private meditation, public worship, reading the Bible and other important books.

Character doesn't develop overnight, but builds over the years. The things most worthwhile are the things we wait for and work for slowly. There is a final piece of advice which encourages us to stand for what we know. Philippians translates it, "it is important that we go forward in the light of such truth as we have ourselves attained to it." This is the sustaining power of our own growing Christian experience. It is true that none of us has made all of the progress that we should have, but few of us have learned nothing. We should not grow too proud of

our experiences, but we should not deny them either; and what we have learned in the past, we are to be guided by in the future.

Lenten Confession **Delivered 2/23/64**

We all need to repent for our sins. We should not forget that the church has set aside the season of Lent as a reminder to us to confess our sins with humble, holy, persistent and obedient hearts and obtain forgiveness by His infinite goodness and mercy. Psalm 51 is a commentary upon David's admission of guilt as Matthew confronted him. I'm sure we remember how David saw Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, bathing and he had her brought to him and she had a child by David. David had Uriah killed in battle so he could marry Bathsheba. It was then that the Lord sent Nathan to confront David about his sins and let him know the Lord was displeased with his behavior. Nathan said to David, "though hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and taken his wife to be thy wife." This is when David enters into his confession. Many regard this (psalm 51) as a model confession. From it we learn that our Lenten confession must be thorough, humble and hopeful.

In this psalm we notice the thoroughness with which David describes his sin. To do so, he makes use of the three words transgression, iniquity and sin. David admits that he has transgressed, rebelled against the known will of God; he knew what God wanted him to do, but he did what he wanted to do. Many of us know what the will of God is in our lives, but we do what pleases us most, disregarding his will. David admits his guilt of iniquity, or depraved lustful conduct with another man's wife. He has sinned, been in error, wandered from the right path, and missed the true goal in life. There is no pretense in his admission. He is completely honest about himself. He uncovers his past, and brings into the open all his faults, failures and shortcomings. How many of us are completely honest about ourselves? Quite often we are so busy and we try to make ourselves so busy that we do not take time to take a good look at our own lives. If we cannot be honest about ourselves in the presence of God, then we will never be honest about it and we are only kidding ourselves because God knows whether we are honest with Him.

In public worship, we confess our sins and wickedness in general terms, but when we examine our consciences in the privacy of our own company, generalities serve no useful purpose. We really have to examine

God knows we have. Maybe if we search long enough and deep enough we will uncover some faults we ourselves didn't even know we possessed. Our confession to God should be complete and involve our half hidden pride, our self centeredness, our frequent resistance to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, our broken promises and resolutions, our hurried half hearted prayers, our greed for material gain, our lack of charity, our unfriendliness, our desire to have our own way, our malicious prejudice, our unwillingness to forgive, and many other sins we secretly commit. Our confession has to be thorough with nothing left out and nothing overlooked. It isn't easy to admit our faults and our mistakes. It takes courage and humility. David had both courage and humility. The physical courage David showed when he confronted Goliath was but a counterpart of the moral courage and humility of his confession to God.

The Psalmist tells us David showed his courage and humility in three ways. First by confessing that no one but himself was answerable for his sins. It took courage to say, "I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me." The use of the words I, me and my shows that David was prepared and anxious to admit that he was personally responsible for his own sins. He did not seek to blame someone else or the times or the situation for these sins he committed. In no way did he try to excuse himself. He didn't plead temporary insanity, he knew he was wrong and admitted it.

Many of us try to deceive ourselves and God by offering all kinds of excuses and trying to justify why we did something and why we acted the way we did. We try to blame others for mistakes we make. I believe this is especially true in our business world today. We try to better ourselves by trying to knock down others. I have often wondered how a man really feels in his head when he does something like this to better himself. He certainly cannot be feeling good.

Some of us blame the way we were brought up for our mistakes. We have all heard people say, when someone gets in trouble, "What can you expect, look at his parents and look at the way he was brought up," but what do we say about a person who turned out good and still he was brought up in circumstances that weren't ideal or good.

Others say we made a snap judgment or acted in the heat of the moment. If I would have thought the situation out, I certainly wouldn't have made that decision. Quite often if we had made a snap judgment,

and then we realize it was wrong, it is often too late to correct the wrong that resulted. Because it is not too late to admit we are wrong, and do something to correct the situation from that point on. To live a life of deception certainly must not be very pleasant or self satisfying.

Guilt is part of the human situation. We generally know within ourselves when we have done something wrong because our conscience speaks to us. In our modern world today, all sorts of advice is used to make guilt seem unreal. Again in the business world, we say that is the way it has to be because any other way would be harmful to our business. I had a person say to me the other day, it certainly is difficult, in fact almost impossible to apply Christian principles to our business. I don't believe it is impossible. We can treat other people the way we want to be treated; fairly and just. We can be honest with them. There is no need to be radical or deceiving. In my own experience, I have found that people like to know the truth, they like to have you be honest with them, they respect anyone who is firm but just. The Christian solution in facing the reality of guilt is finding God's redeeming love. If we are honest before God, He will forgive us.

David recognized the true nature and meaning of sin. That is why, although he had murdered Uriah, sinned against Bethesda, and wronged God, he could still say, "against thee only have I sinned," because he realized finally that all his actions were offenses against God. It was God he had wronged. It was God's purpose and will he had disobeyed. He had actually set himself up in opposition to God. The ultimate meaning of sin is a direct blow to God.

Not only did David acknowledge the true meaning of sin, but the root cause of sin. Everyone has a natural disposition and tendency toward evil, for we are all born into a condition of life in which our union with God is broken and impaired. We are not personally responsible for this condition. We only share in the emotional handicap it entails. The vain belief that human nature is all right and that man is deceit at heart has been shattered by two world wars. We have heard that good is not natural for man. Good is supernatural, for man needs the grace of God before he can attain the good that he desires.

