

THAT BEWILDERING MIXTURE

"The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way."

--Matthew 13:24,25

While this whole story is our subject, I am calling your attention to these two verses. This story is perhaps an actual happening. In it Jesus confronts one of the most perplexing problems of the ages. Here is the story: "A certain farmer sowed his field with carefully selected wheat. Sheltered by the night an enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat. The seed of the tare, or darnel, is very much like wheat except that it is gray in color instead of golden. In its early stages of growth, it cannot be distinguished from wheat. Therefore, the wicked rascality of this enemy was not known until the wheat began to ripen and was almost ready for harvest. Then the servants of the household came and said, "Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares." He answered, "An enemy has done this." The servants said unto him, "Shall we go and gather them up?" He answered, "Nay, lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest."

I

Here Jesus frankly faces the fact of evil. He constantly faced that grim fact. He believed that this was God's world. None was surer than He of the declaration of the psalmist, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." Since a good God had made the world, it was to be expected that it would be a good world with no admixture of evil in it. But He knew that such is not the case. In spite of the fact that this is God's world, in spite of the fact that He is a God infinite in wisdom and infinite in goodness, it is a world where good is constantly elbowed by evil. Tares are constantly growing among wheat.

That was the case in the long ago. It is the case today. Jesus taught that one day the separation would be complete. But He faces the fact courageously that it is not complete now. This bewildering mixture of good and evil, of wheat and tares, has been a fact of all the centuries. The great prophets set themselves against evil, but they did not eradicate it. Jesus came and went to the Cross in a stern conflict against evil. But in spite of His life and in spite of His death and resurrection, in spite of the labors of the saints, of the sacrifices of the missionaries, of the death of the martyrs, evil has not been driven out of one single nation; it has not been driven out of one single state, of one single city of one single village or hamlet in all the world. It has not even been driven out of a single home or of a single church.

The Bible speaks in glowing terms of the Church. It was Christ's dream for it that it should be a glorious Church without spot or blemish or any such thing. It is spoken of as His body. It is spoken of as His bride. Yet the Church as a whole at its best has always been a mixture. Wheat and tares have grown within its membership. Jesus gathered about Him a little inner circle. They were men good beyond the ordinary. But they were a strange mixture. They went into their last meal with their Master spitting hot words at each other as they argued over who should be the greatest. When the test came, all forsook Him and fled. The staunchest man of the group denied Him. One of the keenest betrayed Him.

At Pentecost these men along with others were reborn. They ceased merely to imitate Christ and began in some measure to reproduce Him. But even then the Church was not perfect. Even then wheat was still elbowed by tares. We read this distressing word: "There arose a murmuring of the Greeks against the Hebrews." There were still those who were quick to take offense, quick to quarrel, quick to tear open old wounds that were about to be healed, to redig old chasms that had separated them in other days. Even at Pentecost the Church was not perfect. It is not perfect still after nineteen hundred years. You may not be a

member of the church. But do not be stupid enough ever to say, "Show me a perfect church and I will join it." If there were such a church, it would certainly not welcome you and me because it would cease at once to be perfect as soon as we got in it. This is the case because we ourselves are not perfect.

Where is there no perfect church? Because there are no perfect people. This is not to deny Christian perfection in the sense that one may be whole-hearted, but it is to deny it in the sense that one may reach a pinnacle beyond which it is impossible to climb any height. If the Church is a mixture of good and evil, so are you and I. Some of us are far more good than evil, thank God. Some of you surpass in goodness many of your fellows. But none is altogether good. There is no claim that you could make that would offend your fellows more than to claim that you are wholly good, that there is growing in the field of your soul nothing but wheat without a single tare. We are all of us bewildering mixtures. This fact has surely surprised and shamed us times without number. If we have lived with ourselves intelligently, we must agree with that old threadbare word:

"There is so much bad in the best of us,
There is so much good in the worst of us
That it hardly becomes any of us
To criticize the rest of us."

Evil in the world, in the group, in the individual life is a grim fact. Jesus faced that fact without flinching.

In facing the fact of evil we need, however, to remind ourselves that He *Jesus* did not ignore the good. It is possible for us so to focus our minds upon evil that we forget the good altogether. Jesus never made that mistake. Evil is a reality, but so is good. You remember the two buckets that went to the well. One of them burst into tears and said, "It breaks my heart to think however full I am when I leave the well, I always come back empty." The other laughed outright and said, "You know it tickles me to death to think however empty I am when I come to the well, I always go away full." We must recognize evil, but we must not ignore the good.

II

One more time
Why ~~is this the case?~~ I do not think it is the primary purpose of Jesus in this parable to explain the presence of evil in the world. I do not think a full and adequate explanation has ever been found. Why do men sin? Why is there so much of suffering? Why is our world now being torn into shreds by the ruthless powers of evil? How can we account for so much that is bad in a God-made, in a God-ordered world? The explanation of this, I repeat, is not the primary purpose of Jesus. He does give a hint of its explanation. You may not agree with it, but whatever explanation Jesus gave, this is certainly true--He did not try to explain evil away. Evil is a fact.

Why is it a fact? Jesus does affirm that the presence of evil in the world is not the fault of God. It is the fault of an enemy. In the explanation of the parable that is given a little later, it is said that the enemy that sowed the tares is the devil. I do not take this to mean necessarily that Jesus believed in a supernatural personality that was antagonistic to God. If you believe in the reality of the devil, I am not going to argue with you. It is not faith in the devil that saves us but faith in Jesus Christ. If there is no devil in the world, there is certainly a lot in the world that is devilish. But the heart of the affirmation of Jesus is this--that evil is a fact, but the fact of evil is not due to a loving God. If you feel yourself a helpless victim of evil, remember that God is not to blame. He is never the author of evil.

