FAULTFINDING

Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

Matthew 7:1

I.

"Judge not." This is something more than a bit of good advice. It is a positive command from the lips of Him whom we call our Lord and Master. Therefore, this is something we cannot ignore except at our own peril. We are forbidden to judge. What does Jesus mean by the prohibition. What is our Lord prohibiting when he utters this word "Judge not."

He is not forbidding us to form an estimate of the worth and worthlessness of those with whom we have to do. Reaching such conclusions is inevitable. When you meet a man in whom you are the least bit interested, you cannot but form some estimate of his character. When you hear a minister for the first time, you begin at once to reach certain conclusions about him. Does he know what he is talking about? Is he sincere? Our conclusions about our fellows may be, and often are, inaccurate. But that we reach conclusions is inevitable. We simply cannot help it.

Not only do we form an estimate of the worth of those with whom we have
to do, but it is right that we should do so. It is a positive duty. Jesus implies this fact in this further command. Listen, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine." By this, he means do not lavish your beautiful values on those that are so unworthy as to despise them. But how are we to carry out this command unless we reach some conclusion as to who is swinish, and who is not? We are to invest ourselves as wisely as possible. To do this, we must judge as accurately as possible the character of those with whom we have to do.

We can appreciate the rightness and sanity of this in our every day relationships. If you are thinking of going into partnership with a certain man, how silly it would be for you to fail to investigate your prospective partner. Does he know the business, or does he not? Is he honest or is he dishonest? If a young man is to come into your home to see your daughter, it is not simply your right, but your positive duty to ascertain something of the moral character of that man. If you as a young man or a young woman are planning to form a life partnership, it is stupid and silly for you to fail to know as far as possible, the character of the one you are about to marry. Many marital failures are born of the fact that we have married strangers. We have not taken time to know our partners-to-be.

If then judging does not mean the reaching of certain conclusions as to the character of our friend, what does it mean? What is prohibited by this stern word, "Judge not?" We are forbidden by this to seek for the worst. When some of us set out to judge we fix all our attention on the vices of our friend rather than upon his virtues. This word then is against faultfinding. "Do not," said Jesus, "be a faultfinder." Faultfinding is a common role. Many of us play in it, but Jesus forbids it.

II.
Why is it forbidden?

1. Because the habit of faultfinding tends to blind our eyes to the real facts. First, we fail to reach a right conclusion about any situation, group, or friend, if we are seeking for the worst instead of the best. This is true for the simple reason that he that seeketh findeth. Whoever may be your friends, you are mighty apt to find in those friends pretty much whatever you seek. To whatever church you belong, you are likely to find in that church very largely what you set out to find. If you have an eye only for the faults, the faults you see, and little else. For instance, if I desire to find out about London, I would not seek that famous pussy cat that visited the city years ago. You remember the report of her visit. It went something like this:

"Pussy cat, pussy cat, where have you been?
I've been to London to visit the Queen.
Pussy cat, pussy cat, what did you see there?
I frightened a mousie right under her chair."

But pussy cat, what about Westminster Abbey with its immortal dead? What about the London Tower with its historic and bloody memories? What about the House of Parliament? Did you visit Wesley Chapel? Did you walk down Aldersgate Street, where the founder of Methodism felt his heart strangely warmed? What of the queen herself? Was she beautiful, gracious, and winsome? The pussy cat has no information on any of these questions. Why, because there were nothing but mice in London? By no means. The reason was, being a pussy cat, she was only interested in mice.

One of the most popular books of recent years is "Gone With The Wind." You have perhaps heard that somebody was going to play Scarlet during the next century. "Gone With The Wind" is a very interesting book, but I have sometimes
felt that the wind didn't carry it far enough. What is the matter with this ponderous volume? It deals with a historic and heroic period. But in all its twelve-hundred pages, there is not a single character worth knowing. All of them are either chaffy or cheap. Why so? It is not because no worthwhile people lived at that time. Some of the most gallant hearts that the world has known were living then. But the author had an eye for the worst, and therefore missed the best.

This is ever the case. One day you came to church possessed by a spirit of criticism. You were out in search of what was wrong with the church and all connected with it, rather than what was right. In this mood, you sat through the service. The music was good, the scripture lesson a gem, our ever faithful Lord was in our midst, as he had promised to be, the sermon was so true that you could say amen to ninety-nine per cent of it. But there was one per cent of the sermon that offended you. It may be that the minister made a mistake. He may have used a bit of bad English. He may have told a joke. He may have given a harsh rebuke. Be this as it may, you at once forgot everything about the sermon of which you approved, and appropriated only that which you did not approve. Through the rest of the service you thought of it. You went home and mouthed over it at the dinner table. The more you talked about it, the more angry you became. The more you talked about it, the greater contempt your children had, both for the pastor and for the church. Such conduct is at once unfair and silly.

I have reminded you before that I do not like tomatoes. But the same Sunday I preached that sermon, one percent of which offended you, you smothered your irritation and invited me to dinner. You had beans, and fresh roasting-ears. You had chicken and apple jelly. You had good sweet milk, and the freshest of butter. My mouth watered as I looked at them. But suddenly,
there appeared from somewhere a dish of tomatoes. All at once I saw red. "This family ought to know," I said to myself, "that I do not like tomatoes, and yet they dare to put them before me." I became so angry that I did not eat a bit of chicken. I refused the dessert. I refused everything but the tomatoes. I ate gobs of tomatoes. When I went home, I was so indignant that I wrote my wife a letter:—"My dear, I went out to dinner today and didn't get a single thing but tomatoes." But why, because there was nothing else to be had? No. It was because I was looking for what I didn't like, and found it. In other words, I treated your dinner as you treated my sermon.

If you thus seek for the worst in your friend, the worst you will find. No man or woman ever lived that could escape the sharp tongue of the faultfinder. Centuries ago, there appeared in the land of Palestine a man who lived the one flawless life that this world has ever known. But there were those who set out to find something in Him to criticize. They did not seek in vain. They found out from their own investigation that he was a glutton, a winebibber, a friend to publicans and sinners. They found that he was a perverter of the nations. He was such a terrible foe that there was nothing to do with him but to hang him on the cross. Thus, the eye of the faultfinder is always partly blind. He never sees the whole truth.

Now just as the spirit of faultfinding blinds us to the facts about our friend, so it blinds us also to the facts about ourselves. If we seek the worst in our fellows, we thereby miss the best, and thus come to think of them less highly than we ought to think. But the habit of faultfinding has the very opposite effect in our estimate of ourselves. Just as this spirit blinds us to the good in our fellows, it blinds us to the bad in ourselves. There may be exceptions, but the rule is this:—The more critical we become of others, the less critical we become of ourselves. The more fault we find with others, the less fault we find with ourselves.
That is one reason that faultfinding is so fascinating. As we fix our gaze upon the ugliness of our friend, we flatter ourselves that we are becoming more beautiful. His failures seem to add to our successes. His downfall seems to make us stand the more erect. We glory in his vices because they seem to enhance our virtues. We pass over a thousand fine qualities that he has. He is active, honest, and attractive. He is liberal, sympathetic, and brotherly. We are none of these things, but that does not matter. Yet, we break our arms patting ourselves on the back and say, "At least I am not a hypocrite."

This is what Jesus meant by that rather ludicrous story of the man who had a beam in his eye. One day this man approached a friend who had a mote in his eye. Now a mote is so small that one would need a microscope to see it well, while a beam is a veritable log, so big that one would need a block and tackle to move it. How ridiculous, therefore, for this man with half a lumber yard in his eye to approach another and produce a little cambric handkerchief and say, "Pardon me, there is a mote in your eye," when his friend could have answered, "pardon me, but there is a saw-log in yours." The faultfinder sees the worst in his brother, and the best in himself. Therefore, he is blind to the real truth about both.

2. Then faultfinding is bad because it adds to our conceit and makes repentance and moral progress impossible. There is nobody quite so conceited as the chap who knows everybody's vices, who can see more through a key hole than others can see through a wide open door. He prides himself on the fact that he knows human nature as it is. He knows his way around. He has discovered that every man has his price, and every woman her price. Who is the worst devil in literature? My vote goes to Iago. The most characteristic thing of Iago was that he was a faultfinder. This was his boast, "I am nothing if not critical."
Actually such an attitude kills all possibility of moral progress. The only sins that such a man has to confess are the sins of the other fellow. He has none of his own. Jesus pictures him to the life. "Two men went up into the temple to pray. The one a Pharisee, the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus, "God I thank Thee that I am not as other men; extortioners, unjust, adulterers. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I possess." What a paragon of perfection! This man has a good eye on himself, and a bad eye on his brother. They are all extortioners, unjust, adulterers. He has no eye on God at all. What then was the good of his prayer? No good at all. He was so satisfied with himself that he desired nothing from God, and got what he desired.

3. Not only does the spirit of faultfinding kill all moral progress, but it largely kills our usefulness as well. I am asking you to think now for a moment back over your life. Who has helped you most? Of whom do you find it impossible to think except with love and gratitude? For whom do you have the greatest respect? I could not call his or her name, but of this much I am sure--the one that you have found most helpful has not been some faultfinder. It has not been some father or some mother who could always find something to nag about, but never anything to brag about. It was not some porcupine of a friend who believed in always speaking their mind. Those that seek the worst in us are not those that help us most.

Who then are they? They are those that seek the best. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fall, ye who are spiritual restore such a one." In what spirit are we to make this restoration? Not in the spirit of criticism, not in the spirit of faultfinding, but in meekness. Those that even tell us harsh truth in that spirit can get away with it. But the faultfinder is utterly powerless to help.

4. Then the faultfinder pays a further penalty in that he undergoes a
terrible judgement. One sentence that is passed upon him is that of wretchedness. I do not care what your situation is this morning, you can begin to look for the worst in it till it may become to you a chamber of horrors. You remember the story of that famous palace in Arabian Nights. The genii had builded a palace that was more beautiful than an artist's dream. The owner was very proud of it. In joy he showed his friend through its many lovely rooms. At last, they came to a large banquet hall that was lighted by a thousand shimmering lights. "Beautiful," said the friend, "but where are the roc's eggs to hang from the ceiling?" The owner of the palace did not know what a roc's egg was. He did not know where to get them. But he became restless in his palace henceforth because he did not have a roc's egg.

If you turn a critical eye on your fellows, you can make yourself unspeakably miserable. What a rotten bunch humanity is. That is Elijah's verdict. He was a great man, but he allowed himself to look for the worst rather than the best. Therefore, we hear him whining, "They have slain thy prophets, and have torn down thy altars, and I am the only man left." That is, there is not a good man left in the world but me, and I wish I were not here.

"There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave
There are souls that are good and true
Then give the world the best you have,
And the best will come back to you.
Give love, and love till your heart will flow,
And strength for your utmost need
Give faith and a thousand hearts will show
Their faith in your work and deed.
For life is the mirror of king and slave
It is just what you are and do,
Then give the world the best you have
And the best will come back to you."
Then faultfinding brings judgement because we find ourselves measured by our own yardsticks and weighed in our own balances. "Judge not, that ye be not judged, for with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." How often we find that true! Yesterday you sat down with a friend and picked an absent friend to pieces. Today that friend sat down with another friend and picked you to pieces. Of course, there are exceptions, but as a rule, we get what we give. I used to lean upon my plough handles and shout to the clift across the Buffalo river just to hear an echo. As I spoke to the clift, so it spoke to me. And so, there are echoes in life, echoes between man and man. If you judge mercifully, mercy is likely to be shown to you. But if your hand is against every man's hand, every man's hand is likely to be against you.

Finally, we are not only judged here, but we are judged yonder. This judging is of course, not arbitrary. It does not mean that the Lord has become angry at us. Faultfinding is born of an unbrotherly heart. Heaven is a place of fine fellowships. It is a land of brotherliness. If you are better at hating than you are at loving, if you are forever looking for the worst instead of the best, such a land would not be heaven to you. It would be the lowest hell. The faultfinder shuts the door of heaven in his face. This he does in the here and now. This he does also in the then and yonder.

III.

How then are we to get rid of this pernicious habit?

1. Let us face the facts about it. It is not a mark of keenness, but of blindness. It does not discover the facts about either our fellows or ourselves. It blinds us to those facts. It kills our moral progress. It blights our usefulness. It brings judgement. That is, it hurts us and it hurts others.
Therefore, it is wrong. It is an ugly and damming sin. Let us begin by facing that fact.

2. Because this is true, instead of cultivating the habit of faultfinding, let us try to cultivate the opposite habit. Let us seek for the best in our circumstances, in our church, in our friends. For here too, it is true that he that seeketh findeth. Look for something of which you approve instead of something that you disapprove. That is what Paul meant by this sane advice "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

3. Not only are you to recognize faultfinding as a sin; not only are you to seek a cure by the bringing in of its opposite, but you are to attack evil at its root. Why do we criticize so gladly? The supreme cause is our lack of love—sheer selfishness. One day a disreputable dog called at the parsonage. I had a horror of him. I wanted to chase him away, but my small boy who loved dogs looked at him with vast approval. He said, "Daddy he can wag his tail good." He was a lover, therefore he could see something to praise. "Love worketh no ill to its neighbor," not even the ill of an unkind thought, or a harsh criticism. The greatest safeguard then against the spirit of faultfinding is to let God into your life. This is true because the "fruit of the spirit is love."
I'M NOTHING, IF NOT CRITICAL

"Judge not." Matt. 7:1

This is a straight and forward word. It is a command from the lips of our Lord, but it is more than a command. It is a guide post. It indicates danger. It tells us of an evil that we must avoid if life is to be in the finest sense worth living. Here as always, Jesus is not dealing in arbitrary rules but in fundamental principles that are abidingly essential to conducting the business of life successfully.

"Judge not." What does Jesus mean by this terse word. I do not take him to mean that we are not to reach conclusions as to the merits and demerits of any individual or situation. He is not here asking us to shut our eyes to plain and palpable facts. In our every day dealing with our fellows, it is both sensible and inevitable that we reach some decision as to their characters. We are not asked to call black white, or wrong right. We are not expected to treat a man who has been proven dishonest as if he were honest.

Jesus was the farthest possible from taking such a course. He did not smile indiscriminately upon all whom he met. He did not greet all with words of approval. There were some whom He approved with words so tender and gracious that they warm our hearts to this hour but there were others of whom He disapproved. There were some against whom He unsheathed the sword of His tongue. He called them a generation of serpents. He could find no words sufficiently bitter to denounce them. He wondered in the white heat of his moral indignation how they could escape the damnation of hell.

That He expects us to reach conclusions as to the worthfulness of those about is implicitly stated. He commands us to judge righteous judgment. Not only so but
in this very passage, He gives a command that we cannot obey except as we discriminate between one man and another. "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs. Neither cast ye your pearls before swine." We cannot obey this command unless we reach some conclusion as to who is swinish and who is not. Our Lord then is not asking us to shut our eyes to the facts.

What then is He forbidding by this terse word, "Judge not"? He is forbidding us to form judgments that are not in accordance with the facts. He is forbidding us to look for the worst instead of what is true or for the best. He is forbidding that pernicious habit that both pulpit and pew tend to fall into known as faultfinding. He is forbidding us to have an eye only for that in others or in organizations that we disapprove and condemn rather than approve and commend. "Do not," He warns, "become a faultfinder."

II

Why does he condemn faultfinding? What is wrong with this habit? It is wrong not simply because He forbids it. The opposite is true. He forbids it because it is wrong in the nature of things. But wherein is it wrong?

1. First the faultfinder is always partially blind to the facts about any individual or situation. This is the case because it is true here as elsewhere that, "He that seeketh findeth". The faultfinder is seeking for the worst. He is seeking for something to condemn. Thus seeking, he always finds. Having found, he so fixes his gaze upon the thing he disapproves that he fails to find anything to approve. That has been the experience of almost every one of us.

A few years ago, I was preaching to a conference in Louisville, Kentucky. I made the assertion that there were a great many excellent Christians who could not tell the day and the hour of their conversion.

At that word, one brother sprang to his feet and hurried from the church as if somebody had shouted "Fire". I had read a great passage of scripture. The singing had been excellent. With ninety-nine per cent of the sermon this brother was in total
agreement but the one thing he carried away with him, the one thing about which he spoke to his brethren was the single statement that he did not approve.

Now suppose this brother had been broad-minded enough later on to have invited me to his home for dinner. There was no war at that time and I am assuming that his wife would have served a good dinner. Before me were fried chicken, corn, candied yams and a dozen other dishes that I liked but no sooner did I take my seat than I saw a dish of tomatoes. I don't like tomatoes, therefore in utter indignation I refused the chicken, corn and the yams and dashed out with the tomatoes, and when my wife asked me about the dinner I told her that it was the worst dinner that I ever saw. I didn't get a thing but tomatoes. Yet I would be treating his dinner just as he treated my sermon.

Generally speaking in every situation we find what we seek. The other day a buzzard went flying over our springtime fields and hills. There were a thousand beauties, green trees, blooming flowers, a whole landscape of thrills and throbs of life but all this buzzard saw was a dead 'possum. He found the worst because he was looking for it.

London is to my mind the most interesting city to visit in the world. One can take a guide book and spend a day of interesting sightseeing on almost any street in that historic city. But years ago, according to Mother Goose, a pussy cat visited that city with very disappointing results. When she returned home and the folks asked about the tower, with crowned jewels and bloody memories, when they asked about the House of Parliament and Westminster Abbey and Saint Paul, when they asked about the Queen herself, if her majesty was gracious and charming, this pussy cat had no answer to make. She had seen none of these things. Here is her story: "Pussy Cat, pussy cat, where have you been? I have been to London to visit the Queen. Pussy, Cat, pussy cat, what did you there? I frightened a mousie under her chair." All this historic city meant to the pussy cat was a mouse because that was all she had an eye for.

Since the faultfinder is looking for is something to condemn. He never fails to find it. There is a story of one such who went to Heaven. Having arrived at the
Pearly Gates, he said with a snarl, "Well, I'm here it is true but I came up on the dampest cloud that ever anybody rode on." Then he ran his finger under his crown and said, "Besides, look what a fit that is." That sounds trite I know but the faultfinder, if he should ever get there, would find plenty to criticize in Heaven.

Since he does find fault with the most perfect of situations so he could find fault with the most perfect of personalities. When Jesus walked among men he was indeed the fairest of ten thousand and the one altogether lovely, yet the jealous churchmen of his day were faultfinders. Therefore they found even in Jesus plenty to condemn and nothing to approve. He was simply a gluttonous man and a winebibber, and a friend to publicans and sinners. Faultfinding, therefore, is a deadly evil because it blinds us to the facts both about our brother and about any situation.

2. Not only does the habit of faultfinding blind us to the facts about our brother but also it blinds us to the facts about ourselves. But this blindness, born of faultfinding, while giving us a keen eye for the other fellow's faults tends to make us totally blind to our own. Here is a law that works with almost mathematical accuracy: the more you condemn the other fellow, the more you are likely to commend yourself. Jesus brings out this fact by a story that is so ridiculous as to be laughable.

Here for instance is a man with a beam in his eye. His vision was marred by an obstruction so large that it was impossible not to see it. Yet this man is so busy looking at the mote in the eye of his brother that he fancies himself perfect and offers to assist the poor chap when that poor chap is a million times better off than is the one seeking to help him.

The other day I talked with a man who had allowed himself to become deeply prejudiced against the church. One minister had let him down. Therefore he condemned all ministers and all congregations indiscriminately. He could see no good in any of them. Meantime he possessed one great virtue that was his joy and pride. He said, "At least, I am not a hypocrite. When I want a drink, I take one openly." Naturally, I was not thrilled. Here hypocrisy is a virtue in comparison with the man who flouts his moral sores in your face. The faultfinder is a blind man who minimizes his brother's
virtues while magnifying his own.

3. Faultfinding is hurtful because it so often gives the possessor a sense of pride and self-sufficiency. One of the ugliest characters we meet on the pages of the New Testament is the Pharisee that went up in the temple to pray. He was as cold as an icicle and as hard as a nail. But while in the temple, he saw a publican who in his eyes was so faulty that his very faults seemed to make the Pharisee himself perfect. Therefore he confessed no sin. He asked no blessing. He simply criticized the other fellow and went down to his house the same proud and ugly soul that he was when he came.

4. Now since faultfinding makes us blind, it shuts the door of repentance in our face. The man who is swaggering because he is better than the other fellow never repents. This was the tragedy of the elder son. He did not waste his substance with riotous living as did his prodigal brother. He remained decently at home and worked hard. But when this Prodigal came home with no good word to say for himself, when he came home with this confession on his lips, "I have sinned," a feast was made in his honor. This feast, his decent brother could not attend. His blind and critical spirit shut the door in his face. Our gospel is a gospel for sinners and sinners only. The man who confesses his own sin receives pardon. But the man who only confesses the sins of his brother makes pardon impossible.

5. Faultfinding is bad because it mars and often destroys usefulness. Who are the folks who help us most? Generally speaking, they are not those who always find something about us to criticize. Those who nag in the home seldom help by their nagging. Almost invariably they do more harm than good. The truth of the matter is that we are helped by those who believe in us and who expect the best from us and by those only.

That is what Paul meant by that wise word, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness." Why in the spirit of meekness? Because you cannot restore him in any other way. To say to a man who is guilty of a fault, "You fool you, you had no business doing it. You ought to practice self control like I do." That would alienate the most needy man in
the world. Generally speaking the more critical we become, the more we impair our usefulness.

6. Finally, faultfinding is bad because it exacts a terrible penalty. Jesus puts it in these words: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." In other words, other things being equal, we get what we give. We have to buy on the same scales upon which we sell. We reap as we sow. Criticism begets criticism. When you sit and tear the good name of some friend into shreds, you may count on it that the one who enjoys that pastime with you will be tearing you into shreds at the next opportunity.

In fact there is an echo in human hearts as there is an echo in our world. I used to talk to a cliff across the river from where I was plowing. If I spoke kindly, I was answered in the same fashion. If I spoke harshly, a harsh answer came back. I found the same to work in the daily business of living. Kindness begets kindness, just as hate begets hate.

"There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave,
There are souls that are good and true;
Then give to the world the best that you have
And the best will come back to you.

Give love and love to your heart will flow,
And strength for your uttermost need;
Give faith and a thousand hearts will show
Their faith in your word and deed.

For life is a mirror of king and slave,
It is just what we are and do,
So give to the world the best that you have
And the best will come back to you."

Judge harshly and you will be judged harshly in the here and now. That also will hold for eternity. For there is no Heaven possible for the loveless faultfinder.

III.

"Judge not." Refuse to be a faultfinder. How shall we set about it? I am going to offer three simple suggestions:
1. First, face the fact that faultfinding though at times very interesting and very cute and quite funny is not really beautiful. Since it hurts you and hurts others, it is not simply an infirmity. It is not an indication that you are more intelligent than your fellows. It does not prove that you are keener than the dull rubes about you. It just means that you are wicked. Faultfinding is an injury that comes out of an evil and loveless heart. So thought James, therefore he said, "If any man among you seemeth to be religious and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain." That certainly lands on the pulpit and it doesn't skip the pew.

2. Second, since faultfinding is a sin we are to repent of it. What does repentance mean? It means a change of mind that leads to a change of conduct. What is the outcome of our faultfinding? In faultfinding, we look for the worst instead of the best. But in repentance, we reverse this order. We seek the best in every given person and in every given situation. So seeking, we should surely find. For there is no one with whom we have to deal that is altogether bad.

Some years ago when we were living in Washington, a most disreputable looking dog came to pay us a visit. In appearance he was about everything that a dog ought not to be. In looking him over, along with my small boy, I commented on his utter unsightlessness. But this boy had a roomy heart for dogs. Therefore he failed to see his ugliness at all. Instead he found something about him to commend. "Isn't he horrible," I said. "But Daddy, he can wag his tail good, can't he?"

To be able to see a mark of friendliness in the unfriendly is surely a gift to be coveted. It can be cultivated too, just as its ugly opposite can be cultivated. We ought, therefore, to repent by looking for what is good instead of solely for what is bad.

3. Finally, if we are to win over this very human and yet very hurtful sin, we will need the help of God. Generally speaking, our harsh criticism is born of our lack of love. We do not find it difficult to keep from telling our friends the faults and shortcomings of our own children. This is the case not because those children are perfect but because loving them we are kind in our judgments. There is no help
as great in the cultivation of a loving attitude toward others as letting into our hearts the mighty God whose nature and whose name is love.

One wise man put this sharp test to his criticism of others. First, is it true? Second, is it kind? Third, is it necessary?" There are many ugly things you might say about me that are true. There are such that I might say about some of you. But oftentimes these criticisms are neither kind nor necessary. No wonder, therefore, our Lord realizing how our faultfinding wounds others and will desperately wound ourselves gave us this wise word:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."
Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye and fail to notice the log that is in your own eye? Matthew 7:3
(American Standard Revised)

There is a delicious touch of humor about this text. Jesus is deadly serious, but that fact does not interfere with his laughter. There are those who confuse seriousness with solemnity. Such are convinced that to be serious one must be very solemn. Now, while it is possible for one to be very serious and to have his eyes bright with tears, it is possible for another to be very serious and have his eyes bright with laughter. Jesus had a sense of humor. He knew that laughter is a good medicine. He knew also that it is a very effective weapon. What could be more absurd than for a man with a log in his eye to seek to minister to another who is afflicted with a mere speck? Thus did Jesus seek to make the sin of faultfinding look ridiculous and to laugh it out of court.

It is well to bear in mind that in rebuking the seeker after specks, he is not forbidding us to reach a conclusion as to a degree of worthfulness of those with whom we have to do. Such conclusions are at once inevitable and necessary. This is indicated by the Master's next words, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs. Neither cast ye your pearls before swine." It is impossible to carry out this command unless we reach some conclusion as to who is swinish and who is not. What Jesus is really rebuking is faultfinding - the looking for the worst instead of the best.

"Why do you see the speck in your brother's eye?" Why, indeed? It is not because it is so large and glaring that it cannot be overlooked. It is not because it shrieks at you and demands attention. When you see so small a thing as a speck, it is because we are looking for it. You cannot help seeing a log. It simply compels your attention. But no one
is likely to see a speck unless he is a keen-eyed searcher.

And why do we search for specks? Generally speaking, we do so because we hope to find something wrong. We feel that we cannot afford to give the individual thus criticised a clean bill of health. Satan, in the immortal drama is of this type. When the Lord called attention to the high character of his servant Job, Satan fairly shakes with laughter. He cannot help being amused at how easily the Lord is taken in. "Does Job serve God for naught?" he questions. What he is suggesting is that Job is not really a good man. In fact, there is no such thing as goodness. Decent in his outward conduct he may be, but he is rotten in motive. Thus Satan was so keen-eyed that he could see a speck that was at once invisible and non-existent - a bad motive. Even so, when we see specks it is because we are looking for them and hope to find them.

Why do we hope to find something wrong? We do so for a variety of reasons. Sometimes we look for the worst in order to salve our own consciences. When our own faults and follies and failures make us uncomfortable, we seek to gather a bit of comfort by saying, "I am not the only one." Even if I am grasping and greedy, I am not the only one. If I do selfishly neglect my duty, I am not the only one. " Such feel that the number of the guilty in some way lessens the guilt of the individual. But, of course, such is not the case. If I am dying of cancer, it will not help me in the least to know that thousands of others are dying of the same deadly disease. Yet we sometimes seek comfort in our moral sickness by looking at the faults of others and convincing ourselves that they are as great or greater than we are.

Then we often indulge in adverse criticism and fault-finding because we have a strong conviction that by tearing the other fellow down we some-
how build ourselves up. For instance, when I tell what a shabby and shoddy minister a certain pastor is, I do this in order that you may, by comparison, realize what a paragon of perfection I am. "Poor Mary," said an over-fed sister the other day, "Poor Mary, she really ought to reduce." Why this criticism? It was the critic's way of adding to her own slenderness without going to the trouble of changing her name. But, we really never build ourselves up by tearing others down. I have never known any man to build a house by tearing down the house of his neighbor.

Finally, we often find fault out of sheer envy. Of all the vices, surely envy is one of the most malignant. It is not, as another has pointed out, to be confused with jealousy. Jealousy may be a perfectly natural and right emotion. I know that at times it is the green-eyed monster that makes the meat it feeds upon, but when the meat is made to order by another, then jealousy is all but inevitable. If a husband gives his love to another woman who is not his wife, that wife has a right to be jealous. Jealousy, therefore, is a child of love.

But envy is a child of hate. "Love envieth not." Envy has a long and ugly criminal record. When Cain's offering was rejected and Abel's accepted, Cain could not take it. Out of envy he struck his brother dead. Saul flung a dart at David and then drove himself mad out of envy. The elder son did his best to spoil the feast when his prodigal brother had come home, out of sheer envy. It was envy that helped to crucify our Lord.

Sometimes we inflict the pangs of crucifixion by our tongues because of envy. When we find fault to salve our own consciences, to build ourselves up, and out of sheer envy.

II

Why is this practice of looking for specks so wrong?
1. It is wrong in motive. Of course, there is such a thing as constructive criticism. We realize the truth of this word, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." A real friend may point out the faults of one he is earnestly seeking to help. This text does not urge us to go about soft-soaping all and sundry. But the man who is seeking the worst is not actuated by good will. This man with a log in his eye claimed to be trying to help his brother, but in so claiming, he is playing the hypocrite. His motive was one of sheer selfishness.

In one of the beautiful scenes of the New Testament, Mary broke a cruse of oil and anointed her Lord. Jesus saw in that something so lovely that he declared that he would never allow it to be forgotten. The perfume of that gracious deed filled the room on that distant day. Not only so, but it has helped to sweeten our world for nineteen hundred years. But Judas, with a keen eye for the worst, saw in it nothing beautiful at all. He saw in it only something to snarl over. "Why was this waste of the ointment made?" he asked in indignation. It seems at first glance a very reasonable question. But what prompted Judas to offer this criticism? He did not offer it for the sake of Mary, nor for the sake of the poor, nor for the sake of the Master. He offered it out of sheer selfishness. The faultfinder is wrong in his motive.

2. This practice of looking for the worst instead of the best is bad because it so often hurts the one with whom we find fault. There are those who are deeply wounded by adverse criticism. There are those who are discouraged by it. Then often the faultfinder steals the reputation and thus impairs the usefulness of the one criticized. My reputation is part of the capital on which I do business. If one robs me of it, doors of usefulness
will thereby be shut in my face that might otherwise have remained open.

The faultfinder often hurts the one with whom he finds fault.

3. Finally, the habit of looking for the worst instead of for the best hurts the critic himself. When we persistently look for specks in the eyes of our fellows, we are very likely to hurt them, but we are absolutely sure to hurt ourselves. The faultfinder may wound his brother, but he always inflicts the sorest wound upon himself. Why is this the case?

First, it is the case because the habit of faultfinding has a way of putting out our eyes. The faultfinder is never a dependable fact finder. This is true because to seek the worst is to find the worst. It is true here as elsewhere that he that seeketh finideth. To find the worst and to fix your eyes upon it is to miss the best. In looking for something to condemn, we fail to see anything to commend. Even Jesus Christ himself had no moral beauty for those who were seeking only to find fault. To seek for the worst, is to become blind to the best. You cannot count on the faultfinder as a reliable fact finder.

Tell me what you are seeking and I will tell you what you are likely to find, in your brother, in your situation, everywhere.

"Pussy cat, pussy cat,  
Where have you been?  
I've been to London to visit the Queen.

Pussy cat, pussy cat,  
What did you there?  
I frightened a mousey  
Right under her chair."

Here is one who has been on a visit to the metropolis. London, I think, is the most interesting city in the world. But when this cat had returned and her friends who had never had the opportunity to visit London gathered to hear of that famous city, they must have been sorely disappointed. This
traveler had nothing to tell of London Tower, with its heroic and bloody memories; nothing of Westminster Abbey, that poem in stone, with its sainted dead. She had nothing to say of the House of Parliament, nothing of Buckingham Palace, nothing even of the graciousness of the Queen. All she saw was a mouse. She saw only a mouse because, being mouse-minded, that was all she was looking for. She reported truly what she saw, but looking only for what she was looking for, her report had no light to throw on the city. She had failed to see it.

If I were desirous of knowing the facts about that rugged land of poetry and beauty in the western part of our state, I would not send a vulture to spy it out. In one respect, he would be well equipped for the task. But, though he might fly over mountains crowned with forest, though he might see many a lovely cottage among the trees, and though he might see waterfalls hanging like ribbons from the brow of the rugged cliffs; though he might see gardens colorful with flowers, he would have nothing to say of any of these beauties. The one fact which he would report would be that he found a bit of carrion under a thorne bush. Why would this be the case? It would not be so because that was all that was there. It would be the case because that would be all he was looking for.

Did you ever go to church in a critical frame of mind? You were bent on finding something to criticize. What was the result? Though the music was beautiful, the scripture lesson a gem, the sermon so full of truth that you agreed with it 90 percent, yet you were not edified. This was the case because the minister said one thing that offended you. There was one word in the sermon that you did not like. But, instead of rejecting the letter that was objectionable and accepting the much that was good, you threw away the good and kept only the objectionable. Had I desired an accurate account of that service, I could not have obtained it from you. The faultfinder
cannot be counted on for the truth. He is a bad fact finder.

Not only does the faultfinder miss the facts about his brother, but about himself as well. Generally speaking, the keener our eyes become to the faults of others, the blinder do they become to what is wrong with ourselves. The more we magnify his vices, the more we minimize our own, and the more we minimize his virtues, the more magnify our own. Thus we still hear one who is doing nothing to help heal the world's open sore saying pridefully, "At least, I am not a hypocrite." What a noble boast! Neither is a tiger or a jackal or a fishing worm. Such a charge cannot even be brought against a sack of sawdust.

This blindness to his own faults is just what had overtaken this man who was looking for specks. What a joke it was when, with a whole log in his eye, he went to his friend and dared to say, "Pardon me, but there is a speck in your eye. Let me help you." But our laughter is changed to tears when we realize that his friend might have replied, "The poor fellow is not joking at all. He is deeply in earnest. That which would have been merely ludicrous becomes genuinely tragic. But so long had he looked for the faults of others that he had become totally blind to his own.

4. Then this faultfinder cheats himself in the realm of friendship. If you really desire to know how to win friends and influence people, I cannot give you all the rules that will work, but I can give you one that will not work. You will not win friends by constantly seeking for the worst in those about you and then telling them to their faces just where they are wrong. If you have a friend you may lose him just by persistently picking him to pieces. If you have an enemy you may change him into a friend by looking for what is best in him and by telling him of your appreciation of that best. Here the word of Jesus is emphatically true: "The measure you
give is the measure you get."

5. Finally, the habit of faultfinding so ministers to our pride as to make real repentance next to impossible. Generally speaking, the faultfinder is an egotist. He is proud of his capacity to see more through a key hold than others can see through a wide open door. The worst devil in literature was a man of this type. This is his proud boast, "I am nothing if not critical." Instead of being ashamed of his wickedness, he took pride in it. He was, therefore, as far from repentance as the Pharisee who went to the temple to pray, but got so busy cataloguing the vices of others that he forgot to ask for God's mercy and pardon for himself. The lesser robber who died by the side of Jesus on the cross might have repented had he not been so busy criticizing others. But the greater robber took a look at himself. Therefore, he declared that, though he was suffering the very pangs of hell, he was suffering justly. It was thus that repentance was born. No man ever finds God by confessing the sin of his brother. He has to confess and repent of his own.

Why, then, do we cheat ourselves by constantly looking for specks? Such a habit blinds us to the facts, both about ourselves and about our brother, for looking for the worst, we find it; and finding it, we fail to see the best. However fine your friend, however lovely your home, however adorable your wife, however faithful your husband, just look for the worst and the glamour will all fade away. However loyal your employer or employee, however excellent your position, constantly seek to find something to criticize about it and soon you will be changing jobs. Looking for specks may hurt others but it inflicts its deadliest blow upon the faultfinder.

III

How, then, are we to find a cure for this ugly habit?
1. Let us realize the wickedness of it. It is not simply our peculiar sin, but it is sin. It is an ugly and wrong doing by which we hurt others, wound ourselves, and grieve our Lord. Such conduct is the natural expression of an unregenerate and unbrotherly heart.

2. Having faced the wickedness of it, let us repent. Repentance means a change of mind. It is so to change that we not only leave off the habit of faultfinding, but we go in the opposite direction. We are not simply to shut our eyes and stop our ears and close our mouths in order to "see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil." A corpse might go that far. We are so to repent that as we once cultivated the habit of looking for something to condemn, we are now, by the grace of God, to commend. Thus, we now cultivate the habit of looking for something to approve. For it is true that he who seeketh, findeth. We can cultivate that habit and thus help others, as well as ourselves.

"There are loyal hearts, there are spirits brave, There are souls that are good and true, Then give the world the best you have, And the best will come back to you."
I am calling your attention to two texts. 1st is Matthew 7:12: -
All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you
do you even so to them.