Absolution or forgiveness is one of the most encouraging truths of our faith. This saved David from frustration and disappointment. He was able to face the future beating with hope and confidence, "thou shalt purge me hyssop and I shall be clean: thou shalt wash me and I shall be whiter

than snow. Using this figurative language, he thinks of God as the only one who can absolve him from his sins. He faces the future with the sure understanding that God will grant him that peace of mind and pardon for which his soul craves, for he knows no one else can help him. Once man realizes that man alone cannot forgive or pardon sins, he either abandons all life or throws himself in complete trust on the mercy and forgiveness of God.

Confession of our sins involves first- admission of our guilt, second- sincere regret for our sin, third- restitution where and when possible, fourth- determination to do better and fifth- belief that God can heal wounds caused by our errors.

In Lent we learn to throw ourselves in complete trust on the mercy and forgiveness of God, knowing that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, thoroughly, humbly, hopefully, as David did “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The man who preached to the poor

Delivered 3/1/64

My text today is “the spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.” This incident at Nazareth came toward the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. The sequence of events that precede this event are important. Jesus’ baptism, His temptation in the wilderness, which could be perceived as an experimentation and now an open decision, a declaration of the intention of His soul.

Jesus made the announcement calm deliberation: “there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written.” (Isaiah 61:1-2)

He made the announcement, too, with a vivid conscience of God: “The spirit of the Lord is upon me.” He made this announcement after a vital experience: “He hath anointed me.” He must have caught the significance of the anointing as He reflected upon the custom of His people to anoint prophets, priests and kings.

If we are to find the roots of Christ’s intention, we must go back to the years before His ministry. We can remember the angel Gabriel that she has found favor in the sight of God and she will have a son whose name will be Jesus. He will be called Holy, the son of God. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His kingdom there will be no end. I’m sure we can remember how the child Jesus grew and became strong, filled with wisdom and the favor of God was upon Him. When Jesus was 12 years old, Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem, as was their custom each year, to the feast of the Passover. When the feast was over, they were well on their way home when they missed Him. It took 3 days before they finally found Him in the temple sitting among the teachers listening to them and asking them questions. All who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. When His parents saw Him, they were astonished and somewhat angry to think He was sitting there so calmly when they were worried about His whereabouts. Jesus says to them, “How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s House?” The scripture then says that, “Jesus had wisdom and stature and favor with God and man.” We can imagine as Jesus grew He read the scriptures, He bathed and prayed with God, He submitted to

the Gospel message to all people. "He found the place where it was written." He unrolled the parchment scroll to the exact place. He had done this before. He had meditated deeply on Isaiah's prophecy. He had meditated in depth. What an hour it was when He accepted the prophecy of His own clear call, intention, duty and destiny.

We can never tell what a youth is thinking. The living words of a prophet or poet may be fervent flame in his heart. Such as Jesus found on the scroll and announced as the intention of His soul.

He had begun to observe the poor even before His entry into the ministry. There may have been days in His own home when the family sat down to a very frugal meal. There were neighbors in Nazareth who lived in poverty. Some were better off, seemed to live in poverty of thoughts, ideas, feelings and spirit. He learned that men who are rich in things may be proud of spirit without the meekness which would set the enriching grace of God flowing into their hearts.

The Son of Man had seen all kinds of things and had felt them too! Folk naked and no one to dress them, folk hungry and no one to feed them, folk sick and no one to visit them, folk imprisoned; mostly for debt, and no one to deliver them, ill beggars at the gates of the wealthy but no one giving them care. Laborers waiting all day to be hired, yet often unvalued; poor travelers arriving exhausted at midnight at humble homes, their great hearts giving them welcome, though with nothing to set before them, and offered to go begging on their behalf to other poor neighbors. Jesus had observed these things and had been meditating about them to God.

Now He arrives at an hour of decision. It had arrived at the time of His baptism. He had struggled the matter through on the mount of temptation. It certainly was not easy to stand before family and friends, teachers and neighbors and announce, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." He knows that "the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him." He went on "this day is the scripture fulfilled in your ears." The hour comes when a man must proclaim himself, announce his work, claim his destiny. "I must preach the gospel to the poor," He said.

How wonderful it is when youths of high and noble dreams come to their decisions of duty and destiny under the call of God and in the church of

their childhood. How thrilling to have the church give them blessing instead of standing against them as did the synagogue at Nazareth. The people were astonished, and said “is this not Joseph’s son?” Through Jesus’ ministry, He found He could do very little in His home town because the people apparently did not have enough faith in Him.

Now Jesus becomes a man of action. The days of dreaming become the days of doing. The reflection in the mountains of Judea will now be followed by action in the towns and villages of Galilee. The mountaintop experience of Satan in the presence of God would have meant nothing unless there was action in the village. Dreaming must be followed by deed. Action asks for fulfillment.

His action was immediate. “He went His way and came down to Capernaum and taught them on the Sabbath days, and they were astonished at His teaching: For His Word was with authority.”

His gospel, as the Word means, was good news. It was delivered to the poor, to the meek, to those who were not too proud to receive it. The current word for poor covered every meaning of what it might mean, utter spiritual destitution, that condition when a man can do nothing for himself by his own efforts. The man may be blessed who may be totally down and out; He may then be ready to receive the free mercy of God.

This is one man’s personal testimony.” In my youth we were very poor, but not discouraged or hopeless. Poverty is not tragedy; lack of character and hope are tragedy. In our home there was confidence, integrity, and trust. There was hope and faith in God, there was steady, hard consistent effort to conquer our difficulties and to achieve a better life for ourselves and the community.” Here was a home that had received the gospel, He might have instead said, “In my youth we were very rich.” How many are rich in material possessions and poor in spiritual possessions. Though we think we are rich, are we poor in the eyes of God?

How often we misinterpret human need. We may think a person needs material possessions when he actually needs to feel the presence of the living Lord. How understanding Jesus was. As we study His conversations with individuals, we learn how skillfully He preached His gospel to the poor, to the women of Samaria, to Nicodemus. Their need was not perhaps for things, but for a new idea concerning God.

That was His gospel. Oh, if we could only have part of Jesus' understanding when we deal with other people. We often misinterpret other needs and go off in the wrong direction, causing misunderstanding and often times heart break.

When John the Baptist began to doubt the purpose of Jesus' teachings, Jesus answered "go tell John that the poor have the gospel preached unto them."