But while God does not sow tares, while He never brings evil into any human life, He does put us in a situation where it is possible for us to do evil. Though He never sows tares Himself, He makes our sowing of them a possibility. This He does by giving us freedom. He has to make it possible for us to sow tares in order to make it possible for us to sow wheat. For God to destroy the possibility of wrong-doing on my part is for Him to destroy the possibility of right-doing also. Since man is free he can make a wrong choice and thus bring about evil. The

II

supreme purpose of Jesus in this parable however is not theological but practical. It is this big question that confronts every one of us individually, that confronts us as a group and as a world. Since evil is a fact, what are we going to do about it? That is the question that these practical servants asked. They have just been out in a field where they expected to find wheat and wheat only. But instead of finding only wheat, they found also tares. They came to their master, therefore, with this ~~sane~~^{sane} question--what are we to do about it? The wheat and tares are really growing together, so what?

In reply to their own question, they offered a suggestion. It sounds very sane. It is very appealing. "Shall we go and gather up the tares? What are we to do about them? We cannot ignore them." There are those that try this remedy. There are those that say, "There is no such thing as evil." There are those that affirm that evil is only good in the making. But they were too sane to take this view. They knew tares would still be tares whether they were pulled up or let alone. They suggested the making of a frontal attack on evil. They wanted to get rid of the tares. That was the desire of their master. The only question was the question of method.

That same question confronts every one of us. There have always been many earnest and intelligent people who take the position of these servants. They believe in tare-pulling. They believe in a frontal attack on wrong. Is there a false faith? Destroy it. Is there an idol? Smash it. Is there an evil practise of any kind? Denounce and demolish it. As Christians we must be determined antagonists of all that is evil. Tare-pulling is a very exciting procedure. It always looks exceedingly courageous. It is one of the surest ways of winning applause.

Now beyond a doubt Jesus was the bitterest foe of evil that ever lived in this world. But it would seem that He does not favor the frontal attack. His purpose, of course, is to have the best possible wheat. He did not think that

tare-pulling was the best way to obtain that end. As a method of destroying evil it has certain glaring defects.

1. It is faulty because it is not easy always to distinguish wheat from tares. In fact, it is impossible until near harvest-time. It is not always possible to tell wheat from tares today. Passing judgment on our fellows, weeding out the evil and keeping the good requires an insight that we do not possess. That is what Jesus meant when He said, "Judge not." Fully to distinguish the good from the bad, the wheat from the tares often requires an insight that belongs to God alone.

2. Tare-pulling is very dangerous. It often proves fatal to the tare-puller. However earnest and sincere you may be in your effort to weed out of the church everybody that ought not to be there, such zeal on your part is very apt to work your undoing. I have yet to find any man whose stock-in trade was criticism and denunciation of his brother who did not become hard and cold and Pharasaical. Last week I had a letter from a good brother who had been reading my latest book. He was excited almost to the point of madness by a quotation I had used which is as follows: "Better that error live than that love should die." He thought that that was a dangerous doctrine. But Jesus did not.

For this reason when He gave the distinguishing mark of a Christian, He had nothing to say of orthodoxy. He rather said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another." When they asked Him for the greatest commandment, He answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." That is, the first and great commandment was love—love to God and man. When John, who shared so deeply in the mind of Christ, sought to tell us how we may know ourselves as Christians, he put it in this fashion, "We know that we have passed out of death into life because we love." Paul, who if possible came even closer to Christ than John, declared that love is the fulfilling

of the law. He declared that without love all else comes to nothing. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love it profiteth me nothing." Tare-pulling is dangerous to the one who engages in it.

Then tare-pulling endangers the wheat. It used to be the custom of the church to cast out unworthy members. That was not the method of Jesus. Years ago I had a steward in my church who was the father of twelve children, all of whom were at home. In order to have a well-rounded family, he adopted four more. This man had one shocking fault. Once every so often he would get beastly drunk. Of course, this was an offense. It was a grief to all good people. There were those who urged me to put him off the Board if not out of the church.

But this I refused to do. I knew that a man who was big-hearted enough to adopt four children when he already had twelve had something magnificently fine about him. I knew also that if love would not win him ostracism certainly would not. I knew further that if I regarded him as a tare and pulled him up the results of his life were interlocked with seventeen others of his own family. These might be injured also. So I waited. Then his older daughter volunteered for the foreign field where she is now. He objected to her going. But her consecration broke his heart. And so far as I know he has never taken another drink from that day to this.

4. The final objection to the frontal attack is that while it might exterminate the tares for the moment, it would not guarantee one single stalk of wheat. The glory of a garden is not its absolute freedom from weeds, but the richness of its fruits and flowers. The beauty of a rose-bush does not depend upon the fewness of its thorns but upon the richness of its roses. Remember that no amount of "don'ts" can make a man a Christian. To do no harm does not mean necessarily a very good life. It may mean utter death. What God is seeking is not so much an absence of tares but the presence of wheat. And mere tare-pulling will not guarantee a single grain of wheat.

the Birthmark

How then shall we deal with evil in our own lives and in the world? When we study the method of Jesus we are amazed at the evils of His own day that He seemed to ignore. He lived in a little country that was under the vicious heel of Rome. But He made no attack on a strong nation's exploiting the weaker. He was a part of an empire, the majority of whose people were slaves. But He made no direct attack on slavery. Instead He flung out a word like this, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them," and left it to do its work. He knew that the only real remedy for the unbrotherliness of the world was brotherliness just as the only real foe of darkness is light.

The method of the Master was the method of those who laid the foundations of the Early Church. It is astonishing how little of denunciation there was in their preaching. They did not fight evil negatively but positively. The whole Roman world was under the dominion of a devastating polytheism. Did you ever read Paul's denunciation of Mars? Did you read John's invective against Venus? Did you ever read Simon Peter's Denunciation of Jupiter? No, they did not spend their time denouncing false gods. They spent their time holding up Jesus Christ before the eyes of a bewildered world. When they saw Him they did not have to be admonished to throw away their old gods; they forgot them in the richness of life that they found in Jesus.