This is part of the Sermon on the Mount. It is so rich and full
in its summing up of the whole duty of man that Jesus said it was a
domplete statement of all that the law and prophets had to say. To
be obedient to it is all that is required.

Some who wish to discredit the originality of Jesus declared that
it was uttered before He was born. It was uttered negatively - "Do not

do to others what you would have others do to you". But there is all
the difference between this and the words of Jesus as there is between
life and death. A corpse could carry out the negative assertion, but
it takes life to obey the assertion of Jesus.

Here our Lord is giving an answer to the supreme question of our
day. Indeed it is the supreme question of every day. What is the big
question before the house? It is just this - how can we get on with
each other? How can we live together in peace? That has been the
supreme question ever since there were two people on the earth. It has
grown more and more pressing as we have come closer together where we
now share the proximity of a family.

My second text is found in the Third Chapter of Ezekiel in the
15th verse - "I sat where they sat". This brilliant prophet has been
called by the Lord to be His spokesman. He has been assigned a difficult
congregation. It is a congregation that has suffered. It is now in
a concentration camp outside the great city of Babylon. It is made up
of the shattered fragments of a broken nation. It is the battered
remnants of broken homes. These have lost their native land. They
I have lost their wealth. Some have lost their loved ones. Because their patriotism and religion were so closely tied together, some have lost their God. They are a desolate and wretched bunch feeling that they are condemned to go on living when they have nothing left for which to live.

Now it was to this crowd that Ezekiel was called to speak. But before he rebuked them, before he told them what was wrong, before he finished barking their shins, he went and sat down among them. He looked out on life through their eyes. He wept through their tears. He bled through their wounds. He staggered under the weight of their load. Having thus come to know them, he could in the wisdom of God speak wisely to them. He thus dramatized the words of our Lord before he uttered them. He put himself in the place of others.

PART I

To do this is to find the answers to our supreme question.

1. Suppose each nation across the centuries had had the wisdom to put itself in the place of the other. Then the tragedies of our world would never of taken place. Our rivers would not have so often run red with blood. Our continents should not have been so billeted by graves. The flower of our youth should not have so often been offered in needless sacrifice. We should have learned long ago the wisdom of our beating swords into ploughshares and our spears into pruning hooks. If America and Russia and China should learn that even today we we would not hang over hell every morning.

2. Think of what this would do in our labor-management relationships. We burn up billions as labor fights management and management figts labor. Yet the most stupid of us know that one can not live without the other. Management must have labor and labor must have management.
For these to fight each other is as silly as it would be for a catcher and a pitcher at a baseball game to fall out and play against each other instead of against their opponent. But untold treasure in terms of material wealth, in terms of peace and good will we could have saved if labor would only learn to sit where capital sits and capital sit where labor sits. Then there would be competition in serving instead of being served.

3. This would bring wealth unmeasurable in our everyday individual relationships. How does life look through the cobwebbed, smoke begrimed windows of one who never had a chance? To him of whom it is true that knowledge to his eyes "ample page did ne'er unroll chilled penury suppressed his noble rage and froze the genial current of the soul". How does life look to the hopelessly ill? The one who knows he will never leave the narrow precincts of the sick room until he goes to the more narrow house of the cemetery? How does life look to one whose outlook is darkened by gloom and whose every breath is a breath of pain?

What added joy would come to our own lives if we should learn to put ourselves each in the place of the other. Suppose the husband should learn to sit where his wife sits. To know the monotony of planning what she is going to have for breakfast, dinner, and supper today and tomorrow and tomorrow. Suppose he should realize the monotony of dusting the same old furniture and sweeping the same floors. The sweet and yet taxing task of looking out after her children. Suppose he could thus realize how she misses those tender commonplace courtesies, the bouquet of flowers, the box of candy, the simple little courtesies that made her his in life's bright morning.

Suppose the wife could put herself in her husband's place and
experience the grind of a day in the office or factory. To know what it is to come home tired and a bit irritable. Suppose the wife could see how this once romantic overgrown boy had become a prosaic meal ticket and should give him an unexpected compliment and going far thus to make him young again. Many marriages go on the rocks, and what strikes me as more tragic, many a wretch that might be happy may live in an atmosphere of a perpetual war whoop who could avoid the tragedy by putting himself each in the place of the other. Then we oldsters need to put ourselves in the place of those who are young. We need to remember that we once knew everything. That once we were sure of all the answers. "You look like a perfect idiot", said a hard working old father to his son who had just come home from school dressed in typical college boy savagery. At that very moment an old friend who had know the boy since he was a child came in and seized him, shook his hand warmly and said "You are the spitting image of your father". "Yess," said George, "That is what father was just telling me when you came in". Youth today are in world wide rebellion. Few are agreed on the answer to the problem. Personally I do not think it is altogether the fault of the youngster. Usually many of them have been raised without proper parental control. Let a child know that by screaming loud enough and stomping his foot hard enough that he can get his way in any situation, he is liable to choose that way when he gets to college, though it is a way that never fails to disappoint. No child is very happy who is never crossed. If we would put ourselves in the place of our children, we would see how greatly they need love and understanding. How greatly also they need discipline.

Then what is harder still, we who are young ought to sit in the place of our parents. This is more difficult for youth than for us
who are older. We have been young, though some of us have forgotten it, but you have never been old. Therefore it is next to impossible for you to realize that you will ever be as prosaid and dull and stupid as we are. Yet you too will be the problem of the youth of a quarter of a century from now and your children will wonder with vague and troubled contempt what to do with you. If you could put yourselves in their place and realize what is troubling them will trouble you in later years, then you might go to their graves later on and find something growing there fairer than the lilies of the valley and sweeter than spring violets. It would be the memory of the parents of lives you have led and who could bless you in their homegoing.

PART II

Our wisdom then is to put ourselves in the other fellow's place. First we should do this because it would not only help others, but it would help ourselves. We ought to do to others what we would like them to do to us. We ought to do this because, said Jesus, "The measure we give is the measure we get". Now and then you will hear somebody say "Nobody ever did me a favor". Of course that is never true. Were it true it would simply mean that you never did anybody a favor. I use to stop and lean on my ploughshare as a boy and talk to a cliff across the Buffalo River. I found that I could get anything out of that cliff that I wanted. If I got up on the wrong side of the bed and wanted somebody to tell me how useless and stupid I was, all I had to do was to tell the cliff. If I had gotten up with morning in my heart and wanted somebody to tell me that life was a priceless something and that it was good to be alive, all I had to do was to tell the cliff.

There is sober truth in that old story of the two pioneers who were moving to new settlements. The front covered wagon met a
gentleman on horseback and asked him the name of the next settlement. When the gentleman answered the driver of the wagon asked "What sort of people live there?" "What sort of people did you leave?" "They were simply the dearest people in the world. It hurt our hearts to leave them. We could not have torn ourselves away if it had not been because of the economic pressures." "Well, I am glad to tell you", the man said, "that you will meet the same kind of people here".

From there he rode to meet the second wagon. The driver stopped and asked the man on horseback the name of the next settlement and said "That is where we are going. What sort of people are there?" "What sort of people did you leave?" he asked. "They were the most cantankerous characters that ever lived and were hard to live with. We should never have made this long journey if our people had not been so bad". "I am sorry to tell you that you will find the same sort of people in the next settlement".

This story is true. A farmer bought himself a new Morris Chair in which he had the joy of taking a nap after every noonday meal. One day as he was sleeping a small boy looked him over, and knowing he slept soundly the boy slipped off to the kitchen and got a piece of Limburger Cheese and stroked the man's mustache with it and waited for results. A few moments later the man came awake, sniffed loudly, and said "There is something rotten in this room." He then went out on the porch and said "There is something rotten on this porch". Off he went over the farm and two hours later he came back to report that the whole world was rotten. So there is, if you take it with you. The measure you give is the measure you get.
Since we get what we give, it is important that we give the best. It will help others. Above all else it will help ourselves.

There are loyal hearts and spirits brave
There are souls that are good and true
Then give the world the best you have
And the best will come back to you.

Give love and love back to you, will flow
And strengthen where you utmost need
Give faith and one thousand hearts will show
Their faith in your worth and deed.
For life is the mirror of king and slave
It is just what we are and do.
Then give the world the best you have
And the best will come back to you.

Years ago I was traveling alone in Europe. Now it so happens that I am a bad sailor. What I mean by that is that I am a bad sailor. Whenever I am out of sight of land I feel exactly like a choleraed chicken looks. I attended what was called The World's Fair in Guttenberg, Sweden. It seemed to me about as large as our Country Fairs. Soon I had used it up and decided to return to London. Traveling alone, I had not made a reservation. So I went down to the ticket office and the agent told me that there was no room unless I should share a room with three other men. Being eager to return, I bought my ticket and embarked. No sooner was I outside the harbor than the usual thing happened and I went to my room and went to bed. I found that my bed was an improvised affair - a plank or two with some
quilts spread over it. It was sort of a cooling board, but seemed quite fitting. As the slow hours slipped by a sunny faced gentleman looked in. We had never seen each other before.

"Hello, chap," he said cheerily. "Hello," I answered gruffly. "How are you getting on?" he continued. "Splendidly," I answered him. "I am traveling for pleasure." Then he did a queer thing for a stranger to do. He came over to tuck in my covers. As he did this he discovered what sort of bed I had. He then looked at me in seeming indignation and said "This is my bed!" "Oh," I said "it isn't, but it's not worth arguing about. Besides I am not in an argumentative frame of mind." With that lovely reception he left.

When night came on I decided I would go up on deck. I surely could not feel worse up there. So I went up, attended to a few chores, bedded down the fish for the night, and then about midnight returned to our room. Of course I could see clearly because it was almost in the land of the midnight sun. When I reached our room I found that this stranger had laid claim to my bed and was on it presumably asleep. So I had no choice but to take his bed, which was good and comfortable. I lay for I don't know how long looking at the restful sleeper. The next morning when I awoke he was gone, but as soon as I was dressed I went up in search of him. When I found him I confronted him with this question, "What did you do that for?" He was a Britisher and a good sport. He seemed about as embarrassed as if I had caught him stealing a watermelon. "Well," he said, "I saw you were ill and I saw your bed was not comfortable. I saw too that you were not used to roughing it. You see I am used to roughing it. I have been doing a bit of missionary work over in the Congo for the last ten
years and I am going home on furlough. I knew you would not take my
good bed if I offered it to you, so I had to give it to you by guile.
You will forgive me, won't you?" How could I answer a man like that?
I stood and looked at him in profoundly grateful amazement. He was
bigger than the sky. He was bigger than the ocean. He was big with
the bigness of our Lord. I saw some wonderful sights in my journey, but
far and ahead the most thrilling, the most humbling and uplifting
was this man who had learned to put himself spontaneously in the other
man's place.

PART IV

"I sat where they sat." How did Ezekiel learn to do that? How
did my British missionary learn to do it? The prophet tells
us 'the hand of the Lord was upon them. That is the answer. That is
the only answer. He certainly sat where we sat.' He was wounded for
our transgressions and bruised for our inequities. Since He took our
place we are to take the place of our fellows. "If He lay down His
life for us, we ought also to lay down our lives for our brethren."

If the hand of the Lord is upon us, we do with the beautiful
spontaneity what our Lord would do. Here is an amazing story, and the
wonder of it is that it is true.

A friend told me of a certain young woman, still in her twenties,
who had suffered a tragic automobile accident. Both her eyes were
put out. She was hopelessly blind. She was also paralyzed from the
neck down. Her plight was so pitiful that I promised to go see her.
On the way I got me up a little sermonette to deliver to comfort her.
But when the nurse met me at the door and led me over to introduce me,
this hopeless suffer turned on me a face so radiant that it glowed.
I forgot my sermonette and began to listen as she talked.

While she was speaking in a language that had about it the spicery of the Upper Room, the nurse whispered to me "She is in utter agony every moment she is awake". The patient heard her, and, if possible, her face took on a deeper glow and she fixed her sightless eyes upon me and made this utterly impossible statement. Yet though it was impossible, I knew it was true. Here is what she said. "As I lie here and suffer I catch myself wishing that I might bear the pain of others." To thus long to sit in the chair of pain for someone else, that is saintliness at its best. That means that with His hand thus upon us we could "Do to others what we would like others to do to us". There is no greater achievement than this.
THE TWO BUILDERS
Matthew 7:24-29

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it. And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at His doctrine."

The central lesson of this parable is the importance of obedience. It is fine to study the teachings of Jesus. It is a great privilege to preach the teachings of Jesus. It is our solemn responsibility to teach the sayings of Jesus in our homes, in our schools and churches. But all this falls far short of the ultimate goal if we fail to put these teachings into actual practice.

But to enforce this lesson, Jesus told the following story: He said that there were two men. One of these men was wise and the other one was foolish. Both of these men built houses. The wise man built his house upon a foundation of rock. The foolish man built his house upon a foundation of sand. Upon both these houses the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew. Under the stress of this ordeal the house founded in the sand became a complete wreck, which the house founded upon the rock remained unmoved.

At the very beginning of this story we meet, as so often throughout the New Testament, this seeming dividing of men on the part of Jesus into two classes. According to Jesus, there are only two gates, the strait gate and the broad gate. There are two roads, the broad way and the narrow way. There were two types of trees, the that brought forth good fruit and the one that brought forth evil. The ten virgins represented not ten classes, but two - those who were ready and those who were not ready. All of mankind was divided into two classes, those who were alive and those who were dead in trespasses and in sin.

Here He divides them into the wise and the foolish, or into the disobedient and the obedient. I am aware of the fact that to the modern mind this seems arbitrary and even untrue. We are apt to reason that while no man is so good as to be perfectly obedient, no man is so bad as to be in every respect disobedient. But with Jesus obedience is a thing of the will. And He taught, that a man was either surrendered or not surrendered.

Now these two classes - the obedient and the disobedient - have two characteristics in common...
I.

Now these two classes - the obedient and the disobedient - have two characteristics in common. When in two particulars they are in contrast.

1. They are alike in that they are both builders. The man who was obedient to Christ built a house, and so did the man who was disobedient. This saying is true of all of us. Whether you are good or bad, whether you are wise or foolish, whether you are cultured or uncultured, whether you are black or white, whether you are old or young, you are builders.

Not only are we all builders, but we are all builders all the time. We are not building simply in our conscious efforts to build, but in our unconscious. We do not build simply when we are at church and at prayer meeting on our knees, we build in the market place, in the gambling den, on the ball room floor, in the place of shame, everywhere, all the time, we are building. Every thought that we think, every word that we speak, every dream that we dream, every ambition that we cherish, goes into the building that we are erecting.

Since we are using different material, it is only natural that we are not all putting up the same kind of house. We cannot put up the same sort of building with mud that we can with marble. Some are building to their shame. Some are building for wretchedness. For in the house that you build, in the same house you must live. There is no getting away from this invisible temple that we are building. If you make of it a wretched prison house, in that prison you must dwell forever.

Some of us are building temples of rare beauty and loveliness. The building goes up slowly. A matter of a few days seems to make but little difference, but I have witnessed those whose lives become more and more winsome, who were becoming day by day less bound to self and more thoughtful of others. Day by day they are growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. They are building that that is the admiration of angels and the joy of God. They are building for eternity. "Build thee more stately palaces, O My soul
As the swift seasons roll
Let each new temple
More than the last
Shut these from Heaven
With a dome more vast
Till thou at length art free
Leaving thine outgrown
By life's unresting sea.

II.

But while the obedient and the disobedient have this in common, that both are builders, there are also contrasts. The first contrast is this: They do not build on the same kind of foundation. While one builds upon the foundation of rock, the other builds upon a foundation of sand.
The Two Builders - 2.

And by "rock" here Jesus Christ means Himself. And by "sand" He means any other foundation than Himself. "That is," said Jesus, "men are divided into two classes, those who obey me and those who disobey me. Every man who obeys me is building his house upon a rock and every man who refuses to obey is building his house upon the sand.

This is indeed a daring statement. I do not think Jesus Himself ever made a more marvelous claim than this. He declares that He is the only foundation for the building of the house of life; that any other foundation is unreliable and unsecure. Paul, then, was only following the lead of his Lord when he said: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." To turn from Him is to build life upon a foundation that is unstable and unsecure.

But to build on Jesus is not simply to be orthodox, it is not simply to admire Him, it is to obey Him. It is not simply to make Him your Saviour, but your Lord and Master. It is to put yourself absolutely at His disposal. It is to follow the direction of Mary to the servants when she said: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

III.

The second thing that obedience and disobedience have in common is that both are tested. Upon both of these houses the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew. The house on the rock was no more exempt than the house on the sand. This testing is said by commentators to refer especially to the coming judgement. But it is doing no violence to the parable to make the parable to say that it also refers to the life that now is.

That is, obedience to Jesus does not exempt from the storms and tempests and floods of life. Jesus has not come to give us an easy time. He is not come to put us in a sheltered place. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world." He is not asking that we be cradled in the lap of ease. He is not praying that we may be saved from testings and trials. He is not praying that we may be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease. His prayer is that we are to meet our temptations and our struggles, that are incident to this life, in His strength and through His power.

Now, this has been an accession of stumbling to many. Here on one street corner is a rascal. He has little regard for God or man. He drives sharp bargains; he promotes rotten politics, he grinds the face of the poor, yet he lives in a fine house, rides in the best of sedans and is seemingly in perfect health.

A little further down the street is another man who is God-fearing and conscientious. But all that he touches seems to fail. His investments go wrong. His wife becomes an invalid and he himself has the hardest possible task of keeping the wolf from the door. He needs to read with great regularity: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity", to keep from questioning the justness and fairness of God in His dealings with himself and with his neighbor.
This was what was the matter with John the Baptist when he was in prison. John was an eagle-hearted man, made for wide horizons, and for the great out of doors. When he was shut up in prison, he remembered how he had proclaimed Jesus when nobody else recognized Him. It was he who said first "Behold, the Lamb of God." Now that Christ was out in the world gathering a following. He was opening blinded eyes and cleansing lepers and raising the dead. But he himself was allowed to languish in prison. He could not understand. Therefore, he sent this rather impatient question to Jesus: "Art thou Him that should come, or do we look for another?"

I had an anonymous letter some time ago that read something like this: "Up to three years ago my partner and I were in a business that was paying us a meager living. He left the firm and went into the bootleg business, and I continued with the old business in which we had been engaged. Since then he has become rich. He owns a magnificent house, three cars, while I am struggling along in the same rut. He wanted me to go into the liquor business with him, but I refused because I could not conscientiously do so. Now did it pay?"

That is the same old question. It springs out of a misunderstanding of what Christ is in the world to do. He is not here to coddle us, as I said before. "He is come that we might have life and that we might have it in abundance. And that abundant life is only won oftentimes at the expense of conflict and stress and storm. He never proposed to pay us so much per day for being good. The Devil pays wages. God never does. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The man who is good simply because it pays him to be good is not in reality good at all. That is the reason Satan was so ready to accuse Job. "Hast thou constrained my servant Job, that there is none like him?" And Satan is ready to burst with laughter. "Job good!" he seems to say, "He is only good because you are paying him a fat salary for being so. If you would give me as many camels and sheep and cattle, and as much land, and as fine a house as you have Job, then I would be good too." Does Job serve God for naught? That is his question. The man who does not, does not serve him at all.

So the obedient and the disobedient must meet life's common testings in the here and now. Jesus never promised any man that if he would come after him, he would find an altogether easy task. A young enthusiast volunteered one day, but Jesus saw that he did not understand, and He said to him: "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." "I am more homeless than the foxes, more unsheltered than the birds of the air. If you become my disciples, you will have to face hardships. Saint and sinner must face the conflict here and they must face the ordeal of the judgement seat of Christ by and by."
IV.

But while they both face the same ordeal of testing, the outlook for both is not the same. This brings us to the second contrast. To the one whose life was founded on the sand, the testing meant risk. The rains descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell and great was the fall of it. That is the ultimate end of the man who resists Jesus and persists in sin is that he will become an utter and complete wreck. The wreck of a great vessel is a pathetic sight. The wreck of a fine body is a tragedy.

While I was in Washington I knew a man who a few years ago was a wonderfully vigorous specimen of manhood. He had a splendid intellect housed in an excellent body. But he took the paths of dissipation, and his strength left him and his splendid body was bound and dwarfed and crooked by disease. He became worse than a wasted shadow of his former self. He became a physical wreck.

But there is something infinitely sadder than that, and that is the wrecking of a soul. For a man's body to waste away through dissipation and disease is a matter for tears, but when sin takes the hideous game in its fingers and puts its defiling and rotting touch upon our inner life, when it wrecks the soul, that is the saddest spectacle upon which God, angels or men can ever look.

But the test that brought ruin to the house founded upon sand left the other unmoved. I like the reading of it. "The rain descended and floods came and winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not." Resting upon that foundation, it could not be overthrown.

And the strength and the steadfastness of this house was not an arbitrary case. It was altogether natural. To obey Christ is to know Him. "If any man will do His will, he shall know." To know Christ is to be strong. That was the secret of the strength of Moses. He endured as a man who is invincible. That was the secret of the strength of Luther. "If you fail to recant" said his friends, "the princess of Germany will not support you. Where will you be then?" "I will be where I am now", answered the sturdy little Monk, "in the hands of Almighty God." The man to whom Christ is real will stand in this life, and in that which is to come. May the Lord help us to build our lives on Him.

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Dr. Chappell, I didn’t know whether to copy all the verses or not)

ON BEING SENSIBLE

"...like unto a wise man....
liketh unto a foolsh man"....
Matthew 7:24:29

Jesus was a carpenter. As such, he had a peculiar interest in building. In all probability he had witnessed the scene that is here described: Two men had built each a house. They had employed the same architect, the same carpenters, the same kind of materials. When the houses were finished one seemed just as beautiful and just as substantial as the other. In fact, during the sunny days there was little to choose between them.

But, by and by, there came a crisis. A storm of wind and rain broke upon these two buildings. It beat upon the one just as hard as upon the other, but with differing results. One of them went to pieces and became an utter wreck. The other was just as steadfast and beautiful after the storm as it had been before. This amazing difference was due to this fact: one of these builders had been stupid enough to build on sand, while the other had wisely built upon rock. The latter foundations had not been made because he had been an architect, but because he had done the act of his own volition.

The two groups into which Jesus divides men here is striking. Of course, we are aware that he was constantly dividing folks into two groups. Some were shocked by these divisions; some think they are too dogmatic. But whatever our attitude, the fact remains that our Lord divides us into two groups and only two.

For instance, in this sermon he speaks of those who travel life by the broad road. These have no inhibitions. They are rivers without banks. Their lives are not fenced in. The writer to the Hebrews would call them profane. They know nothing of a compelling
"must", or of a restraining "Thou shalt not". They travel by the broad road and find destruction, while another group travels by the narrow road and finds life.

In this sermon Jesus declares again that they are two kinds of trees. One of these bears good fruit and the other bears evil fruit. He affirms that we can know a tree by the fruit that it bears. Of course, this is just another way of saying that people belong to one of two groups. They are either spiritually alive or spiritually dead. They are either good or evil.

In thus dogmatically dividing us, Jesus is not meaning to declare that any man is altogether good. Nor is he affirming that any man is altogether bad. But what he does affirm is that at the long last either evil or good is predominant in our life. We are either on God's side or we are against him. We are either alive into God or we are dead in our trespasses and our sins.

But here our Lord divides us, not into those who are good and those who are bad; not into those who are righteous and those who are wicked, but into those who are sensible and those who are stupid. That division is more startling to the modern man than the words. There are multitudes who do not shrink in the least from being thought wicked, but who would be very much ashamed to be thought stupid. The other day I happened to hear a younger woman presenting a book to a very old woman with a book. Said this younger woman, "This is a dirty book but I knew that you would not mind that", and the older woman chuckled with delight. She was not offended; she was flattered.

Not long ago a young fellow spoke of a certain party that he had just attended, said, "It was a great party. I got as high as a kite." In other words he had become intoxicated, but instead of being ashamed of it, he was proud of it. It is perfectly amazing how
many today think it rather smart to get drunk though a moron can
get just as drunk as a genius. There are perfectly decent people
who would not be half so embarrassed to be seen going to a liquor
store as they would earnestly searching the scriptures to find the
way to God.

Now, what Jesus is saying here, that to fail to take him seriously—and
the Stupids he is not making a distinction, is not simply to be wicked, it is to be stupid. This affirmation
that is allegory
on the part of our Lord is not unique. He said practically the same
thing when he told the story of the bridesmaids, five of whom were
wise and five stupid. That is what he was saying when he declared
that the prodigal, having run through with his wealth, and having 'wallowed in a hog pen, came to himself. Formerly this prodigal
had simply been out of his head, "off his nut" to use the language
of the street. He acted as if he were insane. His conduct was
silly.

When Isaiah tried to arrest the foolish folks of his day he
shouted at them these words, "Wherefore do you spend money for that
which is not bread and your labor for that which satisfies not?"
Why keep biting at the same empty hook? "Don't be silly", 
A certain psalmist, looking back to the red letter day of his life,
thought said this, "I [rewind] on my way and turned my feet....."What he is
saying is this, "I was messing up my own life and helping mess up the
lives of others but I did a little thinking. I used my head. I
recognized the stupidity of my conduct and changed my direction.

Saul, the first king of Israel, had a magnificent opportunity.
He was a man of no small gifts. He was a splendid animal. He had
some appreciation of those values that are spiritual. But while he
did not ignore God, he could never bring himself to whole-heartedly
submission to him. Thus he was constantly failing and as constantly
confessing. He said, "I have sinned more than any other man in the Bible." But in spite of this, his reign was a failure. He wrecked his family, he wrecked himself, falling at last upon his own sword. When he summed up the tragic mess he had made, he put it in these words, "I played the fool".

That is familiar language. A man killed his common-law wife in our city last week. Is he patting himself on the back as he languishes in jail this morning? No. When you think of those chapters in your own life of which you are most ashamed, what do you say? Do you exclaim with little Jack Horner "What a great boy I am?"
No, you say, "What a fool I was to hurt myself and others by that cruel deed. Jesus, then divides us into the sensible and the stupid.

II

What determines the class in which we fall? We have today what we call the I.Q. test. What is the I.Q. test of Jesus?

The test of whether we are sensible or stupid has nothing to do with how well educated we are. Of course, knowledge is power. But it is power just as money. Whether it is power for good or for evil depends upon the character of the man who possesses it. If you have the character, then it is better both for you and others, that you be a moron than a genius. If a high degree of scientific knowledge could save us as individuals and as a nation, Germany wouldn't be an utter wreck today.

What, then, I repeat, is the test? Our Lord, in giving answer to this question, said about the most daring word that he ever uttered. It was as bold as when he said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father". He declared that whether nations or men should prove them-
selves wise or foolish depends upon their response to his teachings. Nothing could be more daring than that affirmation. Yet all history says such an "Amen" to that word that word that word that to those who have ears to hear it booms like a cannonade.

Notice, then, that it is not enough to hear the sayings of Jesus. Both the wise and the foolish do that. It is not enough to admire his words. It is not enough even to give to them an intellectual assent. There are those who feel that they win special merit because they declare that they believe the Bible from cover to cover. Yet often in making that affirmation they show themselves full of prejudice and even hate against those who do not agree with them.

The one text, then is not the hearing, the admiring, the discussing, the approval of the words of Jesus. It is putting them into practice. Even if they sound a bit silly and impossible, if you dare to practice them you will find them true and will come thus to spiritual certainty. On the other hand, you may be as sure of their truth as you are of the sunshine but if you refuse to obey them, you will only plunge into the deeper darkness. Only one thing counts and that is obedience.

This is the case not because Jesus is the divine son of God. It is the case not because he expects us to take him seriously. He certainly does expect that. It is the case because what he said is true. Any man who ignores the truth is stupid. Any man who acts in obedience to the truth is wise.

Go out tomorrow to conduct your business on the assumption that two times two makes five and you will soon find yourself in trouble. It is said that when Sir Isaac Newton announced his discovery of the laws of gravitation, he excited great scorn. Some called him/mad
that not as many as twenty people of his
generation agreed with him. Yet, if you and I assume that he was
wrong, if in that assumption we step out of a second story window in the
morning, we shall break our bones. Even so to ignore these sayings of
Jesus is silly because it leads us to build upon a lie, and nothing
founded upon a lie will stand. So to build is wicked, but above all
else, it is stupid.

III

Glance for a moment at some of these sayings as recorded in this
Sermon on the Mount. See if they do not strike us as so true and
so essential that to ignore them is to stamp yourself as stupid.

1. Jesus tells us how we may find the supreme and inclusive good.
Here is his direction - "Seek ye first the kingdom of Heaven and his
righteousness". The man who puts God first in his life will find
him. The man who finds God will find all else that life needs. "Seek
first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things
will be added unto ye". That does not mean that if we put God first
we shall necessarily get rich, but it does mean that we shall surely
find what life needs.

If we thus become sure of God and of his ability to supply all our
needs, we shall then be able to live a life of confidence and of peace.
We shall know no longer take anxious thought for tomorrow. We shall
be able with the Psalmist to rest in the Lord and wait patiently for
him. This is not merely theology, it is experience.

2. Not only does Jesus tell us how we can be sure of God and a
can live a life of trust but he tells us how we can best manage our
relationships with each other. He puts it in these immortal words:
"All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye
even so unto them, for this is the law and the prophesy." "This sums up all I am here saying," he declares, "It sums up the whole Bible. If you want to know how to win friends, to influence people, learn to put yourself in the other man's place.

Think of what this would mean if it were taken seriously by the nations. The war has now been over for more than three years but there is almost as much fear, as much hate, now as when the fight was going on. Now the attitude of the nations towards each other is wicked is surely true, but in addition, such conduct is unspeakably stupid.

Think of what this would do in our relations with other races, with the minority group. We have a minority group among us and they are here to stay. This minority group might be assets but we may make of them liabilities. To be so un brotherly as to make a foe when you might make a friend is wicked. But it is even more stupid.

But this word is intensely individual. There is not a day that passes but that you have an opportunity in the home or elsewhere wisely to put yourself in the other man's place, or foolishly to refuse to do so. The practice of this principle would change many a home that is now a bêt of hell into heaven. It would change foes into friends. It would save us from hate and all the torture that goes with it. Here is the way life is meant to work. To refuse to act in obedience to that fact is the height of stupidity.

IV

This word of Jesus confronts every one of us with a choice. What is that choice?

We must either take Jesus seriously or refuse to do so. We must
either act upon what he says or refuse to act. It is not enough to
know the truth, to admire it and approve it. We must put it into
practice. When I take a trip by car, I appreciate the
guide posts along the way. But no guide posts, however accurate,
can bring me to my destination. No college catalog can give me a
diploma. No course in agriculture can guarantee your crop if you do
not work it. No book of diet can reduce your weight if you merely
read it.

What then proves us wise? Only one thing—obedience.
No amount of truth can save us if we do not act upon it. What was it
brought the shepherds to their great discovery when Jesus was born?
The song of the angels was not enough; the _____ of glad tidings of
great joy was not enough. All would have gone for nothing but for this:
the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go even now unto
Bethlehem and see". They put what they knew into practice.

How did Paul pass from darkness to light? How did he change from
the greatest menace of the church into its greatest missionary?
There was no magic about it. He puts the answer in these words, "I
disobedient to the heavenly vision, was not / ." However sure you are of Jesus Christ tonight, if you
act as if he is a light, he will be a light to you. However uncertain
you may be, if you act as if he is the truth you will come to that
certainty that will enable you to say, "I know whom I have believed."
"Now everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts upon them will be like a sensible man."

Matthew 7:24 (Moffatt)

These words come at the end of what we know as the Sermon on the Mount. Whether these sayings of Jesus were uttered as a single address or were collected in the present form matters nothing. Whenever they were uttered we may be sure that Matthew rightly records the reaction of those who heard them. Then the congregation broke up and went away in twos and threes as the people said one to another, "This preacher is different. I never heard anybody just like him before. There is a ring of certainty in his voice that is as refreshing as it is unique. He surely seems to have a first hand knowledge of that about which he is talking. He speaks as one having authority and not as a Scribe."

Thus declaring that Jesus spoke with authority these ancient hearers were using words that sound to us almost timid. "Not only did Jesus speak with authority but with superb audacity. He dared to tell his hearers that their destiny depended absolutely on the attitude they took toward his teaching. What he said to these hearers of the long ago he has said to the ages. What he said to them he says to us of today. Emphatically he affirms that to refuse to act upon his teaching is to meet disaster individually and socially. On the other hand he declares that if we do take his words seriously we shall find life both individually and socially. Not even God himself can make a more daring claim than this. Yet the experience of the
individual as well as the experience of the race utters to these words an emphatic Amen.

In this beautiful story of which our text is a part Jesus makes four very obvious assertions.

I.

He affirms that all of us are builders. When our Lord speaks of building he can speak with especial authority because that was perhaps his own field. The fact that Jesus was a carpenter means no doubt that he did something more than make chairs and tables and farm utensils. He also builted houses. Even if he did not actually build himself he knew about building. More than once in his own neighborhood had he seen substantial looking houses swept away for lack of solid foundations. He had seen other houses weather those same storms because they had in them the strength of the solid rock upon which they were founded.

Now it is the contention of Jesus that while all of us are builders we do not all build in the same fashion. There are those who build wisely. They act like sensible men. There are others who build foolishly. It is not their wickedness that is emphasized but their silliness. But whether wisely or foolishly all of us are building. Of course the house that we build is none other than our own character. That means that day by day we are becoming certain types of men and women. What we are today depends upon how well we builded yesterday. What we shall be tomorrow will depend upon how well we build today.

What we have builded thus far is naturally of great importance. That is the case because what we have builded determines what we are. But while what we are is of vast importance, what we are becoming is still more important. When I was a boy on the farm we raised various kinds of domestic animals and birds. For instance we raised horses, hogs, cattle and sheep.
We also raised chickens and ducks, geese and turkeys. At least we tried to raise turkeys. If you have ever experimented with this bird you know that there is nothing that a young turkey likes quite so well as to die. But we were quite successful with other birds, especially with the geese.

Now if you had the good fortune to grow up on the farm and thus to become personally acquainted with the goose family you will have to confess that the gosling is a beautiful creature. In fact its beauty is superb. But while confessing the loveliness of this young creature I could never grow vastly enthusiastic about it. This was the case because I always had it in the back of my mind that if it kept on the way that it was then going it would surely one day become a goose. This gosling was building but it was building for nothing better than goosehood.

On the other hand, if you had been cleaning up your home some morning toward the end of winter and had come upon an ugly worm like something anchored upon your window sill, if you had set yourself to tear this bit of ugliness from its anchorage and in disgust have thrown it into the fire, I might have protested. "That," I would have said, "is the cocoon of an emperor moth. It is quite ugly now I must confess but in spite of its present ugliness it is on the way to marvelous beauty. Be patient with it, then one day there will be a knocking inside that uncouth prison and a guest will come to visit you on wings more colorful than the rainbow." That creature is headed toward spring. Be patient with it therefore, not because of what it is now but because of what it is to become. Wisely or foolishly all of us are building our own house of life. That is the first assertion of this story.

II.

The second fact that Jesus affirms in this story is that the house I build as well as the house you build is to be tested. There will be gracious and sunny days for all of us, thank God. But there will also be days when black clouds
will scud across our skies and fierce tempests will beat upon them. However sheltered my house may be, however sheltered yours may be, the tempest is sure to break upon that house sooner or later. This is the case because God has put us in a realm of choices. That means that all of us decisions must be made. For all of us the roads fork every day. That is just another way of saying that temptation is a universal experience.

Since the roads fork every day this testing of the house of life is a process. The winds of temptation toy with more or less violence with your house every day. What you do in the face of these lesser storms is of vast importance. In fact what you do when the great tempests break upon you is generally determined by what you have done with the lesser tempests with which you have fought day by day. If in your commonplace days you have suffered defeat, if under the small tempests you have made tame surrenders, that is likely to cause you to make a great surrender when the big hour of crisis comes. If day by day you have told yourself and others little white lies, been guilty of petty insincerities, that course is likely to issue one day in a colossal lie and in ruinous collapse.

But while testing is an every day experience there comes to practically all of us an hour of tremendous crisis. There come to all of us storms whose issues will be a bracing triumph or a tearful tragedy. How did Judas come to his fall? He was certainly not created for the mean role that he played. He was not born a traitor. Luke tells us plainly that he became a traitor. How? Why? Inspite of the love of his Master he came to be guilty of petty deceptions, small dishonesties. These grew by day by day. At last the heavy storm broke upon him. He went to pieces and betrayed his Lord with a kiss. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

All of us, Jesus affirms, are builders whether we build wisely or fool-
I'D BE SENSIBLE

Evilly, all our buildings are being tested constantly. All of them come sooner or later to a supreme test whose issues are a matter of life and death.

III.