T.R. Glover wrote in "The Jesus of History," "when He was challenged as to His credentials, He pointed to misery relieved; and the culmination of everything. The crowning feature of His work, He found in His good news for the poor. The phrase he borrowed from Isaiah, but He made it His own. The splendid promises in Isaiah for the poor, the broken hearted, captives, blind and bruised, appealed to Him. Time has laid its hand upon His Word, and dulled its freshness. Gospel and evangelical are no longer words of sheer happiness like Jesus' "good news" - they are technical terms, used in handbooks and in controversy, while for Jesus the "good news for the poor" was a word of delight and inspiration.

This became Christ's charge to His disciples. His followers are to preach the gospel to the poor. They are to announce that God is the Father of all. They are to proclaim that God loves men and cares for them. They are to tell men about God's kingdom. And this they are charged to do unto the poor of the uttermost parts of the earth. How great the need for proclamation of the good news. Are we following out the intention of Christ's soul?

Healing the brokenhearted

Delivered 3/8/64

My text for this morning is “He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted” (Luke 4:18). We should not be disturbed when we learn that the so called best manuscripts of the new testament omit this text. It will not be found in the New English Bible. However, if you use this Bible you may want to write it in on the margin of your copy. Perhaps that is the way it came to be in the King James Version. Someone who knew Isaiah 61:1 and who knew its inherent truth from his own experience wrote it on the margin of a manuscript. Of course that is only conjecture or a guess. But it is not conjecture when we say that this text has been written upon the tissue of a multitude of human hearts, both in the early times and today. If there is any truth within the world, this stands, that Christ does heal the broken in heart.

At Nazareth Jesus announced that God has anointed him and had sent him to heal the broken hearted. To do this was the intention of his soul.

Jesus revealed the true nature of God as he fulfilled this intention of his soul. We have to remember that God sent him. Jesus, who could quote Isaiah, must also have known those tender and illuminating words of the 147th psalms; “He healeth the broken in heart,” and bindeth up their wounds. He tells the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. How beautifully the love of God and the wisdom of God are linked together! His knowledge and his confession are not separated. God has a mind and a heart. God knows and God cares. And God acts; he heals and binds up wounds.

What can God do with life’s brokenness? For one thing he can deal with the sin in human nature which is responsible for so much of life’s brokenness. He can reinforce the inner life of the man who must bear suffering. Many people are not able to withstand the suffering in the world because they have not let God prepare them for it. I feel that’s why people commit suicide, why people try to run away, and why people go all to pieces mentally. He can use sorrow to deepen and enrich a man’s life. Few of us can understand why God permits so much suffering in the world or why he permits so many tragic incidents to happen. Usually out of every tragedy some good results eventually and maybe it is just turning or bringing the person to the true acceptance of Jesus Christ in their lives. He can use those who have suffered in

broken heartedness is better able to help those that are going through a similar experience.

Christ did fulfill his intention. He went out from Nazareth and actually healed the broken hearted. We certainly are amazed at his insight. How many times we pass by deep human need without noticing! We either are too busy with our own lives or we just plain are not concerned with others needs. The words of John concerning Jesus, "He knew what was in man," may refer to the deceitfulness of man, but they also have a reference to the man's deep need. We are amazed at his insight when we consider such incidents as his conversations with the women of Samaria and Nicodemus.

We can remember how Nicodemus, a Pharisee, came to Jesus at night and how he told Jesus that he must be a teacher from God because no one could do what he had been doing unless he was from God. Jesus answered him "Truly I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Of course Nicodemus didn't understand this and Jesus went on to explain to him the love of God for the world which prompted him to give his only begotten son that whosoever accepted him in faith might have eternal life.

He saw deep within the personalities of the women in Simon's house and a man sick with palsy, who seems to have been carrying a burden of guilt and at the same time was suffering from a bodily infirmity.

Jesus was also aware of the emptiness of heart. He was aware of the fearful condition of the heart that has become a spiritual vacuum. Reading from Matthew 12:43 - 45, "When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest but he needs none," then he says, "I will return to my house from which I came and when he comes he finds it empty, swept and put in order. Then he goes and brings with him 7 other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first. So shall it be also with this evil generation." It waits for 7 demons to come and occupy it.

We are amazed at Jesus' comparison. Insight isn't compassion. It is only the prelude to compassion. It is a divine art to become aware of another's need, it is more deeply divine to feel that need.

Francis Bacon was a wise man, but he was utterly mistaken when he said, "In this world, only God and the angles may be spectators." Wallace M.

Alston makes a comment on this: “We have no spectator God!” He never stands outside the tears and tragedy of life. He enters into every sorrow, stands beside every mourner, and he is in the experience with you to reinforce and under gird you, then to see you through to the bitter end of it. The cross of Christ is our eternal symbol that whatever we suffer, God is in it with us.

Deep in the heart lies man’s greatest needs, his most intense suffering, his most profound tragedy. Christ comes with his compassion and healing deep within the human heart.

We rejoice in his power. Insight and compassion are sometimes not enough to meet the need. How often we have come face to face with desperate human need and have had our hearts torn with compassion and yet have been inadequate to meet the situation. How fortunate it may have been that we found ourselves in this predicament because we realize that we in ourselves cannot possibly solve all problems by ourselves. We need to realize that there is a power greater than human that is available to help us in these kinds of situations. Only Jesus Christ could be adequate. We have to bring the need of the person into contact with his compassion and power. His power is adequate.

I’m sure every true minister of Christ, can relate examples of Christ’s power to heal those of broken heart. One example of such an experience in His ministry is related by John Sutherland Bonnell in his book: “Certainties for uncertain times.”

“Sitting opposite me in the counseling room of our church was a 19 year old college girl. She was the picture of dejection because only 48 hours earlier she had been brought back from the very gates of death by a skilled physician. Guilt and shame had left their marks on her. Now she was groping for a way of life and a glimmer of hope for the future. That was one year ago. Here is a letter from the young student “I thought you might like a progress report. I went back to college as you suggested. Only after a terrific struggle could I bring myself to do this. However, the teacher and students were wonderful. I have now made the deans list and know exactly where I am going. Ever since that day a year ago when I found Christ, the way has grown steadily brighter. He is a wonderful friend. I am afraid no longer.