Paul summed up the whole strategy in one sentence. It is the only one that will really work either in the life of the individual or in the world. "Overcome evil with good." One day he wrote a letter to a handful of converts over in Galatia. These were a vigorous, barbarous and war-like people. They were not finding the Christian way of life easy. What instruction did Paul give them? Quit drinking. Quit being adulterers. Quit lying and stealing. No, he said rather, "This I say, walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh."

Here we put our finger on what is perhaps the supreme cause of failure in our Christian lives. We begin in all earnestness to follow Christ, but we try to live negatively. We think in terms of "don'ts" rather in terms of "does". This

creates a struggle that is too much for us. "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." Nature abhors a vacuum. No man can be negatively good. How then shall we win? We must focus on the growing of the wheat rather than the destruction of the tares. Let the wheat become vigorous enough, the tares will die of themselves under the shadow of the wheat.

You remember the story of how the sirens used to lure the sailors to their death. Their music was so enchantingly beautiful that as the ships passed by the bows seem to turn of themselves toward those dangerous coasts where the sirens toyed with the skulls of men. Since they were so dangerous, some sailors when they went by stuffed wool in their ears so that they could not hear. But that was a negative remedy.

How did Ulysses, the shrewdest of the Greeks, win past in safety? When he set out on his dangerous voyage, instead of supplying himself with wool so that he could not hear any sound good or bad, he took with him Orpheus, the sweet singer among the Greeks. He took with him the man of whom it is said that his song was so winsome that the very rocks and the trees followed him. Therefore, when the sirens began to sing he bade Orpheus strike his harp with the result that the music on board was so much more winsome than the music along the death-haunted shores where the sirens sang that his ships passed to their desired haven. Evil is a fact, but we shall conquer it only in the power of the positive.

THE BEWILDERING MIXTURE

"Let both grow together until the harvest;"

Matthew 13-30

Here is a story that is shot through with the light of genius. A well-to-do farmer is engaged in the business of raising wheat. One day certain of his employees came to him. At once excited and bewildered, they tell their employer this distressing story. "We passed through the wheat field just now and while we found some vigorous wheat, we also found some equally vigorous weeds. We thought you sowed good ^{seed} in your field. How does it come about that it now has ~~weeds~~ or darnel?" This darnel was a wheat that had grains almost exactly like wheat grains, except that the darnel was a dull gray ~~and~~ instead of golden.

In answering their question the farmer said, "An enemy has done this. I myself did not sow these weeds. They have been sown by an enemy." "What, then, are we to do about it?" questioned these laborers. Shall we go and pull up these offending weeds?" "No", was the reply, "don't do that lest when you pull up the weeds, you might injure the wheat. Let both grow together until the harvest."

I

Here Jesus brings us face to face with the fact that is evident to all of us, and that is the strange and bewildering mixture of good and of evil. Since our God is a Holy God, since he is the creator of all things, we should naturally expect a world that was wholly good. But when we look around we do not find such a world. When we face the facts it does seem as if in reality God had made all the world and had not the power to make it as he would. No situation, no organization, no individual is perfectly ideal.

1. As we look abroad among the nations, we see a bewildering mixture of evil ~~will~~ and good. The desperate plight of our modern world is evident to the dullest. As we look among the nations we face the fact that three-fifths of all the people on earth today cannot even read. We face the further fact that there are millions whose one big aim seems to be to keep the world in a state of chaos and finally to dem~~strate~~ it. Communism stakes its all on making the plight of the world so desperate that men will turn to this atheistical doctrine out of sheer despair.

But along with those that are seemingly seeking to wreck the world there are also those who are also trying to rebuild it. Our own nation is accused by its enemies of being imperialistic. In our effort to rebuild the shattered nations of Europe we are working in part to our own selfish interests, yet we are spending millions with no other hope ~~stronger~~ than of being helpful. We are even giving to those who once fought to destroy us. The Senator reminded us the other night that seventy-one percent of all the money being spent for the rebuilding of the world comes out of American pockets. As nations we are mixtures of good and evil.

2. We find this same strange mixture when we turn to the church. It is certainly God's purpose that the church should be without spot or blemish, yet that ideal has not been realized. When Jesus gathered twelve select men about him, one of them swore in an hour of crisis, that he had never met him. Another betrayed him. The other ~~two~~ fled like a flock of sheep. Even immediately after Pentecost we read "there arose a murmuring". Those who had just been welded into a brotherhood were threatening to fall apart over the distribution of food.

To this day the church is a mixture. There are among them lovely saints who help to salt the earth. There are also among them shoddy failures who help society to rot. The man who says to the minister, "Show me a perfect church and I will join it", is saying something that does not rise even to the height of dignified nonsense. There is no perfect church. If there were a perfect church, he could not join it because such a church would have no place for him. The church is the best institution in the world but it is not perfect, it is a mixture.

3. Now the reason the world and the church is a mixture is because the individual is a mixture. Not one of us is wholly bad. That is something we are prone to forget. A wise man said "nobody can be as wicked as he wants to be". By this he meant however far we come from God, however long we live in the far country with the swine, we never become perfectly at home there. Old memories always disturb us and the lure of home forever makes us miserable.

This we have discovered in dealing with men and women that we looked upon as without the pale. I have talked to those in whom every good impulse seemed dead, yet if I talked long enough, I would always discover that there was one ugly thing that they did not do. There was some dream of beauty to which they still clung. If I have looked with a seeing eye, I have been able to discover many weeds growing in the garden of their hearts but always there was at least one little white flower. Nobody is wholly bad. Even Lady MacBeth could not murder Duncan because he looked so much like her father.

Now, just as nobody is wholly bad, nobody is wholly good in the sense that they can get no better. None of us has reached a height

beyond which we cannot climb. I am not forgetting that the Bible teaches perfection, but the perfection that is taught by the Bible consists in wholeheartedness rather than just attainment. I knew a man years ago who claimed perfection. He was neither a fool nor a ~~hypocrite~~ ^{hypocrite} ~~or fanatic~~. I think he was sincere. He told me that he had not been tempted in three years. Yet on the heels of that, when a neighbor came up and held out his hand to speak to him, he refused to take that hand.