The third assertion that Jesus makes is that while storms break upon every life the effect of the storm is not for all of us the same. Here were two houses that Jesus knew. Perhaps they were in sight of each other. During the sunny days there was little to choose between them. The house of the foolish builder looked just as strong and abiding as that of the sensible man who had built wisely. Then suddenly the rains came, the floods arose, the winds raged. The wild storm was on. It beat upon both houses. But while one stood firmly upon its solid foundation the other was swept away, an utter wreck.

Sometime ago I drove by a bit of forest where a storm had recently raged. In other days the passerby could see two magnificent trees standing close together in that forest. One of these trees looked just as strong as the other. But now one had crashed, while the other seemed to stand all the taller and the more erect because of the wreckage that was all about it. It was not the storm that made the difference between these two trees. The difference was there before the storm came. The storms simply made the difference manifest. While it brought ruin to one tree it brought greater strength to the other.

Thus it is with the tempests that break upon men. The fact that one wins through while the other crashes is not to be explained by that while the tempest broke upon one the other lived all his life under clear skies. Indeed the truth is that it is not the fierceness of the tempest that decides our fate, it is what the tempest finds in us. The
same discipline that changed fluctuating Simon into a rock of Christ-like character, that made fanatical John into an apostle of love, changed Judas into a traitor. We are all builders. The characters we build must be tested by the storm. But the issues of the test will not be the same. The tempest that is the minister of life to one will be to another the minister of death.

IV.

Finally, Jesus tells us what is to be the decisive factor that will determine whether the house we have built will stand or fall. He affirms that our destinies are not matters of chance. He is sure that we do not have to be the victims of circumstance. When he stood at the end of life's journey with a calm assurance that he had overcome, he claimed that he had lived victoriously. He had met the storms of life but his house had not wavered—but had remained firm upon its foundation. "A kindred victory," he affirms, "is within your reach and mine." How is it to be attained?

Listen to the answer in Jesus' own words, "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts upon them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock—and everyone that listens to these words of mine and does not act upon them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand." There was a difference in the reaction of these two men that made all the difference between success and failure, victory and defeat, life and death. What was that difference?

To begin, it was not that one listened to the words of Jesus while the other turned away and refused to listen. There are those of course who miss the best because they have never had an opportunity to hear the gospel message. But the story indicates that both these men were hearers, but listening is not enough. In fact our own experiences have taught us again and again that we may be to no purpose. In fact one of the major dangers that dogs the steps of the constant church goer is the tendency to believe that by the mere act of
listening he has measured up to his responsibility.

Not only is listening not enough, but, even taking the message sufficiently to heart to teach it to others falls short. Both these men might have been both hearers and teachers. Both of these men might not only have been hearers but they might have been preachers of the word they had heard. Every teacher in the Church School, every minister must realize how much easier it is to point out the way of life to others than actually to walk in that way ourselves. How much easier it is to preach than to practice. We are told of a certain minister who recently confessed sadly, "I am like a trainman who calls the station along the road but who never visits these stations himself." "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings." But even that is not enough. Paul realized that when he said, "I shall and master my body, lest, after preaching to others I am disqualified myself."

Finally the difference between these two men was not in the fact that while one was thrilled by the message of Jesus the other was bored. While one nodded assent, the other brazenly denied. It is not enough to listen, even to listen with approval. It is not enough to listen with such approval that our emotions are deeply stirred. It is not even enough for the listener to believe without questioning the message. We cannot but realize that some of the most cranky and cantankerous people that we have known along the way have been churchmen who were intensely proud of their orthodoxy. There are those who fancy they are saints because they vow they believe every word of the Bible from cover to cover. Such faith may be entirely fruitless. James tells us that the devils themselves believe, but they are not transformed by their faith, nor do they seek to transform others, they only coddle. It is not enough therefore either to hear, to teach, or to believe the sayings of Jesus. We must go beyond that.

What then is the one essential? What is it that makes the difference between life and death for these two men and for all mankind? The answer is action.
"Everyone that listens to these words of mine, shall be like a sensible man." While the man who refuses to act however high may be his regard for the teachings of Jesus is simply building on sand and thus playing the fool. When we hear Jesus say, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life" we must act in accordance with that daring claim. We must give ourselves to the task of walking in His way. We must act here and now upon His truth. We must seek to live today His life. This is an adequate foundation upon which to build. Nothing less than this will stand the storm.

In thus making action or obedience the essential condition of victorious living Jesus is altogether sane and reasonable. It is only as we act that we come to that steadfastness that is born of knowledge in any department of life. It is not enough for one to believe that bread will satisfy hunger and that water will slake thirst. Before that faith will result in any good it must be acted upon. To refuse to act is to starve. When I was a farmer I came to believe beyond peradventure that if I planted corn and cultivated the crop I would reap corn when the harvest time came. I was sure also that if I sowed wheat I would reap a harvest of wheat. I am just as sure of the rightness of my position today as I was then. But in spite of this fact I am not expecting to reap either wheat or corn during the coming harvest. Not because the law of sowing and reaping has changed, but because I am not acting on the knowledge I have. I am no longer farming.

A lovely girl promised to marry many years ago. That promise might have gone for nothing and I might have become a cranky old bachelor had I not acted upon that promise. When just out of my teens I decided to apply for a scholarship in our oldest university. It looked like a long slim chance, but I determined to take it. Then one night I went over to the little village for the mail. There was only one thin letter. It was addressed to me. I noticed that
it came from Cambridge, Massachusetts. When I opened it it read as follows:

"Your application for a scholarship at Harvard University has been favorably considered. Please report at Lower Massachusetts Hall September 28 at 10 a.m." That was thrilling enough. But having read that letter I might have said to myself sadly, "What a pity that I do not dare take advantage of this generous offer. But if I should make the long journey to Cambridge I would have to borrow the money to pay my traveling expenses. If when I reached my destination the authorities were to fail to live up to their promise then I should certainly be in an embarrassing situation both financially and otherwise." Therefore I might have heaved a sigh and have torn the letter to pieces.

But I did no such thing. Instead I was filled with inward laughter. I said to myself, "I will certainly be there. You may count on that. If Lower Massachusetts Hall has only one inmate on September 28 at 10 A.M. I am surely not going to be that man." By thus acting on the words of the authorities at Harvard University I received my scholarship.

It is acting on the words of Jesus that counts for the individual and for the world. What is the supreme tragedy of the bleeding nations of the earth at this moment? Why are we destroying each other as if we had a mad eagerness as a world to commit suicide? Fundamentally it is because we have never acted upon the words of Jesus. The leaders in this bloody strife are nations that have been for many years been labeled Christian. But in too many respects these nations have been Christian in name only. They have heard the sayings of Jesus about brotherhood, about the necessity of loving one another, about the penalty of taking the sword, but they have refused to act upon these words. Thus refusing the result has been just what Jesus said, disaster. It does not take a wise man to see that the course that is being persistently pursued by the nations is not simply wicked, it is foolish, silly to the point of insanity. What do you propose to do with the sayings of Jesus? Do you mean to applaud them, to look at
You can promise yourself little today or tomorrow by holding them as lovely dreams, as beautiful ideals and nothing more! If so, the end for you is tragedy. But if on the contrary you begin here and now to act upon them, you will find them true, as true as the law of sowing and reaping, as true as the law of gravity. The man who assumes that the law of gravity will not always hold is true of the act may be wicked, but he is above all else silly. The man who refuses to act upon the words of Jesus is playing the fool, while the man who acts is supremely wise. To take Jesus seriously, therefore, is to build a house of life that will stand in time, in spite of all storms and that will stand in eternity. May God help us thus to be sensible.

To be someone is to be lovely - be him freely counted in retrospect.

Montgomery B. Churchill
To my mind this is one of the most beautifully simple stories of conversion to be found in the Bible or out of it. I grew up in an old-fashioned country community where the great event of the church year was the revival. The only orthodox time for one to be converted was during this revival. To be converted at any other time was hardly to be thought of by either saints or sinners. Not only was conversion solely a revival experience, but such conversion had to be accompanied by a great emotional upheaval to be regarded as genuine. The louder the convert shouted, to our way of thinking, the more profound his conversion!

Naturally, therefore, the business of becoming a Christian was for many of us shrouded in mystery. I thought all conversions ought to be like that of Paul rather than like that of Matthew. With Paul there was a flash and a fall. Then he was picking himself up from the desert sands, his commission from the high priest gone and the commission of Jesus Christ thrust into his hand. He was declaring "It is a true saying and worthy of universal acceptance that Christ came into the world to save sinners." But since I had never been flung upon my face, and since I had never seen any great light, and since I had never heard any divine Voice speaking in thunder tones to me, I was greatly at a loss as to how I could be converted at all.

But when I read this story of Matthew, I was heartened. How simple it is! "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom; and he said unto him, 'Follow me.' And he rose and followed him."
him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him." Did he shout? Did he weep? Did he pray? We do not know. But what we do know is that he obeyed. That was his conversion. That was also Paul's. It was not the light nor the voice that really saved Paul. He might have gone from the security of that light into a deeper darkness. This is what saved him -- "I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

To be converted is for one to begin right where he is, the best he knows, to follow Jesus.

Who was Matthew?

1. He was a publican. He worked for Rome in the Department of Internal Revenue. He was a tax-collector. As such he was perhaps the best-hated man in Capernaum. If there was a man who was more unpopular than Matthew, that man was doubtless another publican. This was the case in part because paying taxes is never a favorite pastime. In spite of all our flag-waving, in spite of our patriotic orations, many good patriots pay their taxes with wry faces. In fact we often employ the best legal talent we can find so as to reduce our taxes to the lowest minimum. In spite of the fact that we know that by paying taxes we are helping to maintain our own government, we are helping to keep ourselves free, in spite of the fact that we know we are contributing to the education of our children, in spite of the further fact that we are asked to pay only our legitimate part, the paying of taxes is still not vastly popular. The average man pays as little as he can and that with considerable reluctance.

Since this is the case with ourselves, it is not surprising how unpopular was a tax-collector such as Matthew. In the first place, he
collected taxes without any great effort at justice. He bought the privilege of collecting the taxes over a certain area. Having obtained this privilege, he proceeded to extract the last possible penny from his victims. Then the taxes he collected did not go toward helping his own people to be free; they went rather to help a conquering power to keep them in subjection. Thus Matthew was hated most of all because he was looked upon as a traitor.

When Hitler took over the smaller nations of Europe, he tried so far as possible to govern those nations through local traitors. He found one suited to his purpose in Norway, Quisling by name. That name is destined to become a synonym for baseness and treachery. In choosing local traitors, Hitler was but taking a leaf out of the book of the Roman Empire. Matthew was a Quisling who had sold himself to Rome to do her dirty work. He had thus become so hateful that his oath would not be accepted in a court of law. His money would not be received into the coffers of the church. The hand of every decent man was against him.

2. The fact that Matthew was a publican gives us a further hint as to the character of the man. He became a publican not because he had to. He was not forced to do this shameful task. He did it of his own choice. He did it knowing the terrible price he would have to pay. When he made up his mind to pull Rome's chestnuts out of the fire for her, he knew that he would be counted a traitor to his people and to his God. He knew that he would be ostracized and hated. The fact that he dared all this with eyes wide open shows that, if he did not have courage, he had a certain toughness of fibre that is close akin to courage. He had some bit of strength. The soil that could grow such rank weeds as those in the heart of Matthew had to have some fertility.
3. Finally, the fact that Matthew was a publican puts its finger on the supreme passion of his life. For what did Matthew care above all else? What was it that grappled him with hoops of steel? What was the supreme love of his heart? It was not his native land. It was not his religion. It was money. Matthew no doubt shrank from the hatred and shame that he knew must be his as the result of his base choice. But with his eyes wide open to all the horrible price to be paid, he paid it because he said, "Cost what it may, I am going to have money. I would get it honestly if I could. I would get it without shame and without the contempt of my fellows if I could. But honestly or dishonestly, with shame or without it, I am going to have money."

Now, "The love of money is the root of every kind of evil." Of all the base loves that grip the heart of man, none I think is more dangerous than this love of money. Its danger lies partly in the fact that it seems to be harmless. A man who finds himself becoming a bond-slave of liquor or of dope becomes alarmed. But so often the more a man falls in love with money the more keen and shrewd and free he fancies himself.

Then there is a second danger that threatens the lover of money. He is one of the hardest of men to reach with the Gospel. Sometime ago I sat down beside a man who had become the bond-slave of an evil habit. I said, "If a man had told you that you would ever become what you are, you would not have believed it, would you?" He glared at me and said, "If a man had ever told me that I would do what I am doing now, I would have killed him." "But you have not gone down without a fight, have you?" Then he burst into tears. "You are the first man," he said, "who ever talked to me that did not think I
wanted to be a blank fool. I don't want to be like I am, but the thing has got me. I need help." And I was able to point him to One who is able to save unto the uttermost. But had he been a money-lover, the chances are that he would have lifted a dollar between himself and the minister, even between himself and his Lord, and would have said at least within his heart, "You're not talking to me because you care for me. You are after my money."

Finally, the love of money is dangerous because it issues in wrong deeds. There is no kind of crime that has not been committed for the love of money. Matthew, the money-lover, having given up so much in order to win money, doubtless ceased to be scrupulous as to how he won it. The chances are that he cruelly ground the faces of the poor. Tacitus, the Latin historian, tells us of coming upon a monument in a certain city with this inscription, "To a good publican!" How revealing! When a man enters a bad business, he tends to become a bad man if he is not bad already. How hard, for instance, to find a good man engaged in the liquor business! Why? Because a bad business makes bad men. The chances, therefore, are very great that Matthew was a hardened rascal.

II

Yet this hardened rascal became a Christian. Not only so, but he became one of the apostles of our Lord. How did Jesus win him? Look once more at the simple story.

1. Jesus passed by Matthew's toll-booth. He knew the location of the tax-collector's office. We are not to think that this was the first meeting between Jesus and Matthew. Remember that Jesus was then living in Capernaum. I have an idea that these two men had met more than once. Jesus had possibly been to Matthew's office to pay
his mother's taxes. Perhaps he had gone with some hard-pressed widow to intercede with Matthew in order to keep him from robbing her and her children of their last bit of bread. In all probability Matthew had heard Jesus preach. Now Jesus has come his way, and Matthew is looking up from his ledger into the kindest and most searching eyes he has ever seen.

2. Not only did Jesus pass by Matthew's office, but in Matthew he saw a man. Listen to the story: "As Jesus went forth from thence, he saw a man, called Matthew." That is significant. There were thousands passing down Matthew's street. These saw a publican. They saw a traitor. But Jesus saw a man. He saw a man who loved money. He saw a man who loved money so well that he had sold himself in order to get it. He saw a man who was rich and growing richer. He saw also a man who in spite of his riches was heart-hungry, restless, wretched, longing for help, longing for God.

3. Then Jesus did a most daring something. He did something that threatened the success of His whole enterprise. He invited Matthew to become a disciple. We are accustomed to see nothing of good in the scribes and the Pharisees, those ancient pillars of church and state, whom Jesus had to criticize so unmercifully. But their indignation against Jesus is in some measure understandable. How would the Norwegians of today feel about a man who would set out to organize a new enterprise for human betterment and would begin by inviting a Quisling to be one of the leaders of that enterprise? Yet Jesus invited such a man in Matthew the publican. "Follow me," said the Master, and without a quibble, without even waiting, it would seem, to balance his books, Matthew rose up and followed Him.
What kind of disciple did this tax-collector become? He became a most useful and practical worker. His subsequent conduct is that of a keen man of business.

1. He made a great feast. When Matthew himself tells the story, he simply says, "There was a feast." It is Luke who informs us that the feast was given by Matthew himself. This feast had a two-fold purpose. First, it was Matthew's way of celebrating his freedom. When he left the toll-booth he did not look wistfully back. He did not go away shaking his head, wondering if he had made a bad bargain. He turned from it to give himself to Jesus with a wholehearted abandon. This feast, therefore, was a feast in celebration of the joy of having been set free. Then he gave this feast in order to introduce his new-found Friend to his fellows. He was proud of this Friend. Of course, he was. That Friend had given him back his self-respect. He wanted to introduce him to others that they might share his joy and his freedom. Thus, he did not simply invite them out to hear the Master preach. He said, "Come to my house for dinner."

Having decided upon this feast, Matthew's next decision had to do with his guests. "Whom shall I invite?" he asked himself. Then he thought of the respectable Pharisees that he knew and shook his head. "No, they would not come." Perhaps he thought of the good man who had been his rabbi. He would like to have him to meet Jesus, but he had to scratch his name out --- he would never think of coming to the house of a publican. Then he made a list of the only ones that he dared to invite. They were all outcasts like himself. Some of them were rich and some of them were poor, but all were without the pale. Matthew's Guest of honor, therefore, found himself that night
feasting with the disgraced and the disinherited.

Now a feast of that kind was news. The Pharisees heard about it and, though not invited, attended. They went not to find food for their stomachs, but food for scandal. They went to criticize. Thus searching for such material, they found it in abundance. But instead of taking the Master Himself to task, they spoke to His disciples. I imagine these disciples were a little embarrassed themselves. Some of them doubtless thought that Jesus was going too far. "Why does your Master," questioned the Pharisees, "eat with publicans and sinners?" Jesus overheard the question and gave the answer. It was a very solemn answer, yet I think there must have been a twinkle in His eye as He replied, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. You Pharisees, being in such perfect spiritual health, do not need me. These outcasts do. Where should a physician be if not among his patients?"

It would be impossible to find a more sane answer than that. Then Jesus added another word, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners." That, too, is the climax of sanity. It is no use to call the righteous. They will not come. It is only those who are conscious of their ignorance that seek to learn. It is only those who are convinced of their own sickness that consult a physician. It is only the sinners that turn to God for salvation. It has been said many times before, but we need to hear it again, ours is a Gospel for sinners and for sinners only. If you are saying with the Elder Son, "All these years do I slave for thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandments," if you have never sinned, then I have no message for you. Jesus Himself has none. No man either seeks or finds a place at the feast of the fullness of life unless
he is conscious of his hunger.

2. Not only did Matthew make a feast for Jesus and his friends, but he made another feast with his pen. When the Master looked searchingly and yet tenderly at Matthew and said, "Follow me," the publican forsook all to follow Him. That is, he forsook everything except one -- that was his pen. With that pen this redeemed publican began to jot down some of the sayings of his Master. He helped to light the world, even wrote a Gospel. Thus while the feast he made in his own house has been over long ago, the feast he spread with his pen has been feeding hungry hearts for nineteen centuries. Through that feast he is ministering to you and me at this hour. 

Matthew's Gospel has certain characteristics peculiar to himself. He had been accustomed to keep books. He was a man of orderly mind. Therefore, his Gospel is a gospel of an orderly arrangement. He groups his material, putting the sermons in one place, the parables in another, the miracles in another. The story of his own conversion he puts among the miracles. Of all the wonders that Jesus did, the most wonderful to this one-time publican, was that he saved this traitor.

Matthew wrote especially for the Jews. Hence he is constantly girding what he says by proof texts from the Old Testament. His favorite expression is "that it might be fulfilled." Such expressions are seldom found in the other gospels. He had betrayed his own people. He had plundered them. Therefore, as if in compensation, he writes a Gospel that in a peculiar sense is to fit into their needs. But while this Gospel is especially for the Jews it is also for the whole world. It is Matthew alone who gives the great commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to
Matthew The Quisling

observe all things whatsoever I have commended you; and, lo, I am
with you always, even unto the end of the world."

IV

And now the scene shifts from far off Capernaum to the city in
which we live. The same Christ that passed Matthew's toll-booth and
invited him to become His friend and follower stands face to face with
you and me. He is giving us the same invitation. We need this friend
just as Matthew did. This Friend needs us just as he needed Matthew.
We have to give an answer just as did this publican. It must be yes
or no. When this service is over, may it be said of every one of us,
"He rose up and followed Him." If we thus follow, of course, it will
cost us something, even as it did Matthew. But this wise publican
paid the price. Where is Matthew's toll-booth now? It has vanished
long since. The very city in which it stood has been a ruin for
centuries. But the wealth he received and the wealth that he has been
able to give to others has gone on, increasing, and will continue
to increase throughout all time and throughout eternity. May his
choice be ours.
"And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him."

---Matthew 9:9

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We can understand something of how Matthew's fellow Jews felt about him by putting ourselves in their place. Suppose Germany should win the war. Suppose in spite of all our sacrificial efforts, we should become a conquered nation, suppose that, having been defeated, in spite of all our blood and tears one of our own fellow citizens should come forward and offer himself as the tool of Germany and collect our taxes, not for our freedom nor for the education of our children, but for our conquerors. We should regard such a traitor with a burning hatred that we would not even give to our conquerors. It was so that Matthew was regarded by almost every respectable Jew in Capernaum.

2. The fact that Matthew was a publican gives us a further hint as to the character of the man. He became a publican not because he had to. He was not forced to do this shameful task. He did it of his own choice. He did it knowing the terrible price he would have to pay. When he made up his mind to pull Rome's chestnuts out of the fire for her, he knew that he would be counted a traitor to his people and to his God. He knew that he would be ostracized and hated. The fact that he dared all this with eyes wide open shows that, if he did not have courage, he had a certain toughness of fibre that is close akin to courage. He had some bit of strength. The soil that could grow such rank weeds as those in the heart of Matthew had to have some fertility.
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Yet this hardened rascal became a Christian. Not only so, but he became one of the apostles of our Lord. How did Jesus win him? Look once more at the simple story.

1. Jesus passed by Matthew's toll-booth. He knew the location of the tax-collector's office. We are not to think that this was the first meeting between Jesus and Matthew. Remember that Jesus was then living in Capernaum. I have an idea that these two men had met more than once. Jesus had possibly been to Matthew's office to pay his mother's taxes. Perhaps he had gone with some hard-pressed widow to intercede with Matthew in order to keep him from robbing the widow and her children of their last bit of bread. In all probability Matthew had heard Jesus preach. Now Jesus has come his way, and Matthew is looking up from his ledger into the kindest and most searching eyes he has ever seen.

2. Not only did Jesus pass by Matthew's office, but in Matthew he saw a man. Listen to the story: "As Jesus went forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew." That is significant. There were thousands passing down Matthew's street. These saw a publican. They saw a traitor. But Jesus saw a man. He saw a man who
loved money. He saw a man who loved money so well that he had sold himself in order to get it. He saw a man who was rich and growing richer. He saw also a man who in spite of his riches was heart-hungry, restless, wretched, longing for help, longing for God.

3. Then Jesus did a most daring something. He did something that threatened the success of His whole enterprise. He invited Matthew to become a disciple. We are accustomed to see nothing of good in the scribes and the Pharisees, those ancient pillars of church and state, whom Jesus had to criticize so unmercifully. But their indignation against Jesus is in some measure understandable. How would the Norwegians of today feel about a man who would set out to organize a new enterprise for human betterment and would begin inviting Quisling to be one of the leaders of that enterprise? Yet Jesus invited such a man in Matthew the publican. "Follow me," said the Master, and without a quibble, without even waiting, it would seem, to balance his books, Matthew rose up and followed Him.

III

What kind of disciple did this tax-collector become? He became a most useful and practical worker. His subsequent conduct is that of a keen man of business.

1. He made a great feast. When Matthew himself tells the story, he simply says, "There was a feast." It is Luke who informs us that the feast was given by Matthew himself. This feast had a two-fold purpose. First, it was Matthew's way of celebrating his freedom. When he left the toll-booth he did not look wistfully back. He did not go away shaking his head, wondering if he had made a bad bargain. He turned from it to give himself to Jesus with a wholehearted abandon. This feast, therefore, was a feast in celebration of the joy of having been set free. Then he gave this feast in order to introduce his new-found Friend to his fellows. He was proud of this Friend. Of course, he was. That Friend had given him back his self-respect. He wanted to introduce him to others that they might share his joy and his freedom. Thus, he did not simply invite them out to hear the Master preach. He said, "Come to my house for dinner."
Having decided upon this feast, Matthew's next decision had to do with his guests. "Whom shall I invite?" he asked himself. Then he thought of the respectable Pharisees that he knew and shook his head. "No, they would not come." Perhaps he thought of the good man who had been his rabbi. He would like to have him to meet Jesus, but he had to scratch his name out—he would never think of coming to the house of a publican. Then he made a list of the only ones that he dared to invite. They were all outcasts like himself. Some of them were rich and some of them were poor, but all were without the pale. Matthew's Guest of honor, therefore, found himself that night feasting with the disgraced and the disinheritEd.

Now a feast of that kind was news. The Pharisees heard about it and attended. They went not to find food for their stomachs, but food for scandal. They went to criticize. Thus in search for such material, they found it in abundance. But instead of taking the Master Himself to task, they spoke to His disciples. I imagine these disciples were a little embarrassed themselves. Some of them doubtless thought that Jesus was going too far. "Why does your Master," questioned the Pharisees, "eat with publicans and sinners?" Jesus overheard the question and gave the answer. It was a very solemn answer, yet I think there must have been a twinkle in His eye as He replied, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. You Pharisees, being in such perfect spiritual health, do not need me. These outcasts do. Where should the physician be if not among his patients?"

It would be impossible to find a more sane answer than that. Then Jesus added another word, "I have not come to call the righteous but sinners." That, too, is the climax of sanity. It is no use to call the righteous. They will not come. It is only those who are conscious of their ignorance that seek to learn. It is only those who are convinced of their own sickness that consult a physician. It is only the sinners that turn to God for salvation. It has been
said many times before, but we need to hear it again, ours is a Gospel for sinners and for sinners only. If you are saying with the Elder Son, "All these years do I serve for thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandments," if you have never sinned, then I have no message for you. Jesus Himself has none. No man either seeks or finds a place at the feast of the fullness of life unless he is conscious of his hunger.

2. Not only did Matthew make a feast for Jesus and his friends, but he made another feast with his pen. When the Master looked so searchingly and yet so tenderly at Matthew and said, "Follow me," the publican forsook all to follow Him. That is, he forsook everything except one—that was his pen. With that pen this redeemed publican began to jot down some of the sayings of his Master. He even wrote a Gospel. Thus while the feast he made in his own house has been over long ago, the feast he spread with his pen has been feeding hungry hearts for nineteen centuries. Through that feast he is ministering to you and me at this hour.

Matthew's Gospel has certain characteristics peculiar to himself. He had been accustomed to keep books. He was a man of orderly mind. Therefore, his Gospel is a gospel of an orderly arrangement. He groups his material, putting the sermons in one place, the parables in another, the miracles in another. The story of his conversion he puts among the miracles. Of all the wonders that Jesus did, the most wonderful to this one-time publican was that he himself had been saved.

Here Matthew wrote especially for the Jews. Hence he is constantly undergirding what he says by proof texts from the Old Testament. His favorite expression is "that it might be fulfilled." Such expressions are seldom found in the other gospels. He had betrayed his own people. He had plundered them. Therefore, as if in compensation, he writes a Gospel that in a peculiar sense is to fit into their needs. But while this Gospel is especially for the Jews it is also for the whole world. It is Matthew alone who gives the great commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

IV

And now the scene shifts from far off Capernaum to the city in which we live. The same Christ that passed Matthew's toll-booth and invited him to become His friend and follower stands face to face with you and me. He is giving us the same invitation. We need this friend just as Matthew did. This Friend needs us just as he needed Matthew. We have to give an answer just as did this publican. It must be yes or no. When this service is over, may it be said of every one of us, "He rose up and followed Him." If we thus follow, of course, it will cost us something, even as it did Matthew. But this wise publican paid the price. Where is Matthew's toll-booth now? It has vanished long since. The very city in which it stood has been a ruin for centuries. But the wealth that he received and the wealth that he has been able to give to others has gone on increasing and will continue to increase throughout all time and throughout eternity. May his choice be ours.
PATCHING OLD CLOTHES

"No one putteth a piece of unshrunk cloth upon an old coat."

Matthew 9:16

Jesus was always at home among the commonplace things of life. Mark says of him that the common people, that is the mass of people, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned heard him gladly. They heard him gladly because they understood him. He talked to them of things about which they knew. He took familiar objects and by his genius transformed them into creatures of righteousness. He took the ordinary prose of life and touched it into exquisite poetry. He spoke of the sower that went forth to sow. He spoke of salt and light, of yeast, of candles, of familiar household articles. Here he is speaking of patching old clothes.

There is little doubt that this parable grew out of the experience of Jesus himself. He was the oldest of a family of at least seven children. There were possibly eight or nine. Joseph, the father, died when the baby was very young. This large family had to be supported mainly by the elder son. What Jesus could earn in the carpenter shop was not any great sum. This made it necessary for the mother, Mary, to be very economical. Jesus had doubtless seen her sit far into the night patching a worn coat to get it ready for the wearer the next day. When he urged her to go to bed and get some much needed rest she declared that she must finish the job or Simon or Judas would have nothing to wear on the morrow. Those who belong to this generation do not know much about patching. But those
who belong to the generation of which I am a part are quite familiar with the matter of which Jesus is speaking. If you happen to be a part of a large family, if it so happened that that family was not too burdened with money, if it so happened, further, that you were the youngest member of that family, you can doubtless appreciate what Jesus is saying. When I think back to my own boyhood I am reminded of a lovely poem that Shakespeare did not write. It runs like this:-

"There are Pete, Jim, Jack, George, Joseph, and Ned,
A half dozen boys to be clothed up and fed,
I buy for them of plain victuals to eat,
But clothing, I only buy clothing for Pete."

When Pete finished with a garment it was passed and handed down to Jim. When Jim was finished with the garment it was passed on to Jack. When young Ned got it it was a veritable coat of many colors. But these colors were so tarnished and faded that it did not tend to make a snob out of the wearer as did the many colored coat that Joseph used to wear.

I.

How did Jesus come to speak this homely parable?

He was answering a question that the Pharisees had put to him. These Pharisees were not always sincere in their questions. But from the simple, straightforward answer that Jesus gave them, I think he saw a note of sincerity in their question. The question was this,—"The disciples of John," they said, "are accustomed to keeping fast. This is also the custom of the Pharisee, of all religious Jews in fact. Now since fasting is a religious rite, since it comes to us bearing the sanction of some of the best of men in the past and present, why is it that your disciples do not fast?" In other words, why do you not observe all the rules of the Jewish ritual? Why do you not obey all our traditions?

From this question Jesus saw that these Pharisees misunderstood both himself
and his mission. Their question indicated that they looked upon Jesus as a mere reformer. They thought that he had come to make some improvements upon present day religion, and through that religion to make some improvements upon human nature. But at best he was not a reformer. This view of Jesus is shared still by many of our time.

But the Master had an entirely different view. He had not come to reform but to transform. "Behold," he said, "I make all things new." He came to create a new man. He came to enable all of us to shout with Paul, "Old things have passed away, behold they have become new." Through the creation of a new man he had come to make a new society, a new nation, a new world. Through Him there was to be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

II.

It is evident from this that the religious Jews of the Master's day did not see eye to eye with Him as regards his mission, his plan for the individual and for society. They thought that he had come to reform rather than to transform. But while they did not have an adequate understanding of his mission, there was one particular in which they and the Master agreed. They both agreed as to the fact of need. Though they differed as to how the needs of the individual and of the world were to be met, they were of one mind as to the fact that those needs really did exist. This realization of need has belonged to all mankind. It has been felt by the worst of men, criminals, outcasts, desperate souls, disappointed by their own wrong doing. All these have realized their need of help. But this sense of need has been felt most keenly, not by the worst, but by the best. When we listen for the bitterest cries of confession those cries that are hot with shame and wet with tears we hear them from the lips of the purest and best of mankind.

Here, for instance, is an earnest young genius going one day in brokenness of heart to worship at the temple. The king who has been the center of his hope is
dead. Driven by his sense of need he turns to God. He does not ask in vain.

"I saw the Lord high and lifted up... then said I, woe is me for I am undone.
I am a man of unclean lips and dwell in the midst of the people of unclean lips."

We hear a kindred cry from tortured Job. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of
the ear, but now my eyes seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust
and ashes."

We of today do not feel the consciousness of guilt perhaps as did these men.
We have in some measure lost our sensitiveness to sin. But there is a confession
that is as much at home upon our lips today as it is at any time in human history.
With the Prodigal we are saying in a thousand ways, "I press with hunger." With
the Rich Young Ruler we are asking wistfully, "What lack I yet?" Disguise the
fact how we may our humanity is constantly tortured by gnawing hungers and burning
thirsts. When an ancient Psalmist cries, "As the heart panteth after the water
brook so panteth my soul after Thee 0 God." He is uttering a word that is as old
as man and as new as our own sense of need of something that can satisfy.

This is the case whatever may be our theory of the cause. We have gone a
long way from that horrible doctrine of total depravity. We realize that no man
is utterly bad, no situation is utterly hopeless, no night is entirely black. But
while we are aware that we are not entirely bad we know that we are not entirely
good. Act for it how we may our hand, as that of Lady Macbeth has a stain on it.
We have burdens that we do not know how to bear. There are vales through which we
cannot see, there are doors to which we find no key. And what is true of ourselves
individually is true of our broken and shattered world. There may be some argument
as to what we need, but there can be no possible argument as to the fact that we
need something and need that something desperately.

III.

Since we all acknowledge the need, the big question comes, but what are we
to do about it? There are varied answers to this question.

1. There are those who feel that nothing can be done about it. This was the conviction of the writer of Ecclesiastes in the long ago. He looked out upon a world that he felt was almost wholly bad. Being loyal to his own sex he thought grudgingly that you might find one decent man in a thousand. But when he turned to the woman, he was in black despair. Such a thing as a good woman simply did not exist. Not only was the individual and society bad, but it was doomed to stay that way. "What has been is, that which is shall be, for there is no new thing under the sun." Man is a brutal destructive beast and will remain so till the end of the chapter for the crooked can never be made straight.

We confess at once that this is a horrible conviction, but more people are holding it today than at any other time in recent years. H. G. Wells declares that man began in a cave and is going to end in a slum. Bertrand Russell affirms that our whole social order is headed for the rocks. That only on a foundation of despair can we build without disappointment. There is much in our modern life to confirm such pessimism. Yet, to be possessed of this dark view is not only to kill our hope for our journey, but it is to kill our usefulness as well. The hopeless man ceases not only to be an asset he becomes a positive liability.

2. Then there are those who believe in a better day. But they fix their faith on man himself rather than upon any higher power. Man is to remake himself and thus remake his own world. He has advanced to the place that he can get on without God. This view was more prevalent among us a few years ago than it is now. We thought that man could lift himself by his own boot straps into a new life. The tragic facts of experience have torn this complacent theory into shreds.

But as this view has lessened among ourselves it has increased among others.
Three of the greatest nations in the world today are betting their all upon their ability to create a new world order through force. These nations have thrown God completely into the discard. They are able to look out for themselves. They are able through blood and slaughter to build a new and better world. We believe that these are doomed to failure.

But this faith in our ability to save ourselves is one that comes close to us as individuals. We do not make mention of conversion any more. All we need to become saints is to lap off a few evils and take on a few things that are good. When I first went away to Webb School I found before I had been there long that I was out of style. Every boy that was up-to-date was wearing a short coat. Mine was distressingly long. The situation was so grim that I could not bear it. I went to a tailor. He suggested a new coat, but that was beyond my reach. All I could do was to have mine detailed. This I did, and the remainder of the year I was as stylish as the best.

But when I came back the following fall still wearing the same coat I found that the styles had changed. Nobody was wearing short coats any more. They were all long. Again I went to the tailor. I wanted to have my coat retailed. But the scraps were gone and there was no cloth to match. Therefore, I had to go on wearing my old coat. That is the idea of religion that some have. All we need to be saints is to cut off a little here and to add a little there. We need to reform ourselves.

3. Finally, there is a remedy offered by Jesus. He spoke of it more than once. The classic passage is his conversation with a scholarly gentleman Nicodemus.

"We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Then Jesus broke in with this amazing word,-"Marvel not that I say unto you that you must be born again." Nicodemus is astonished. "How can a man be born when he is old?" Well, that is a rare miracle, but it is possible. But just then they heard the wind as it sloughed around corner.
and Jesus answered, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." God's part of it is beyond your knowledge. But your part is so simple a little child could understand it. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Through simple faith in Jesus Christ a man may be reborn.

Now this is a gospel that fits into human need. Jesus was keenly aware of that. That is the reason he said, "Ye must be." Don't misunderstand this word. It does not mean you have to be. There is no compulsion in it. It means that you must be or else miss the life that really counts. Just as it is necessary to be born physically in order to see this present world, just so it is necessary to be born anew in order to see the spiritual world through the realization of God. The new birth, therefore, is more than a necessity. It is a privilege. It is a supreme privilege. Surely we all long to be better than we are. Surely there is not one who has not at sometime said with deep yearning, "O for the man to arise in me that the man I am may cease to be." "Don't you wish," I said sometime ago to a splendid young chap who had made a mess of his life. "Don't you wish you could rub it all out and start anew?" And a bit of light came into his sad face. "O, if I only could," he said. All of us long for this at our best.