She has found a faith to live by and a purpose to live for. No longer is

there emptiness in her heart, but instead, a Christ filled victorious life.”

I'm sure we all know person's whose lives have been aimless, purposeless, and suddenly Jesus Christ came into their hearts. Their lives were changed completely. Life had meaning and they are looking forward to each day. Jesus Christ intends this for each of our lives. He is ready, willing and able to help us change our lives, to guide and direct us if we are willing to let him.

When Christ heals the broken hearted, he then uses them for healing others. It is the one who's grief has been assuaged by the compassion of Christ who can channel his grace to a grief stricken friend. It is the man who has been through it who helps his brother through.

Quite often when we are going through a grief stricken experience, such as the death of a loved one, we ask ourselves some questions. Why did this happen to me? Where is the God of goodness? We are really bitter about the whole situation. But as time passes, we suddenly begin to realize the answer to these questions because Christ has shown us the way. It may be that our grief has led us to be of greater service to others.

A minister tells the following story; “I had called on this family several times to bring them the invitation of Christ. They were always courteous, but indifferent, and made no noticeable response to the invitation. Then one day their teenage boy took a shotgun and killed his younger brother. That would break the heart of any parent. Their hearts were broken. They came to Jesus Christ. They were healed. In the little chapel of the church stands a replica of Thorwaldson's statue of Christ and nearby is a stained glass window dedicated to the memory of their boys, one dead, the other in an institution for the insane. These parents with healed hearts are a marvelous influence in healing the hearts of others. Sometimes something tragic has to happen in our lives before we realize the presence of Christ. Once we realize the presence of Christ in our lives we go on to tell others who are going through similar experiences in their lives. We become fellow laborers with Christ in healing the broken hearted. That belongs to the joy of our salvation.

Preaching deliverance to the captives

Delivered 3/15/64

I have chosen as my text today “He hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives” (Luke 4:18). Jesus was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, he was sent to heal the broken hearted, his third commission was given to him to preach deliverance to the captives. This then became a part of his soul’s intention. I believe it must have thrilled his soul. God was a God of deliverance. He was called to share in that service to his people.

Jesus’ commission to preach deliverance looked back into history and literature of his race. He lived in the days when fathers recited the stories of deliverance to their children. The synagogue schools repeated them. Feast days recalled the deliverances of old. The narrative of the Exodus when God delivered Israel from bondage in Egypt never ceased to be an exciting tale. The great feast of the Passover, year after year, repeated the story. I think perhaps the story of the Exodus has made a deeper impression on the Christian imagination than any of the Old Testament stories that have contributed to the full view of the Christian faith. There is a strange parallelism between the event of the Exodus and the event of the gospel. In the Exodus, God rescued his people from bondage to the Egyptians, in Christ’s death and resurrection, he redeemed mankind from slavery to sin and death. Through the Exodus God led Israel to fulfill its historic destiny in the Land of Promise, through Christ’s death and resurrection, he led the human race to its final perfection in the Land of Eternal Life. The gospel events appear as the “New Exodus” fulfilling the promise of the old.

The Passover was not like independence day in America when busy with picnics and absorbed with games, the youth’s forget or never learn the significance of the day. We take our liberty too lightly. We should look upon it with reverence and treat it with respect. Men have died and probably more will die so that we might have our liberty. We should at least live that we may keep it. No, the deliverance and Passover never lost its meaning to a Jew of Jesus’ day. The words of Jesus, “He hath sent me to preach deliverance,” were framed in the memory of the Exodus.

Jesus also knew the story of his people’s captivity in Babylon and of their return to rebuild the walls and the temple at Jerusalem in order to es-

Nehemiah earned a fascinating take which stirred the soul of every patriotic Jew. The words of history and prophesy and poetry spoke to Jesus of God's deliverances. He heard the cries of the captives and the rejoicings of their liberation in the songs of his people. One voice cries out to God "Save me and deliver me," and another sings "I will love thee, oh Lord, my deliverer; my God."

As Jesus made his proclamation "God hath sent me to preach deliverance to the captives," with his keen insight surely he was aware of the imprisoned people who stood around him. In the synagogue were the local Pharisees "In bondage to the second hand and cramped by tradition." They were self righteous synagogue police, who claimed the right to pry into and control the lives of their neighbors. Imprisoned themselves they made captive all others around them. As Jesus stood before them he could sense the people's need for emancipation.

Man is imprisoned in the external present. The external present at Nazareth was the legalism, the hidebound ness of the Pharisees expressed in rules and commands to which all had to conform. Every age has an "external present" which tends to imprison men. It is a presence of the world to make men conform. At one time it is one thing, at another time it is another. It may be one thing at one place, another thing at another. In some places the external present is the Jones family with which we must keep up. Or it may be some idol of wealth or prestige to which we must bow down. It is the pressure to conform to the world. How often do we think we need a new car, a new television set, new living room furniture because our friends have new things or because our friends may think we cannot afford it, and after all, the impression we make is important (at least we think so). We are slaves to material gain, earn more money so we can spend more and shove ourselves closer to the top in social prestige. We need a boat because everyone has a boat nowadays. Where is God and our church in all of this conformity? God and the church usually come last. After we have all we want, then we think about the church. In fact, we can go a step further and think of the conformity of our churches. Ladies and Men alike have to be dressed a certain way or they wouldn't be seen in church. If a person comes to church with shabby clothes, maybe needing a haircut, I don't think we

would have anything to do with them. Our church boards have to be made up of people who are prominent in the community. Perhaps the person who is just an ordinary person would have just as many, and maybe better, ideas than you and I. It is the pressure of the outside world that makes us conform and besides, it's much easier to conform than it is to do something difficult and perhaps oppose everyone else.

Jesus is the great emancipator. He can free us from this world of conformity. He offers a secret and permanent means of escape from such a prison, a breaking of the prison walls which leaves a man standing; of course, still in a present, but in a present so enlarged and enfranchised that it becomes not a prison but a free world.