To begin the Christian life with the idea that the fight is over as soon as you enlist is to meet with disappointing defeat. If you run past temptation you have run past Jesus. His own life was a fight. We like to read that dramatic passage from St. Paul where he tells us frankly that ~~the sin he did to God~~ ^{when he vowed to good, evil was} ever is present with him. He tells us that the good he vowed to do, he fumbled; and the evil that he swore he would not do, that he did. All this, ^{we} he affirms, took place before his conversion. That is true. It also took place in some measure after his conversion. Why should he be different from all the rest of us? Conversion gives us the power to fight victoriously, if we avail ourselves of that power, but fight we must to the end of the day. Therefore as a group and as a world we are a mixture.

II

"How has this come about?" That is the question asked by these servants. "Whence then hath it tares?" Now I am perfectly sure that the primary purpose of this parable is not to explain the origin of evil or Jesus would have sought fully to explain it. But if he did not intend to give us a full explanation, he certainly did not explain it away. He

faced it as a fact. Facing it as a fact, he made at least two assertions about it.

1. He affirmed that the presence of evil was not according to the will of God. God is in the very nature of things eternally antagonistic to evil. There is nothing evil in the universe that is according to his will. God has put you and me in a situation where evil is possible if we make a wrong choice, but he is never the creator of evil, he is always its eternal foe.

2. A second fact that Jesus states regarding evil is that it is the work of an enemy. That is, evil is ^{not} brought by God but by some agency that is antagonistic to God. The explanation often found in the Bible, the explanation of our fathers, is to attribute evil to a personal intelligence called the devil. It would seem that Jesus believed that there was such a personality. But whether there is ^{is} or ~~not~~ does not change the situation. Even if we assume that there is a devil that only pushes the problem back. We then have to explain the presence of the devil himself.

Aside then from all explanation, evil comes into your life and mine on wrong choices. The presence or absence of a personal devil would make not the slightest difference at all. All the wrong that is in the world is due solely to wrong men and women. Given people who are right at heart, we are on the way to building a right world. But as long as we have wrong men and women, we are going to have a wrong world, at least a world that is a mixture of good and evil.

III

But ~~the~~ part of the parable that comes closest to ~~us~~ ~~that is to~~ modern ~~practice~~, is the ^{then} question asked by these employers. "Your wheat

field", they declared, is not altogether wheat. It has a mixture of wheat and tares. In the face of that fact, what are we to do about it?" In other words, how are we as a group, how am I as an individual, to deal with evil in my own life and in the world? Now, in answering this question there are two major emphases: that of the servant and that of the farmer himself.

1. What have these servants to suggest? Their suggestion is very appealing and seemingly very practical. They are all for pulling up the tares. That is, in seeking to build a good life or a good world, they put their emphasis on the wrong that is to be destroyed rather than on the right that is to be established. There is no question here as to opposition to evil. Both the servants and their master are apposed to evil. It is only a question of how best it is to ^{be fought} fight. Now this negative approach, while appealing, is quite faulty. First, it is faulty because it requires a discernment on the part of the tare puller that he does not possess. When I go out into the world to pull tares, I meet with this difficulty. I cannot always tell a weed from wheat. I cannot always tell with absolute certainty who is good and who is bad. I used to think I could tell a rascal by looking at him. The fact that I have been making small loans to strangers for some forty years and have been paid back only one time shows that I cannot tell for certain a weed when I see one. Many a man has fought a cause as a deadly evil to find it to be good. Many of those who opposed Jesus were sincere. They simply could not tell wheat from tares.

Second, to major on weed pulling is very likely to hurt him who does the pulling. Across the years I have watched ministers here and there who majored on a gospel of denunciation. However eager and earnest

*Strike me
down*

they were in the beginning they always _____ turned sour and cynical before they reached the end of the journey. The man who majors on destructive criticism may hurt the one whom he criticizes. He is always sure to dry up the milk of human kindness within his own heart.

Third; Then weed pulling is dangerous because, as this farmer pointed out, we are likely in pulling one weed to injure more than one stalk of wheat. Years ago I had on my official board a man who would go on a big drunk perhaps once a year. After such a fall, his shame knew no bounds. Of course, his conduct provoked comment. Some advised that I leave him off the board. This I was a bit inclined to do, though we were close friends. But there was one consideration that made this impossible. He was the father of twelve children, all of whom lived at home. In addition, he had adopted four more. He had a devoted wife who was a beautiful Christian. I knew that if I pulled up this weed I might injure seventeen stalks of wheat. So we left him alone. By and by his daughter volunteered for the mission field where she is today. Since her decision I have been given to understand he has never taken another drink.

Fourth: Then weed pulling is faulty because even where it is successful, it would not guarantee one single stalk of wheat. What makes a lovely rose bush? ^{Not} the absence of thorns but the presence of roses. What makes a blooming garden? Not the absence of weeds but the presence of fruits and flowers. What makes a good wheat field? Not the absence of tares but the presence of wheat. What makes a good man? Not the absence of vices but the presence of virtue. It is possible to be "faultlessly faultless, icily regal, splendidly null". Good health

is more than an absence of disease.

Down at the morgue the other day a gentlemen came in who had a very bad cough. He was seized by a coughing spell and made the welkin ring. "That is a bad cough you have", said his friend, who kept the morgue. "Yes", was the reply, "but any of these lying about on slabs would be glad to have it." The trougle, then, with the suggestion of these servants was that it was the negative approach and therefore could not guarantee any type of victory.

2. Then there was the suggestion of the farmer himself. He said to his servants "in conducting a campaign for ^a good wheat field, don't focus your attention on weeds, focus it on wheat." How can we hope to have a good world? Not by killing off all the bad men. The one chance is to change bad men into good men.