"I wish there were somewhere a wonderful place,
Called the land of beginning again;
Where all our mistakes, and all our heartaches,
And all our poor, selfish griefs
Might be left like a ragged old coat
At the door and never put on again."

There is such a place, and that place is here, and the time is now.

IV.
"What she said to herself was this."
---Matthew 9:21 (Moffatt)

Here is a woman having a conversation with herself. That is a practice that is all but universal. Most of us at times talk to ourselves. The other day I saw a man walking down the street alone, but his lips were moving and his hands were gesturing as if he were making a speech. What he was really doing was talking to himself. Perhaps he was telling himself what a great man he was, how fortunate the city was to have him. Perhaps he had just struck out and was telling himself that after all he was only a dumb donkey. Maybe he was rehearsing what he was going to say to some friend. Maybe he was preparing to give somebody a piece of his mind. What is even more likely, he was telling himself what he ought to have said when a certain friend bowled him over and left him speechless. We seldom think of the right word at the right time. So far as I know I have done so only once.

A few years ago I was holding a meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina. One night a minister, who had been attending practically every service, came forward to speak to me, leading two women with him. One woman looked easily old enough for his mother, while the other was about the right age for his wife. "Doctor," he said, "I want you to meet my wife." To my astonishment the older woman extended her hand. I was sure there was a mistake. Therefore, desiring to show myself a man of some discernment, I said, "This is not your wife."

At once the atmosphere became tense. The storm-clouds gathered instantly. There were lurid flashes of lightning. There they both stood, the embodiment of thunder, with that word "She is not your wife", ringing in their ears. "Yes,
she is my wife, too," he said darkly. "How in the world," I answered eagerly, "did I get it into my head that you were an old bachelor?" The storm passed. They went away satisfied, and I heaved a vast sigh and said to myself softly, "That was the time when the Lord came and shut the lion's mouth."

I

"What she said to herself was this." It is hard to overestimate the power of words. What others say to us is often of vast importance. There are words that devastate and destroy. There are words that blister and burn. There are words that fall like hot acid on our hearts. Those of you who have read Hugo's "Laughing Man" will recall a horrible practice in vogue in that day. Certain physicians would perform operations on the facial muscles of a little child and change a beautiful face into one of the horrors of nightmare. Such an operation had been performed upon the face of the Laughing Man. As the once beautiful child grew to manhood, his face was distorted into a perpetual laugh that was so ghastly as to make the blood run cold.

The surgeons of that day performed such an operation with knives. Sometimes we perform ours with words. Wrong words spoken to a sensitive child have sent that child out to a lifelong battle with an inferiority complex. Even worse, sometimes those wrong words have sent the child out to a life of crime. Persistently telling him that he is bad, he gives up his struggle to be good. He fulfills the harsh prophecy of those that have knifed him with words.

But if words can hurt, they can also heal. "A word fitfully spoken," said a wise man, "is like apples of gold and pictures of silver." There are words that at times fall like healing lotion into our wounds. There are words that breathe battle into us and send us out to fight where the victory is to the brave. What a lovely tribute was that which was paid to Job by one of his friends. "Yours words," said this friend, "have kept me upon my feet." How magnificent! Here was a man weak and weary. He was about ready to give over.
But Job sustained him with words. He so undergirded him that his fall was impossible.

Words often have power to change and remake our entire lives. Years ago a rough and swearing tinker overheard a conversation of a certain group of women. These women were not gossiping. They were telling each other the amazing difference that knowing Jesus had made in their own lives. Fearing the Lord, they were speaking one with another, and this ignorant but vastly gifted tinker listened. He was so impressed that his own heart became wistful. He made up his mind then and there that he would learn their secret. Thus John Bunyan was led to Christ.

What an unspeakable benediction that was, not only to himself but to future generations! Just as he himself was remade under God by words, so he has remade countless others. Out of that experience was born a book that has enriched an innumerable company. As long as literature lives, John Bunyan will be sustaining men with words. As long as literature lives, he will be guiding benighted souls from the City of Destruction to Mount Zion.

But if what others say to us is important, what we say to ourselves is, if possible, even more important. Tell me what you persistently say to yourself, and I will tell you what you are. Tell me what you say to yourself, and I will tell you what increasingly you are becoming. It is possible for us to talk ourselves down as well as up. We can talk ourselves into courage as well as into cowardice. Tell me what you say to yourself, I repeat, and I will tell you what you are.

Here is a famous character of whom Jesus told. He was a rich farmer. No doubt everybody thought well of him, honored him for his success. He had broad and fertile acres. His harvest was so abundant that he could not store them all in his barns. But before we congratulate him, let us learn what kind of man he is by listening to him as he talks to himself. "And he thought within
himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool. He was a fool because he reckoned without God. We can tell it as we hear him talk to himself.

The conversation that this woman had with herself is also a revelation. It tells something of what she is. It tells what she became.

II

What did she say to herself? In all sincerity, she might have said some very harsh and depressing things. Life had not dealt kindly with her. As she was coming into young womanhood, she was gripped by a shame-faced disease. It was the disease that made her ceremonially unclean. It shut her out in large measure from the comforts offered by religion. It shut her out from the privileges of wifehood and motherhood, practically the only open to the woman of that day. It caused her slowly to fade like a frost-bitten flower. Among all these liabilities there was but one asset. She was not penniless. She did not have to live off the charity of others.

When this woman had found herself thus afflicted, she refused to surrender. She was evidently a resolute soul. She resolved not to die until something actually killed her. Therefore, she turned to the doctors. She was the patient of one after another. This went on year in and year out until now twelve years had passed. After these twelve distressful and suffering years, she is worse off than ever before, nearer the cemetery than she has ever been.

Listen to Mark's closely-knit story: "And there was a woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, who had suffered many things of many physicians but was nothing better but rather grew worse." She had gone to the physicians,
but they had relieved her of nothing but her money. When Luke tells the story, he tells it in the same fashion as does Mark except that he leaves out that fact the woman had grown worse. He himself was a physician, and we honor him for his loyalty to his profession.

It was with a background like this that this woman heard of the coming of Jesus. "A new prophet has come," a friend told her. "He is not simply a physician, but the Great Physician. It is reported that He has opened blind eyes, cleansed lepers. Some even go so far as to say that He has set a heart of life to beating underneath the frozen ribs of death. If I were you, I would put my case in His hands." What answer did this woman make? The natural answer would have been, "What's the use? I have gone to physician after physician for twelve long years. What has been the good of it? I am now more ill than I have ever been. And to my illness has been added the further plague of poverty. I am through."

But she refused to say that. "What she said to herself was this, "If I touch but the tassel of his robe, I shall be healed. I have tried for twelve bitter years, but what of it? Each day is a new beginning, each morn is the world made new. Here is a physician infinitely greater than any I have consulted before. I am going to defy my past failures and go to Him."

III

What was the good of this conversation?

1. By so talking she helped to keep up her courage. She might have talked herself into utter cowardice. She might have so fixed her gaze upon past failures as to expect nothing else but failure. But by telling herself that in spite of all her wasted years there was still a chance, she kept hope in her heart. She kept up courage. She saved herself from despair.

It is fine in hours of depression to have a friend to put heart in us. It
is a great thing to have someone at hand to change our sobs into songs. But
too often there is no such friend. Too often we have to meet our conflicts
alone. That is a fine word we read about David. He found himself in one of
the most critical situations of his crowded life. Nominally, he was vastly
popular, but even his own soldiers were threatening to stone him to death. What
did he do? We read this word: "David encouraged himself." That was what this
woman did. That is what you and I can do.

2. By thus keeping up her courage, she kept up her struggle. Had she lost
heart and lost hope, she would have quit trying. That is what many people
do. There are sick folks that are not suffering from any incurable disease,
but they will never be well. They have quit trying. There are moral and
spiritual failures that have in them the making of great saints, but they will
die in spiritual poverty, not because they cannot be rich, but because they
have quit trying.

3. By thus talking to herself and keeping up her effort, she won. On a
certain eventful day a friend said, "Rachel, the Prophet is coming to this
community today." And Rachel, instead of turning her face to the wall and sobbing
because she could not get to see Him, said bravely, "Get my clothes, and I will
go." Her friends pled with her to be sensible. While they told her she was
far too weak to get out and cope with the mob that was about Jesus, she went
on her way. On tottering feet, she struggled. At last she can see the Master.
Now she can almost touch the tassel of His robe. But some of the curious run
in between. She is on the point of fainting, but she refuses to give up. Then,
that frail finger touches the tassel and she is cured, not by her finger, but
by her faith, a faith that made contact with the Infinite Christ. And victory
has come out of defeat because she knew how to talk to herself.
IV

What do you say to yourself?

1. What do you say about your social relationships? Do you tell yourself that nobody likes you, that you do not have a friend in the world? When you see somebody laugh in the distance, do you swear that they are laughing at you? If you tell yourself that, nobody loves you, that everybody is trying to slight you and insult you, the chances are that that will become increasingly true. But if you tell yourself the opposite, that, too, may happen. If any of you care to insult me, you had better take me aside and explain carefully that this is an insult, or the chances are I won't see it. I am not expecting one; therefore, I am not quick to see one.

2. What have you to say about this tragic world situation in which you have come for no fault of your own? You can whine over it. You can complain about it. You can wail with Hamlet, "The world is out of joint. O cursed spite, that I was ever born to set it right." And like him, you can be so busy contemplating suicide that you will do nothing to set it right. But you can take a braver course. You can say, "Yes, the situation is hard, but that is the reason I am here. In the providence of God, I have come to the Kingdom for such a time as this."

3. What do you tell yourself about your job? Do you tell yourself that yours is a mean, prosaic, worthless job? That your employer is trying to crowd you into a mustard-seed when there really would not be room enough for you in a hog's head? Or are you telling yourself that, though your job is good, you are no good. Either way ends in failure. You could talk the best job in the world down to utter drudgery. Or you can talk what seems like drudgery into a poem.

4. What do you tell yourself about your religious life? Maybe you are not a Christian at all. Or maybe you are a trifling Christian. In this day
of desperate need, do you excuse yourself by saying that you are at least not a hypocrit? Do you soothe your conscience by soft alibis? Do you talk baby-talk to yourself? Do you boo and coo at your discontented soul in order to keep it from crying out at your own moral failure? Or do you dare to tell yourself the truth?

The most tenderly beautiful story that Jesus ever told is that of the graceless laddie that went out from home and wasted his substance in riotous living. The story ends in victory, but in what utter and ghastly failure it might have ended if this boy had not had the courage to tell himself the truth. Suppose he had talked to himself as we sometimes talk to ourselves? And when he came to himself, he said, "What a mess this old world is! I did not ask to be born. My father and mother had no right to thrust this miserable existence upon me. Then, what a moronic old soul is my father. When I asked him for the portion of goods that fell to me, he actually gave me all for which I asked. He ought to have known better. He ought to have known that it would end like this. It is his fault.

"What it lacks being entirely his fault is that it is partly the fault of that older brother of mine. What a chump he is! Cold as an icicle and hard as a nail! But for him I would never have come on this foolish jaunt. Then, there are those friends of mine. What a bunch of parasites they are! They slapped me on the back when I had money, but, when I lost everything, they kicked me in the pants. Everybody's against me. Therefore, I am going to stay right here in the hog-pen and starve. Then Dad and all the rest will be sorry." Had he said that, he would have remained in the hog-pen and everybody would have been glad except the hogs.

But listen to what he did say: When he came to himself, he said, "I have been an awful fool. I had the best father in the world. He put vast wealth
into my hands. Wealth with which I might have vastly enriched others as well as myself, but I have wasted it. And now here I am starving in the hog-pen. But it is all my fault. I have nobody to blame but myself.

"But because I have failed once is no reason I should fail forever. I left home in considerable splendor. I left with a shrug and a swagger. It is hard for me to go back in poverty and shame, but that is what I am going to do. I left home openly. I told everybody that I was headed for the far country. Having done that, I am going back openly. I am not going to try to slip in at night through the back door. It will be humiliating, but, having been open and above-board in my rebellion, I will be open and above-board in my surrender."

What was the result? This father saw him and had compassion on him and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. He said, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." He did all that because he knew that a man that would face up to his own sin without an alibi was capable of receiving a second chance. But as long as we excuse ourselves, as long as we put the blame on circumstances or on loved ones or our friends or enemies or on God, we are incapable of a second chance. God can only forgive the man who is too honest to lie to himself—who is too honest to forgive himself for being a spiritual failure when he might have been more than conqueror. "What she said to herself was this." What are you saying to yourself?
HOW TO TALK TO YOURSELF

"What she said to herself was this..."

Matthew 9:21 (Moffatt)

Here is a woman who is having a conversation with herself. That is a very common practice. It is something that all of us are given to doing. Now and then I see a chap going on the street moving his lips and gesturing as if he were making a speech. What he is doing is talking to himself. He is perhaps telling himself what he is going to say to some troublesome friend. What is more likely, he is telling himself what he ought to have said in a recent conversation where he got his feelings hurt. Somebody bowled him over, he was struck down, but now his tongue has been loosed. He is, therefore, talking thus to himself, "I ought to have said - - - - - ." Or, maybe he has just knocked a home run and he is reminding himself what a great man he is. Or, he has just struck out, and he is telling himself that after all he is little better than a dumb donkey.

Now what we say to ourselves is of importance. In fact, there is no telling the importance of words in general. There is no measuring the effect that words spoken by others may have upon ourselves. There are words that blister and burn. There are words that torture. Those of you who have read "The Little Man" will remember a devilish practice resorted to by certain physicians of that time. They got hold of children in their tender years, performed some delicate operation upon the nerve of the face so that
ever after they wore a perpetual grin or was distorted into ghastly laugh. The hero of this story was made into a kind of monstrosity, new he was always laughing. His laughter was a hideous and ghastly something fit to make the blood run cold.

In performing such devilish operations, these surgeons used a knife, sometimes we use words. A thoughtless and cruel word spoken to a child has at times sent that child out to a life-long battle with an inferior complex. Sometimes a wrong and harsh word has launched a child on a career of crime by convincing him that he was already hopelessly bad. Words may warp and blight. They may wither our hopes and break our hearts. There is no telling how many have been wounded to death by words.

But if the wrong word can do endless harm the right word can do endless good. "A word fitly spoken," says the Wise man, "is like apples of gold and pictures of silver." There are words that heal like balm. There are words that comfort like the tender arms of a mother. There are words that breath battle into us and send us out to fight where the victor is to the brave. There are words that kiss us into wakefulness as the prince kissed the sleeping beauty.

In Moffatt's translation of Job, one of Job's friend's passes the suffering man this compliment:—"Your words," he said, "have kept men upon their feet." What a fine way to use words. Here was a man who was ready to fall. He was staggering under the weight of the load that was too heavy. But Job girded him with new strength and makes his collapse all but impossible. This he did by words. Such words have been spoken to us. It would be impossible to tell how much we owe to those who have said the encouraging word to us at the right time.

Not only are there words that keep us upon our feet, but there are
words that change the whole direction of our lives. Years ago a very profane and ignorant tinker, while mending a vessel, heard a conversation of a little group of women. These were sitting in the sun telling their religious experiences. They were telling how they had come to experience the righting of the Son of Righteousness with healing in his wings. That tinker was so impressed by their conversation that he decided to seek what they had found. Not only did he seek, but he actually did find. What he heard led to his remaking. He in turn helped to remake others. In fact, he wrote a book that has possibly done more for the remaking of men than any other except the Bible. For that tinker was none other than John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrims Progress.

But if what we say to each other is important, what we say to ourselves is more important still. Tell me what you persistently say to yourself and I will tell you what you are. Tell me what you say to yourself and I will tell you what you are on the way to becoming. There are few things quite so revealing as what we say to ourselves. Take for example one of the most familiar stories that Jesus told, the story of The Rich Farmer. Here was a man who had made a success. He had a splendid farm. He doubtless lived in a lovely home. Doubtless already everybody thought well of him because he had made good. If you would ask who lived in that lovely home, nobody would have dreamed of telling you that a fool lived there. Yet, that was the truth. But if so, wherein was it true?

To get the answer to this question we must slip in behind the scene and hear the man think. We must listen to him as he talks to himself. Here is what he says. "What shall I do, for I have no room where to bestow my goods. This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and there will I bestow all my goods. And I will say unto my soul, Soul thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink
and be merry.” What is he telling himself? “I am a success. I am solely responsible for that success. I have nothing for which to be grateful. I have no obligations to either God or man.” Yet, everything that he had had come to him in some measure as the gift of another. If he had been robbed of everything for which he was solely responsible, nothing would have been left him but his sin. Outwardly successful, when we hear him talk to himself we know him for what he is, a fool.

II.

What did this woman say to herself? She might have said some very discouraging and depressing things. This was the case because life had dealt harshly with her. Listen to Mark’s closely knit story:—“And a certain woman who had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and was nothing better, but rather worse, heard of Jesus and said.” Here is calamity you see piled on calamity. Look at what she had suffered.

She was afflicted with an incurable disease. This disease was of such a nature as to render her morally unclean. I know the law was silly, but that did not make it any easier for the woman to bear. She was shut out from the religious privileges that belonged to more fortunate women. Not only so, but she was shut away from the only career that was open to a woman of her day, the privilege of wifehood and motherhood.

But, though staggering under the weight of this heavy handicap, she refused to give up. She did not die till something actually killed her. Therefore, she set herself with firm determination to the task of getting well. She had some means for prosecuting this undertaking. The first, there was this mitigating circumstance, she had money. She was thus able to consult the very best physicians. This she did.

But what had come of it all? Today after twelve years, she is more
weak, a little closer to the cemetery than when she had set out on her tragic journey. The physicians that she had consulted had relieved her of nothing but her money. That is Mark's version. When Luke tells that story he leaves out that part about the physicians. He himself was a doctor, and we love him for being loyal to his profession.

Now with twelve years of disappointment behind her this woman might have been excused by saying some very discouraging things about herself. She might have said truthfully, "I am sick. I have been sick for twelve years, but I haven't taken it lying down. I have done everything a person could do to get well. I have fought desperately and hard, but it has been a losing fight. Now I hear about another physician that has come up the horizon. But there is no use in consulting him. Of course, I would lose nothing by so doing for I haven't any more money to pay, but I would gain nothing. There is nothing for me to do but to go my painful way to death." But she refused to talk in this fashion. In spite of all her failures she still told herself that there was a chance, that she could yet recover her health and live abundantly.

III.

What was the good of talking to herself after this fashion?

1. It kept up her hope and courage. There are times when our fellows encourage us. There are times when somebody comes forward as did Job to speak a word that will keep us upon our feet. But there are other times when Job is not there. There are times when everybody seems to have forgotten. What then? We must encourage ourselves. There is a fine sentence we read of David in the Old Testament. It runs like this, "But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God." That is what this woman did. That is the way she kept up hear and hope.
2. Because she kept hoping she kept trying. When we give up hope we quit. When hope dies, effort dies. Sometime ago a man got off at a wayside station out on the planes. He set out to walk to his home. A blinding snow storm came on. The road was familiar, but he became bewildered. He never reached home. They found his body, however, lying upon its face with hands outstretched. Those outstretched hands were in five feet from the steps of his own door. If he had only known how nearly home he was he would have taken those five steps. But he lost hope and quit trying. By talking encouragingly to herself she kept up the struggle.

Then at last her great day came. "Rachel," a friend said, "the Master is come to our village today. I have heard the wildest rumors concerning him. Some say that he can open the eyes of the blind, that he can cleanse lepers. Some even claim that he can start a heart of life to beating under the ribs of death. Suppose you try him. If he does not cure you, you will be none the worse off." "Why, it's no use," the sick woman might have said. "I have tried dozens before and look where I am now." But she didn't say that. "Help me to get up and dress," she said, "this is my chance. In spite of a thousand failures, I am going to win this time."

And she is leaving the house. Her knees totter under her from weakness. Her heart threatens to sink as she sees the vast multitudes. For about Jesus is a mob. These are not crusaders they are vagrants. They are not out in quest of any power, they are just curious to see the Prophet. But Rachel maps her campaign. "I am going to touch the tassel of his robe," she tells herself. "Why that?" I answered. "Because," this is what she said to herself, "if I touch but his robe I shall be healed." And she is almost in reach of him. She is shrugged aside when somebody comes in between. But she persists. She has touched that coveted tassel, and the flowers of
health are blooming on her cheeks. For she is healed, not by her finger but by her faith. "Immediately she knew that she was healed of her plague." It was by thus talking encouragingly to herself that she found newness of life.

IV.

What do you say to yourself?

1. Take the matter of friendship. Do you tell yourself that nobody appreciates you, that you haven't a friend in the world. When you see two folks coming in your direction and watch one of them burst into laughter, do you assume then that they are talking about you, and that in a derogatory fashion. Do you tell yourself that everybody is trying to slight you and hurt your feelings? Then you are on a lonesome road. Not only so, but more and more that which you tell yourself will happen to you. But, if on the other hand you tell yourself the opposite, the opposite is likely to happen. Personally, I never assumed that anybody was trying to hurt my feelings. If any of you have your mind made up to insult me, you had better explain to me because ninety-nine to one I won't see it. But if you talk yourself down, you are mighty apt to go down.

2. How do you feel as you face your job? Do you tell yourself that it is the poorest possible job, that it is so mean that it is not worth making good at? You can talk yourself into despising the best job in the world if you go about it in that fashion. Or, assuming that you think well of your task, do you tell yourself that you can't do it, that it is impossible? If you think you are whipped, the chances are that you will be tomorrow. However able you may be, you can talk yourself into utter failure, if you so mind.

3. What do you say as you face your struggle for Christ-likeness? Do you talk baby talk to yourself? Do you pity yourself for your failures in-
instead of facing them in a courageous fashion? Do you deaden your con-
sciousness by doping yourself with sufficient alibis? Do you dare tell your-
self the truth, or do you shut your eyes and mind to yourself? The dif-
ference between moral victory and moral disaster is right here. You can
talk to yourself in such a fashion as to make failure inevitable. You can
also talk to yourself in such a fashion as to assure victory.

Take for example the most winsome story that Jesus ever told. The
story of the lad who went away from home. He went off with high hopes.
He had abundant wealth, plenty of friends, but he ended in a hog pen. With his
hunger pinched face and his pockets as empty as the pockets of a shroud.
In this sorry plight he began to talk to himself. Let us draw near and listen
to what he has to say.

First, listen to the way in which he might have talked. He might have
conversed with himself in this fashion. "What a stupid old fossil my father
is. Had he had the brains of an imbecile he would have never given me my
wealth when I asked him for it. He might have known that it would end like
this. But in spite of that he had to go and turn it all over to me. Well,
it is all gone now, and it is his fault. Then there is that other member
of the family. That older brother of mine. He is as cold as an icicle and
as hard as a nail. If it hadn't been for him I never would have left home.
You might think I am going back to let him stick his tongue out at me. But
you will see. Then there are those friends of mine. What a pretty lot they
are. As long as I had money they slapped me on the back. But when my money
gave out, not one of them knew me."

"Well, here I am in the hog pen. It is not so hot, but I know folks
who have been in the hog pen as well as I have. I am hungry, it is true,
but I am not the only hungry man. There are a lot of folks in this famine-
stricken country that are as hungry as I am. Therefore, I think I will stay
on here. I got here through no fault of mine. Everybody was to blame for my coming but me. Of course, if I stay I am going to starve to death, but it is worth it to spite my father, and that pharisaical brother, and those hypocritical friends. When they find that I am dead, they will be sorry." Had he talked like that in the hog pen he would have lived there in the hog pen and he would have died there.

But the saving fact was that he had the courage to tell himself the truth. What he really said was this:—"Here I am among the hogs. If ever a man made a mess of things I am that man. Not only have I made a mess, but nobody is to blame for it but me. My father is the best and kindest man that ever lived. He gives even to his slaves more than they need. The reason I left him was not because of his lack of kindness, it was not because of my brother, nor of my friends. I left him because of my own free will. I wanted to get away where I could do as I pleased. Well, I have done it. And to be perfectly honest, I am in the worse mess that I have ever been in in my life."

"But the fact that I am broke and hungry and far from home does not mean that there is no hope. Unless I am a miserable coward I can still go back and face my failure and start again. That is what I am going to do. I came away in the open. It was broad daylight. I announced to everybody that I was leaving for the far country. Now I am not going to be yellow enough to slip back under the shadow of the night. As open as I came away, so open I am going back and confess that I have made a complete mess, and ask for a new chance."

What happened when he talked to himself after that fashion? He got on his feet and started. And the wildest hopes that he had for his father were more than justified. God can give such a man a second chance. Listen to the story:—"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and had
compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him." Then when
the son undertook to tell what a mess he had made of things, he said,
"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his
hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill
it;" And his want is changed into wealth because he dared to tell him-
self the truth and act accordingly.

"What she said to herself was this; I am sick, but I may be well.
I have tried other physicians that have let me down. Today I am going to
try the supreme Physician." He has never failed a single trusting heart
through all the centuries. He will not fail me. Today I am making a new
beginning. Today is to be my birthday." Thus talking to herself, she found
health and healing. So may we. This is no wild dream. To tell yourself
this is simply to tell yourself a plain and eternal truth. What are you
going to say to yourself in the presence of God at this moment?

That glistening gentleman is perhaps
feeling curious what he ought to have said. We
often think of such things at night time. - Preacher's
two women.
"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Then said He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray then, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest." — Matthew 9:36-38

Jesus saw the multitudes. That is something we dare say, that you and I have never done. Had we looked on this crowd we should not have seen what Jesus saw. We should simply have seen a great section of humanity — some rich, some poor, some old, some young, some learned, and some ignorant, some well-dressed, and some poorly dressed, some seemingly elated with the victories of life, and some bowed and defeated and overcome. On the whole, we should have been impressed doubtless more with their happiness and contentment than with their confusion and sadness. For a crowd usually wears its best face before the world. But Jesus saw them as they really were.

What did He see? As He looked on their hearts, He saw them as sheep, not having a Shepherd. They were masterless men. They had not found anything or any one big enough to command them. No one had taken captive their whole heart. They were religious people. They went up to the synagogue every Sabbath day, most of them. They could not say out of a joyous and conscious experience of His presence: "The Lord is my Shepherd." In spite of all their pious and Church attendance, in spite of all their religious observances, they were masterless. And that is true of vast multitudes among us today, both in the Church and out of it. God is not a being with whom they reckoned. How much does God count in the settling of our labor disputes? How much consideration does God get in the affairs of government, in the private life today?
Now, being Shepherdless, they were without peace.

God is the only power that can give to man a unified personality. Sin can never do it. The voice of conscience always disturbs us, however low we may go. It has been well said that no man can be as bad as he sometimes wants to be. However far we go from God, the workings of His spirit make us restless. That is the reason the Prophet is right in saying: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." I saw a lost dog some time ago. He would run in one direction and then in another. Now and then he would see some man who looked hopeful, but he would approach just near enough to discover his mistake, and then sorrowfully turn away. The best advertisement, I think, was gotten out years ago by the Victrola people. It was the picture of a dog listening to a Victrola, and his face is full of gladness and expectancy and content. It is entitled "His Master's Voice!" And we find content only when we hear our Master's voice.

"I had walked life's path with a careless tread,
I had followed where comfort and pleasure led,
Till at last one day in a quiet place,
I met my Master face to face.

I had built my castles and reared them high,
Till my turrets touched the blue of the sky.
Then I had sworn to rule with an iron mace,
When I met my Master face to face.

I met Him and knew Him and blushed to see,
That His eyes in pity were fixed on me.
And I faltered and fell at His feet that day,
All my castles trembled and vanished away.

They melted and vanished, and in their place,
I saw naught else but the Master's face.
And I cried, 'Oh, make me meek,
To follow the path of Thy bruised feet.'

My care was now for the souls of men,
I'd lost my life to find it again,
Ere since that day in a quiet place,
I met my Master face to face."
These people were not only at war among themselves, but they were at war with one another. As Jesus looked upon this crowd, He saw them glaring at one another across wide chasms of unbrotherliness and hate. For, when a man loves God, he loves his brother, too. And as God looks upon the multitude in our world today, He sees the same sad sight. Nation glares at nation, and group at group. Labor glares at capital, and capital at labor. And everywhere about us is turmoil and confusion growing out of our mutual dislike, selfishness and unbrotherliness.

Then, Jesus saw these people, as is a better translation—harrowed, worried. They were like poor people that had been persecuted by the dogs. Their flesh was torn. They were frightened and worried and wounded. Some were dejected. That means literally—they were lying down. They were prostrated by their wounds or by their discouragement. So, it was a crowd that had made a bit of a mess of things at which Jesus looked half a hundred years ago. And we have to confess that in spite of all our vaunted progress we have done but little better. As He looks upon us, He sees us as sheep without a Shepherd, worried, harrassed, and dejected, and, in fact, all but desperate.

II.

What were the reactions of Jesus as He looked upon this crowd? It was not anger. It was not contempt. It was not even fretful and feverish impatience.

1. He was moved with compassion. The sight stirred His pity. Now, pity for us is often the chief emotion. You can pity folks without it costing you a penny. You can pity them and never lose a moment's sleep, and never put yourselves to the least trouble. I have an idea that the Priest and the Levite pitied the poor chap that they found wounded by the Wayside. But their
pity was not dynamic. It had no driving power. Not so with the pity of Jesus. He built the city and wept over it, but He did more. He died for it. His pity was what steam is to a locomotive. It had driving power. It sent Him to struggle under their burdens, and to bleed through their wounds.

What effect does the sight of the multitude have on you? It would seem that the sin of all sins, according to this Book, is a want of compassion. To fail to love is to fail to care. That was a startling picture in the Prophet Ezekiel. The Lord is represented as calling to him a man with an ink horn. "Go through the city," he tells this man, "and set a mark upon the foreheads of all those that sigh and cry, for there are abominations down in the midst thereof." And the man with the ink horn went and marked the brows of all the compassionate people. Then, the order came: "Go through the streets and slay all that have not the mark upon their foreheads, and begin at the sanctuary."

What a startling command! To fail to care is to carry about a callous heart in the midst of a needy world. That is a sin that invites death. Not that this story means that God, in His anger, strikes the man dead who has no compassion. That is not necessary. Selfishness has already done that. To live unmindful of the needs of your brother, to refuse to enter into his sorrows, to refuse to help him bear his burden, is to die inwardly - is to commit spiritual suicide. "Why do you want to go back to China?", one asked of a certain missionary who had come home as an invalid. "Because I cannot sleep at night for thinking of them. Their hungry faces haunt my dreams." That was a man that knew something of the compassion of Jesus.
2. Not only was the compassion of Jesus stirred when He looked upon this crowd; He was also moved by a boundless hope. That is the wonder of this amazing Book. That is the wonder of this matchless Christ of ours. He can face all the facts, look at its seeming hopelessness, at its despair, and never lose heart. We get discouraged easily. A brilliant young actor named Wright Lorrimer set out to go upon the stage a few years ago. He soon convinced himself that the task was hopeless. He was asked to speak upon a certain occasion, on the subject "What Can Be Done To Elevate The Stage?" His speech consisted of one word, "Nothing." A little later in sheer despair he blew his brains out.

But Jesus, I repeat, looked upon this crowd with boundless hope. He declared that they reminded Him of a great wheat field just waiting for the harvester. "The harvest truly is plenteous," He said. In fact, He considered their tragic plight as a help to the task to which He had set Himself rather than a hindrance. Because they were worried and wearied and depressed, He would respond all the quicker to the voice of the "Good Shepherd". That is natural. If you were going out with the New Testament message, "All things are ready, come to the feast", you would not go to the satisfied and the surfeited; you would go to the hungry.

And this, if we would only believe, constitutes our big chance today. Every man who is not totally blind must see that our present day civilization is in a desperate plight. Every man that thinks in the least must realize that if ever humanity needs help it needs it now. The Church of this day may do one of two things - it may share in the fear, in the cowardice, in the selfishness of the world, and lose its chance, or it may make the very desperation of the situation that we
face a roadway along which it will move into a larger usefulness, into a larger power. If there is ever a day in which the Church of the Living God was desperately needy, it is today. There is a true sense in which she is standing, even now, at the forks of the road. She may fail and help civilization to rot down, or she may share in the hope and compassion of her Lord, and go from victory to victory. God, help us as we look upon the crowd today, to look with something of His compassion, and something of His boundless hope!

III.

Not only did Jesus pity and hope, but He suggested remedy. May I suggest that same remedy to you? I do not know that I would have the courage to suggest it on my own authority. I dare, because it comes from the lips of our Lord. It is the evidence of Him who of old laid the foundation of the earth. It is the direction of Him in whom dwells all the fulness of wisdom and knowledge. Here is a torn and divided civilization. What can we do for them? We must bring them under the shepherding care of our Lord. And how is that to be done? Here is the word of Jesus, "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest."

The modern man has lost the jaunty optimism of a few years ago. Any man can say that what we need today is God. But it is equally true that God needs us. Man cannot get along without God, and God cannot get along without man. God's one way of saving this world is through man. What He needs today is laborers. "Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest."
Let me reemphasize that word. The need of the hour, I say, is laborers. It is not whiners. It is not folks who can creak. It is not folks who can say, "I told you so!" It is not for critics. Goodness knows, we have enough of them! It is not somebody to tell what the Board of Stewards ought to do, or what the preacher ought to do. We need somebody to work, to really get under the load with out Lord.

And we are to do that, not in some far-off place, but right here in Birmingham - right here in First Church. If this world is to be saved, it is through the building up of a brotherhood. What you and I do about that matter must be done here. If we can't build up a brotherhood at First Church, we can't build up one anywhere. But if we can build one up here, we will help to sweeten the whole world. "Look how these Christians love each other", the pagan world said in wonder years ago, because they themselves wanted to love and to be loved. They joined these little Christian communities. The Roman Eagle gave place to the cross.

Because we need laborers, we are to pray. God to send them. God does send laborers. That fact is written broadly across the whole page of Church history. Not only is it prayer that secures laborers, but prayer makes their work effective when they are secured. Prayer enters the lips of ministers, and touches them with grace and power. But, of course, if we pray, if our prayers have any meaning, if our prayers are anything more than sheer breath, if they are not the expressions of hypocrisy, they get that feeling. Not only pray, but work. When you pray for the Lord to send forth laborers, you will also pray, "Here am I, send me."
Now, I am wondering how seriously we are going to take our Lord in this matter. One of the best men in this Church warned me to say nothing further about the night services. I respect him, and his opinion very highly. But he seemed to speak on the assumption that the night services concerned the pastor only. On the contrary, the night services are the recruiting services of the Church. It is my conviction that the downtown church that ceases to have a victorious night service is headed toward disintegration. But, I am thinking especially of how much it misses. I have been for sixteen years pastor of a downtown city church, and I do not hesitate to say that the most thrilling experiences of my ministry, the most thrilling experiences of my life, have been the evening services. Why in the name of all that is sane will we let a thing drag when it might be as colorful as springtime, and as winsome as sea music! All that is necessary is that we follow the plain truth of our Lord.

How much, I wonder, are you willing to put into the task? When Dr. Drummond was preaching at Edinburg some years ago, he received a very brilliant letter from a young atheist. A few days later an American student in the Senior class spoke to Drummond about this young man, and said, "He works beside me in the laboratory, and I am trying to win him." But commencement came, and the boys went home, and he was not won. The next year, Drummond noticed the young American in his first service. When he spoke to him a little later, he said, "I thought you finished last year." "I did," was the answer. And then he said confidently, "You know I didn't win our friend, the atheist. I am doing some postgraduate work, but I came back here to win him. I thought if I could, it would be worth one year of a man's life.
"You will win", said Drummond. And he did. Before the year was out, that young man bowed at the foot of the cross and went out as a medical missionary. We, too, can win if we follow the directions of our Lord. "Therefore, pray ye the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest."

And as you pray say, "Here am I, send me."
CHRIST AND THE CROWD

Matthew 9:36-38

"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, 'The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into his harvest.'"

I wonder if we ever really saw a crowd. I wonder if we have ever looked at crowds in any sense through the eyes of Jesus. This multitude that Jesus saw was not unique. It was just a cross-section of humanity. There were folks there who had good bank accounts; there were others who were bankrupt; there were some who were enjoying vigorous health and others who were physical wrecks; there were some, doubtless, who had found no small joy and gladness in their domestic relations; and there were others who had made a sad wreck of it all. It was a crowd that had a mingling of laughter and tears, of sunshine and shadow. It was very much such a crowd as Jesus would see upon the streets of Houston were he here in the flesh. Jesus"saw the multitudes."

Now what a man is determines in large measure what he sees.

When Peter Bell saw a primrose, he did not get excited.

"A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

But Wordsworth could not look at that primrose without a thrill.
"To me," he said, "the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears."

We have two American writers who have portrayed the life of a typical mid-western town. One of them walked down Main Street without seeing a vestige of beauty. To him no flowers bloomed, no birds sang, the landscape was drab and the men and women were more drab and commonplace even than the landscape. He was little more than an inspector of sewers and street gutters. He specialized in deformities, in warts, and carbuncles. But a certain woman walked down practically that same street. She carried a lantern in her hand which was only typical of the lantern in her heart. For her the whole atmosphere was redolent of romance and poetry. She saw just as clearly as the other and far more so. She was able to see something of the beauty and heroism of ordinary folks working at ordinary tasks.