Jesus had before him in the synagogue, and in the world beyond its doors the men and women who were in the bondage of sin. It is a terrible imprisonment. We should also pity the men and women who turn round and about within the narrow limits of sin's imprisonment. Though some may seem to have become accustomed to or unaware of their condition, nevertheless, the wonder of the open door and the free air and the broad space is the offer of him who came to set men free. Some of us may be imprisoned with sin, sin that is not obvious like swearing, drinking, running with other women, etc. Inward thoughts or actions such as jealousy, envy, hatred, greed, etc. Are just as bad sins as those we show outwardly. In fact, these kinds of sins will grind away at our inward beings until finally we will not be able to control them. Pretending to be something when we actually know we are not is perhaps the worst sin. "From bondage to freedom" is the biography of John Newton. It is the biography of many whom Christ has set free. It may be or could be your biography or mine, in fact. The word deliverance carries a meaning that should be noted. It has been likened to the letting go, as of horses, from the starting post. It is freedom to run the race, it is freedom to press on toward the goal. The free man can track out the truth. The free man can explore God. He searches out the unsearchable riches of Christ. He can do exploits in Christ's name. This is glory of Christ's deliverance.

Because Christ gives us the freedom, doesn't mean we are free to do as we please or to be indifferent about Jesus Christ or the church. The

freedom that Christ gives us is just the beginning. From here, we go on to learn more about the Christian religion and to witness to others for him, so that others may know the truth and be set free also.

A Poem written by George Matheson, entitled “Christian Freedom” goes like this:

Make me a captive Lord,
And then I shall be free;
Force me to render up my sword,
And I shall conqueror be.
I sink in life’s alarms
When by myself I stand;
Imprison me within thine arms
And strong shall be my hand.

Deliverance from Egypt meant a new country to be occupied and established. Deliverance from captivity meant a new Jerusalem to be built and a temple to be restored. A Declaration of Independence was followed by the writing of a Constitution and the continuing task of establishing a nation. The man who is freed from the bonds of tradition and error and second hand thinking and an “external present” attains to truth only by hard work and discipline. The man liberated from the grip of sin has still to press on toward the goal of righteousness.

Yet, the proclamation of Jesus brings hope to men. It is the proclamation of victory. It is God’s purpose that men should be free. Free men repeat the proclamation to men who are bound. The bells of liberty begin to ring. This gospel has not everywhere been heard - that Jesus came to give deliverance to the captives, that is the truth that sets men free, that this Jesus of Nazareth said also “I am the truth” but by the obligation of free men to their freedom, by the joy that they have in the blessings of liberty, the proclamation of the Sabbath day in Nazareth will be repeated to the ends of the earth. Even though some of us have heard this gospel we are not free because we

have not taken Jesus Christ into our hearts. We say, with our lips, that we believe in Jesus Christ, but we don't feel it in our hearts. We therefore are still captives to the world, and not captives of God.

We should remember that freedom is not a gift of God that is given without cost. Men lay down their lives that their children and that their children's children may be free. This Jesus of Nazareth who proclaimed deliverance to the captives laid down his life and took it again that men might be free. He won victory over sin and death. We too can win freedom from death unto eternal life if we are willing to accept Jesus Christ in our lives. Have you truly accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and are you free?

“In Fultonham”

In Fultonham the skies are blue
The valley green and wide,
While God’s protecting hands
Lift up the hills on every side.

In Fultonham our Father built
This church in former days,
And we unite our loves for it
A place of prayer and praise.

In Fultonham through summer days
We hold Vacation School,
And learn to live a Jesus lived
To keep the Golden Rule.

In Fultonham we love the Word,
The Church is our delight,
That teaches us God’s Holy Truth
And guides our lives aright.

In Fultonham we find that truth
Inspires us all to live
For God and others, and our best
To purify and give.

In Fultonham we live and learn
To keep throughout the years
This Holy Faith we pledge today
No matter what appears.

In Heaven above some golden day
We’ll join that happy throng
And mingle there our Fultonham
Tribute of Sacred Song.”

-Rev. William G. Boomhower, D.D.

Observing or following
(Palm Sunday)
Delivered 3/12/64

There is plenty of difference between observing Christ and following Christ. We can at least learn that much from our scripture reading regarding Palm Sunday.

Had there been newspapers in Christ's days, there probably would have been a special newspaper report assigned to cover Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and he would have written it in glowing terms. If Christ were making this journey today I'm sure we would probably cover it with television cameras. At any rate it looked as if that city had finally accepted Christ and His way of life. He was acclaimed and cheered. People even spread their garments in the way that he might ride over them and so they could say "Christ rode over this very cloak when He entered Jerusalem in triumph." this seems to have been the same as we would do today when we ask a famous person for his autograph. Christ's success seemed assured on Palm Sunday.

If our hypothetical reporter had written such an article on Palm Sunday he would have regretted his error of judgment and his lack of accurate observation when Friday of the same week had rolled around. He would have realized his mistake as he watched the triumph turn into tragedy.

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem will bear a great deal of study. In the first place it is quite different from the way Jesus conducted most of his ministry which usually was quiet and unobtrusive. Even though crowds always followed Him, He generally tried to avoid them. Although He was a great public figure, there was barely a handful of people who knew His secret and they did not fully understand it. Throughout most of His ministry He worked with individual people. Then suddenly He prepares for a triumphal entry into the Capital City. There was no mistake about the claim He was making, the greatest possible publicity; He was claiming to be the real king of the nation.

In the second place, this triumphal entry is a surprising incident because Christ is openly moving into the midst of His enemies. Until this time He had always kept one step ahead of them. When John the Baptist had been thrown into Prison, Christ had quietly withdrawn to Galilee, knowing that He would be next to be imprisoned. He had always kept beyond the reach of those who would have destroyed Him, but now He throws all caution to the wind and openly enters the strong hold of the opposition.

I think we need to try to examine and explain if possible, such a drastic change of procedure on Christ's part. It is very unlikely that it was understood by anyone in the crowd or even by His disciples themselves. They apparently assumed it was a gala occasion.