How shall we go about having a good church? Not by turning out all those who are unfaithful. Jesus had a traitor in his own Inner Circle but he never turned him away. He knew that if love could not win him, ostracism would certainly fail. If we are to build a strong church, we are not to do so by casting out the wicked but by helping them to be good.

How can I personally build a good life? I cannot do so by swearing off. I cannot do so by going out into the garden of my heart and pulling up weeds one by one that grow back as fast as I can pull them. My only hope is the letting of the Heavenly Gardener into my life. When he comes in, then he helps me to live a life of positive goodness. In his power the flowers of the spirit, love, joy and peace and long suffering will bloom in rich profusion.

One day Paul was writing a letter to a certain mountain church called Galatia. These Galatians were all rigorous and aggressive people who

were finding the Christian way rather difficult. Some of them were looking wistfully back over their shoulders wondering if it would not be better for them to renounce the wild dreams of goodness that had been born in their hearts and go back to their old life. Paul is pointing out to these tempted men and women the cost of victory. What does he say? He does not tell them to clinch their fists and square their jaws and fight with more grim determination. On the contrary, he gives them this single word: "This I say, walk in the spirit and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." We are strange mixtures of good and evil - all of us - but if we surrender ourselves to God he makes the prevailing tone of our life one of victory instead of one of defeat as it was before we availed ourselves of his power. That we may find ~~that~~ victory, let us receive him afresh into our hearts tonight.

THE AMAZING GROWTH no

Matthew 13:31-32

"Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: But when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

I

Here is a parable buoyant with hope and bright with the sunshine of a great faith. Jesus is reminding us once again of the great task to which he has set himself. He is not here to accomplish any mean or easy task. He is not here even to save a few choice souls out of the world and to get them into heaven. The task to which he has set His hand is the most colossal imaginable. He is here for no lesser purpose than the establishing of the kingdom of God. This consummation means nothing less than the realization of that mad dream for which He taught us to pray when He said, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." He has set himself to the task of making a new man and a new world, a new individual and a new society. ✓

Then He faces candidly the meager beginnings that He has made toward the accomplishment of this great enterprise. No one could realize more clearly than He how almost infinitely small was the start He had made in comparison with the vast reaches that He was seeking to accomplish. So far he had only succeeded in

gathering about him a little handful of nameless men without any political, social or financial standing in the great world of which they were a part. These were pathetically faulty and tragically ignorant of the real meaning of the enterprise upon which they were engaging. Surely such a beginning was aptly compared to a grain of mustard seed which had the reputation of being the very least of all the seeds.

But in spite of the greatness and difficulty of the task, in spite of the meager beginnings, Jesus never ^{for one moment} doubted ~~for one moment the greatness of~~ the outcome. It never occurred to Him that His undertaking was going to end in utter failure. True, He was to be rejected by His own people. The religious leaders of His time were to turn Him over to the Roman authorities to be hanged on a cross. His own life was destined to end in what seemed the most tragic of all defeats. Yet with a quenchless faith He declared that the final victory should be His and that lifted up from the earth He would draw all men unto Him.

How we need this bracing faith in these tempestuous days! And how few of us possess it! Yet an unshaken confidence in the final triumph of righteousness and a complete establishment of the kingdom of God ought to be far easier for us than it was for Jesus. The wild dream that He dreamed is yet sadly far from realization, but no candid reader of history can shut his eyes to the fact that much has been accomplished and that the kingdom of God is far nearer on its way to realization than when these words were uttered. Look at the world to which Jesus belonged. The Americas had never been dreamed of. Northern Europe was barbaric. About the waters of the Mediterranean were two great civilizations, Greece and Rome. Greece had conquered the world intellectually. Rome had conquered it politically. Three-fourths

of that Roman world was made up of slaves. Those not in slavery were part of the political despotism.

Then one night in a stable in an obscure village of a despised province of the great Roman Empire a baby was born. His coming created no stir in that great Roman world. They had no time for Him. There was no room for Him at the inn, nor was there room for Him in the thoughts and hearts of men. He worked in a carpenter's shop till He was thirty. Then He went out about the countryside and the villages of His obscure country, teaching and preaching. He never traveled abroad. He never went to one of the great universities. He never wrote a book. He never looked into the face of a single prominent man. No expert stenographer waited upon Him to take down His message. Yet today in millions of homes His words are treasured. Colossal evils that were taken for granted then are impossible today. There are even millions now who are thinking in terms of brotherhood, of a world governed by love and justice where oppression and war shall be no longer possible. This little world has not reached the height of its possibilities yet, but surely it is vastly larger than it was when Jesus sowed the seed and wrought to make it grow. It is easy to look at one small eddy in a great river and think the stream is flowing backward. But if you look at the stream as a whole you can know that it is making its way toward the sea. If we look at the moral eddy in which we seem to be at this time, it is easy to be discouraged, but if we consult the centuries instead of the seconds, we can see that Christ is marching on toward His great purpose, the establishing of the kingdom of heaven.

II

Now if our Lord is seeking to bring about that good day when the glory of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, how does He expect this consummation to be accomplished. It is well to realize at once that He does not expect it to take place within a day or a month or a year. Just when the kingdom of God shall come in its fullness He did not see fit to tell us. In fact He did not claim to know Himself. There are always those who are trying to pry into this secret, though Jesus Himself declared "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons" He even said that He Himself did not know when the great task should be accomplished. He was sure that it would not be at once. It was going to take time.

Then it is evident that Jesus did not expect the triumph of the kingdom by revolutionary processes. Through the centuries there have been good and earnest people who have expected Jesus to return in person to set up His kingdom. There are those who cling tenaciously to this in our own day, and some of them are beautifully Christlike. But how out of harmony with the teaching of this parable is their faith! To me it seems also out of harmony with reason. The coming in of the kingdom depends absolutely upon Christlike character, but Christlike character is not made by any physical process. I am firmly convinced that God is doing everything within His power to make this a Christlike world right now. If He could accomplish His purpose in any other way I am sure He would have done so long ago. The kingdom of God will never be set up through any sort of revolution.