Even in as commonplace an experience as attending a religious service, what you see depends very largely on what you are. Two people may come to the same church, sit on the same pew, listen to the same music, sing out of the same hymn book, hear the same scripture lesson and sermon. One may go away with heart strangely warmed, saying, "Surely God is in this place!" The other may go away utterly forgetful of all that is good, bewailing the poverty of the service because of one insignificant part of it that he did not like.

II

Now Christ, above all others, had a seeing eye. He saw things clearly. He saw men and women as they actually were. What did He see as He looked upon this crowd?

1. He saw them scattered. That is, they were broken up
into units. They were not bound together by the ties of a common loyalty and of a common love. They did not follow a common Shepherd. They did not obey a common Master. They were like sheep scattered by the wolves. It was a case of every man for himself.

2. Not only were these scattered as a group, but they were torn and divided individually. One result of sin always is to bring about a state of civil war within the soul. No man is wholly bad. The worst of us are at times tormented with the dreams of the larger men and women that we might be. "My soul cleaveth unto the dust," said the psalmist long ago, "Quicken Thou me according to Thy Word." Full salvation means a unified personality. This integrated personality can only come through the power of Christ.

3. Jesus not only saw that these men were divided individually and as a group, but that growing out of that fact, they were wretched, they were distressed. Being utterly spent, ready to fling themselves down because too weary to stand. Divided and discontented personalities are never at peace. Paul knew from experience that inward strife. "The thing that I longed to do," he cries, "I do not, and the thing that I vowed that I would not do, that I do." And what was the outcome? That wild cry that has sounded across the centuries. "Oh, wretched man that I am!" Division means wretchedness.

Now, appealing to your own experience and knowledge of life, I wonder if you are not ready to agree that the estimate of the crowd that Jesus gives here, is largely true of the crowds as you know them today. We are doubtless better clothed and better fed and better housed than these of the long ago. We know far more about things, but many of us are still masterless. Many of us are still in strife with ourselves. And growing out of that fact we are far from peace.
One of the keenest writers of our day declares that in spite of all of our advancement, the prevailing tone of our modern life is one of restlessness and wretchedness.

4. But Jesus not only saw these men as they were, but He saw them as they might be. What an eye He had for possibilities! When He met Simon for the first time He saw the blundering fisherman that was. But He saw also that larger and better man that might be. "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona," He said. "Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." He saw more in John Bunyan than a vulgar and ignorant tinker. He saw a dreamer of dreams. He saw a spiritual Greatheart. He saw one who should guide pilgrims toward the Celestial City as long as the world shall stand.

When Jesus, therefore, looked upon these scattered and distressed folks, He saw them not simply as they were, but also as they might be. He saw how they might be bound into a winsome brotherhood. He saw how they might be individually the possessors of a great peace. Their very restlessness and very dissatisfaction with their present attainments and incapacity to be satisfied with minor things, was a prophecy to Him of their great spiritual future. Christ sees you and me today as we are, but He also sees us as we might be.

III

What was the reaction of Jesus to this vision? How did Jesus feel as he looked upon the crowd? There was no contempt in His look. There was no scorn, no biting irony for the tragic mess that many of them had made of their lives. I recall a brilliant preacher that I used to hear during my days at Harvard University, that reminded me of one who might stand on the shore and watch his blundering brother fisticuff with death amidst raging waters, and saying to
him, "Content yourself. Why did you fall in there?" We gather our skirts about us sometimes in pharisaical fashion as we look upon victims of forms of to which we have never been tempted.

Nor did Jesus look upon these with indifference. That is one of the commonest sins of our modern life. Yet we are more kind today than in any time possibly in the history of the world. But we are appealed to by needs that are physical far more than by needs that are spiritual. While I was in Washington a sewer caved in on a colored man near my home. In fifteen minutes the energies of that great city were harnessed for his rescue. We are sensitive to physical need but we are too little sensitive to needs that are spiritual. Jesus is sensitive to every need that is human. That is a striking word that we read in Ezekiel about the man with the inkhorn who was to set his mark upon those that sighed and cried for the abominations done in the midst of the city. I wonder upon how many of our foreheads his mark would rest.

When Jesus looked"He was moved with compassion." His heart went out in tenderest pity. It was not a cheap and costless compassion. It involved absolute self-giving. The priest and the levite were possibly sorry for the man who fell among thieves, but they did nothing but pity him. They did not care enough to help. Jesus was moved with compassion and gave His all to those upon whom he had compassion.

IV

Then He suggested a remedy for the situation. It is the only remedy, I am sure, that He Himself can devise. Here are scattered and distressed people, their distress growing out of the fact that they are masterless. They have never found someone to be their Lord, to absolutely take captive their hearts. To Jesus they are as a great
field of grain waiting for the harvest. How is grain harvested? By men who are willing to work, and men and women must be harvested in the same way.

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers." We have enough who sit on the side line. We have enough critics. We have enough mudslingers. We have enough spiritual deadbeats. The great need of the church is for men and women who are willing to work. "The next great revival will come," said Mr. Moody, "when a man is willing to take a walk with his brother for Christ's sake." Men are ready to be won. They are only waiting for those who are willing to win them.

Your remember that striking story that Jesus tells of the laborers that stood so long idle in the market place. "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" was the question. And what answer did they make? They did not say "We like being idle." They did not say, "This standing in the market place has fully met our needs." They rather said, "We are idle because no man has hired us. There does never seem to be a job at which we could work and where we would fit in." And there are tens of thousands right here in Houston that have practically as little knowledge of the things for which the church stands and what they might do to help build up the Kingdom of God, as a Hottentot. If they ever find out, they must be told. If they are to be told, we must tell them.

When Henry Drummond was preaching at Edinburgh University he received a letter one day from a brilliant young atheist. At the close of one of the services an American student came forward to speak to him about a friend that he was seeking to win for Christ. He said "My friend is an atheist," and Mr. Drummond asked him his name and found that he was the same man as the one from whom he had received the letter. "He works beside me in the laboratory," said this young
American. "He is a brilliant chap and I feel that I must win him for Christ. I must hurry, too, for this is my senior year and I expect to go back and begin the practice of my profession when it is over. " But the year wore on and the young atheist was not reached. The American returned to his home, but at the opening of the next term, much to Mr. Drummond's surprise, this American student was present again at the first service. "Why, I thought you had finished last year," he said. "I did," was the answer. "Then why are you back?" "Well, I am doing some post graduate work, but my real reason is this: You remember our young friend, the atheist. Well, I did not win him last year. I thought If I could win him this term it would be worth one year out of a man's life. " "You will win," answered Mr. Drummond. And sure enough before the year was over that young atheist bowed at the feet of the cross and went out as a medical missionary. And I do not care how great the task at which this young American might have toiled, he could not have invested a year in a better way.

There are some that you may win if you will but make the effort. "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." If you truly pray, you are going to say, "Here am I, send me."
Therefore pray ye the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers into his harvest. These are the words of Jesus Christ our Lord. They fall from the lips of him in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. They are the command and exhortation of him who has all authority and power in heaven and in earth of him whose face is as the sun that shineth in its strength and who holds in his hand the seven stars. He is the one who liveth and was dead and behold is alive for evermore. He has a right to speak. And we, if we are to be his, must bow our heads and hearts in assent as he speaks. They are old words, but may we hear them anew this morning.

Therefore pray ye. The reason for this exhortation has gone before. It is found in the two preceding verses. And he saw the multitude and was moved with compassion toward them because they fainted and were scattered as sheep having no shepherd. And he said the harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few, therefore pray ye.

He saw the multitude, that is the secret. His was the seeing eye. The reason we have such shallow compassion and such scant praying is because we have such poor and superficial vision. He saw the multitude. That is where most of us fail. We have never seen our eyes are alright. But it is only a truism to say that physical sight is only a very small part of seeing. Do you see you must have knowledge, sympathy, imagination. To Peter fell a prismatic symbol. Playing by him a yellow prismatic rose was to him, and it was nothing more. But to the other it had thoughts that lay too deep for tears. One saw earth creased with heaven and every common hugh afall with God. But while she saw those without vision stood round the faltering man and picked huckleberries.

Two men look at the key that hangs upon the walls of T. Vernon. They both read what is written. The key to the Bastille. To one it is only a rude and commonplace piece of metal. We could make one as good himself. To another it is a picture, a history. As he looks upon it he sees rise the grey walls of the world's grimiest prison. He sees tyranny crushing down humanity till it grows up in to a kind of monstrosity like a gallows. It becomes a grim hand that snatches men from the light into the night. It becomes a grave digger deaf and dumb, whose cruel task it was to bury men alive. It is crimson with blood and red with tears. As he sees it he hears the grim sob of bitterness that soaked a whole nation in blood.

There is a drop of water on a mother's face. What is it? I ask. One man says it is a drop of water, an infinitesimal part of that which constitutes three fourths of the world's substance. Then it is of small importance indeed. But another looks and says it is more than a mere drop of water. It is a tear. It came not only from the eye, but from the heart. That tear is a book, a story. Its pages may be turned and read by the knowing. It tells the angel of suffering came one day and a baby boy was born. It tells of his growing up, of a mother's hopes and tears and dreams. It tells of his education and of his going away to France. Of his letters and her pride in them. Of the little message that she now holds in her hand that he has been killed in action. And the tear is a mere drop of water no more, but liquid grief and devotion and sacrifice. It is transparent joy. It is a wide ocean of heartache condensed into one shining tear.

What is that ornament about that maiden's neck? It is cross. To the Jews it is a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness. To the Christian it is love's highest expression. One man sees in it only a rude instrument of torture. Another really sees and sings "In the Cross of Christ I glory." Christ saw the multitude. That was where his disciples failed. That is where we so often fail. Xerxes saw his armies and was buffed with pride. He then saw them as the prey of death and burst into tears. The disciples saw Jerusalem and admired it buildings. Christ saw it and
why ever it,for he saw more than the buildings.He saw the men.He saw the rebellion,their sin,their impending doom.

What was it that Jesus saw in the multitude that moved his compassion.It is said that three kinds of suffering moved Jesus when he was here.He was moved with compassion at the sight of physical hunger. He would not send the people away fasting.He was moved with compassion at the sight of physical pain and sorrow.He pitied the leper.He was also moved with compassion at the sight of the funeral at Naia.But that which moved him most was the havoc wrought by sin.And that was the secret of his compassion here.He saw the multitude torn and flayed and prostrated.They were so not physically, but spiritually. They were wounded and unable to rise because of what sin had done and was doing in their lives.

We are living in possibly the most humane age that the world has ever known. There was never a time when it was so easy to get bread for the hungry. There was never a time when we were so good to the sick. Our sympathy goes out to those upon sick beds, to the fathers who cannot earn a living for their children, for the mothers who cannot play the mother’s part, for the children who cannot play as other children play. We have compassion on these and it is well.

But it is far harder to stir the compassions of men for spiritual needs. We are outraged that houses should not be warmed when needed. But it is not so bad if the fires of spiritual power and devotion go out upon the altars of the home and the church. We burn with pity and indignation that one who is sick in body should be neglected. But is it when they are sick in soul it is none of our business. The secret of this lies in the fact that we see the one and do not see the other. If we could see as Jesus sees our larger compassion would flow out for the pains and poverty of the soul rather than of the body. Jesus saw men and because he saw them as they really are the sight broke his heart. For he saw that there were bleeding and wounded and ready to die. That was true of the men of his day and it is true of the men of today. Men are lost without Jesus.

But Jesus saw more than need. He also saw possibility. These men whom Jesus saw were helpless, but they were not hopeless. They were cast down, but they were not utterly destroyed. That field strewn with the prostrate was to him a field ripe for harvest. He saw in that human desert a possible garden. He saw in those flayed and torn sheep a possible army. Every Simon was a possible rock. Every Magdalene was a possible herald of the cross. Every Saul the Pharisee was a possible Paul the Apostle. Christ never shut his eyes to the grim fact of the sins of men. He never denied the fact that this was a lost world. But he never doubted that it might be saved. He never doubted that the kingdoms of the world might not be made the kingdoms of the Lord and his Christ. He cherished the highest hopes for men. He believed in them to the uttermost. Seeing their weakness, knowing their frailty, he yet tumbled the responsibilities of his kingdom upon their shoulders and went home to the Father with the firm declaration that the gates of hell should not prevail against them.

The very wretchedness and restlessness of these scattered sheep made his hope for them the greater and the surer. They were wounded and prostrate, but they were not content to be that way. That was his hope then it is his hope and ours still. There is much indifference abroad today. There are many thousands who never enter our church doors, but they are not contented and happy. They are restless and athirst. There is infinite hope for men in sin so long as they are not content to be in sin. These men were conscious wrong, inferior and unhappy as so many are today. And that is our hope. Men are saying give us this water that we may come not to the wells of the world to draw. When men become content, that is when hope for a harvest is dead. “The lamp of Youth will be quite burnt out etc.”

Christ saw that these men might be reached. That what they needed
THINK WELL OF YOURSELF

"Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." Matthew 10:29

By this question Jesus is seeking to bring home to each one of us a sense of our importance. He never lost the individual in the crowd. Now, as then, He called his own sheep by name. Even a sparrow is so important to the eternal God that not one of them is forgotten before Him. A God who thus counts a sparrow of such importance that not one falls that He does not take time to attend its funeral will certainly count one of us of vastly greater importance. Jesus is eager for us to know how much we mean to God because such knowledge will quiet our fears and help us to become our best. He is eager for us to think well of ourselves because he knows that no man is more likely to throw himself away than the one who counts himself of little or no worth. We, therefore, need this question to help us to keep or recover a wholesome self-respect.

I

Such a bracing question is needful because there is so much in our day that tends to dwarf us in our own eyes.

1. First, there is the laughter of the cynic, and of the smart boys. There have always been those who delighted to ridicule man as an insignificant creature. There is that old story of the elephant who had a flea on his ear. This elephant trudged across a bridge that shook under his heavy tread. On the other side the flea shouted gleefully, "Big Boy, we shook her, didn't we?" Mankind, they tell us, is that flea. Then another tale tells us is a monkey, filthily digging for nuts while he chatters of his kinship to the archangels. Of course such a story is as silly as it is cynical. The fact that he has/monkey chattering...
of his kinship of archangels contradicts all that is gone before. Any monkey that could chatter of archangels or even conceive of them would be separated from his fellows by a chasm wider than the spaces between the stars. Then there is that old chestnut from Mark Twain. He tells of a chap that died and went to knock at heaven's gate. When asked where he came from, he answered proudly, "California." But Simon Peter and all the wise men shook their heads. They had never heard of California. "Why it is in the United States", the man answered with indignation. But they had never heard of the United States. "The United States is in America!", the man contined with growing amazement. But no one had heard of America. "North America is on the planet Earth", he declared indignantly. But nobody had ever heard of the earth. The wise men and investigators after looking through many a forgotten lore found it under the name of The Wart. How ridiculously small then one individual must be who lives on a forgotten wart.

2. When man had been dwarfed with the vastness of his universe, an ancient poet felt this, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" He was amazed at how He should take account of so small a creature as man. Yet his universe was a very snug affair. His earth was the center of everything and the stars were lighted to show it on its way. Today our world is no longer a center. Those seemingly near and friendly stars are separated from us by distances that are measured in light years. So small is our world that one astronomer out tells us that if it were to drop out of existence that it would tell upon the universe no more than the falling of a leaf in a vast forest.

3. Then, we individuals often feel dwarfed today by the bigness of events that have taken place before our eyes and the problems that those
events create. We have seen a whole world convulsed by war. Today we see capital and labor glaring at each other refusing to recognize the fact that they are meant not to contradict each other but to complement each other. We see whole nations trying to find some basis for permanent peace. We realize that a few outstanding leaders can do something about this, but what can the average man and woman such as we are do? Our sense of insignificance tends to paralyze us. It tends to make us forget that the war was won not by a few leaders, but by millions of individuals.

4. Then we often fail to think well of ourselves because of our mistaken idea of the real meaning of humility. Having been reared in Christian faith, we realize something of the importance of being humble. We know that humility is a queenly virtue. It is hard for us to get away from the conviction that to be truly humble is to think meanly of oneself, which, of course, is not the case at all. Jesus was the humblest of men. In fact his humility was the one virtue of himself, which he calls to our attention. "Remember me, for I am meek, of heart." How then, did this meekest of men think of himself? He thought grandly of himself. He thought so grandly that He said things about himself that no other man could possibly say without provoking our scorn. He brushed aside certain words of some of the great prophets with a bold "Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time...But I say unto you, Ye have heard of old nations that stand or fall; live or die?" To take Him seriously was to build upon rock and to be able to weather any storm. To fail to take him seriously was to build upon sand and end in utter destruction. Humility is not self-content. It is to think rightly of yourself. It is to see yourself somewhat as God sees you.

Naturally it is possible for us to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. There is such a thing as conceit. There are those
that have failed because they underestimated themselves. But that is not the most fruitful cause of failure. If thinking too highly of oneself has slain its thousands; thinking to meanly has slain it ten thousands. Yet often times our misconception of what humility really is tends to prevent us from thinking as well of ourselves as we ought to think.

- II -

Where then shall we turn for aid to our own hurt self-respect? I know of no book so helpful as the Bible. I know of no teacher that so enables us to think grandly of ourselves as does Jesus. What are some of the bracing words that we find as we turn the pages of God's Book? First, we are taught here that man is God's child. In the majestic language of Genesis God formed man out of the dust of the earth and breathed life into his nostrils and he became a living soul. We are God's children. God is our father. That gives us something at once to live up to. That paves the way to a high and holy self-respect.

Since we are God's children, we are by nature grand creatures. That was the contention of the poet to whom we referred a moment ago. "Thou hast made us", he declared, "a little less than divine." Thou hast made us a little lower than God. We are like him in that we are persons. God is an infinite person. We are finite. But since we are persons, we have power to know, power to chose, power to love.

This is a page of our greatness. We are not to confuse bigness with greatness. We have a tendency to believe that because of things big, we are great. But that is not necessarily the case. Years ago as a young chap I went alone for a stroll in South Cheyene Canyon. As I came in sight of the pillows of Hercules my first reaction was one of mingled awe and insignificance. I thought how many centuries were looking down upon me from the many heights and thought also how many they would look down upon as frail as I when I behind the curtains have passed. Then I thought
"I am greater than Hercules. I can contemplate them, but they cannot contemplate me." The list of God's children is greater than all the stars because that child can respond to the love of God and that no star can do.

2. Man: as a great creature, as individual being, is in for a great destiny. "Thou madest him to have great dominion." God did not make man for a slave. He was made for mastery. He is great in his possibilities. No other ever believed in man as grandly as did Jesus. He saw man for what he was. He knew him to be a sinner. He also saw in every man's possible saint. Man's greatness is recognized in his almost infinite capacity to become.

For instance, he has a capacity for evil that is almost unbelievable. There is a turning right at your feet that if taken might lead to depths beyond your dreams. Had you warned Judas the first crooked turn he ever took after meeting Jesus that he would end by becoming a traitor, he would not have believed it. Few of us recognize the possibility of the evil in our own lives.

But over against this is our all but infinite capacity for good. If we can descend to the lowest depths, we can also ascend to the highest heights. We have a capacity to become like Christ. Nothing bigger can be said than that. "We are the sons of God and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

3. Then we glimpse something of our greatness not only in the greatness of our Maker and in the greatness of our capacity to become, but also in the greatness of the love that God has bestowed upon us. We may not feel that we mean much to others, but we mean infinitely to Him. He loves each one of us personally and individually. He loves us sacrificially.
When we want to know something of how much we are worth to him, we need only to stand under the shadow of the cross. He gave himself for us. He gives himself for each one of us and to each one of us still. God would not bestow such vast love or invest so sacrificially in a creature that is of no significance. His sacrificial love for us is a badge of our greatness.

- III -

Now which of these views shall we take? Shall we regard ourselves with contempt, or shall we think grandly of ourselves? I think we ought to take the Christian view for the following reasons.

1. Such a view is more desirable. You may accuse me of wishful thinking if you will but be that as it may, I had rather thank well of myself than to do the opposite. While I was a student at Harvard, a friend told me this story. I certainly will not vouch for the truthfulness of it. He said that one day he was going by train from Boston to New York. At New Haven a friend of his, a student at Yale, got on the train. They got a seat together and were soon in earnest conversation. This Harvard friend noticed the Yale man's ticket protruding slightly from his coat pocket. While calling his attention to something outside the window, he slipped the ticket into his own pocket. Soon his friend felt for it, missed it, and began a frantic search. Unable to find it he told the Harvard man that he had an important date in New York and that he had spent every cent of his money for the ticket, therefore, he would have to secure a loan or be put off the train. The Harvard man was sympathetic and told him he had only one thin dime. "However, if you will get down under the seat, I will cover you with my overcoat." With great reluctance the Yale man consented. My friend handed him two tickets to the conductor as he stopped at the seat. "Where is the other passenger?"
I prefer, "He is crouched on the seat was the reply. He prefers to ride that way." Well it is a matter of taste. I prefer faith that gives significance to personality.

2. I prefer the Christian view because it appeals to my intelligence. The faith that God is our Father is not always easy, but to account for our presence here in any other fashion would be vastly more difficult. In a recent book, "We Are Not Alone" a scientist gives some of his reasons for his faith in God. He tells us that there was not a chance in a million that this world was capable of being lived on but for the planning of an infinite intelligence. He declares that if the crust of the earth had been ten feet thicker, animal life would have been impossible; that if the moon had been only 50 thousand miles away instead of its actual distance, the tides would have overflowed the continent twice a day. I believe in a loving, planning, God because no other faith appeals so strongly to my intelligence.

3. I take this faith for the worth of the individual because it helps me to become my best. I need faith in myself, and in the meaning of my life to enable me to live it seriously and bravely. No man is so right to throw himself away as a man who has no sense of worth. We are not careful to treasure wares that we count of no worth.

I read sometime ago of a gentleman who was sailing along the coast of Newfoundland. He put in at an inlet to find a fisherman in dire poverty. He had a meat barrel full of a soapy like substance that he had taken from the stomach of a whale. He offered to sell it first for $25, and then dropped to $15. But the visitor was not willing to invest $15 in such worthless looking stuff. However, when he sailed away, he took a sample saying he would come back if it should prove to be of value. In Boston he had it examined and learned that it was amber grease worth about $1000 a pound.
Armed with this information, he sought to make a speedy return to the distant cabin of the fisherman, but heavy winds delayed him. At last he arrived, eager to tell his new found friend that the soapy looking substance that he had offered was really worth $2,000,000. But when he began to tell the fisherman about it, he was puzzled for a moment, then the fisherman began to tell him that he had emptied it all in the ocean. He threw it away because he did not know its value. The greatest safeguard against doing that with your life is to recognize yourself as God's child and live a life in fellowship with Him.
"Art thou he that should come or do we look for another."
(Matthew 11:3)

The most tragic words in the Bible are not affirmations but questions. When life had fallen into ruins for John, when he had lost his wealth, his health, his loved ones, when his faith in God threatened to collapse, he wondered if there might not be some compensation for his suffering beyond the grave. Of that he was sure. Therefore in his agony he asked this question: "If a man die shall he live again?" The most agonized word ever uttered by Jesus was a question. When he hung on the cross he cried out of the bitterness of his pain: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" With the exception of this question that was wrung from Jesus amidst the bitterness of his passion, I think this question of John's is perhaps the most pain-filled of any other in the New Testament. "Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?" There is no measuring the stark agony and torture that gave birth to that question.

I

Why did John ask it?

Because this question takes us so by surprise some had felt that John was asking it for the benefit of others. Some of his followers had fallen into doubt. They were beginning to wonder if this strange Preacher, was in reality the expected Messiah. They had come to John with their doubts
and he, to satisfy them, had passed the question on to Jesus. Then there are those who claim that John asked this question in order to hurry Jesus. The Master was not moving as rapidly as he felt that he ought. He wanted him to move more swiftly in the setting up of his kingdom. Therefore, this question. The same explanation has often been given for the treachery of Judas. The trouble with both of these answers in my opinion is that they have no foundation in fact.

Why, then, I repeat, did John ask this question. He asked it to satisfy himself. He asked it because his once clear faith had become gloomy doubt. Men have found it hard to accept this answer because they were so sure of John. He had been a man of such solid convictions. He had been so utterly sure of Jesus. The contrast between this pathetic question and the great affirmations he had made regarding Jesus when he preached in the wilderness seemed to some too shocking to be true. Yet, shocking or not, it is true. John is in doubt.

A few years ago I was preaching in a country church near my own home. At the close of the service a charred and withered old woman came forward and spoke to me. She called me by my first name and said: "Don't you know me? I'm Ellen." I failed to disguise my utter amazement. She read this amazement and answered it though I did not speak a word. "I have had a hard life," she said. "You know the man I married." Yes, I knew him. About the best thing he ever did for her was to get in the penitentiary. But what was so shocking was the terrible contrast between this withered old woman of today and the beautiful girl of yesterday. It was hard to believe that so few years had wrought such a change.

More than fifty years ago a brilliant and well-known minister broke with his church and with the faith of his fathers. He went out to Los Angeles and established a Peoples' Church. For a while that church was thronged by Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Then the great congregations seemed to melt in his hands like a rope of sand. The church was closed and
the minister for a while dropped out of sight. A few years later a brother minister told me that he was passing through a park one evening in Seattle, Washington. He heard a man calling the set for an old-fashioned square dance. The caller had such a beautiful voice that my friend was eager to see him. When he made his way through the crowd he recognized the once famous minister. Now calling the set for a dance was not so bad. The shocking part of it was that a man would be willing to turn aside from calling sinners from repentance to engage in this cheap task.

That, therefore, that shocks us about John is the contrast between the man as he is today and the man of yesterday. Yesterday he was a magnificent creature of the wide open spaces. He had grown up largely in the wilds of the wilderness. When he began his ministry he was a man of conviction. He spoke with such compelling assurance that he fairly emptied the cities and filled the wilderness with eager multitudes. He had called a whole nation to repentance. He had known Jesus personally. He had baptized him. He had pointed him out to others saying: "Behold, the Lamb of God." With trumpet-like voice he had brought a new sense of God to many thousands and now this trumpet voice dwindled down to this Micky Mouse squeak. "Art thou he that shall come, or do we look for another?" It is next to impossible to overstate the agony of that tragic blackout.

II

How did John come by his doubt? How did this man of faith lose his assurance? Men do not come to doubt in the same way.

There are those whose doubt is born of wishful thinking. I know that our critics often accuse us who believe of being victims of wishful thinking. If there is any truth in their claim, if we can believe what we will to believe then this power works both ways; we can also doubt what we will to doubt. If our faith can be born of wishful thinking their doubt can be.
born in the same fashion. There are those who do doubt because they prefer to do so. The fool of the Psalmist was such a man: "The fool hath in his heart, 'there is no God.'" Notice the source of his trouble. It was not in his head but in his heart. His difficulties were not intellectual but moral. The thought of God troubled him. Therefore he decided to banish God from his thinking.

Such a course is not unique. I read a letter some time ago written in reply to a radio sermon. The young man who wrote the letter was telling the minister what a relief he had found since he had renounced all faith in God. At first glance it may be difficult to understand this yet he explained it. If he had lost some privileges he had lost very weighty responsibilities. If there is such a God as Jesus reveals then you and I cannot live like sons of mud any more and be comfortable in so doing. If there is such a God we have immorality on our hands whether we desire it or not. We have a saying, "A man must live." We often use it to explain some shabby piece of conduct. But if there is a God, that is sober truth. Therefore since we must live we ought to be fit to live with ourselves as well as with others. But there are some who doubt God because they may wish to do so. But this was not the case with John.

Then there are those who fall into doubt because of their disloyalty to the faith they have. This I think is by far the most fruitful source of doubt. There are those who, afflicted with intellectual conceit, like to talk about the doubts that are natural to a thoughtful man. But for every doubt that is born of clear thinking there are millions that are born of muddy living. If we live up to the best we know we come into the fullness of the light. However dim our vision may be at the beginning, or however bright our vision, if we fail to follow the gleam then that vision fades into utter nothingness. Just as doubt has a way of melting in the warmth of an effort to do some good in the world so faith fails in the presence of disloyalty. If you do not practice your gospel you will cease to believe
it. The time will soon come when you will have no gospel in which to believe.

But John had not fallen into doubt because of his disloyalty to his Lord. In fact, it was because of that loyalty that he had been cast into prison. Had he been willing to compromise he would have had a far easier time. Had he been made of less stout fiber he would never have been cast into the prison. Had he been less true to his faith he might have eaten roast beef out of the very platter on which his head was served to an unclean woman. This loyalty is a sure road to doubt but that was not the road that was traveled with the rugged feet of John. John I think fell into doubt for the following reasons:

1. First, he was idle. Remember, he had been a man of the wide open spaces. He had been a man who had lived his live in the thick of things. He was a great rugged son of battle. If hundreds had come to him in those days he was too busy fighting to give them any attention, but now he cannot fight any longer in the open. Now he is shut up in a gloomy prison cell seemingly forsaken of God and man. Now he can no longer hear the tramp of the multitudes as they come to wait on his ministry. He can only hear the monotonous lapping of the waters of the Dead Sea against the walls of his gloomy prison.

Idleness is always hard to endure. If idleness is self-chosen it spells disaster. No man can remain a Christian and be a deliberate idler. But even when idleness is enforced it is often hard to bear. This is the reason why old people so often tend to despair of the present and look to the past for the really great days. Why were the days that have dropped into the sunset so great? It is not because they/Really better than today. They may have been less good. They were great days because these old bodies were then in the thick of things while today they cannot carry on as they once did. John fell an easy prey to doubt because he was idle.
2. The second reason that John fell into doubt was that he had misunderstood Jesus. John was a stern prophet of the Old Testament type. He believed that the ax was already under the root of the tree and that every evil tree should be cut down. It was his conviction that the Messiah was going to overthrow Roman rule and authority and enable the chosen people to lord it over their enemies as their conquerors had lorded it over them. He believed that the Messiah was going to establish a political kingdom rather than one that was spiritual. A kingdom of physical force rather than of spiritual power.

There are those who cling to John's faith to this day. Not a few of our friends who believe in the visible and physical return of Jesus expect him to establish his kingdom by force. One earnest advocate states that when he comes back he will ride in blood up to the bits of his horses. How amazing to believe that the Christ who repudiated violence when he was here is going at the long last to trust in it to establish his kingdom. One of the most pathetic words I think that he ever uttered was spoken to his disappointed disciples when they saw that he was going to allow him to be killed. They had hoped desperately that he would assert his power and conquer his enemies but he refused. "Don't you know," he questions, "that I could pray and he would send twelve legions of angels." But suppose he had. Nobody would worship Him today.

As we look abroad in our world there is much that is discouraging. Sometimes it does seem as if right is forever on the scaffold and wrong forever on the throne. Why does not our Lord do something about it. He is doing something but the only dominion that he seeks and for which he cares is the dominion of human hearts. He is not come to set up any kind of material kingdom. No man can claim the authority of Jesus for any sort of social or economic set up. He is come seeking dominion over your heart and mine. The dominion of love. John failed to see this and so fell into doubt.
3. The final reason I mention for John's doubt was what John himself had suffered and was suffering. Bear in mind that he was brought up in a faith that the good always came out for the best and the bad always went to the . That is the faith that has enough truth in it to take a long time to die. I remember as a small boy the old-fashioned, goody-goody stories where the bad boy always came out the little end of the horn and the good boy always got the pie. But the actual business of living tears that complacent faith into shreds and tatters. Bad men do suffer, but so do good men. The best man this world ever knew went to the cross.

But it was hard for John to see this as it is often hard for ourselves. John had been true to Jesus Christ. He had been loyal when that loyalty was costly. If he had denied him and suffered for it he could have understood but it was hard for him to understand why he suffered when he had been faithful. Strange rumors filtered into the prison of the doings of this Christ whose forerunner had been. Some said that he had powers beyond the human. Some said that he had opened blinded eyes and cleansed lepers, that he had set a heart of laughter to beating under the frozen ribs of death. Why then did he not use that power on his behalf? Why did he allow him to languish in prison when he might be doing so much in the outer world. John found no satisfactory answer for this question.

Hence his doubt. That same doubt has tortured many a suffering soul. Why do the good suffer? There are many answers but a full explanation has not been given us yet. We do know that God always sets character above comfort. We know too that it is not the care-free and unscarred souls who have helped us most. Those who have brought the most of healing to hurting hearts have been those who have been shut up in some kind of prison of pain or disappointment or sorrow as was this prophet of the long ago.

III

What did John do with his doubt? When his black night was upon him
where did he turn for help. Men watch to see where we go in our hours of bitterest need.

When John became gripped by doubt, when a deadly fear seized his heart a fear that his own hopes were without foundation a fear that he had misled those who had trusted him when he was tortured with the fear that his whole life might have been no more than a huge mistake, a tragic blunder, he did not even then renounce Jesus altogether. In the face of his doubt he still lived up to the best that he knew. Even though he had been mistaken he believed it was still better to be courageous than to be a coward, to be clean than to be unclean, to be loyal to the best of which he had dreamed rather than to be disloyal.

"Art thou he that should come?" That is doubt. He is not at all sure that he has not misjudged this amazing cousin of his. He has perhaps put more weight on it than he is able to carry. But in spite of his doubt he still has a shred of faith. Listen: "Art thou he that should come or do we look for another." "Even if I am wrong," he seems to say. "Even if I have been misled and have misled others, even if you are not the coming One, I am going still to believe that God is going to make good his promise to me. I am going to climb my watch-tower and keep my face toward the east, looking for the rising of the Son of Righteousness until the very day I die. I know that at the long last God will send some man to show us the way home. "But if not"—in fairness.

Not only did John continue to live up to the best that he knew but he took his doubt to Jesus. That is sane. That is fair. He told him frankly through his friends of his misgivings, of the sickening fear that had fairly brought the sun out of his sky. That privilege is open to us even more fully than it was to John. We have the right. We are even invited to bring our doubts, our every burden to the Master himself. Here is one place where we can unburden our hearts with words. We can as that woman of the New Testament fall down before him and tell him all the truth. John defied his
doubts and lived up to the best that he knew. He also brought his doubts to Jesus.

IV

What was the outcome?

When those friends spoke John's mind for him, telling Jesus frankly that John had been disappointed in him, that his faith had been shaken at its foundation, Jesus did not throw up his hands in horror. He did not criticize John. He did not show the least disappointment or the slightest surprise. Jesus never seems horrified by our honest doubts. Thomas was a brutal doubter. He declared that he would be satisfied with nothing less than putting his finger into the print of the nails and thrusting his hand into the side of his Master. Later when Jesus came, he offered Thomas just that, but Thomas did not need it. He fell at his feet saying: "My Lord and my God."

Not only did Jesus not rebuke John for his doubt but he gave him an answer. Not in words but in deeds. He went quietly on with his work, healing the sick, opening blind eyes, cleansing lepers, preaching his gospel to the poor. Then he said: "Go show John the things that you do hear and see."

Do you notice that he does not say, "Go tell John." Telling is good, but it is not enough. Go show John is the word. Show by the change that has taken place in your own life that Christ is still abroad in his world, that he is still doing all the gracious things according to his promise. Blessed is the man who has a personal authentic word of what our Lord is doing today.

What came of it all? Frankly we do not know. But I have an idea that John heard and was satisfied. A little later the sweet angel of release came and went home to see his Master face to face. He went to where tor-
menting doubt gives place to radiant certainty forever more. This our Lord will do for every doubt-tortured soul. He is able to steady us now and to make us sure of himself until we reach that good land where we shall know even as we are known.
AN ECLIPSE OF FAITH

"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"
—Matthew 11:3

Certainly some of the most tragic words of the Bible are questions. For sheer stark agony, I do not think any assertions in the Old or New Testament is equal to some of its questions. Here, for instance, is Job. He has lost his wealth. He has lost the honor and consideration of his fellows that have been in part the result of his success. Not only has he lost his wealth, but he has lost his loved ones—his children are all dead. On the heels of these losses has come the further loss of his health. Pain is walking with fire-shod feet along every nerve of his body. He is suffering the very tortures of hell. Tortured in body, tortured in mind, tortured by the perplexities of God's strange dealing with him, it all seems so futile and so hopeless. If he could believe in an after-life, there would be some compensation. But off that he is by no means sure. Therefore, his black night tortures from him this question: "If a man die, shall he live again?"