It is very unlikely that the opposition, (rabbi's and priests) understand what Christ was doing. Probably to the people it seemed like a fool hardy blunder that would deliver Christ into their hands and wouldn't have to go after him. The applause and ovation given to Christ by the common people no doubt worried them and compelled them to make their plans in haste. Some people thought that He was going to be the leader for open revolt against Rome. Others, who understood him better realized that Christ would not consent to this, but they saw in the occasion an opportunity to represent Him in that light to the Roman authorities. In any event, it looked as though Christ had made a very serious mistake in his strategy and had blindly delivered himself into their hands.

What then was the purpose of the triumphal entry? I believe it was this: Christ was compelling people to make up their minds. He had taught, preached, healed, and moved among those people for three years. They had not one, but many opportunities to know what He was asking them to do. He had said and explained the same thing many times. Christ's message was simple. A person doesn't have to be a great scholar and possess high intelligence to understand His message. You do not have to study it for years before you comprehend it. To love God and your fellow man is difficult but not complicated.

Honesty, humility, forgiveness, our human values that do not have to be proved by elaborate arguments. Christ has presented the truth to men in understandable form. He had spoken to them in their language, a language they could understand. He had illustrated almost every point. He had set an example of what He taught by His own life.

Now at last it was time for people to make up their own minds. They had heard the truth. Are they willing to accept it and to live by it? It is the hour of decision. That I believe is the reason for Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Truth is something about which people have to make up their minds. You don't just look at truth indifferently. You accept it or reject it. Christ went to Jerusalem to be accepted or rejected and ultimately there was nothing else He could do.

In the story of Jesus Christ, Palm Sunday is a day of decisions. You can drift but just so long; and then the time comes when you must make up your mind one way or another. You can court a girl for just so long, and then the time comes when you have to make up your mind whether you want to marry her and sacrifice your independence, or marry somebody else or nobody at all. You can flounder around in the business world for just so long, doing this, and that, and the other thing, and the time comes when you have to make up your mind and choose one course and pursue it. You can let a bad, downgrading habit go just so long, and then you have to make up your mind whether you want to let it go on forever, or whether you want to change it. You can let a country go just so far on its free and easy materialistic way, and then the people have to make up their minds one way or another on which way they want to go.

And this is the sobering truth. If you drift beyond a certain point you become a drifter, and a drifter is a person who has lost the power of decision, and a man who can no longer make decisions is a man who can no longer make anything. So there are "D" days, days of decision in every man's life, and in the life of Jesus Christ, Palm Sunday was this day.

Why do we reject greatness? Maybe because we don't understand it or because we are too close to it.

Why do we reject beauty and goodness and truth when it comes close to us? Maybe because our hearts are not ready to accept it. Maybe because it requires a change in our lives and none of us readily accept change. So Christ was rejected. He went on His way to the cross. Most of the people did not want him, the leaders couldn't tolerate him, and the few people who did want him kept still because they were afraid for themselves and because they didn't fully understand his mission and purpose and mission. What a familiar story this is and what a sad, tragic tale it was.

It seems in our easy going, modern world, making a decision places too much of a demand on us. We are very often reluctant to make decisions, probably because we feel it might be wrong or perhaps it is easier to remain on the fence and fall according to which way the wind blows us. In time of war some decisions are demanded of us and we are willing to accept it. But generally, under normal circumstances we like to take our own sweet time. Today we are constantly called upon to make decisions regarding the kind of products we are to use. Modern advertising by way of newspapers, magazines, radio and television, require that we choose between products. We listen to these advertisements but we actually pay very little attention to them. Of course if we actually did pay attention to these ads we would never know which direction to go or which product to buy. We are actually immersed in commercial propaganda. But how seldom we confront the truth that demands decision.

But we have to decide about the truth. We have to decide Christ. And notice this— we have to decide about Christ in our own lives. There are many people who do not have much trouble deciding about Christ as a great teacher or philosopher or a superbly fine human being. There are many who will admit that he was a masterful teacher, that he lived a fine unselfish life and that He did many useful things to help other people. Even the man in the street thinks that Christ was a great person although he may not exactly know why. The majority of people have had little difficulty in deciding that Christ had unusual abilities and qualities, but the majority of people have not yet made Christ sovereign

Or supreme in their lives.

Jesus Christ claimed to be supreme in the lives of men. He challenged the pettiness of the contemporary rules and regulations. People can live by laws, the law of God, and still not be acceptable in the sight of God. Christ compelled men to decide between the real and the false. He insisted that men live by what they say they believe in, and he called men to a way of life that is hard and dangerous, today as it was then.

When Pilate asked Christ at the judgment, “art thou a king then?” Jesus answered “thou sayest that I am a king. To this end I have been born, and to this end I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice.”

He asks us to accept Him as our Lord, our ruler, our final authority. He asks us to accept His word as the law of our lives. He asks us to accept His principles as binding upon us. He asks us to accept His kingdom as our goal and final objective. He asks us to accept the low and humble whom He called His brothers as our brothers. He asks us to fight against the things He fought against, and to fight for the things He gave His life for. He asks us to look at ourselves and repent of the sins we find in our hearts. He asks us to seek forgiveness and to grant forgiveness unto others. He asks us to make up our minds, to throw in our lot with Him once and for all.

Are you just observing Jesus Christ and watching what He does for other people or have you made a decision to follow Jesus Christ and bring him into your life?

The Upper Room **Delivered 3/25/64**

One evening nearly 2,000 years ago, 12 men and their beloved leader sat around a common table, sharing a common loaf, pouring from a common cup and hearing words from their masters lips that were most uncommon. There are at least three things about that Upper Room where the “Lord’s Supper” took place.

First of all, it was a quiet room. The roar of the restless city was outside. All kinds of sounds could be heard outside, but inside, everything was quiet. It was a place apart, Upper Room indeed. It doesn’t matter if it was Jerusalem or New York. The thing that is important is that “the upper room” can be any place as long as it is quiet where we can meditate with God, where we can think, and thoughts can be collected, where we can take a good long look at our own lives. There aren’t many places in our world today where it is quiet. There seems to be some sort of activity going on regardless of where we go. Sometimes our churches are so busy with church activities (meetings, dinners, clubs, etc.) that we do not have time for meditation with God in quiet. We are so busy with all kinds of activities that we do not have time to look at our own lives. And so the upper room at the first Lord’s Supper was quiet.