How, then, is it to come about? It is to be through a process of growth. Growth is a silent force, but it is as mighty as it is silent. The truth of the matter is that the strongest

things are those that are silent. There are many of us who seem to think that the power is in the thunder rather than in the lightning. The men of Jesus' day were drawn away from Him by the noisy clamor of a thousand things. He looked after them sadly and said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." You can never hear anything grow, from a blade of grass to a giant oak, yet growth is the mightiest force on earth. The power of steam or of electricity ^{is a} ~~are~~ puny, pygmy things in comparison with it.

What a little thing, for instance, is an acorn. I can almost carry enough in my pockets to plant sufficient forests to build the cities of half a world. Take the growing power of wheat and corn. We used to raise these two grains on my father's farm. One bushel of wheat would conservatively produce thirty bushels. One bushel of corn would produce one hundred bushels. Suppose you were to take one bushel of wheat and sow it and its product for twenty years, how much wheat would you have? Those of you who have not forgotten your arithmetic will see that we have here a geometric $\frac{30}{20}$ whose ratio is thirty and whose terms are twenty. A bushel of wheat will produce thirty bushels the first year, it will produce 900 the second, it will produce 2,700 the third year, and in twenty years it will produce enough to fill this earth, if it were hollow, 10,995,000 times, and the fraction left over would be enough to feed everybody in the world for millions of years. If you planted a bushel of corn and its product for fifteen years you could fill 32,000,000 worlds like ours with corn. Surely there is no power that we know, so tremendous as growing power, and that power Jesus claims for his kingdom.

III

What is the sphere in which the kingdom of heaven is to grow?

1. It is to grow in the heart of the individual. A baby is a winsome and lovable something. Every gentle and tender heart warms to the appeal of a baby. But what is the chief glory of a baby? Not its innocence, not its beauty, not its helplessness. The chief glory of a baby is that it has a capacity for growth. If it fails to grow, however much it may be loved, however welcome it may have been, at its birth, it changes little by little from a joy into a heartache. We lived next door, years ago, to a home that was gladdened ^{by} with the birth of a little baby. But the days and weeks crept by and the little fellow did not grow, and little by little the sparkle went out of his mother's eye and the laughter went out of her heart. One day a thoughtless woman came to call. She looked at the pitiful little dwarf. "O, your baby doesn't grow at all, does it?" she said. And the mother shrank back as if she had pricked it with a dagger, and said, "O, don't say that, don't say that! I had so hoped that he would grow ~~and~~ ^{it} breaks my heart that he doesn't."

Then suppose he does grow physically, but does not grow mentally. I was invited to a dinner in a certain home years ago. I noticed a rather tall, fairly well made man playing about in the yard. This man had on a checked apron such as he wore, no doubt, when he was two or three years of age. At the age of 21 they could keep nothing else on him. He had grown physically but he was still an utter infant intellectually, and he, too, was a bitter heartache. Then suppose he grows both mentally and physically but does not grow morally. The danger of heart break here

is far greater than when he fails to develop in body and mind. The baby, therefore, that fails to grow is the bitterest of disappointments.

What is the chief glory of him who has just become a follower of Christ? It is not his perfection in character. It is rather ~~than that~~, that he is facing in the right direction and has an infinite capacity to grow. I think that should be the supreme hope of every struggling soul. What a faulty creature was Peter! ^u When he began to follow Jesus and for many months afterward, ^A after he had been with him for some three years, he swore like a trooper and declared with an oath that he had never met the man. Yet in spite of this tragic breakdown, he kept his face toward the front. He kept growing till by and by he became a rock-like character, as Jesus said he would, and I dare say he has been growing far more during these long centuries since he has passed within the veil. What a spiritual infant was ~~born~~ ^{John} when he first set out to be a disciple! He was selfish and hot-tempered and narrow. One day he found a man casting out demons and forbade him because he was afraid he might get ahead of his crowd and cast out more demons than they did. Another day he came, hiding behind his mother's skirts, to ask for the highest seat in the kingdom. How did John ever come to be the apostle of love? He grew. Our chief glory is, that having received into our hearts the seed of the kingdom, we have almost infinite growing power.

2. Not only is the kingdom to grow in the heart of the individual, but in the world as well. Remember it is the purpose of Jesus to establish His kingdom in this world. He is seeking to bring man in all his relationships into harmony with His will. He is moving toward that day when a society of brotherly

men shall conduct their business and home life and pleasures, every human relationship, in accordance with the will of God. Our Lord is never going to rest till this whole world becomes a Christian world.

Now the kingdom of God in the world is to be brought about through men and women like ourselves, working in harmony with God. We bring in that kingdom in two ways. First, by character, by being Christlike. A Christlike man creates an atmosphere in which it is hard for any selfish, any guilty, any unjust thing to live. He creates an atmosphere in which it is hard to hate and easy to love. A young Christian in America was engaged to teach in a Japanese school on the condition that he would not mention the name of Jesus. He promised and kept his word. Yet forty of his pupils met before the year was out to declare their allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Second, the kingdom spreads through contact. When Andrew goes after his brother Simon there are two Christians where there was but one. When Simon so preached that three thousand turned to Christ, the kingdom spreads. It was through contact of one individual who had found Jesus, with another who had not, that caused Christianity to sweep over the Roman Empire like a forest fire.

IV

What then is the call that comes to you and me out of this thrilling and hopeful parable? It indicates the way Jesus Christ is marching and gives you and me the opportunity of marching with Him. It calls our attention to the supreme importance of the direction of life. The biggest question about you and me tonight is not how far have we climbed toward the

heights, nor how far we have dipped toward the depths. It is rather the direction toward which we are traveling. If we are facing in the wrong direction, the more rapidly we grow the more deadly it is for us. But if we are facing in the right direction, there is no limit to what we may become. at last among the tall sons of the morning. Perfection is ahead of us if we only dare to face that way. "For we know not what we shall be but we know when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." To find out the way that God is going and go with Him is the secret of time and of eternity.