The most bitter and agonized word that ever fell from the lips of Jesus was a question. He made some sad assertions. Shrinking as He did from loneliness, it was sheer pain that led Him to say, "It shall come to pass that ye shall be scattered, every one to his own and shall leave me alone." But the agony of this assertion was as moonlight to sunlight in comparison with that question which was wrung from him upon the cross. Here even God seems to have left Him alone. Therefore, He flings out that exceedingly bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That word has more of agony in it than any other in the New Testament. But if I were asked for a question that comes closest to that which was wrung from our Lord upon the cross, I would turn to this that comes from the lips and broken
heart of John. Here he is in prison with the waters of the Dead Sea lapping in 
moanful monotony in his ears. He is seemingly forsaken of God and man. The sheer 
pain of it seems more than he can bear. It wrings from him this question, "Art 
thee that should come, or do we look for another?"

Why did John ask this question? It is so little like him. It is in such 
utter contrast to all that he has said and done before. Cannon Raven had as 
his hobby the study of birds. He took moving pictures of them. One night he 
was showing his pictures to the prisoners of a certain British penitentiary. 
Among other birds that he showed was the "curlew". While he was describing this 
bird, its wild defiant call, there came from his audience a perfect imitation of 
the curlew's cry. It has a note of defiance in it and also of agony. It has a 
hint of laughter through tears. And there the prisoners and the minister heard 
it within the forbidding gray walls of a prison--an exultant cry of freedom among 
those who knew freedom no more. The thing was startling.

A few years ago I was preaching in a little country church not far from my 
own home. At the close of the service a charred and wrinkled old woman came for-
ward, called me by my first name and said, "Don't you know me? I am Ellen." I 
remembered her. We had been schoolmates. She was not fifty, and yet she could 
have passed for seventy-five. Once she had been vivacious and beautiful, but I 
could not see the slightest resemblance in this poor, wintry face and figure to 
the girl I had known a little more than a quarter of a century ago. I suppose my 
surprise was evident for she hurried on to say, "I have had a bit of a hard time. 
You know my husband?" Yes, I did know him. He was in the penitentiary then. That 
was really the best thing that had been done for her. But the shock of the exper-
ience was the contrast between what she was in life's springtime and what she was 
in the autumn.

Almost half a century ago, a prominent minister of rare ability surprised and
shocked his brethren by renouncing his Christian faith. He went out to Los Angeles, established what he called a People's Church, and drew into it Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. For a while the enterprise seemed highly successful, then it melted in his hands like a rope of sand. A few years later another minister told me that he was passing through a park in Seattle one night when he heard somebody calling a set for an old-fashioned square-dance. He said the voice was so resonant and beautiful that he made his way through the crowd to see who it was. He was horrified to discover that it was this one-time successful minister. No great harm in calling for an old-fashioned square-dance, but it becomes tragic for one whose voice had once proclaimed the unsearchable riches of Christ!

It is thus the terrible contrast between the John of yesterday and of today that shocks us. How sure John had been, how certain he was that this Cousin of his was the promised Messiah! John had baptized Him. John had been His fore-runner. John had preached that sermon that is the summary of all saving Gospel: "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." John had called a whole generation to repentance. John had emptied the surrounding cities and filled the wilderness with eager multitudes because he brought to those who heard him a new awareness of God. But now this lion-like voice that had said, "Behold the Lamb of God" has changed to this Mickey Mouse squeak, "Art thou he that should come, ordo we look for another?"

What, I repeat, is the matter with John? The contrast between what he is and what he was is so great that some have refused to believe it. There are those who argue that he was simply trying to hurry Jesus. The Master was not moving as swiftly as he thought he ought. Therefore, he was asking this question to quicken His pace. There are others still who argue that John was trying to satisfy his friends. Some of his disciples were losing their assurance. They were beginning to question but that is not the answer. John was not simply trying to satisfy others; he was trying to satisfy himself. John's faith had suffered an eclipse. John was being
tortured by doubt. That doubt wrung from him this question, wet with the sweat of agony, "Art thou he that should come or......" Or what? Did you ever face that awful possibility? John was saying, "Maybe I have been wrong. Maybe I have been duped and have duped others. Maybe my whole life has been no more than a tragic blunder." There is no measuring, no over-estimating the tragedy of that question.

II

How did John get into doubt?

There are some doubts that are born of wishful thinking. I know that those who seek to discredit religion are fond of saying that our faith is often the result of wishful thinking. Well, certainly I want to cast my vote on the side of faith. But this wishful thinking works both ways. If there are those who believe because they wish to, there are those who refuse to believe for the same reason. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Notice the source of his denial. It was not intellectual difficulties that gave birth to his doubt. It was moral difficulties. God was in his way. If God was his Father, then he had something to live up to. If he had no other ancestry than mud then life would be easier. He desired the easy way; therefore he brushed God aside.

There is no denying the fact that if there is a God such as Jesus Christ revealed, life at once becomes infinitely earnest and serious. If God is my Father then I have immortality on my hands. This is the case whether I wish it or not. If God is my Father I am under vast obligations to be the kind of man that a son of God ought to be. If God is my Father, I must play the part of brother to all the sons of men. This brings us at once into high altitudes where some of us find it difficult to breathe. It is not surprising, therefore, that a hearer writes in to a certain radio preacher, declaring how much more comfortable and jolly he has found life since he has ceased to believe in God. Some fall into doubt through wishful thinking, but that is not the case with John.
Then, another fruitful source of doubt is failure to be true to our heavenly vision. In fact, I think this is the most fruitful source. However clear the light may be that shines upon your path today, if you refuse to be true to that light the light will turn to darkness. However clear may be your assurance of God, if you fail to be loyal to God that assurance will change into uncertainty. Just as doubt melts away in the warmth of an effort to do some good in the world, so faith vanishes when we disregard its voice. It was Paul's loyalty to his heavenly vision that brought him into the fullness of the light. But the same law his disloyalty would have plunged him into utter night.

But John had not been untrue. He had lived up to the best that he knew. He had done so at great cost to himself. It was because of his loyalty that this great, gallant man, accustomed to the wide open spaces was thrust into prison. It was because of his loyalty at the last that he lost his life. John might have eaten royal food out of the dish that bore his head if he had only been willing to strike his flag to a god of lies. But John had been true even though it cost him everything. Therefore, his doubt was not born of his unfaithfulness. What then was the cause?

1. John was idle. Deliberate idleness is always deadly. Even enforced idleness is very hard to bear. Why is it that old bodies so often despair of the present and look back to the good old days? It is not because those good old days were better than our todays. Generally speaking, the old days were good because they were then in the thick of the fight. They were so busy playing the game that even their wounds were not noticed. Work is a tremendous safeguard. But idleness is hard to bear. It is often the mother of doubt, discouragement, and defeat.

"It was not in the day of battle
That we threw away the sword,
But in the lonely hours of watching
At the river by the ford;
The waters lapped, the night winds blew,
Full-armed the fear was born and grew.
And we were flying ere we knew
From specters in the night."
Here then was a man who had led a full and fighting life. Here was a man who had moved his whole nation as he called them to repentance. Thousands had thronged to hear him. *But now his voice is hushed. Now the crowds come no more. Now he is forced to spend empty days in the stenchful loneliness of a prison with nothing but the lapping lappings of the Dead Sea to break the monotony of his life. This idleness worked against his faith even though it was enforced. If you and I remain deliberately idle, if we do not practice our faith, we are sure to fall into doubt.*

2. A second cause of John's doubt was that he misunderstood Jesus. John was a powerful preacher. But you cannot read his message without seeing the sharp contrast between that message and the one proclaimed by our Lord. John had been divinely chosen as the forerunner of Jesus. He was appointed by the Spirit from his birth, but in spite of this he clung to the old Jewish faith that Jesus was to be a political Messiah. He believed that this Messiah was to save His people by enabling them to throw off the yoke of Rome. He believed that the ax was laid beneath the root of the tree and that every evil thing should be destroyed by force. He looked to see his own people put their foot upon the neck of their foes as Rome had put its heavy foot upon their own necks.

But the days and the weeks and the months slipped by and nothing like this was happening. Political deliverance seemed no closer than it had been before. Rome still held a place of power. She still lorded it over the weaker peoples of the earth. John, therefore, began to suspect that this Jesus that he had introduced to the world was not the Messiah at all. Certainly He was not doing the things that He expected Jesus to do. There are those certainly that fall into this same kind of doubt today. In every tragic upheaval like that we are experiencing in the world folks begin to talk of the failure of Christianity. But it is not Christianity that has failed; it is we ourselves. It is not Christ; We have failed to take Him seriously. Christ will not and cannot establish His Kingdom by force.
He can only establish it through the submission of willing and loving hearts.

To fail to realize that is to join John in his doubt.

3. A final source of John's doubt was Christ's dealing with his own life. Put yourself in John's place. Here he is breaking his heart in a prison cell—this wild man of the wilderness. Rumors trickle into his prison of what Jesus is doing in the big outer world. Some report the great crowds that are awaiting his ministry—crowds that used to hear John. They also tell that this Jesus has powers beyond the human. Some say that He is able even to cleanse lepers and to set a heart of life to beating under the frozen rips of death. "All right," says John, "if He has such power why doesn't he help me? I have stood for Him. Why doesn't He stand for me?" That is an old problem. Even Jesus was tortured by it. It is hard for us to get away from the conviction that if we are loyal to Christ, He is under obligations to get us through life without any serious discomfort. We still hear people ask desperately, "Why should this happen to me? I have tried to live right. I have tried to do my duty. I have tried earnestly to be a Christian, and yet my life has fallen in ruins." "How," questioned tortured John, "can Jesus be the Christ and yet leave me here in my loneliness, a plaything of my enemies and His?" I am afraid that I have misunderstood, that I have claimed more for Him than is true. I am afraid that my whole life's work has been no more than a tragic blunder."

III

But what did this tortured man do when his black-outs came upon him? What did he do when the sun of his faith went into all but total eclipse?

1. He remained true to the best that he knew. He did not allow the things about which he was uncertain to interfere with those about which he was certain. He still believed that it was better to be true than false, that it was better to be brave than a coward, better to be clean than unclean. He still clung to the little bit of faith that lived in the stony heart of doubt. We can see that from
his question—"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" What does he mean? "Maybe," he said, "I have been wrong. Maybe I have blundered. Maybe the thousands that have been called by me to this faith are to be disappointed as I have been disappointed. But even if I am wrong about Jesus, I am going on believing that God's promise to the prophets of the past, that his promise to me, is going to come true. I believe that God is surely going to send some one to show us the way home. If this Jesus is not the man, then in spite of past failures, I am going to mount my watch-tower and be on the look-out for Him. If this Jesus is not the one, then I shall die with my face toward the east in the faith that one day the Sun of Righteousness will at last rise upon us with healing in his beams." The man who at a time of doubt remains true to the best he knows will come to know the best.

2. A second wise move that John made was that he took his doubts to Jesus Himself. When he began to question, when he began to fear with a sickening fear that all his great and sacrificial ministry had been little better than a blunder, he did not consult the enemies of Jesus. He did not consult those who confessedly did not know Him. That is what we often do. He went to Jesus Himself, told Him frankly that he had misgivings about Him, told Him that he felt that He was letting him down, and that he must be sure, that he simply could not go on living without Him. How infinitely wise that is! That door is always open to all of us.

IV

And how did it all end? What response did Jesus make?

To me it is very gratifying that Jesus was not shocked by this doubt of John at all. He did not seem the least surprised—He did not even seem disappointed. He knew how hard it was for this tortured friend of His. I have an idea that Jesus was greatly pleased that John still trusted Him enough to come to Him. Certainly the reception that he met indicates that we can be perfectly natural and frank and honest in our prayers. We can say to our Lord what we really feel instead of
what we think we ought to feel. Instead of rebuking John and saying how disappointed in him He was, no sooner had the messengers that came from John gone on their way than Jesus began to tell the people what a great soul John was. In fact, He complimented this doubter in a superlative fashion. He said he was no reed shaken by the wind, that he was no soft soul living in royal palaces. He declared that he was a great, gallant-hearted man—so great that no greater had been of woman born. The heart of Jesus warmed to this man who could trust Him enough to come to Him in brokenness of heart and tell Him of his doubt.

But Jesus did more than appreciate. He moved toward the satisfying of John's doubt. This He did by continuing the work that He was doing when John's messengers approached Him. The scene is a typical one in the life of Jesus. "The blind came to Him and received their sight. The lame came and were made to walk. "He lepers were cleansed, and the poor and under-privileged were privileged to hear. And when the work was done, He said to those messengers, "Go, show John again the things that you have seen and heard." How suggestive that is! "Go show John." He did not send them to argue with John, to give proof-texts. "Go show John the things that ye do hear and see." Carry on your own lips and in your own lives an authentic message, not simply what Christ did in the long ago, but what He is doing today, what He is doing in you.

In some matters it is enough merely to tell folks, but in the matters of religion they must be shown. When you think back over yesterday, who are those that have helped you the most? Who are those that when the night of doubt encircles you help you to find the daylight of a living faith. It is those who were able to show you—the people. It has been some choice soul to whom Christ was so real that He has made Him real to you. If you find yourself imprisoned today—a prison of doubt, of uncertainty, of bewilderment,—tell your story to Jesus. If you have a friend like that, go show him again the things that you have seen and heard and as he sees the light of Christ in your face, he will not be faithless but believing.
THE ECLIPSE OF FAITH

"Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

Matthew 11:3

The most tragic words in the literature of the world are not assertions but questions. That is true in this Bible, the supreme Book of mankind. When Job had lost his wealth and his loved ones and his health; when his faith in God was threatening to topple into ruins; when he felt cheated of life here, and was desperately afraid that he might go on being cheated forever, it wrung from him this question, bitter with agony and wet with tears, - "If a man die, shall he live again." By far the most tragic word that ever fell from the lips of Jesus was a question. It was born of the hour of unspeakable blackness upon the cross. The full measure of its bitterness we can never know. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" This question of Jesus is the only one, I think, that has in it more of tragedy than this of John. It is hardly possible for us to exaggerate the pathetic pain that made John fling out this desperate word, - "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

I.

Why did John ask this question? It is so little like him. It is so different than that we expect of him that many have tried to explain it away. Some have argued that John was not trying to satisfy himself, but that he was trying to satisfy his friends. Some of his friends had become a bit shaken in their faith and John was trying to steady them. Still others claim that John had grown
a bit impatient with the slowness of Jesus. He was sure the Master was going
to establish his Kingdom, but he was not making rapid progress that John desired.
Hence this question. The same argument, you remember, has been urged for an ex-
planation for the treachery of Judas. "Judas", these say, "was sure of Jesus. 
He was sure that when the hour of crisis came he would act decidedly. Therefore,
by his treachery he created this crisis." But the trouble with all these ex-
planations is that they do not explain.

Why then, I repeat, does John ask this question? He is asking it because
his faith has gone into eclipse. He has come to have serious misgivings about
this Jesus of whom he was once so sure. He has a torturing fear that this strange
Cousin of his is after all not what he once proclaimed him to be. Such a question
on the lips of any disciple would be disappointingly disappointing. But such a question upon
the lips of John is tragic beyond words. It marks such a contrast between the John
of other days, with his voice of authority, and the John of the prison cell wailing
out this pitiful question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another." 
The contrast startles us.

A few summers ago I was preaching in a country church near my old home. At
the close of the service a charred and withered old woman came forward. Calling
me by my first name she said, "Do you remember me? I am Ellen. We used to go to
school together you know." She was little past forty-five though she looked easily
seventy. The contrast between this blighted bit of womanhood and the beautiful girl
that I had known twenty-five years ago was so great that I fear she read astonishment
in my face. At least she hurried with an explanation. "I have had a hard
time. You know the man I married. . ." I do know him. The best thing he had ever
done for her was to get in the penitentiary. Her tragic life had passed its grim
hand over this once beautiful woman and had erased every vestige of her former
beauty. I have seen other women just as homely, but hers was accented by the con-
trast between this ugly today and her radiant yesterday.
About a century ago there was a brilliant and gifted minister who gave up his pastorate to become an evangelist. Were I to call his name, some of you older ones would know him. He was a man of rare charm and power. But something went wrong. He made shipwreck of his faith and quit the ministry and his church. He went out to Los Angeles and established a Peoples' Church. For a while that church was thronged by Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. By and by his great congregation melted in his hands like a rope of sand. A few years later a minister told me he was passing through an amusement park in Seattle, Washington. He heard a man calling the sets for an old fashioned square dance. He had a voice of unusual music and power. Pressing through the crowd to see who it was he recognized this one time brilliant and gifted preacher. His tragedy was not simply in the fact that he was calling the sets for a dance. Many descent chaps have done that. It was rather in that he should turn aside from calling men to repentance to take a work so trifling and so insignificant.

That, therefore, that shocks us about John is the contrast between the John of today and the John of yesterday. Think of that magnificent prophet that we recently met in the wilderness, who was a man of tremendous power. His gospel of repentance fairly emptied the cities and filled the solitudes along the banks of the Jordon with eager multitudes. He called a whole nation to a new awareness of God. He was so sure of his own mission, he was so certain of this Young Carpenter, whom he had baptized, "and the latched of whose shoes," he declared, "he was not worthy to unloose." With what assurance he points him out to his friends with a word that is a summary of all sane preaching. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." "He," he said, pointing to Jesus, "is the man who is able to set right the tragic quarrel between the soul and God in the individual and in the world." John staked his life on his convictions and went to prison for his faith. But now that thundering voice of assurance has dwindled down just to this, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" It is impossible, I say, to overestimate the agony
that lay back of that question.

II.

How did John thus get into doubt? There are many different roads by which we reach such uncertainty.

1. Some doubt through intellectual conceit. They have become convinced that to question, especially in matters of religious faith, is a mark of their mental superiority. But, of course, this is not the case at all. But some believe it. And there are those who doubt because they feel that to do so is the easiest way out. If there is a God like the one revealed through Jesus Christ that is the best of all Good News. Yet, such new involves heavy responsibilities. If there is a good God, then goodness is expected of ourselves. If God is our Father, then we are likely to have an immortality on our hands. This brings us into altitudes where some of us do not care to live. A certain Psalmist knew such a man. The thought of God worried him. Therefore he decided to get rid of God. He took a foolish way of doing it, it is true, but it worked. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." Understand his difficulties were not intellectual but moral. He got rid of God because he wanted to be rid of him.

2. Then there are others who lose their faith by refusing to live up to it. Perhaps this has been fruitful in more disaster than any one cause. I care not how bright your life may be if you turn your back upon it, it will cease to shine for you. I care not how certain may be of God if you turn your back upon him and begin to act as if he is not true, he will cease to be true. Yes, he will cease to exist for you. Act as if God is a lie and he will be a lie to you. That must be the case in order for the opposite to be true. Act as if He is, and you will find a reality. However vague may be the light that shines upon your path, if you will be true to that light it will bring you into the radiance of the eternal morning.
Live up to the faith you have and it will become a larger faith. Deny the faith you have and it will dwindle into utter doubt. But this was not the secret of John's faith.

3. Then there are those who doubt because God seems to make such slow progress in the winning of his world. This was John's first wrong step. His conception of the Kingdom of God was largely material. He thought of the mission of Jesus mainly in terms of a temporal kingdom. The Messiah was to be a better military leader than any of the Romans. He was therefore to conquer the conquerors. He was to make short work of tyrants. "His fan was in his hand." He was to save the wheat and burn the chaff with unquenchable fire. He was to enable Israel to triumph over her foes as she had been triumphed over by her foes. But Jesus was abroad in the world and none of these things were happening. In spite of the coming of the Messiah, right still seems to be on the scaffold and wrong on the throne. Just as it seems today.

4. Not only was John perplexed with Jesus' amazing handling of the political situation, but he was more perplexed still by his dealing with his own life. John had been loyal to Jesus with an unflinching loyalty. He had dared unpopularity. He dared imprisonment and death for his sake. This Jesus for whom he had ventured all was now abroad in the world. Some said that he was displaying power beyond the human. Why then did he not exert himself on behalf of his friend? Why did he leave the man who had proclaimed his coming to languish in a dungeon, seemingly forsaken of God and man? John could find no satisfactory answer to that question. Therefore he fell into doubt. And millions have wrestled with the same perplexity. Some of you in your prison of poverty, your prison of pain, your prison of loneliness are asking the same question this morning.

5. The supreme reason for John's failure was that he had not learned to avail himself of the resources that were in Jesus. He thought that Jesus had come to save him from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. He thought, as some of us think, that the chief business of our God is to make us comfortable. But he is
not after comfort, he is after character. "He has come that we might have life." Life often comes to its best through conflict. But in every conflict there are infinite resources available if we will use them. Jesus could not in consistency take John out of prison. But he could, if John had given him an opportunity, so enriched his inner life as to change his prison into a palace and a pulpit. That has happened times without number. Thus John languished in doubt when he might have been rich in the certainty of the realized presence of Jesus Christ.

III.

But what did he do with his doubt? Where did he turn when his black night was upon him? How did he meet the grim hour that comes soon or late to almost every earnest soul?

1. He continued to live up to the best that he knew. He refused to let what he did not believe interfere with what he did believe. How wise that is. "Are you sure, John, that Jesus is the Christ of God?" And his lips quiver, and his face is white and drawn with pain. He does not answer glibly, he answers with voice that is choked with sobs. "No, I am not sure. I am afraid that my life in spite of its earnestness, in spite of its devotion has been no more than a mistake. People have trusted me. When I pointed Jesus out as the Lamb of God some of them began then and there to follow him. I am afraid I misled them. I am sorry, but I am not sure of Jesus any more."

Then what? Does John stop there? No, at the very heart of his doubt there is still a kernel of faith. In spite of the fact that he does not fully believe in Jesus any more, he still believes something. Listen again to his question. "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" Ah! that last word has faith in it. "May be," he said, "I have been mistaken in Jesus, but I am sure that God is one day going to reveal himself. If I find that I am mistaken in the man that I have pointed out as the Messiah then I will mount my watchtower again and wait for him.
"The Eclipse of Faith"

Even if I have blundered, from now on till the end of the journey I will keep my face toward the horizon, till the Son of righteousness does rise with healing in his wings." There is something magnificent about that.

2. Then John was wise in that he took his doubts to Jesus. He could not go in person, but through his friends he told the Master frankly that he had serious misgivings about him, that his old faith in him had been shaken to its foundations. That shows that we can always be frank with Jesus. "Man looketh on the outward parts, but God looketh on the heart." If nowhere else, we ought to be frank and honest in our prayers. There is no use to tell Jesus what is not true. He knows us as we are. Here is one place where we can dare be ourselves. We can follow the sound wisdom of that woman of the long ago of whom it is written, "She fell down before him and told him all the truth." John took his doubt to Jesus.

What response did Jesus make to this frank declaration of doubt on the part of his old friend? He did not throw up his hands in horror. He did not say how disappointed he was in John. He did not seem to be in the slightest sense surprised. He did not insinuate how little and mean John must have been ever to have doubted. Instead, when these friends were gone he proceeded to tell what a grand creature John was. He paid him the highest compliment he ever paid to any man. Instead of rebuking him he set about answering his questions. He did not answer by words. There are times that words are very poor things. He answered by deeds. They were the natural expression of a spirit-filled personality.

Having heard John's doubts he went on with his teaching and his healing. When the tasks were done he said, "Go show John again the things that you have seen and heard. The blind received their sight. I give to men vision of God. The deaf hear. I enable men to hear the voice of God. The lame walk. I get men upon their feet in strong self-respecting erectness. The dead are raised up. I give men life. The poor have the gospel preached to them. I come with Good News for the spiritually impoverished. Then show these things to John." Mark you, the word is "show" not
"The Eclipse of Faith"

"tell". "Go show John again the things you have seen and heard."

That is a word we need to remember today. If our doubting world is to be won it has to be shown. It is not enough for us merely to talk. It is not enough for us to quote proof texts. Go show from your own life that God is still abroad in his world. Then show that he is still doing the gracious deeds that he did in the long ago. Then show that your eyes are open to his visions of beauty. That your ears are attentive to his voice. Go show that you are standing morally and spiritually erect through him. Go show that you live, and yet not you, but Christ lives within you. Then with an authentic and up-to-date word from God in your own experience eager men and women will hear as in the long ago.

Was John satisfied with this answer? I do not know. It is my opinion that he was. But there is a question far more important than that for us. Are we satisfied with it? Is the Christ that works not by force, but by love and goodwill satisfactory to us? Are we finding that he meets our needs? A friend of mine went some years ago to preach for a week in a certain college. In that college was a young man who posed as a skeptic. He had broken with the faith of his childhood. But he went to hear the visiting minister. To the surprise of his friends he went forward at the close of the service and met the minister and asked for an interview.

The next morning he knocked on the study door and stood face to face with my friend. "I have not come," he said modestly, "to argue with you, or to get you to explain anything to me. I want to ask you first one question. Last night I heard you preach. You preached as if you had something I need. But before I follow you, tell me this: Is Christ real to you? Is what you preach really working in your own life?" And that minister who is one of the choicest saints that I know was able to look that young man in the eye and answer humbly yet grandly, "As real to me as the best friend I have. Yes, as real as wife or child is Jesus Christ to my heart."

The young man left without a word. But at the close of the next service he came
forward to meet the minister. There was a light on his face that was never seen
on land or sea. "I came to tell you," he said, "that he is real to me too."
That, I think is what John found. That is surely what you and I may find.
"Doubting Castle"

"Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" Matthew 11: 3.

When we face all the facts with regard to this question, it is one of the most tragic ever asked. It is not born of idle curiosity. It is not a mere speculative question. It is wrung from an anguished and broken heart. It comes to us writhing with agony and wet with the tears of disappointment and despair. Oftentimes, we read it lightly, little guessing the wracking torture that caused John the Baptist to give it utterance.

I.

Why did John ask this question? There are those who have found it so impossible to believe what the question implies that they have given answers that seemed to many not guaranteed by the facts. Some say John was a bit impatient with the slowness of Jesus and was therefore asking this question to hurry Him on. He desired to compel Him to set up His Kingdom at the earliest possible date. Others say that John was asking the question to strengthen his faltering disciples. John's friends were losing faith and he was trying to encourage them.

But what is the real reason? John was not trying to hurry Jesus, he was not trying primarily to satisfy his friends, he was trying to satisfy himself. John's faith has gone into an eclipse. John has fallen into doubt, doubt so terrible that it breaks his heart. Once he was so joyously sure of that strange Cousin of his - the ring of conviction in his voice comes to us through the far space of years, "Repent ye," we hear him cry, and all sorts and conditions of men are brought under his spell. He fairly empties the surrounding cities and fills the wilderness as he thunders his message into the ears of listening thousands.

Not only did he call them in to repent, but one day he pointed out the Master to his disciples with these great and meaningful words, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." How sure he had been of Jesus. How certain he
was that He was the world's Redeemer - the coming One who was to meet all our needs and take from our burdened shoulders the heavy load of guilt.

But now that strong, challenging voice has changed into a mere whimper. It is hard to believe that the same man is speaking. A few summers ago, I was preaching near my old home in Tennessee. At the close of the service a woman came forward whom I had known as a schoolgirl years before. Life had dealt harshly with her. Her husband was then in the penitentiary, and as I looked into that faded and pain-scarred face, I could not find one faint resemblance to the beautiful, charming, vivacious girl that I had known a quarter of a century ago. The light had gone out of her eyes and before time she was a charred and wrinkled old woman. But a greater change than this has come to John.

Some of you older members possibly remember a noted evangelist of some thirty years ago named B. Fay Mills. After a brilliant and successful ministry, he made shipwreck of his faith. He went out to Los Angeles and founded a great People's Church that was thronged for a while and then melted away like a road of sand. A man told me that some months later he was out in the park one night where they were having an old-fashioned square dance. He heard somebody calling the set, and pressing his way through the crowd, he was amazed to find that it was B. Fay Mills. He declared that he could make a living in no other way.

But there is an even deeper note of tragedy in this question of John. "Behold the Lamb of God" he was saying the other day. Then he was out in the great open spaces, then the blue skies were above him, then he was surrounded by listening thousands, then the winds of the wilderness were fanning his face and the winds of the spirit were filling the sails of his soul. But now he is shut away in a gloomy prison with the waters of the Dead Sea lapping about its walls and he is sobbing out this question, "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" John has fallen into doubt.

Now this, I think, is one of the most tragic stories in all the Bible.
"Doubting Castle"

Aside from the passion of our Lord, there is no story that is more fraught with pain. Yet one of the greatest of our British preachers declares that he thanks God for this frank story more than for any other in the gospels. He is thankful for it, as we may well be, because there are so many who, like John, are tortured by doubts. Maybe you have never had a clear assurance. Maybe you once had, but have lost it. Maybe you are today stranded on a lonely mud flat without a white sail in sight. Even then, there is hope for you as there was hope for John.

II.

How did John come to lose his faith? He did not do so willingly. There are those who doubt because they desire to doubt. The fool hath said in his heart, "There is no God." The fool's difficulty, as you see, is not intellectual, it is moral. The thought of God annoyed him. He could not use life as he was using it with the thought of God before him without being miserable. Therefore, he brushed God out of his life and said, "There is no God." There are those like that today. I read a letter sent to a radio preacher in which the writer expressed the relief and peace of mind that had come to him since he had decided that there was no God. But John was not of this class.

Neither did John doubt because he had proven untrue to his heavenly vision. Of course, we know that there is nothing so fruitful in doubt as sin. If you live up to the light that you have, the light will grow brighter. But if you turn your back upon it, it will grow dim and at last go out. The most terrible penalty for the refusal to be true to your faith is that you lose your faith. Fail to put your gospel into practice and the time will soon come when you will have no gospel. But John had been true. Why then did he doubt?

1. John was idle. Idleness, if willful and deliberate, makes vital religion impossible. But even when it is enforced, it is exceedingly tried. Why is it that old folks find it so easy to despair of the present and begin to look back to the
"Doubting Castle"

"good old days." Why is the golden age for them so often a thing of yesterday instead of today and tomorrow? Yesterday they were in the fight, today they can no longer carry on. Therefore, they find faith increasingly difficult.

"It was not in the day of battle
That we threw away the sword,
But in the lonely hours of watching
By the river at the ford.

"The waters lapped, the night winds blew
Full armed the fear was born and grew
And we were flying e'er we knew
From spectus into night."

Fantoms! John had lived his life in the thick of things - now he was shut in a dungeon and his faith collapsed.

2. Then John failed because he misunderstood Jesus. His conception of Him was one that had haunted the minds of his people for centuries. John expected Jesus to bring about the political revolution. His fan was in his hand - he was going to cleanse a threshing floor, gather the wheat, and burn up the chaff. He was going to throw off the yoke of Rome and by force set his people free. But none of these things were happening. That is the case to this day. And there are still those who lose faith because the Kingdom of God does not come by outward observation. Jesus can only win as he wins through the willing submission of human hearts. Force is ruled out today as it was then.

Then John was perplexed by Jesus' dealing with His own life. John had been faithful. He had spoken the truth at a cost. When he was invited to preach at the King's court, by training a little, he might have been very popular, but he was made of sterner stuff. He rebuked Herod for his sin, but his faithfulness was not rewarded by the favor of the King, but by a dungeon.

Now John had been reared in the faith that goodness is always rewarded outwardly. He believed and some of us believe to this day that God pays us in dollars and cents for being decent. In the old-fashioned Sunday School story, there were usually
a good boy and a bad boy. The bad boy always got the raw end of the deal and the good boy came out on top. But in actual life that does not always happen. Here was John in prison and Jesus was in the big outer world. He had power beyond the human, yet He was not using it to help John.

If God is good, why does He allow good people to suffer? That is a question far older than John, it is as old as man. It is also as new as your own perplexity and your own heartache. Nor is it my purpose to undertake to give a full answer to the problem of pain, but this I can say that Jesus has not come to put us all on "Easy Street" - He has not come to break open all prison doors and quench all fiery furnaces, He has come that we might have life and have it in abundance. And this abundant life comes generally at the price of suffering and of heartache.

3. The final reason for the collapse of John was that he did not avail himself of the resources that were in Jesus. That is the secret of more of our collapses than any other one thing. He is able to make all grace abound unto us, He is able to keep us from falling and to present us before the throne with exceeding joy, but He can do this only as we avail ourselves of the resources that He is so eager to bestow.

III.

What did John do with his house? The answer to this question indicates the bigness and fineness of the man. So many of us are easily turned back. We go glibly on our way till we meet with a bit of opposition and then we collapse. John has delivered his message and has been thrown into a dungeon for his pains. The natural darkness that is about him is as light in comparison to his spiritual darkness that he refuses to give over in utter surrender. What did he do?

1. He defied his doubts. "Art Thou He that should come..." he asks, "or do we look for another?" "Art Thou He..." that is doubt - but at the very heart of the doubt there is a kernel of faith, "or do we look for another?" I am no longer
sure of this cousin of mine, he seems to say. I have perhaps claimed too much for Him. He may not be the Messiah, but if He is not, I will keep my face toward His coming. I am sure that God is going to keep His promise to us. I am sure He is going to send One who will be a revelation of Himself and will show needy men and women the way home. Therefore, he mounts bravely to his watchtower to wait for the rising of the Son of Righteousness with healing in His beams.

2. The second wise thing that John did, he took his doubts to Jesus. That is always the wisest thing to do. But often when we are in doubt, we turn to those who confessedly know nothing about Jesus. We turn even to His foes and seek to strengthen our doubts instead of to strengthen our faith. John took the course that is open to every one of us. He brought his doubts to Jesus himself.

What does this mean but that we may be perfectly frank with our Lord when we pray. How often we thank Him for things for which we are not really thankful. We ask Him for a blessing that in our hearts we do not desire. I believe our prayer life would be greatly enriched if we would cultivate the habit of perfect frankness. Tell Him, not what you think you ought to think, but tell Him the real truth about yourself. John said virtually, I am disappointed in You. You haven't done what I expected. Have I made a mistake? Am I altogether wrong? "Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"

IV.

What was the response of Jesus? I rejoice that He did not throw up His hands in horror. He was not shocked in the least. He was not even surprised. He does not even seem grieved. He does not show the slightest impatience. In truth, never once did Jesus show impatience with an honest doubter. He had to deal with Thomas, Nathaniel, and Nicodemus and many others, but He was never the least impatient with them and their doubts.
What He did was to go quietly about His work preaching, healing, giving,
then He said to these friends, "Go show John again the things that you have seen and heard." Mark the commission that He gives to these friends, not "Go tell John," not "Go argue with him," but "Go show John again the things that you have seen and heard." Have you a fresh up-to-date experience of the dealings of Jesus with yourself or with another? What John needed was not proof text, not argument, - he needed to be shown. An ounce of experience is worth endless tons of arguments and more preaching.

"Go show him..." that is a great need of the hour. What happened when these radiant faced messengers reached the gloomy prison cell of this despairing prophet, we are not told, but I am sure that he was satisfied. I am sure that the night gave place to radiant day, and he recovered his old joy, his old assurance, his old song. Not only so, but there was a note of added sweetness because a rich and roomy faith had been won out of his conflict. It may be so for us if we are faltering today. It does not mean that our blessed Lord is impatient with us, He is still questing for us and we shall come if we live up to the passion that we know to say with doubting Thomas, "My Lord and my God."
A WINSOME INVITATION

"Come unto me," Matthew 11:28

My business with you in these words is very simple. I am not here as an entertainer, though what I have to say should be vastly interesting. I am not here primarily as a teacher, though my message should be instructive. I am not here to lay upon you any kind of external compulsion. I am here as the bearer of an invitation. The invitation is not mine, but Another's. My sole business is to deliver it as plainly and as winsomely as I can. It is up to you to decide whether this invitation is addressed to you personally or not.

When I was a boy, one of the big hours of the day was when the mail reached our village. Those fortunate enough to be present gathered around the little corner that was boxed off in the racket store to hear the postmaster call the mail. He called each piece just as one might call the roll. When we heard our names, we answered and received our letter, or post card, or catalogue, or sample copy of the Home Comfort, as the case might be. Naturally, there was no compulsion about this. The postmaster did not put a gun in our faces and compel us to take the bit of mail that was rightfully ours. We could take it or leave it at our own choice. He had discharged his duty by calling our names and making our mail available.

Now my position is akin to that of the postmaster. I am here to call the

If you find this invitation addressed to you, it is your privilege to accept
you find that it has nothing whatever to do with you, then, of course, you
right to be indifferent and to let it alone. Listen, then, to the
invitation; and see if it calls your name. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." This invitation is extended to two groups, to two types of individuals.

1. Jesus is here inviting the laborers. "Come unto me, all ye that labor." The word "labor" implies more than work. Work is a privilege. It is a source of great joy. Nobody can be happy who is not in some sense a worker. Work is also a wonderful safeguard against temptation. The hours of our greatest peril are always our hours of idleness. Then, work is a great healer of hurt hearts. How many have forgotten in some measure their sore wounds by hard and diligent work! But labor means work that is carried on at the price of weariness and pain. It is work that is so heavy and hard or so futile that it becomes an agony. It is work that has degenerated into toil, the toil of the treadmill, and the toil of monotonous struggle that ends in lean achievement or in utter frustration.