Secondly, it was a place where these men came with the dust of their faults still brown upon them. We certainly misread the story if we think that only saints were around that table. There was Judas with his intent of betraying his master to chief priests and scribes and elders. The gospel of Luke records that “there was strife among them.” I have heard people say that they are not good enough to join in the Lord’s supper. If this was the case, there would have been no one at the table because we are all sinners in the sight of God. How many of us can truly say that we are free from sin? If there is anyone, he certainly is a liar. Regardless of how sinful we are if we truly repent of our sins and we are sorry for our misdoings and intend to try to lead a better life, then Christ wants us to partake of the Holy Communion.

If we stay away because we think we are not good enough, then we will never participate in Holy Communion because we will never be good enough. Yes, the upper room was and still is a place for all people just as they are.

Third and most important of all, the upper room was a place where these men were drawn close to God. We too should feel the presence of the living Lord as we partake in the Holy Communion. His disciples could physically see and feel the presence of their master, while we can spiritually feel His presence.

It is Jesus Christ Himself who welcomes us to His table. He is the host. We are the invited guests. He Himself is the food and it is He who says “take, eat.” he is the priest and the saving sacrifice. The sacrament of the Lord’s supper has one meaning and one message. It commemorates the eternal sacrifice of Christ for us and for our salvation. At the same time, it holds in its keeping all of the benefits of the new covenant. It presents Christ to us and with Christ we receive from His hands what He has to give. The Christian life is to be a festival of freedom from the bondage of sin.

It is called the Lord’s Supper. The Holy Communion is the sacred act of Christian fellowship, the bonds of the members of the beloved society with each other and with their savior.

I believe that it is necessary for each of us to prepare ourselves for the communion service. We should thoroughly examine ourselves in the presence of God. We should look our lives over admitting our sins and wrongdoings. Some of us may have wronged another person. We should be willing to admit our mistakes and ask the other person for forgiveness as well as forgiveness from God. We should remember that Christ invites us regardless of our unworthiness. We should also remember the supreme sacrifice He made of His only son so that our sins could be forgiven and we could have eternal life in His kingdom.

We should be willing to demonstrate at least a small part of the love He has shown us to others.

These are just some suggestions for preparing ourselves before we partake of the Lord’s Supper.

This night let us partake of His bread and blood realizing that this is our “upper room.” we are gathered here in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ. We can feel His presence, His guiding and directing hand. Regardless of what our lives have been, we are going to change them now and direct them toward Christ. Let us truly accept Jesus Christ into our lives and make Him the most important part of our lives.

The Resurrection Faith **Delivered 3/29/64**

If we are honest with ourselves we will probably confess grave difficulty in believing the resurrection story and in holding the resurrection faith. What do we mean by the resurrection faith? I believe we mean that in Christ Jesus the Eternal God of power and love, had the last word, overcoming forever evil and death. That, after man had done his worst, thought he had finished things up in his neat, simple way with fear and hatred and jealousy and the skill of his little tools, hammer and sword and spike, God acted. The sign of his action was the re-appearance of Jesus as undeniably real, with a new body. That in brief is the resurrection story. God had the last word; and today the resurrection faith is that God still has the last word: that God is God, not death nor the devil.

With all honesty we have to admit we sometimes find the resurrection faith difficult to hold. The disciples likewise found the story hard to believe, the faith difficult to embrace. As we read the last chapter of the gospel of Luke we find three causes for belief on the part of those who had known Jesus best. First Luke writes of them in the eleventh verse. "but these words seemed to them an idle tale and they did not believe them." they were just as blunt as that. No beating around the bush with them, no fancy rationalization; the resurrection-nonsense.

Do we not feel at home with them? They had a struggle on their hands, too. An idle tale. This resurrection story, we say, has been made up in order for the book to come out more pleasantly; a chapter tacked on at the end to alter classic tragedy and to cover up the grim truth of God's abdication on Calvary. No one likes a sad ending but a sad ending it was and we might as well accept it. So we have emphasized the teachings of Jesus, hold him up as moral example and prized the Bible as literature, but have said of the resurrection faith: it is an idle tale, nonsense.

I think we should go further if it be nonsense, then we must in all honesty try to make sense out of facts like these: the church, for exam-

Resurrection, the resurrection rather is the only explanation of them. So it is with all that has followed in their wake like Martin Luther, John Wesley, public schools and constitutional law and your grandfather in church before you and you here this morning. None of them explaining the resurrection but all making sense only in the light of its truth. All this because some mysterious thing happened after the crucifixion which caused a handful of men to stop shaking with fear and break out in a glorious doxology: for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever, amen. These men themselves are hard to understand without the resurrection. They were broken, dispirited, disillusioned men, fleeing in terror, hiding in fear, trying in every way to disassociate themselves from the Galilean teacher in order to save their own skins. Yet suddenly transformed, made dramatically intense, powerful personalities. Was this the work of nonsense, of an idle tale? Strange nonsense that, turning cowards into martyrs and splitting the spirit as well as the numbering of the centuries. We find the resurrection incredible but no thoughtful man can dismiss it, as an idle tale, nonsense.

The disbelief of the disciples moves to a higher level. When we reach the 37th verse of Luke “but they were startled and frightened.” here is the disbelief of fear; afraid to believe. Does this not strike close to home? If the resurrection faith is true then life does make sense and we are relieved for a moment— but then afraid. For it is true, life does make sense but only on God’s terms—not on ours! It means we cannot escape His judgment— the defeat of everything ugly; the triumph of everything lovely.

The resurrection means, that God is intent on the fulfillment of His purposes, that He is indeed earnest about the establishment of His kingdom and that what we are set on is sure to fall in rubbish at our feet and at His, if it is not also what He is set on.