The King of the Jews

A WOMAN'S REVENGE

"And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger."
-- Matthew 14:8

Scene

Here is a ghastly sin. It seems all the more horrible because of its beautiful surroundings. A slave enters the banqueting hall of an oriental palace. His face and garments ^{are} reflect with blood. He has a dish in his shaking hands as if he were going to serve the guests. But that is a special dish - it is the head of a man. The lips are parted - the wide-open eyes stare at nothing. The slave puts the dish into the hands of a beautiful girl of high school age, and she in turn gives it to her mother. Herodias seizes it eagerly, gloats over it awhile. Her sensuous and cruel lips smile in triumph. "I told you I would get you," she seems to say to herself, "and I have."

I

This horrible story has a long and interesting background. The man who lost his head, as you know, was named John the Baptist. John had had a brilliant and brief career. The greater part of his life was given to preparation. He spent time in the wilds of the the wilderness where close to nature, and close to nature's God he brooded over the problems of his day and the voice that spoke within his own soul. Day by day it became increasingly clear to him that God was on the point of doing something marvelous for the salvation of the world. He became convinced that the Lamb of God was coming, who was to take away the world's sin, and that he

himself was to be the forerunner.

At last with these great convictions burning like live fire within his heart he could keep silence no longer - he began to prepare the way of the Lord by calling people to repentance. Soon the solitudes of the wilderness were shaken under the tramp of multitudes. He fairly emptied the surrounding cities as the great crowds flocked to hear him. They heard him because he was speaking home to their deepest needs. He was calling upon them to face their sin, and to put it away, and this is a message that when delivered in the power of the Spirit has always met a response, because there is nothing of which we are more sure about ourselves than just this: "We have all sinned and come short of the Glory of God."

Men high and low, rich and poor, are caught under his spell, and thousands received baptism in token of their break with sin. The amazing happenings in the wilderness ~~was~~ ^{were} a theme of discussion in every village and almost in every cottage. Everybody seemed convinced that there were great events brewing. Their hearts were full of expectancy. By and by reports of the preaching of this strange man of the wilderness reached the palace of Herod, and awakened, not only his curiosity, but also his hunger of heart. So much was this the case that he invited John to preach at the Royal Palace.

Now, the inmates of this palace needed some preaching. Everybody knew that. It was a veritable cess pool of rottenness. A few months before this invitation, Herod had paid a visit to his brother Philip, who was then living at Rome. It was a cordial brotherly visit. But while there, he had an affair

with Herodias, his brother's wife. He became infatuated with her. She in her turn became infatuated, if not with him, at least with his position. So they ran away together. (You see it is quite a modern story). Herod's real wife, the daughter of an Arabian King, had to go back home. This led to a war between Herod and his father-in-law a little later. Meantime Herod and his paramour were living together in the palace on the shores of the Dead Sea, living in open and notorious adultery.

There is no doubt that the friends of John Baptist were a bit solicitous when they heard of his invitation to the court of the Tetrarch. They could not ^{but} be ~~but~~ so. Realizing as they did the corruption of the court, and the daring passion for righteousness that belonged to John. It is altogether possible that they gave him some good advice before he set out on his perilous undertaking. They reminded him that all his life had been spent in the backwoods; that he had possibly never visited the city even once, and that preaching in the wilderness and preaching to a royal court were quite different matters. They said, "It was a great opportunity Bro. John, if you will only be tactful. Be sure at least to ~~steer~~ clear of the Seventh Commandment. If you go to talking about that, you will sure^{ly} get on somebody's toes."

But God's real prophets have never been much hindered by the fear of men. We used to have in our Church a man by the name of Peter Cartwright. He was close akin in spirit to John Baptist. Conference was meeting in old McKendree Church in Nashville. Cartwright was appointed to preach in First Presbyterian Church, but some cautious member remembered that Andrew Jackson belonged to that church. Therefore, he was

switched back to McKendrye. Now, just as he got up to preach, the pastor looked up and saw Jackson coming into the church. He was terrified. He dared not let the service go on without warning the preacher. So he plucked him by the coat and whispered to him, "General Jackson is here." Peter Cartwright glared over his glasses and said, "Who is General Jackson? I just want to tell the General unless he repents of his sin, he will go as straight to hell as any guinea negro. The General came forward at the close of the service and took the preacher home to dinner with him, and told him if he had ^{men as} ~~as many~~ loyal men to himself as he was to his Master, he could take the world.

When John had an opportunity to preach to Herod and his paramour, he suited his sermon to their needs. He did not preach to the man in the moon, he talked to those two that were before him. He did not abuse them. He did not bemean them, but he did tell them plainly where they were wrong. It does not require any great courage to say hard and harsh things to a whole congregation, but it takes the highest courage to speak plainly to one or two individuals, especially when these are highly placed, and when these have it in their power to make you or break you so far as this world is concerned.

But John was not a reed shaken by the wind - he had courage of the highest order. Therefore, he went straight to the needs of those to whom he preached. He did not apologize. He did not tell Herod or Herodias that "this hurts me more than it does you." When a man does that he is apt to be thinking more of himself than of those to whom he is speaking. He did not tell them that what they were doing was not expedient, that it was bad politics - that it made them an offense to the people they were ruling - he rather said "It is not lawful. What

you are doing is wrong. What you are doing is a sin against God, and God is not going to hold you guiltless."

Why did John speak like this? It was not to show his own courage. It was not to show his contempt for social position. It never occurred to John that he was courageous. John was like this because he was unselfish, because he cared, because he saw these two traveling the road that he knew must end in desolation and death, and he could not suffer them to travel it without a protest. He himself had nothing to gain - he had everything to lose if his message should be rejected. But he spoke because he wanted to save those two royal sinners to whom he spoke, because he desired that more than he desired to save his own life.