One day, for instance, Jesus commanded his disciples to enter into a ship and to go before him to the other side of the lake. They obeyed with all eagerness. For a while their little vessel glided in romantic beauty over the silvery water. But suddenly a tempest swept down upon them. The sea was whipped into a rage. The angry winds pounded them; and row as they might, they could make no progress. The work of the beginning was now changed into toil. They were straining far harder than when the sea was calm, but they were getting nowhere. Strain as they might, all they got out of it was weariness, blistered palms, frustration, and defeat.

Possibly some of you feel yourselves in this class. You have taken life seriously. You have tried hard to be and to do your best. But your efforts seem to have brought you little or nothing. The whole struggle has resulted mainly in
vanity and vexation of spirit. A woman came to my study sometime ago, glared at me in desperate fashion, and said, "I feel like I want to hurt somebody. I would like to hurt you." Then, after a pause, she went on, "I have tried to make a Christian out of my son but he is not a Christian. He is a criminal. That is all my efforts have come to, and I am going to quit. I tell you that right now, I am never going to come to church again. I am never going to pray again." Poor broken and defeated thing! Hers is an extreme case, I know. But perchance some of you can sympathize with her. If life for you has become a task too hard to manage, if you are carrying on with an effort that has in it a bit of agony, the agony of a too bitter struggle or of defeat, then yours is one of the names that Jesus is calling.

2. The second group that is invited is the burdened. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." If you have come to God's house struggling under a weighty load, then this invitation is meant for you. This is the case regardless of what that load may be. Your burden may not be like that of the man at your side; it may not be like that of the minister; but the chances are that most of us here present are conscious of carrying some kind of burden.

Yours may be a burden of anxiety. You may be tormented by fear. You look to tomorrow and turn hot and cold with fright. Maybe you fear for yourself. Your income is uncertain. Your position is insecure. Your health is failing. Pain is walking with fire-shod feet along every nerve of your body. Or maybe you fear for another who is dearer to you than your own life. Maybe that one is slipping into an untimely grave. Worse still, maybe sin has taken him captive and is robbing him of all moral and spiritual beauty. Yours may be a burden of fear.

Then, you may be struggling under a burden of sorrow and disappointment. You once dreamed great dreams, but they have come to nothing. You have traveled a road that promised to lead to great and worth-while adventure, but it has led to a quagmire or to a desert. Perhaps death has slipped into your family circle and has taken one who was so dear that life has seemed empty since he has gone. Perhaps you have been robbed by an enemy even worse than death. Anyway, you have become acquainted with
with tears; and you are here, bearing your burden of sorrow.

There are others whose burden is that of self-will. Without any desire to hurt themselves or anybody else these have been bent on freedom. They have determined to live their own lives. But the experiment has proved vastly disappointing. In the Arabian Nights a gentleman, out of sheer kindness, took a feeble old man on his shoulder to give him a lift; but once there, the old man refused to dismount. He was the Old Man of the Sea, and he became a crushing weight upon the shoulders of the one that had sought to befriend him. But self-will is a burden even heavier than the Old Man of the Sea. All toilers, then, and all burden-bearers are included in this invitation. I have an idea that includes about all of us.

II

What does Jesus invite us to do? His invitation is twofold.

1. He says, "Come unto me." This is an invitation that careless handling has left a bit tarnished. Familiarity has, in some cases, bred contempt. It is possible to say, "Come to Jesus," in such a fashion as to repel rather than to woo and to win. But we must not allow its careless handling to rob us of its deep and enriching meaning. There are some ultra-moderns who even laugh at this winsome word; but, in spite of that, it is unspeakably rich to all who will give it a hearing.

This is a word that was on the lips of Jesus again and again. He could never see a crowd without holding his hands out to them, as a mother might hold hers to a tired and frightened child, and saying, "Come to me." He meant something when he said it. He meant something still. He means that we can come. We can do so instantly, in the twinkling of an eye. This is an invitation to us to accept his lordship, to enlist in his service, to become his disciples. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." Every man of us may accept that invitation, here and now, if we will.

2. But not only does he say, "Come unto me," but, "Take my yoke." This word is capable of two interpretations. It may mean, "Accept the yoke that I give;
submit to my authority." But perhaps the better interpretation is this: "Take the yoke that I bear." The one, "Come unto me," calls for a single act of decision; the other, "Take my yoke," for a dedicated life. Jesus himself bore a yoke. He invites you and me, and all the toil-worn and the burdened, to accept the yoke that he himself bears. This first word, then, "Come unto me," is an invitation to enlist. The second, "Take my yoke," is an invitation to share in the campaign.

What was the yoke of Jesus? It was the yoke of complete surrender to the will of God. The life of Jesus was a dedicated life. He lived every day and every hour within the will of God. He emphasizes this fact over and over again. "He that hath sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; because I do always those things that please him." "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." When he was sitting by the well-curb and his disciples were urging him to eat, he replied, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Then, when he stood at the end of the journey and his earthly life lay behind him, he faced his Father with these words, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." We are invited, then, to come to Jesus and to take upon ourselves the yoke that he bears.

III

Then, our Lord gives us certain reasons for accepting this invitation. He will not undertake to force his yoke upon us. Whether we come and accept his yoke or not is purely optional. He has too great a respect for personality to undertake to force us. He could not if he would. He would not if he could. He will never compel any man to come to him. He will not compel any man to bear his yoke. All he will ever do is invite. Whether we accept or not is up to us.

But though it is our privilege eight to accept or to reject the yoke of Jesus, it is not our privilege to reject all yokes. The most that is offered us is a choice of yokes. If we refuse his yoke, then we must in the nature of things bear some yoke. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve," said a warrior of the long ago.
By this he meant that we are going to serve somebody or something. We can choose the service of Christ if we will. But if we refuse his yoke, another yoke, that of self or sin, will be forced upon us. Every man must bear some kind of yoke. It is optional whether we bear the yoke of Jesus or not. But, having refused his yoke, the bearing of another yoke is not optional. Some yoke, I repeat, we must bear whether we wish it or not.

Why, then, are we to bear the yoke of Jesus? The reason given by the Master is a bit surprising. It is not what we should have expected. He does not urge us to bear his yoke because by so doing we may make our way to heaven. That is no doubt the case. The bearing of his yoke will certainly do this for us. But that is not the reason offered by our Lord. No more does he urge his yoke upon us because the bearing of it will lead to our highest usefulness. This is also the case. But that is not the reason that he gives.

Why then, I repeat, does he urge his yoke upon us? For this strange reason: "My yoke is easy," or "kindly," as Moffatt translates it, "and my burden is light." Jesus is here speaking out of his own experience. Having worn the yoke of a dedicated life, he commends that yoke to us. "I have found the bearing of this yoke easy and kindly," he says. How strange! Why, the bearing of it cost him everything. It made of his life one long self-giving. It caused him to be a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. It meant for him the tragedy of Gethsemane and Calvary and Joseph's grave. It led him to that exceeding bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But in spite of all this, he declares that his yoke is easy.

Not only does he make this claim, but his whole life bears out the truth of it. If his life was one long crucifixion, it was still the most radiantly joyful that was ever lived on this planet. In his last prayer with his friends, he makes this request for them, "that the joy that is mine may be theirs." In spite of the fact that he is under the shadow of the cross, he has a present joy that is so
boundlessly rich that he longs that those he loves may possess it. Then he has a peace that knows no bounds. That, too, he bequeaths to his friends as he goes away. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." Speaking out of his own rich experience, he says to all of us, "My yoke is easy. My yoke is kindly."

IV

Why is this the case?

1. The yoke of Jesus is kindly because the bearing of it brings us rest. The rest here spoken of is not the rest of idleness. That is not in the strictest sense rest at all. While conducting a funeral recently, I noticed that the casket had upon it these words: "At rest." But I must confess that they made no great appeal to me. I have never been quite so weary as to long for that kind of rest. The rest that Jesus offers is not rest from the yoke, but rest under the yoke. It is a rest that is born of right relations, that results naturally from rightness with God, rightness with ourselves, and rightness with our fellows. It is a rest that will keep work from becoming the agony of toil. When perfect, it will enable us to "work for an age at a sitting and never be tired at all."

2. His yoke is easy because it is borne from a great motive. The lightest task may be sheer drudgery if we have no high reason for the doing of it. But the heaviest task becomes sheer poetry if done from a great motive. Jesus found his yoke easy because he cared. He had a burning passion for God, and a burning passion for men. Therefore, it was a joy to serve them. "For the joy that was set before him," the joy of helping, he endured the cross, despising the shame." Love always delights to serve. The only time that love's heart breaks is when it can no longer serve.

Some years ago the sweet angel of relief came to an afflicted boy near my home in Tennessee. That boy had been for years a great sufferer and a constant care, especially to his mother. Sometimes she would sit and hold him in her arms all the long night through. Therefore, when death touched him into peace, some said, "Of course, his mother will grieve, but what a relief!" But this was what she said to
her minister: "My little boy has gone, and I cannot get to do anything for him any more." She had borne a heavy yoke, but it was easy because it was borne from a great motive.

3. Then, the yoke of Jesus is easy because it fits. More than one team of oxen had been driven before the little shop where Jesus worked to have a new yoke fitted. The Carpenter saw how the old yoke had wounded their necks until the drawing of the lightest load was painful. What was the matter? The yoke did not fit. Jesus saw to it that the yoke he made would never wound, because it was a perfect fit.

Some of us are suffering from sore wounds, wounds of conscience and wounds of the heart. What is the matter? We have been wearing a yoke that does not fit. There is no surer road to wretchedness than that. A brilliant graduate in one of our leading universities took his life a few years ago. He left a letter that was a literary gem. In giving his reasons for his rash deed, he said, "I have grown so utterly tired of doing as I please that I long to bathe my weary soul in the ether of eternity." Why had he become so weary? It was not the weight of his yoke. His weariness rather was born of the fact that his yoke did not fit. That ill-fitting yoke made him so wretched that he could not bear to live. Only one yoke fits us; that is the yoke of Jesus.

4. Finally, his yoke is easy, as another has pointed it out, because it is one that is shared. In Ian Maclaren's beautiful story, "His Mother's Sermon," the mother makes this appeal to her son: "If Christ offers you his cross, you will accept it, because he always carries the heavy end himself." That is true. When he offers us his yoke, he carries the heavy end. Not only so, but that yoke becomes a bond of union between him and us. It becomes a medium through which his amazing power and helpfulness is transmitted to ourselves. Sharing the yoke with him, we shout with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."
This, then, is the invitation that I am sent to deliver. Bear in mind that it is not mine, but his whose I am and whom I am seeking to serve. Therefore, it is my earnest hope and prayer that you may be able to look past the minister into the face of him who gives this invitation and who pledges himself to make good its every promise. He is standing in our midst at this moment, holding out his hands to us, and saying what he said to burdened, weary, and flustered souls in the long ago, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." This is his winsome appeal to all of us. What response have you made? What response will you make today?
"Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart," (Matthew 11:29)

We at once recognize humility as an admirable virtue. There is no one of us who would attempt to deny this. Yet, strange to say, it is not a virtue that we greatly covet. We should like to share the strength of Jesus. We should certainly love to have His gallant and courageous way of looking at things. Certainly we should covet His poise, His magnanimity, His brotherliness. But His humility -- that does not claim our desire so much. If one should tell us that we were very humble, I doubt if we should feel complimented.

Why is this? I think it is because so many have a wrong view of just what humility is. How many people we dislike simply because we do not really know them. How many there are who pass by our church doors in contempt who would be really interested if they knew what we were undertaking to do. There are multitudes all about us who are as genuinely ignorant as to what the church is really about, as if they were born in rankest paganism. We shy off from humility because this suggests a type of character that we do not greatly admire.

For instance, it is hard for us to get away from the idea that humility consists in thinking meanly of yourself. Jesus pronounced the blessing on those who were "poor in spirit" but he pronounced no blessing on the poor-spirited. Uriah Heep is an important caricature. He still represents to a great number of people the very embodiment of humility. He was a slimy, slick, scheming, arcing creature who was as proud as Lucifer but who put on the face, of the semblance of humility in order to climb into power.

Now nothing could be further from humility than such a character as
Keep, yet we find those still who constantly talk themselves down, -- they can not do any work, -- they can not serve in any kind of a position, because they are so humble. They stand in the midst of a desperately needy world and of a church calling for workers and do nothing at all but they smooth over their consciences and excuse their wicked idleness by claiming they are humble. Such an attitude is not humility or a mark of humility at all. It is merely a sickening and cowardly caricature of humility. And as little as we covet it, when we see it as it is, I think we should all desire it.

I.

What is humility? This is a virtue that is hard to define. The dictionary is of no great service to us. In fact, it never helps us very greatly on the really great words. It is easy to define little and unimportant words, but the big roomy words are more difficult. Take love for example, what is love? One has defined it as "an inexpressible all-overness." But I do not think that is so good. The only way to understand love is to see it embodied in a personality. Take God -- can you think of a being much less winsome than God as defined in a purely theological fashion. The only correct definition of God is to be found in Jesus.

This is true of the word humility. We can only understand it as we see it live in some personality. And there is always something winsome about people who are genuinely humble. They are never weak and spineless creatures either. There is a rugged strength about them. Who, for instance, is the humblest man in the Old Testament. In the old Sunday School literature, that place was always given
to Moses. I think the choice is right. But if Moses is conspicuous for his humility, he is equally conspicuous for his rugged strength. Perhaps the most humble man in the New Testament is Paul. He is also the strongest man.

But to see humility at its best, to see it in its perfection, we must needs turn to Jesus. "Learn of Me," He says, "for I am meek and lowly in heart, I am humble." It is highly significant that this virtue of humility is the only one in Himself to which Jesus ever calls attention. He assigns it as one of the reasons that we are to sit at His feet. "Learn of Me," not because "in Me dwells all the fullness of wisdom and honor," not because, "I am the only begotten of the Father," but "learn of Me because I am humble."

Here then is one who was perfect in his humility. What kind of man was He? Certainly, He was not a man who thought meanly of Himself. He was not forever speaking of Himself in terms of contempt. On the contrary, He constantly said things about Himself that would outrage us if we heard them from the lips of any other man. Listen to Him, "You have heard it was said by them of old times, but I say unto you....." Who were these of old times -- Moses and the prophets -- but Jesus puts Himself above them. "Art Thou greater than our Father, Jacob, who gave us the well?" Jesus does not hesitate to affirm that He is, "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again, but he that drinketh of the water I shall give shall never thirst, but the water I shall give him shall be a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Look at his stupendous "I am"s. "I am the bread of life." "I am the light of the world." "I am the way; I am the truth; I am the life." And He even affirms His one-ness with the Father, "I and the Father are One. He that has seen Me has seen the Father." This humble man, therefore, did not think meanly of Himself. Yet,
He was greatly humble.

What then is humility?

1. It is child-like-ness. When Jesus wanted to teach His own disciples a lesson of humility, He took a little child and set him in their midst and said, that unless we should humble ourselves and become like little children, we could not enter the Kingdom. Now childishness is not beautiful. It is one of the saddest calamities that overtakes old age, but some folks remain childish from their cradle to their grave. Childishness is ugly, but child-likeness is beautiful. This is true for the following reasons.

   (1.) Because to be child-like is to be teachable. A child is willing and eager to learn. A child is forever asking questions. To be child-like is to be teachable.

   (2.) To be child-like is to be willing to lean on a high power. A child feels its dependence. Jesus felt His. "I can of mine own self do nothing."

   (3.) A child is free from pride. He will play as readily with a piccaninny as with a prince. He is never a snob. He never swaggers because his father has money. A child is free from pride. To be humble is to be child-like.

2. Humility means a willingness to stoop in order to serve. One day James and John came hiding behind the skirts of their mother to ask for positions of prominence. "Grant," they said, "that we may sit the one on the right hand and the one on the left of Thy Kingdom." But Jesus informed them that this was not His to give. But He showed them the true path to greatness — it was humility. "He that would be greatest must be the bond slave of all."
He taught a similar lesson in that last sad scene in the Upper Room. It is in many respects one of the most pathetic in the life of our Lord. He and His disciples have gathered together to celebrate the Pass-over. It is to be more than that, it is to be the Last Supper. There is no slave to do the menial service of washing their feet. It never occurred to Peter and James and John to do this lowly service, but Jesus girds Himself with a towel and performs the service Himself. Humility stoops in order to serve.

It is profoundly interesting too to note the state of mind of Jesus when he performed this service. Why did He bend to this slave's task? Was it because He thought meanly of Himself? Not a bit of it. Listen to His state of mind as John described it. "Jesus, knowing that He came from God and that He went to God; at the time He was most conscious of His kingly origin and His kingly destiny, he girded Himself with a towel..." What is it to have the mind of Christ? The great apostle tells us, "He humbled Himself and became obedient unto the death, even the death of the cross." Had Jesus been proud, He would not have allowed Himself to be treated as a common fellow. When the mob shouted at Him, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save," Had he been merely a proud man, He would have shown them that He could save Himself, but had He done this, He would not have saved others. Humility then is child-likeness. It is willingness to stoop even to death in order to serve. It is a high and Holy and beautiful self-forgetfulness.

II.

Now our Lord is eager that you and I be humble. "Learn of me," He says,
"The Humility of Jesus"

"for I am meek and lowly in heart." To refuse to be humble is to refuse to be like Him. Everyone of us ought to set his heart on humility for at least three reasons.

1. Without it, there is no entrance into the Kingdom. "Except you humble yourselves as this little child, you cannot enter." It is our soiled and stained efforts that rob us of His fellowship — it is our pride and self-sufficiency. Two men went up into the temple to pray. You remember the story. One was a decent man and the other an outcast. But the decent man merely thanked God that he was better than his fellows and went back to his house just as he came. The outcast said, "God, be merciful unto me, a sinner," and went back transformed. Without humility, there is no entrance into the Divine fellowship.

2. You ought to be humble because there is no continuance in the fellowship of Jesus without it. A proud saint cannot walk with a humble Christ. Whether your pride is one of position or power, you must have some measure of humility in order to pray. Where there is no sense of need, you may pour out a whole deluge of words but there is no prayer in it. Humility is necessary for growth and grace.

3. Then humility is necessary to our highest usefulness. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, the spirit restores such a one in a spirit of meekness." Certainly that is the only way in which we can restore the erring. As long as we assume an attitude of superiority, as long as we look upon faltering and failing with contempt, so long will we be powerless to serve them.

When I was a student at Harvard, I went one day with a friend of mine who was an Atheist, but a bitter and disappointed Atheist, to hear a certain distinguished
man preach. He was easily one of the most brilliant preachers in America at that
time. In this particular sermon, he impressed you with that fact. As we came
away, I asked my friend what he thought of him. "He reminds me," he said with
a touch of sadness, "of one standing safely on shore watching some poor fellow
drown in a raging stream and saying to him, 'You fool, you had no business falling
in there to begin with.'" This listener was a very needy man and knew it. He
needed restoring but he could not be restored except in the spirit of meekness.
Meekness then is the door of entrance, it is the path of fellowship, it is the
way of usefulness. Let us, therefore, take seriously these words, "Learn of
me, for I am meek and lowly in heart."
A WORD TO THE WEARY

Matthew 11:28-29

"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls." My business with you this morning is very simple. I am not here to discuss with you the topics of the forum and of the marketplace. I am not here to rehearse in your hearing the happenings of the week that is past. I am not here primarily to entertain you. No more am I here to give you a bit of good advice.

What, then, is my task? I am here as a messenger. I have been sent as the spokesman of another. I am the bearer of an invitation. The invitation is not mine, but His. In spite of my unworthiness, in spite of my weakness and selfishness, in spite of my folly and sin, the author of this message has given me the privilege of delivering it to you.

But this letter of invitation is not addressed to everybody. It bears the name of a definite individual. And I do hope if you hear your name called this morning you will claim this message. When I was a lad it was a great event when the mail reached our village. The postmaster would call every piece aloud and we would stand by and listen for our names. And how eagerly we responded when our names were called. And how eagerly we stretched our hands to take whatever piece of mail was intended for us. So may you do today if you hear your name called. For this message of invitation may be for you.

There are some of course who are not included. The invitation is not for the man who has no need. If you are here this morning absolutely satisfied, if you are here without a hunger or a thirst, if you are here without a burden weighing upon your shoulders and no weariness upon your heart, then this invitation is not to you. The One who sent it did not have you in mind. If you belong to that class, then I must confess that to you I have nothing to say, because my message is for a different individual altogether.

To whom, then, is this message addressed? Answer - to the heavy laden. It is addressed to those who are struggling under a load that they do not know how to carry. It is for the man who has a burden that he does not know what to do with. It is to every weary man and to every tempest-tossed and restless woman. It is to that great company of individuals that is burdened. It is a word to the weary.

And I have an idea that takes in most of us who are here this morning. When I tell you that this message is addressed to the burdened I feel confident that you realize that it is addressed to you. I know that it is addressed to me. Not that all our burdens are alike. Not that all of us are struggling under the same load. Your load may be different from mine. Mine may be far different from that of the one who is sitting by your side. Yet I feel that I am constrained to believe that all of us have our own individual burdens.

Some of us are struggling under the burden of sin. It is a weary and trying load. There is nothing more exhausting. There is nothing that so takes the elasticity out of the step and the song out of the soul. How tired we become trying to get on without God. How soon we are exhausted.

Did you ever stand on the street corner and watch the crowd pass by? And did you ever notice the marks of weariness in the faces of most that you see? How tired they are. How almost spent. How feebly forward some of
them are tottering, for they are carrying a heavy load. Bunyan was right when he pictured his Pilgrim going from the City of Destruction to Mt. Zion carrying a great burden upon his back. It was a burden of sin. And he never lost that burden till he came within sight of the Cross. Then and only then was it lost from his shoulders. Then and only then did he see it roll down the hill till it disappeared in the grave.

Your burden may be simply a burden of selfishness. You have resolved that you will accept no task that is unpleasant; that you will do nothing that you do not naturally want to do. You will simply do as you please. You will not accept the galling bondage of religious duty. You will accept no responsibility for the work of the Kingdom. It may be that you did so once, that you had a place of usefulness and responsibility in the home Church, but now that you are away from home you will have no such hampering burden any more. You will go your own way. You will live your own life. You will do as you please.

But let me ask you if such a resolution has brought you freedom. Have you found your selfish refusal to ease your burdened heart and to take the load from your shoulders? You have not. You are struggling this morning under the heaviest load that a man ever carried and that load is yourself. You remember how the man in the Arabian Nights allowed a trembling old wreck to get on his shoulders. But once there, this wreck that seemed so feeble became powerful to cling. He was the old man of the sea. And upon the shoulders of his victim he sat morning, noon and night, and his days were made restless and his nights bitter because of the heavy burden that he carried.

That old man of the sea is yourself. There is nothing so wearying as self-pleasing. One of the most brilliant young men that ever graduated at Vanderbilt University became a physician. Before he was twenty-one years of age he preached and preached acceptably in the leading pulpits of the city. But having reached twenty-one he said that up to this time he had been pleasing his father, who was a pious and consecrated man, but that now he was going to please himself. And so he did. And a few years later he put a pistol to his head and blew his brains out. And the letter that he left behind stated that he was utterly tired out, that he was wearied beyond endurance, and that the secret of his terrible deed was this: "I long to bathe my weary soul in the ether of eternity."

And this weariness is not the experience of an isolated individual here and there. It is the experience of every selfish worldling that ever lived. It is the experience of the worldlings who fail and also of the worldlings who succeed. Byron succeeded as the world counts success. He coveted fame, and one critic said of him that he drank draughts that might have quenched the thirst of millions and then died of thirst because there was no more to drink.

Solomon was such a man. A man worth millions of dollars died some months ago. And his family said of him that he was the most restless and wretched man they had ever known. This was his calamity:

"I'm an alien to the faith my mother taught me; I'm an alien to the God that heard my mother when she cried; I'm a stranger to the comfort that the "Now I lay me" brought me, To the everlasting arms that held my father when he died."
"I have spent a lifetime seeking things I have spurned when I
have found them.
I have fought and been rewarded in full many a winning cause.
Yet I'd take them all, fame, fortune and the pleasures that
surround them,
And exchange them for the faith that made my mother what she
was."

For some of us the burden is the burden of discouragement. We have
dreamed great dreams for ourselves, but they have not been realized. Our
eyes have been bent to horizons, but we have been strangely held back.
We set out with the hope of complete victory, but we have stumbled and
blundered and fallen. We have undertaken to do some bit of work for our
Master and there have been little results, little appreciation, little else
but failure. And today we are utterly discouraged. We feel that we can
never win, that we will be largely useless to the end of the day. We are
seriously discouraged. Maybe this is your burden.

Or maybe it is a burden of grief. Maybe you are lonely this morning.
You are separated from those that you love. Your heart aches for the
touch of a vanished hand and the sound of a voice that is still. Maybe
those whom you love are in a far distant city, or maybe they have passed on
into that eternal city whose builder and maker is God. And today you are
old and weary and alone, a poor tired old broken woman, a white haired,
spent old man with few to comfort.

"For the mossy marbles rest
O'er the lips that you have pressed
In their bloom.
And the names you love to hear
Have been carved for many a year
On the tomb."

Or maybe your grief is more bitter still. Maybe your loss has come
not through death, but through something far worse than death, through
unfaithfulness; through the death of the soul, through the death of those
fine qualities that make womanhood beautiful and manhood manly. Maybe your
home is a broken home. Maybe I am talking to that unfortunate woman who
was married to a leper. Maybe I am talking to one the deepest and sweetest
relations of whose life were only a tragic blunder.

Oh, I do not know what your burden is. But I know this, that whatever
it is I have an invitation for you this morning. Whoever you are with a
cloud in your sky, whoever you are with any galling weight upon your
shoulders my message is addressed to you. It is to all the weary ones, all
the burdened, all the heavy laden. And it is just the message that you
need. What have I as the representative of my Lord to say to you this morn-
ing? I have this to say: He invites you to Himself.

"Come unto me." That is a wooing word. That is a word that holds
out its hands to weary bodies like ourselves. No mother ever stretched
her arms to her tired child so lovingly and so invitingly as our Lord is
stretching forth His hands to us as He utters this blessed word: "Come unto
me." And He says it not here only, but over and over again. In fact He
could never look upon needy and weary and spent folks like ourselves with-
out uttering this cry, passionate with longing and sweet with the wooing
note of love: "Come unto me."
Our Lord is interested in the burdened, in the heavy laden, in the weary. We know that this invitation does not come from any of the great leaders of this world. When they send their invitations they send them to the well circumstanced, to the fortunate, to the strong, to the fit, to the virtuous. Plato claimed to be able to build an ideal republic, but he demanded ideal men and women out of which to build. There was no place in his republic for the burdened and the weary and the unfit. Even the religion of the Jews had no place for such men. "Those that know not the law", they said, "are accursed."

But here is One who singles out the man who is weary, the one who is burdened, and He calls especially for them. He woos them. He invites them. He passes by the whole that need no physician to invite the sick. He calls to Matthew with his full pocket and his empty heart. He invites Bartimaeus, sitting in the dark without any hope of it becoming day. He addresses His invitation to a stained outcast who slips out of the dark to wash His feet with her tears. To the world-weary, to the sin burdened, to the grief stricken everywhere, in all times and in all climes He addresses Himself. He sends this winsome invitation: "Come unto me."

And He lets us know what is involved in this coming. "Come unto me" means that we are to take the yoke of Jesus, that we are to enter into His service. It means personal surrender. We can not come to Him except at the price of coming away from ourselves. We can not come to Him except by separation from our sins. We cannot come to Him without putting ourselves wholly into His hands. To come to Jesus means to give up your way for His way, your will to His will. It means to "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Coming thus, He lets us understand, we will find His yoke easy and His burden light. Now I realize that such a statement on the part of Jesus is utterly perplexing to many of us. We have tried to be Christians and we have not found it easy at all. We have found it so hard that we have sometimes felt like rebelling and giving it all up. We have been persuaded almost to believe that we have been cheated, in ever deciding to give up our way for God's way.

But this disappointment has not come as a result of the powerlessness of Christ to keep His word with us. It is the result of just one thing and that is the incompleteness of our surrender. We only partly surrender. I was brought up on the farm. I discovered this, that the horse that had the hardest time was the horse that rebelled against his master. (My balky horse.)

Then this coming to Jesus not only means surrender to Jesus, but the privilege of knowing Him, of learning of Him. "Learn of me", He says. That begins with the first definite act of our surrender. It is to continue through all eternity. We will never exhaust Him. We are to go on learning about Him as long as life lasts here and as long as life lasts over yonder.

And why are we to learn of Him? "Learn of me", He says, "for I am wise." No. That is not the reason assigned. He was the keenest brain that ever thought. "In Him dwells all the fulness of wisdom and knowledge." But we are not to learn of Him simply because of His wisdom. We are not to learn of Him simply because He is mighty, though all power in heaven and earth is given to Him. We are to learn of Him because He is meek, that is, because of His humility, because of His whole-hearted dependence upon God.
A word to the weary

It is this that is to help us in our complete yielding to the yoke of Christ. The fuller we learn the lesson of His humility the more complete will be our surrender and our obedience.

And what is the promise that our Lord makes to those who thus come and thus accept His yoke? He said, "I will give you rest." Look at the certainty of it. "I will." There is absolutely no doubt. There is nothing in all the universe more absolutely certain than the power and willingness of Jesus Christ to give rest. There is nothing more sure than that He will give rest to those who come to Him. This He will do regardless of who you are. This He will do regardless of your circumstances. Whatever may be your burden, whatever may be the foe of your peace, regardless of what it is that whips your troubled heart into a rage this morning like the rage of a sea lashed by a storm, Jesus Christ can speak peace to you and give you rest.

"I will give you rest." This is the language of the Christ of God. He can do it. And mark me, no one else can. How absurd, how utterly mad such a statement as this would be upon the lips of the greatest and wisest and best man that ever lived. The money king might say, "I will give you money." The man wearing the crown might offer position and prominence and power, but only One can give rest. If you do not find it at His hands, restless and wretched you will go through life and restless and wretched you will go through eternity. "For there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" from the burden of our weariness, of our restlessness.

Some years ago one of our Methodist preachers on his pastoral rounds visited a woman whose brilliant ability had brought her to fame and fortune. She was known around the world. She decked her couch in nations' praise. And he congratulated her upon her brilliant career. But with carelines deep in her face she said, "Oh, don't talk to me of those things. I am nauseated with them. What I want is rest and peace, peace and rest." And her eyes filled with tears and her shoulders drooped. And she was as needy as a poor tired child.

That same afternoon he made another visit. This time he went to a little cottage where an old maid was dying of tuberculosis. She was the eldest of a large family. When her mother had died she had taken it upon herself to mother her younger brothers and sisters. She had carried their burdens. She had poured her energies into theirs. She had kept house for them, sewed for them, educated them, lifted them all on her toil worn hands and upon her toil stooped shoulders. She had done this to the point of utter exhaustion. And now she was dying. "How are you?" said the preacher. And the smile on her face was like a ray of sunshine. And she said: "Oh, I have rest and peace, peace and rest." And the brilliant woman of success needed to sit at the feet of the burdened woman of pain who had learned her lesson in the school of life.

Now, I wonder if you desire this rest this morning. Are you here with a burden? Are you one of the heavy laden? Then here is rest for you. Do you want it? Some do not because they fail to understand what it is. The rest that Jesus offers does not mean idleness. I went to a funeral some time ago and I noticed on the plate upon the coffin this word: "At rest." That did not appeal to me. I felt the blood of health glowing warm in my veins and I did not want to lie down and simply be still. I have no envy of Rip Van Winkle.
A word to the weary

The rest that Jesus offers, remember, is rest under the yoke. It is rest in service, it is rest even while we toil, rest while we labor, rest while we bear heavy burdens for His sake and for the sake of our brothers. I am confident that neither here nor in the life to come will our rest be a simple routine of doing nothing. For there is no work that so utterly tires us as the depressing task of idleness.

"My yoke", He says, "is easy." Is that true of the yoke you are wearing this morning? There is not a man listening to me but what has a yoke. You are in service, either the service of sin and self, or of Jesus Christ. Are you finding your service satisfactory? Is the yoke that you are wearing the one that you intend to wear through eternity? Has it met your needs? Has it brought you usefulness? Has it brought you rest and joy and peace? If it has not, why not fling it off? Why not accept the yoke that Jesus Christ offers?

"My yoke is easy." Why? Not because the task at which He asks us to toil is a trivial task. Not because the burdens that He asks us to bear are small and light burdens. "My yoke is easy" not because the business of being a Christian has no conflict in it. It is full of conflict. It clashes with battle. Its ease does not come from the lightness of the load or from the smallness of the opposition. The ease of Christ's yoke is accounted for in an altogether different way.

First, His yoke is easy because He brings into the life a great motive, the motive of love. What drudgery is house-keeping, and home-making and child-bearing where there is no love! The mother's work is indeed the most difficult work in the world. There stood by the cross of Jesus His mother. And a mother's love is always by the cross. How is it that she consents to remain there? How is it that she remains there, not reluctantly, but joyously, gladly? What is it that fills her task with music, that sweetens her labor with poetry? It is this; it is done through a great motive. Love will make the most prosaic task easy and beautiful.

Then Christ's yoke is easy, in the second place, because it brings into the life new power. As we surrender to Him He gives Himself to us. And the thing that was difficult becomes easy, not because the task has been lessened, but because our strength has been increased, I shall never forget how I agonized the first year I ever studied over the little problems of Ray's Mental Arithmetic. With travail of soul I worked at them and mastered them. But after that all other mathematics was comparatively easy. I labored through trigonometry without ever missing a problem. Not that trigonometry was altogether easy, but a new strength had come to me.

There was a time when that blacksmith could not lift the hammer that he wields today. But now he can swing it from morning to night with little weariness. Why? Not because the hammer has grown smaller, but his strength has grown greater. There was a time when that eagle if dropped from the nest would have fallen like a mere piece of stone. But today he can bathe his plumage in the thunder's home. Why? Not because the law of gravitation has been done away, but because wings have been supplied.

And so we shall find rest even under the yoke. We shall find rest even while toiling in the most arduous and difficult of tasks. We shall be enabled to mount up with wings as eagles, to run and not be weary, and to walk and not fail. And this we shall do not because that flying is wanting in difficulty. This we shall do not because it is not still more difficult to run upon this dusty earth. This we shall do not because it is not most
difficult to walk, to plod. But we shall be enabled to do this because our energies have been fed from the infinite energy of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here, then, is how the case stands with you and me. We are weary. We are burdened, everyone of us. There is absolutely no ease for our burdened hearts or for our heavy laden shoulders at the hands of ourselves or at the hands of others. There is but one chance for rest. There is but one possibility and that is at the hands of Jesus Christ. But blessed be God this is all sufficient and this is sure. You have tried other remedies. Try this. You have been to other physicians. Come to Him.

Come to Him now. Do not struggle any longer alone. It only ends in disappointment. It only ends in a further waste of your life. Here is your remedy. It is exactly what you need. It is all that you need.

"Thou, oh Christ, art all I want.
More than all in thee I find."

Let me speak home to everyone of your hearts. The message is not mine, but His. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord and He will sustain thee. He will never suffer the righteous to be moved."

"Come, ye disconsolate, where'er ye languish,
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel.
Here bring your wounded heart,
Here bring your anguish,
Earth has no sorrow that Heaven can not heal."

Oh that I might disappear from your sight at this moment and in my place might stand the strong Son of God, holding out His hands to you and crying to you as He does, this blessed invitation: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."
HIS KINDLY YOKE

Matthew 11:30 - My yoke is kindly (Moffatt)

"My yoke is kindly." That is a staggering word. Had I been present, it seems I must have said to my Lord, "The wearing of that yoke on your part is the one hope of my disparate world. But look what it cost you. One day you turned your back on your little shop and went out with the maddest dream that even God ever had; the dream of saving the world. For a little while it looked like victory, but soon that victory became defeat. They put a cross on you that was heavier than you could bear. They nailed you to that cross. I heard your bitter cry - "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Do you mean to tell me that a yoke that involved the cross was a "kindly yoke"?

"Yes," replied Jesus. "In spite of the cross and because of the cross I lived the fullest, the richest, the gladdest life that was ever lived on this planet." "Thou hast annointed him with oil of gladness above his fellows." (Hebrews 1)

Why is the yoke of Jesus a kindly yoke? There are many reasons, but this supremely - it fits. Any garment that fails to fit is likely to be at once uncomfortable and unsightly. When I was a boy in my early teens I decided I would show what the well dressed man was wearing by getting a tailor made suit.

To that end I sent for the catalog of Montgomery Ward and Company. I turned to the tailoring department and saw the picture of a chap that was a masculine poem. "That," I said, "is the way I'd like to look. That is the way I would look if I had his suit." Therefore in spite of the hugh cost of $13.50 (which was a vast sum in that day), I decided I would pool all
my resources and buy it.

But having got that vast sum together, I found there was yet one fly in the ointment. There was no tailor about. Therefore I had to take my own measure (blessed is the man that can take his own measure). I took my measure and sent off plans and specifications. In due course that suit came. I took it under my arm and hurried upstairs to put it on and come down and surprise the family. I did just that.