But they were startled and frightened. So it was: at first the disciples called it an idle tale, nonsense, and did not believe; but then they saw the implications and were afraid and did not want to believe.

Then, in the third encounter, they still could not believe but for the strangest reason. The record in the 41st verse says, “and they still disbelieved for joy.”

That is not an uncommon reaction to very good news. Some news comes that the war is over or that an election is won or a cherished position secured, and we shake our heads: “no, no its too good to be true. I must have heard it wrong!” but it is true, it is true, they say, but we still disbelieve for joy. I believe that this is true among many of us today when we hear the resurrection faith proclaimed, that God has the last word, that He is not mocked! Not many of us in this generation has really believed it.

We have seen that life is often tragic and brutal and painful and we try with all human resources to brace ourselves for the worst! Then God suddenly steps in among us and says “the worst is not true, eventually and eternally, but that the best is, this is almost too good to be true.” We disbelieve for joy.

It means that love wisely spent, outpoured in work and reflection, in an anticipation and work again, is not at last wanted but is caught up by God and that it endures. It means men of good will struggling in the classroom and laboratory, the parliaments and main streets of the world, these struggles are not in vein no matter what the governor of nations declare or what death a guided missile or popular opinion can bring.

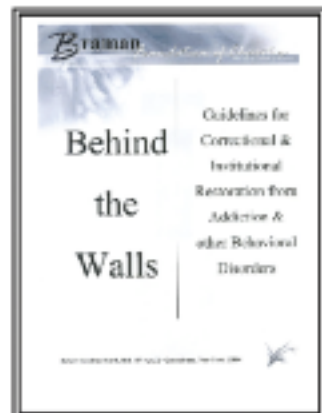
Pilot governed and the guided spikes brought death, but God has the final government of His creation. The road ahead is not without darkness, the path ahead is not without false turn, the answers are not simple, long life and happiness are not promised; but do not crack under the pressure, do not give in under that strain, for all creation is God’s and God is good and God is all powerful. Christ, our Lord, is risen today!

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.

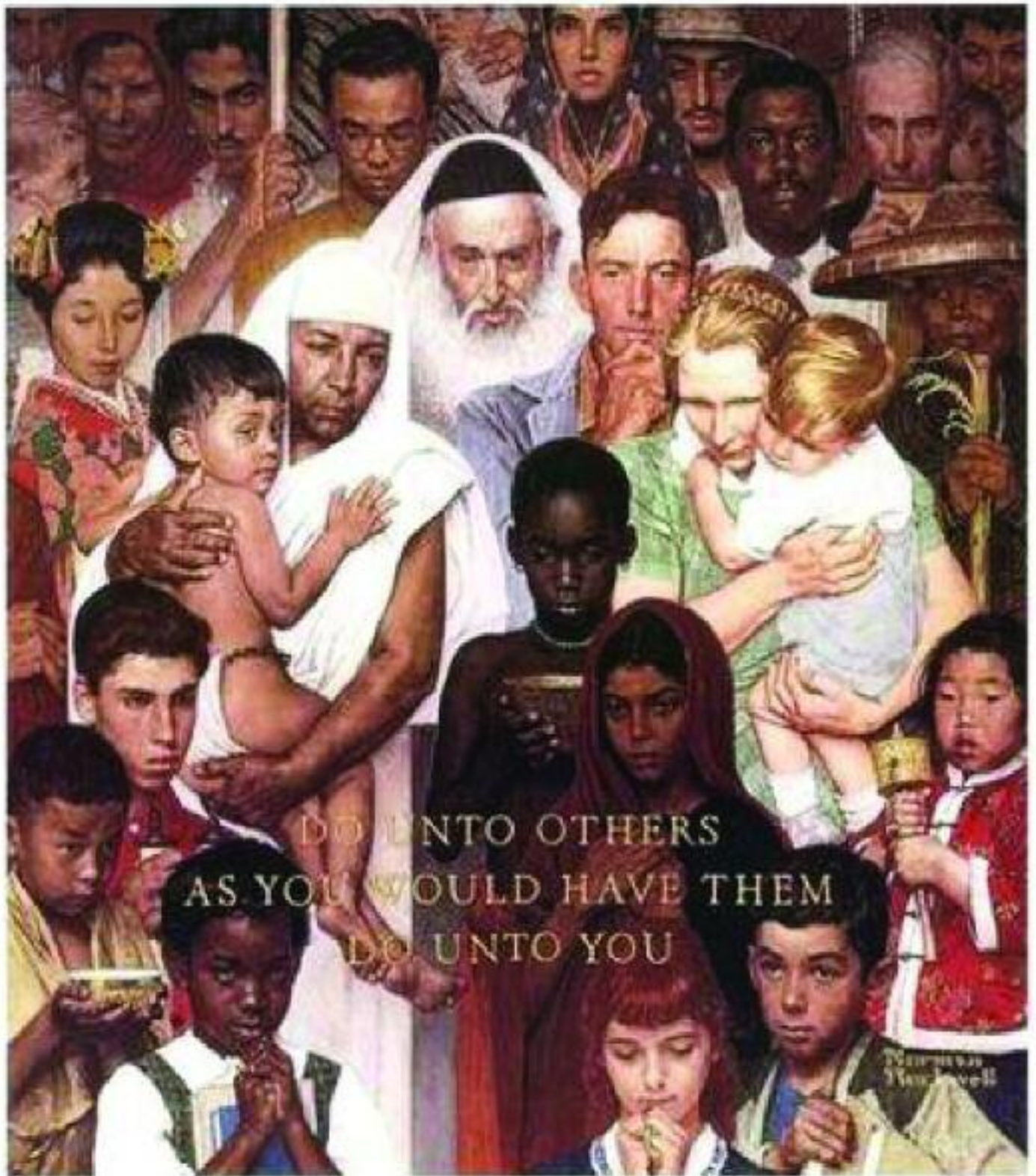


Millions of us suffer needlessly from addiction & depression. The reasons for this are many. In this program we emphasize the 12 step method of Recovery, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, and Meditation techniques to overcome difficulties. We also rely on God's grace to help you be lifted from your dilemma.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