That suit would not have fit anything in the heavens above, nor the earth beneath, nor the waters under the earth. In utter desperation I wadded the creation up and sent it back with this letter: - "I know you are not responsible for the fit of a tailormade suit, but I can't use this."

About a week later I got a check from that firm for $15.00. That paid for the suit and paid express charges both ways. They wrote no letter to tell why they did it. But I was driven to the conclusion that when they took a second look at that suit they had to say, "Anybody who is thus deformed needs help". What was the matter with my suit? Not shoddy material. Not poor workmanship. It did not fit.

What is the matter with our beautiful world? Why does it hang over hell every day? It was made for the yoke of brotherhood and we won't wear it. Look at the tired faces of men and women. What is wrong? So many are wearing the wrong yoke. This invitation is to you. You do not have to accept it. But you do have to act upon it. Act by saying "Yes", and you will find that it is kindly.
"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation."

Matthew 12:5,6

Here is a man who very obviously has made a failure. His effort to conquer evil has been sheer futility. Yet he stands judged with no positive crime. When the foul passion of the evil spirit that had been expelled from his life came back to have a look at the home it had once occupied, that one-time home was not full of positive wrong. This man who had sought to be free had not made himself a positive slave. His hands were not stained with any deep and desperate deeds of wrong. They were merely empty. He was an utter failure, yet guilty of no positive fault. The tragic blunder that he made is very old and yet very new. Perhaps more people enter the house of death by his door than by any other.

I

What was wrong with this man of the empty hands?

It was not that he was morally color-blind. There are those who get their values confused. The prophet was familiar with certain characters who put evil for good and good for evil. They had trifled with conscience until they could not tell right from wrong, but such was not the case with this man. One day he waked to the fact that he had a tenant in the house of life that was not desirable because that tenant was evil. He saw the situation clearly and faced it honestly.

Not only did he face the fact that there was something wrong in his life, but he was a man of genuine moral earnestness. He resolved to be rid of that evil tenant. He resolved to expel him at all cost. Therefore, he at once set himself...
to the difficult task. He set himself to the task with such intense earnestness that he actually succeeded. The evil was expelled and his house of life became clean, swept and garnished.

But in spite of his seeming and temporary victory, he did not win finally. The old evil that he had expelled came back. Not only so, but it brought re-enforcements. Therefore, he found himself more hopelessly bound than he had been before he undertook to be free. He found himself more utterly defeated than before he had set out to win the victory. Why, I repeat, did he fail? He failed, not because he was not earnest, not because he made no effort, but because he used the wrong technique. He chose a method that has proved a failure through all the centuries. It is a method that we who are professing Christians employ perhaps more often than any other. Yet it is one that has never really succeeded. It is one against which Jesus warned again and again. The method of Jesus was one that was beautifully unique. It was so unique that it seemed revolutionary. It was so unique that we hardly believe it to this day. Therefore, we still employ the method of this faultless failure of the long ago.

II

What was the method employed by this faultless failure?

1. He fixed his attention upon the evil that was to be eradicated rather than upon the good that was to take its place. He did exactly what Jesus warned us not to do in his story of the tares. You remember how the servants came with bad news that tares were growing among the wheat. They offered what seemed and seems still a very wise suggestion: "Shall we go and pull them up?" But the wise farmer forbade such a foolish procedure. He rather bade his servants to focus their attention upon the wheat rather than upon the tares. To take any other course ends in failure. This is the case for at least three definite reasons.

2. Merely to make a frontal attack upon evil ends in emptiness even when it is successful. Naturally, such an attack is not always successful. But when it
wins the end is emptiness. This is a time when many are speaking of their Victory Gardens. Suppose I were to boast to you about my Victory Garden. "It is wonderful," I say. "It has not a single weed or a single briar or thorn in it." You express a desire to see such a well-kept garden. Therefore, I show it to you with pride. You find that I have spoken sober truth. There are no weeds nor briars nor thorns but neither are there any fruits or flowers. Therefore, I have in a real sense no garden at all—only a desert. To boast of such a garden would be like boasting of the beauty of a rose-bush not because of the loveliness of its roses, but because of the fewness of its thorns.

Yet how often we confuse harmlessness with holiness, absence of positive vice with positive virtue. "Are you a Christian?" I asked a friend sometime ago. "No," he answered, "but I do not do any harm." In spite of Christian preaching and teaching over a period of nineteen centuries, an unbelievably large percentage of people to this day believe that vital religion consists mainly in doing no harm. But no amount of ciphers can be added in such a fashion as to make a unit. No amount of "don'ts" can make a Christian. It may be that you have escaped every vice. The same may be said for a wax figure in a show-window. If to be a saint is merely to do no harm, then we might make a St. Paul out of a dummy, or a Susannah Wesley out of a rag doll.

It is safe to say that this feeling that goodness consists in doing no harm has been a major curse to religion. That was in a special sense the case during the life of Jesus. The Pharisees who had once been the Puritans among their people had allowed their once lofty religion to degenerate into legalism. They were concerned mainly with prohibitions. The Sabbath which had been God's good gift to man to be used for the upbuilding of his physical, mental, and spiritual life had become so hedged in by prohibitions that from a help it had become a hindrance. There were so many things that one could not do on the Sabbath that it took the ablest scholars to enumerate them. It was wrong even to catch a flea. To engage in the extermination of such a pest was to violate the law against hunting!
It was this same emphasis upon the negative that helped to make the Dark Ages dark. The Church ceased to go to the attack. It ceased to carry the ball. It began to play a defensive rather than an offensive game. Some of its most earnest saints became gripped with the mistaken idea that the best service that they could render their needy day was to hie away to some monastery where they often lived lives of sanctified selfishness. They tried to be good without being good for anything in particular. They hid their candles and thus the light went out and the night came on. To focus our attention, then, on evil even when successful ends in emptiness.

2. Not only is this method a failure because it ends in emptiness but because emptiness is in itself an evil. In fact, it is one of the supreme evils. Throughout this Bible the men of insight warn us that our supreme danger is not in the doing of the positive wrong but in the refusal to do positive right. That is in a special sense the emphasis of Jesus. I have reminded you before how that every parable of judgment He uttered was uttered not against vicious and aggressive wrong-doers but against those who in the presence of opportunity failed in right doing.

What, for instance, was wrong with the man of one talent. It was not that he wasted his substance in riotous living. It was rather that he hid his talent in the earth. What was wrong with the foolish bridesmaids? It was not that they insulted the bridegroom or paid no heed to his invitation. They simply failed to provide themselves with oil. The tragedy of the priest and the Levite was not that they shared the loot with the robbers. It was rather that they did nothing at all. The curse of the barren fig-tree was not that it bore poisonous fruit but that it bore none at all. James summed up the truth that he himself had learned from his Lord in these words: "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

When Paul looked out on this needy world, he said, "I am a debtor." He was speaking sober truth. What he said of himself, we can say of ourselves. Every one of us is weighted by an individual weight of responsibility. We have a task to do that nobody else can do, a service to render that nobody else can render. In order
to lose life, we do not have to walk paths of aggressive wrong. There is no surer way to utter moral failure in the here and now than merely to come and grow and go and never know the majesty and mirth of carrying a heavy load.

3. Not only does the focusing of our attention upon evil result in an emptiness that in itself is an evil, but such emptiness tends always to eventuate in positive evil. This is the case because nature abhors a vacuum. An empty house invites a tenant. How many through the years have come into the Church in all good faith and yet have made shipwreck. This they have done, not because they have turned at once into paths of evil, but failing to give themselves to positive service they little by little slipped back into the old life because there was nothing else to do.

When that daring young nobleman, Nehemiah, left the luxuries of a Persian palace to give himself to the trying task of rebuilding the city of Jerusalem, he met with much opposition. There were those who ridiculed his purpose as a sheer futility. There were those who threatened him with personal danger. There were those who invited him to compromise. But he weathered the gale and held true to his high purpose. How did he manage? He states it in this sentence, "I am doing a great work so that I cannot come down." He found that a good task served as a life-preserver. There is no slightest chance of finding anything but failure if we focus our attention merely upon getting rid of evil.

III

How then may we hope for victory? Paul, who possessed the mind of Christ, perhaps more than any other man of his day, stated the technique that wins in these words: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Everywhere the Bible promises victory. Jesus promises it. He shows the way to it in His own life. He tells us that the only way really to conquer evil is to roll against it a tide of good. That impresses us at once as sound religion and sound sense.

It is true in matters of physical health. The old-fashioned doctor fixed his
attention upon the sickness and sought by strong medicines to exterminate it. In
the process he often destroyed the patient. The modern physician fixes his attention
upon building up the patient, knowing that if the patient is built up the health
germs will show the disease germs the door.

2. This same law holds in our fight with ignorance and error. When I was quite
a young preacher, I did quite a bit of denouncing. I thought tare-pulling was one
of my big jobs. But I soon learned that a gospel of denunciation is not in reality
a gospel at all. The teacher and preacher that sets out to demolish all error will,
generally speaking, arouse ten serpents for every one that he kills. The only really
helpful preaching is positive. Were I to demolish every false belief in the land,
there would be another crop tomorrow. Years ago when Theodore Roosevelt was President,
somebody accused him of having made a success of his administration because he fol-
lowed the policies of Mr. Bryan. Mr. Roosevelt replied, "That may be so, but Mr.
Bryan has plenty more."

It is very arresting to notice how constantly the preachers of the New Testament
preached constructively and positively. Take Jesus for example. He lived in a day
of tremendous abuses. There was political and personal slavery. There was infanti-
cide. There was hate between man and man. But instead of denouncing these, He
utters great and constructive principles such as "All things whatsoever ye would
that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." He knew that by and by the
incoming of a new life would make these evils impossible. When His apostles went
out, they did not spend their time denouncing false gods. There were thousands of
such gods. Had they waited to demolish polytheism before they spoke their message,
they would not have finished to this day. But instead they declared Jesus Christ,
and, when men caught a vision of His face, they threw away their false gods of
themselves.

Herein lies the secret of our victory over the liquor traffic and our final
defeat by it. For almost a century we were on the offensive. At last we won. Then
we settled down to defend. Instead of sober, solid teaching, instead of filling
up the vacuum with clear-cut convictions, we tried to dig in and stand a siege with the result that we lost a fight. No team makes a touchdown in any game while the other side has the ball. All successful teaching and preaching must be constructive and aggressive.

3. This same law holds in our human relationships. For years now disintegrating forces have been at work upon the home. One marriage out of every six goes upon the rocks. What is the remedy? Some suggest improvement in divorce laws. But improved divorce is only an improved method of destroying marriage. The only remedy for conflict between husband and wife is a better understanding, a deeper sympathy, a new willingness to cooperate.

Suppose you have an enemy, how can you deal with him? You can break off diplomatic relations with him. You can slap his face with the danger that he may slap yours all the harder. You may even exterminate him. All these methods have been tried and are being tried still, but they end in failure. Another course you may take is this—you can make him into a friend. That might not work every time, but it will work far more often than we are willing to believe. Luther Burbank said, "Every weed is a possible flower." The only reason that old burr-weed hasn't its hands full of beauty instead of full of cockle-burrs is because nobody has brought it to its possibilities. It is also very largely true that every foe is a possible friend.

This is the only final answer in our international relationships. What are we going to do with Germany and Japan and Italy when the war is over? Some say exterminate them. Some say dismember them. Some force must be used with their leaders, but force and hate are not the final answer. The only remedy that is going to work not in our international relationships is going to be meeting evil with evil, hate with hate, destruction with destruction. The final answer, if it ever comes, is here—we must overcome evil with good.

4. Finally, this is the only technique for sane Christian living. How can I
begin the good life? By swearing off? That is well so far as it goes, but that is not enough. Am I to go out into the garden of my heart and pull up the weeds one by one? No, they will come back faster than I can pull them. The only way to correct a vice is by the bringing in of its oppositional virtue. The only way to drive out self is by letting in a new guest. That Guest even now stands at the door and knocks. The first step in Christian living is to let Jesus Christ into your life.

The schoolhouse that I used to attend as a small boy stood in a grove of stunted, scrubby black oaks. Those dwarfed trees could hold their leaves longer than any others of the forest. When autumn came and other trees began to shed their leaves, these clung to theirs with the tenacity of a miser to his gold. Then the frosts came, then the snows and sleet and bleak winds of winter, but they all beat and tugged at these leaves in vain. Not even a wind of hurricane proportions could tear them away. But by and by a miracle happened. There was a new warmth in the atmosphere, a new life in these scrubby trees. Then one day that life slipped out through every branch and twig and the new leaves said, "Room please!" and the old dead leaf fell away.

That is the secret of new life to the tree. It is the secret of new life for you and me. This I say, "Walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." It is as we let Christ bring new life into our hearts that the old life falls away from us. It is as we go forth to serve in his fellowship that we find the growing life that gives us power to conquer temptation. When the sirens sang along the death-haunted shores of Italy and Greece, some sailors tried to escape by merely stuffing their ears with wool, but that ended in failure. Ulysses won by taking Orpheus on board. His song was so much more beautiful than that of the sirens that their music lost its charm and the ships won to their desired haven. Here then is a technique of victory that is sure: "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."
"He found it empty". Here is a thrilling experience that
ended in the drabest of prose. A man once enslaved has been set
free, but he dressed himself in chains again, not by doing some-
thing vicious, but by doing nothing at all. Of all the sins, the
one that Jesus seemed to dread most was the sin of doing nothing.
The most dangerous life was an empty life.

One reason for this is that so often we count ourselves
saints because we are guilty of no outbreaking and vicious sin.

I never cut my neighbor's throat
My neighbor's gold I never stole,
I never spoiled his house or land;
But God have mercy on my soul
For I am haunted night and day
By all the good I have done, yet
Oh costly valour never won

"Come ye blessed of my father. Inherit the Kingdom prepared
for you. For I was hungry and ye fed me, thirsty and ye gave me
drink." What an unspeakably rich compliment that was. Nothing
that this company could have heard that was so thrilling as that.
But they were too honest to take even heaven on a misunderstanding.

So they said, "Lord that is lovely, that is a word of unspeakable
worth, but you have us confused with somebody else. When saw we
ye and gave ye drink?" And He said, "That day you took that
alcoholic in when everybody was saying 'you are wasting your time',
that was none other than myself".

There was another group who was turned away, because they had
committed some crime? Not a bit of it. They simply treated the
alcoholic as they were told to do, as one with whom there was no
use in wasting time. "Depart", said Jesus. "When I came by in
that guise you hurt the door in my face".

No man was ever lost because of what he did. Every man that missed the fellowship of his Lord missed it because of what he failed to do. However black your record, it will not banish you from His presence. If you are a lost sheep you are exactly the one He is after. He has come to seek and to save that which is lost. Every man who ever permanently lost his way had this charge against him - "You did it not".

"Are you a Christian?" a gentleman asked a young man recently. "No," he answered, "but I am not so bad. "Neither is a corpse", came the answer. Neither is a wax figure in a show window. Neither is a rag doll. Our supreme danger is not fullness but emptiness.

I remember the first Christmas tree I attended. I was only five years of age. The tree was in the little village Church. It was loaded with presents. Eager and joyous children were present with their joy somewhat quieted by the presence of an august Santa Claus. He was scooping presents from the Christmas tree and calling the name of one child after another. My hands were as full of presents as my heart with gladness.

But there was one chap, he was the village halfwit, who had not been called and most of the presents were already claimed. He stood looking at the scene, his lack-luster eyes almost becoming bright with witsfulness and faint expectancy. Then old Santa reached up and got the largest box on the tree and called his name. His stupid face lighted up and his dull eyes sparkled as he reached trembling hands for his present. He untied it with trembling thumb and fingers. He lifted the lid to find the box completely empty.
As a little child I did not fully realize then the cruel tragedy of the scene. In the after years I have thought what a heart the perpetrator of that crime must have had. Yet the box put on the tree did not conceal deadly poison. It did not conceal anything except the terribly ugly fact that somebody was so devilish as to mistake a tragedy for a joke.

We are hanging presents on the world's Christmas tree. The presents we are hanging are the lives we live. Some are hanging empty boxes. It is everybody's privilege to hang boxes that are full. Otherwise to fail to do this is to have this grim sentence read about you: "He found it empty."
Matthew 12:44 - He finded it empty

"He finds it empty." Here is a poem of an experience that ended in the drabest of prose. A man once enslaved has been set free, but at once he dressed himself in heavier chains, not by doing something vicious, but by doing nothing at all. Of all the sins, the one that Jesus seems to dread most is the sin of doing nothing.

One reason for this is that so often we count ourselves saints because we are guilty of no outbreaking sin.

I never cut my neighbor's throat
My neighbor's gold I never stole,
I never spoiled his house nor land
But God have mercy on my soul
For I am haunted night and day
By all the good I have not done
Oh unattempted loveliness
Oh costly valour never won.

"Come ye blessed of my father. Inherit the Kingdom prepared for you. For I was hungry and ye fed me, thirsty and ye gave me drink."

What an unspeakably joyous thrill! Nothing could have brought greater joy. But these were too honest to take even heaven on a misunderstanding. So they said, "Lord, that is a word of unspeakable worth. But you have us confused with somebody else. When saw we thee a thirst and gave ye drink?" Jesus answered: - "That day you took that alcoholic in when everybody was saying 'you are wasting your time'. That was none other than myself."

There was another group who were turned away. Why? They simply treated the alcoholic as one with whom there was no use in wasting time. "Depart," said Jesus. "When I came by in that guise you simply shut the door in my face."

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As a little child I did not fully realize the cruel tragedy of the scene. Yet the box did not conceal any deadly poison. It did not conceal anything, not even the hellish fact that somebody was so devilish as to mistake a tragedy for a joke.

We are all hanging presents on the world's Christmas tree. The presents we hang are the lives we live. It is everybody's privilege to hang lives rich with His fullness. To fail to do this is life's supreme loss.
Matthew 12:44

"He findeth it empty".

Empty! This is the word that holds in its hands the secret of this man's ruin. He had been cleansed but he allowed his cleansing to end in a greater foulness. He had been set free but he allowed his very emancipation to become a doorway to a deeper and darker bondage. But this he did not by a positive and aggressive doing of evil. He did it by doing nothing at all. He did not fail because his hands were full of the unclean. He failed rather because they were empty.

What is the secret of this empty life. How did it come about that this man who had been cleansed found no worthy task at which to toil? Why did he allow himself to become an idle. It was not that he was seeking to make a wreck of himself. I assure he failed as many others do from a fatal/conception of what it means to be a Christian. He made a fourfold blunder. He had no right understanding of what real saintliness involved. He was perchance eager enough to teach a high and wordly faith, but he did not about it in such a fashion as to make success inevitable. He thought a man was a saint by virtue of what he does rather than by virtue of what he is and does. He thought you could add up a column of ciphers and find their sum to be a Christian character. And his mistake is one of the oldest and one of the very newest. It belongs to all times. It found footing in yesterday and it is not without a place in the thought of today. You can not do good on him.

Among the Jews, for instance, this conception of religion was very prevalent. The big word with them was, "Thou shalt not." Their prohibitions were innumerable. It was thus that they bound heavy burdens upon men that were grievous to be borne. Their restrictions regarding the Sabbath alone were so many that it took a ripe scholar to enumerate them. One was not even allowed to catch a flea on the Sabbath, lest he should be accused of hunting.

It was for this reason that Jesus had to remind them that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath for man. It was not to put man in a prison, but to bring him into a larger freedom. It was not to tie his hands but to lose them for service. Thus Christ used it always. One Sabbath day He met a man with a withered hand, and He cured him. On another Sabbath, He found a man who had lain thirty eight years in his infirmity, and He set him on his feet. But such use of the Sabbath was antagonistic to the religion of His day and hastened the Master toward His cross.

It was this fatal misconception that gave rise to the monasticism of middle ages. There came a time when those in quest for goodness thought they must shut themselves up in some monastery or in some den or cave of the earth. There they sought to find God by scorning the world and crucifying the flesh. But they robbed the world of the light that they might have brought. They helped to make the dark ages darker. And they often utterly lost themselves as well. This same fatal misconception lives thus today. There are multitudes of idle, useless people who feel no con-
The Haunted House

knob and go in. The surest way that I know to make a failure is to do nothing.

The young men and women that go to the bad today, - when do they start? When do they take their first step down? When they are busy? Why they are engaged? No, when they are idle. I guarantee that if you might know the soul history of the wrecks among those who work, you would find that the hours of doom are mainly those between nine o'clock at night and midnight, - the hours when the day's work is done and there was nothing to do. The devil is an ingenious monster. He seeks admission into a life as insistently as the water seeks admission into a boat, and every vacancy invited him. And the only remedy is fullness. The only chance for victory is to be positive.

One day Paul was writing a letter to a strong, virile, semi-barbarous tribe in Galatia. They had been recently converted to Christianity. They were finding it difficult to practise the strict, religious self-control that Christianity demanded. Their blood was hot and blazing passions rioted within them. The flesh clamored for the satisfaction of its lusts. And Paul is telling them how to win, and what is the secret? Does he say compress your lips, square your jaw, shut your eyes, hide yourself away and resolve that you are going to be good? No. This is his recipe: "Walk in the spirit and you will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." Let your life be full of God and there will be no room for evil. Fill your hands with flowers and they will not be able to lay hold on the thorns. Let in the wide daylight of Christ and the night will find no room. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

It is hard for us to believe. We have thought many times that the way to overcome evil was by a greater evil; that we could kill hate by hating in return; that the way to keep folks from saying hard things about us was to say still harder things about them. But it is all a mistake. It is like the blunder of the Siamese who, troubled with cockroaches, introduced a certain poisonous spider to kill them, and the spider became a far greater menace than the roaches.

No, there is but one hope for any of us as we set ourselves to the task of being Christians, and that is that we be positive Christians. If you are going to conquer the love of the lower you must do so by loving the higher. If the foul weeds that we call the lust of the flesh are to be uprooted in your life, you will not succeed by pulling them up one by one, adultery, fornication, etc. The only chance is to have the garden so crowded with the flowers of the spirit that there shall be no room.

It is a dangerous and rocky coast along which we sail. Sirens sing in the mouth of its caves all and still they toy with the skulls of men. How shall we pass they by? How shall we hold on our course to the fair havens? How shall we keep the prow of our ship turned straight toward the port of God's eternal summerland? Well, we will succeed not simply by shutting our eyes and stopping our ears. You know how Ulysses succeeded. He took Orpheus on board and when the sirens sang Orpheus also sang, and the sweeter music on board made the sailors utterly oblivious of the songs along the shores of death. That is your safety and mine, for to be a Christian is not to be an idler. To be a Christian is not to hide yourself away from the world. To be a Christian is to live in the world as the ship lives in the sea, but to be so full of the life Divine, so full of earnest, aggressive, positive and spiritual service that there shall be no
is that man who sees a wrong that he might right and refuses to right it; that sees a tear that he might mend and refuses to mend it; and sees a flower that he might plant and refuses to plant it; that sees a load that he might lift and refuses to lift it; that sees any help he might render anywhere to any human being and refuses to render it. For instance, there are thousands of men today who realize the value of the church, who know its fundamental and abiding importance. They are men who realize it is the one institution that the world can not do without, and yet they refuse to put their lives into making it a more efficient instrument for the bringing in of the Kingdom of God. Such refusal is sin.

That fact was emphasized by the Master Himself again and again. When the nations were gathered before Him they were condemned not for what they did, but for what they failed to do. Again and again the Word is, "Inasmuch as ye did it not." The man of one talent was thrown away, not because he squandered his talent, - he had it, - but because he failed to use it. He failed to invest it where it would serve. He was blighted by the eating cancer of a minus sign. He was branded by that devil's iron, the zero.

There is a story that the Master say a fig tree one day, and the fig tree had leaves. Now, you know the fruit comes before the leaves upon the fig tree, and the fact that the fig tree had leaves was an advertisement of the fact that it also had fruit. But when the Master came, He found no fruit thereon, and He cursed it and the fig tree withered away. It withered, not because it bore poison or thorns, - it withered because it had no fruit. It was damned by a negation.

The purpose of Christ in the world was to bring about a positive change in the heart of all mankind. He was to give men new motives, new impulses, new life. His fellowship and service was to be a positive something. He never sought to save the world by hiding Himself away and being good. And the man who fails to learn that lesson will not only fail to bless the world, but he will lose his own soul. To refuse to help when you can help is sin.

There was a young couple very devoted to each other. They were engaged to be married. One day they were at the theater together. They had been there often. Suddenly there was a burst of smoke near the stage and a cry of "Fire." And the young lady turned to rise to her great love, and stared into an empty seat. He was gone. A few blocks down the way he drew up panting, thought of the girl of his dreams, walked back, stuck his head into the theater, slipped down to where he sat before and sat down again till the fire was out. She heard him come; she knew he was there without looking. She never looked and she never spoke, and she never married him. Why? Because he had set her on fire? No, but because he did nothing. (Huckaby and the Mad Dog.)

Last of all, emptiness is not only sin, negative sin, sin of omission, as we call it, but it will lead to positive sin. There are many things that you may count impossible, but the most impossible something that I know is to make a success at keeping a clean house that is at the same time an empty house. Emptiness invites occupation. Nature abhors a vacuum. The man who starts to be a Christian, but who thinks only of the things that he is going to quit is foredoomed to utter failure. By so doing he sets out a flaring sign, "To-Let" upon his own front gate, and every devil that passes by will ring his door bell and turn his door.
respective and kind hearted you are, you are a sinner before God.

"For to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

III

Not only is emptiness sin, but it invites positive and aggressive sin. That old saying about the devil finding work for idle hands to do is abidingly true as hackneyed as it is. Nature abhors a vacuum. If you refuse to do the positive good then you tend inevitably toward the doing of the positive wrong.

When is it that most of our working young men and women go astray? It is not in their busy hours. It is in their hours of idleness. What is the secret of the failure of so many who come into the church with the highest and best intentions. It is this, they remain idle. They do not lay hold on any positive good to take the place of the evil they have given up. Often times the fault is with ourselves. I am sorry to say that there are multitudes of spiritually dead in our churches today that might have been alive if they had only been directed and helped into the wholesome religious work.

How is it that so many moving from the country into the city or from one city to another back slide and often lose touch with the Church altogether. They were workers in the old church, but in the new place to which they have come, they are idlers. No Christian is strong enough to endure the strain of idleness. David did not fall when he was carrying a heavy burden. The great sin of his life came upon him in a hour of idleness. And what is true of him is true of thousands.

"Was not, in the day of battle that we threw away the sword,
But in the long hours of watching at the river by the ford,
The water laughed, the night winds blew,
Full armed, the fear was born and grew,
And we were flying ere we knew
From spectres in the night."

IV

Victory, then is not in emptiness, but in fullness. The only way to conquer any evil is by the bringing in of its opposite. If you are sick, the wise physician does not shut the door and close the windows and pull down the blinds, and try to club the disease to death. That was the old method. But the modern physician is far wiser, he opens the windows, and lifts the blinds, and builds up the patient. He depends upon the patient killing the disease. That is, he recognizes that the only sure foe of sickness is health. "Demolish it, is the answer of the foolish. "Displace it with the truth, is the answer of the wise. There is no greater mistake being made by many earnest men and women today than that of trying to save the Gospel by fighting the other man's view point. You cannot drive out darkness with a club. The only sure way to destroy error is by the proclaiming of truth. How are we to get rid of the sin that is in the world and in our own hearts? There is a method that commends itself to vast multitudes. It is the method of those servants who came saying, "There are tares amidst the wheat. Wilt that thou that we go and pull them up?" Tare pulling was
often spectacular. It sometimes wins great applause. But it usually ends in a failure. It is not the method of the Master. He said, "Let them alone. If you pull up the tares, you might pull up the wheat, too. It is better to have wheat with some tares than to have a barren field." Center your attention upon wheat and not upon the tares. Let your program be positive and not negative.

Paul spoke to the same purpose. There was a colony of virile and stormy semi-barbarians living over in the mountain fastnesses of Galatia. Paul had preached to them and they were struggling to live up to his message. But they were not finding it easy. The lusts of the flesh were clamouring aloud, and they were fighting hard for the Master. Paul knew it and so wrote to them. But he did not tell them to try to get their hands to their lust and choke it to death. He gave them a better remedy. "This, I say, walk in the spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

This is the way of conquest for you and me and there is no other way. You remember how the sirens used to sing along the rock bound shores of Greece and Italy. Ships were lured upon the rocks by these bewitching creatures. They were said to trot with the skulls of men. There was but one hope according to the popular conception of the ships getting by, and that was for the crew to have their ears stuffed with wool so that they could hear no sound at all. But it was a poor remedy. It was only negative.

The one employed by Ulysses was far better. When he prepared to make this dangerous voyage, he did not provide himself with a supply of wool. On the contrary, he took on board with him Or-----, that noted singer, who could sing so winsomely that even the trees and the rocks followed him. When he neared these enchanting shores and the sirens began to sing, he ordered Or----- to strike his harp and music on shipboard was so much more winsome than the songs of the sirens that the people went on their way.

We are on a voyage this morning, every one of us, and the shores along which we sail have many dangers. There are many voices that call to us full of lure and enchantment. The call of the world is strong. How shall we resist. How can we hope to win. There is only one possible chance, and that is by having in our own hearts a deeper satisfaction than the world can give. It is by having our own hands busy at laiger tasks than the world has to offer. Thus we can say to every voice that calls in the noble words of Nehemiah: 'I am doing a great work, and I cannot come down.'
room in your life for anything else. It is thus that you shall conquer and only thus will the will and the Trappist monk.

CGC:BR
It is possible you may not believe in ghosts. It may be true even that you never did believe in them. If so, it is because you did not have the privilege of growing up among the old-time Southern darkies. When I was a boy they were plentiful as blackberries, at least they were plentiful in some quarters. Now, there were some ghosts that had no respect for decency and decorum and knocked custom into a cocked hat. These were ghosts that would sometimes show themselves out on lonely roads or maybe even in well-kept and tenanted houses.

But the really decent orthodox ghost was never seen except in an empty house, a house out of which the tenants had moved. It was in such an environment as this that the old-time ghost was at his best; when he could have the house all to himself and enjoy hearing the blinds rattle, shaken by skeleton hands, and doors slam by unseen fingers; while there was stifled sobbing, and at times wild shrieking and steps upon the bare floor silent as death; and a presence as cold as night. (The medical students at Vanderbilt. This was not an orthodox ghost. It did not have the right kind of setting.)

But the text tells us the story of a haunted house that is altogether true. It is the story of the haunted temple of the human soul. If you believe the Bible you believe that there is a personal agency of evil that we call the devil, and that under his leadership are innumerable wicked spirits, and that these spirits are constantly seeking to embody themselves in men and woman. Paul said that our fighting was against wicked spirits, and Jesus claimed that the grimmest fight in His life was His battle with the devil. You may not believe this. Personally, I do. And I find at least this bit of consolation in it: that all the evil suggestions, all the tugs downward that come to my life day by day do not originate with myself. They may be the result of the play of the powers of evil upon me.

Now, the picture that we have here, and remember it is one that fell from the lips of Jesus, - it is not a history. It is only a parable, only a picture, but it is as true as the truth. In this story, I say, we have an account of a man who was once a demoniac, but out of whom the evil spirit has been driven. He is now free. He has been set free by the power of God. The night has been driven out of his life because into it has been flashed the light that gleams from beyond the cliff-tops of eternity. But a second look at this emancipated man reveals to us the sad fact that he has lost the fight and that he has fallen into far worse bondage than he was before; that the untenanted soul has now become haunted with seven other spirits more wicked than the one who originally made his abode there.

Now, the question is: how did this man lose his fight? What is the secret of his failure? It is summed up in one word: He findeth it empty. The failure of this man was not positive sin. He did not fail because he had blood in his hands. He had none. He did not fail because he had evil strongly entrenched in his heart. It was not there. He failed because hands and heart were empty.

His blunder was one of the oldest and newest in the world, as old almost as man and as new as your own present failure or mine. Why did he fail? He failed because he thought that emptiness was Christianity. He thought that a man was a saint by virtue of what he did not do. He
thought a Christlike character could be made up of don'ts. He thought you could add up a column of ciphers and minus signs and that the sum total would be a heroic Christian.

His mistake is a very common one. It is being made today by folks both in the church and out. There are scores and thousands of people who take great satisfaction in the fact that they are doing no harm. They look for wings to be growing on their shoulders every morning because of the thousand and one things that they do not do. They do not lie, nor steal, nor swear. They do not do this and that and the other. Their list of don'ts would make a whole column in a dictionary. They are as blank as a white sheet of paper and quite as uninteresting and quite as useless.

In all frankness, I know of no one that is further from being a Christian than the man who simply does no harm. A landscape is not to be prized simply because it has no weeds and briars and thorns growing upon it. If so, the Sahara Desert would be a great success. A rose bush is not prized in proportion to the fewness of its thorns, but it is measured by the wealth and beauty of its flowers. And a life is not to be valued by its absence of faults, but by its wealth of service. If to do no harm is sainthood, then you might make a St. Paul out of a billiken and turn your rag doll into a Susannah Wesley.

But this is a misconception that is, I say, almost as old as man, and that refuses to die. It is a mistake that worked endless harm among the Jews. Their religion was largely a religion of don'ts. The big word was: Thou shalt not. And the Master said that they bound heavy burdens upon men—difficult to be borne. There were so many thousand things that they could not do that the man who had no arms and no feet and no ears and no eyes and no powers of smell was of all others the best candidate for sainthood.

Take the matter of Sabbath keeping. There were so many things that should not be done on the Sabbath, so many different ways of breaking it that a man must be a great scholar to be able to enumerate them all. For instance, they were not allowed even to catch a flea on Sunday lest they be charged with desecrating the Sabbath by hunting. And what a picnic those pestiferous pests must have had on the Sabbath day! So when Christ came and lifted the burden off the stooped shoulders of a woman who had been bowed down for eighteen years, the religious leaders were outraged. And when He lifted the man to his feet upon the Sabbath who had lain in the way of human progress for almost half a century, they determined to hound Him to His death.

It is this same misconception that gave rise during the middle ages to the folly and sin of fanaticism. Some of the best and most earnest men in the world ran off and hid themselves in order to be good. And the world lost the lift of their strong shoulders, and these slackers lost the strength and power that might have come from the lifting. And the night deepened over the face of the world because men mistook a minus sign for a plus, and thought that so many thousand times zero was so many thousand, instead of just zero. And the world, I say, not only lost these men, but the men lost themselves, for no amount of don'ts can make a man a Christian.

Not only does emptiness fall short of Christianity; emptiness in itself is sin. The word of God is very plain on this point: "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The sinner
idleness for their idleness and uselessness. Should you accuse them of being wrong, they would be astonished. They could tell you of literally thousands of wicked things of which they were not guilty. They do not lie nor steal, nor get drunk. And they fancy that they are Christians simply because they are doing no harm.

But how wide the mark such a conception is. We do not value a garden simply because there is an absence of weeds and briars, but because of its fruits and flowers. Our appreciation of a rose-bush does not grow out of its lack of thorns, but is born rather of the wealth and loveliness of its roses. And our worth does not consist in absence of evil deeds but in positive goodness. If to do no harm were to be a Christian, then you might make a St. Paul out of a wax figure and a Susana Wesley out of a rag doll.

II

Not only is emptiness not holiness, but it is sin. It is possible for one to be very busy and yet be really wicked. This is true for the very simple reason that idleness is sin. James makes that very clear when he says, "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

This truth is emphasized over and over again throughout the Bible. The curse uttered against Korah was not because of any evil done, but because of the good left undone. It receives a special emphasis in the teachings of Jesus. In the parable of the fruitless fig tree. That tree was ordered cut down, not because it was bearing poisonous fruit, but because it was bearing none at all. The fig tree that is cursed is cursed because it was barren. And Jesus declared emphatically that every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down. He declared that every branch that beareth no fruit is taken away. That is, fruitlessness is sin.

The same reason is taught in the parable of the talents. Why was the man with one talent condemned. It was not because he had wasted his talent in riotous living. It was not because he had invested his talent to prevent justice, or do any form of evil. He had his talent there in his hand intact. His condemnation grew out of the fact, not that he had invested his talent in wrong, but because he had not invested it at all. He had merely allowed it to lie idle.

The same truth is emphasized in the parable of the last Judgement. "When saw we Thee hungry and fed Thee not, or naked and did no the Thee? And what is the answer, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me." That is, they were banished into the dark not because they had been criminals, or because they had been unclean, but because they had rubbed elbows with those who were hungry and had made no effort to appease their hunger. They had lived in the midst of a world where souls were thirsty and they had made no effort to satisfy those burning thirsts.

This is a word to startle every idler. It is a word that ought to awake every man who is neglecting his duty. Are you setting the right example before your children. Are you making a contribution to your church and to your community? Are you doing your part to heal the world's open sore. If you are not, regardless of how decent you are, regardless of how