What was the outcome? Herod was deeply stirred. His conscience was enlisted on the side of John. He was made to realize something of the ugliness of his sin, and something of the beauty of holiness. Not only so, but he tried to reform after a fashion. The story says that he did many things. But the tragedy of it was that he did not do the one big thing of repenting of his sin. Years ago we had a lovely spring at home, whose waters became filthy and vile. We discovered the cause - a certain animal had died almost at its fountain source. What was the cure? Not the painting of the fence that shut in the spring, not covering the bottom of the spring with lovely white gravel - the one cure was the removal of the thing of death that was polluting it. And that was the only cure for Herod, and the only cure for you and me. It is not enough for us to preach, for us to be sorry, for us to join the Church. We must reach into our hearts ^{by} ~~for~~ the power of the Spirit, and

*pick up
cave*

take the wretched thing that is making hell on earth for us, and tear it from its place, and fling it down at the foot of the cross, and say, "By the Grace of God, I will die before I will be guilty of that accursed thing again."

But Herod did not do that - he trifled with the truth. He outraged his convictions. He stifled his conscience. This he did so effectively that his eyes went out, and his ears became stopped. A few ^{months} ~~minutes~~ later Jesus was arrested and brought before him. He had been eager for a long time to see Jesus. When his opportunity came, he asked him many things. But Jesus stood utterly silent in his presence. It is one of the most amazing scenes, I think, in all the Bible, - the tender loving Christ standing face to face with the needy sinner, and answering him never a word, because he knows that it will do no good, that he might as well speak to the dead. Surely it is a terrible thing to be awakened by the Spirit of God and ~~you~~ refuse to respond.

Herodias made a different response. She, so far as we can say, was not stirred in the least, except with bitter ^{no doubt she influenced Herod.} resentment. As she heard her sin rebuked, she did not grow red with shame and hot with indignation against the thing that was damning her. She rather grew hot and indignant against the man who was pointing out the thing that was working her destruction. When our sin is rebuked, we usually do one of two things - we either take the side of the prophet and of God against ^w sin, or we take the side of our sin against God. When the physician points out the disease from which you are suffering, you are likely either to side with the physician against your disease, or with the disease against your physician. Herodias clung to her disease and hated her physician. She

resolved that some day sooner or later she would get even with the man who tried to save her from herself. She would have killed him then and there had she had it in her power.

But while she was unable to bring about his death at once, she took the first step toward it by having John cast into prison. That was a disappointing end for such a ^{promising} perplexing service. John delivered his message courageously and in the fear of God. It seemed that nobody repented. There was not a single confession. Nobody applauded. Nobody told him, "That was a great sermon." Instead he was thrown into a dungeon, a dungeon from which he was never to come out alive. There he languished till his friends fell away from him, and ~~he languished~~ till his faith broke for the moment under the strain, ^{then} and he sent to Jesus two of his disciples with that pathetic question, "Art Thou He that shall ^{ever} come, or do we look for another." This man of the open spaces could not understand how the Christ for whom he had suffered the loss of all things could neglect him, as he seemed to be neglected in this dark prison.

Jesus responded to that honest question. He let John know that he was doing just what the Prophets had said that he would do. But he never broke down John's prison door and set him free. His freedom came about in another and more ghastly fashion. There is a big feast in the palace in celebration of Herod's birthday. Herodias believes now that the hour for which she has waited has come. Herod and his guests are now drunk enough to be fairly foolish. Then, Herodias makes her strategic move. She sends in her daughter to dance before Herod, and his court. She dances that lascivious dance that we

have resurrected under the name, first of the Hoochie Koochie, when we had it in our dives or our back streets, and the Salome Dance, in our theatres on the Avenue. Herod is fairly swept off his feet. He promised the dancer anything that she will ask, to the half of his kingdom.

For what does she ask? Some rare orchids such as only the King's garden can grow? A rope of pearls? For some rare gems? No, she asks for the head of John Baptist. Even this half-drunken king and his court are terrified. Herod would like to back out, but he does not. Nevertheless the story reads - for his oath's sake and for the sake of those that sat with him, he commanded it to be given to her. I do not think the oath counted much. That which really counted was the pressure of the crowd. He had surrounded himself with men and women in whose company it was easy to do wrong and hard to do right. It was easy to blaspheme and hard to pray, easy to be cruel and hard to be kind, easy to be filthy and hard to be clean. How about your crowd? The wise man uttered a true word when he said, "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." So Herod gives his word, and a few moments later John's head is reposing in a dish, out of which he might have feasted at the royal table if he had been less loyal to God and his conscience.

III

What a disappointing end! you exclaim. Yes, it is disappointing. And we do not like stories with unhappy endings. We like to see Joseph, in spite of being sold into slavery, end in a palace on the Nile. We love to watch Daniel as, purposing in his heart that he will not defile himself, become the biggest man in Babylon. We love to watch the three

Hebrew children, cast into the firey furnace, come forth without the smell of fire upon their garments. But it doesn't always turn out that way. Many a Joseph dies in chains in spite of his faithfulness to God. Many a Daniel fails to come to a place of prominence and power. And many a loyal soul, cast into a firey furnace, burns to ashes there.

That fact perplexes us oftentimes. We would like for God to pay us in terms of worldly success for being good. Other things being equal, the good man is most likely to succeed, but he doesn't always do so. But even when he fails, he succeeds in the largest and fullest fashion. If you will glance over the pages of history you will find that those who have made the largest contributions to life, those who have done most to bless the world, and to push the continents into new zones of life have been the failures. Whoever failed so dismally as did Jesus? One morning he locked up his shop and went out to set up the Kingdom of God. Three years later he was hanged between two thieves, crying, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" What a failure! And God seemed to do nothing about it. But it is that failure that is the one hope of our poor sinning world at this hour.

What, then, is our business in the light of these facts? It is not to win certain worldly prizes. It is not my business to save a certain number of people. It is not my business to speak in such a fashion as to compel you to repent and turn to God. My business is simply to speak the truth as God gives me to see the truth, and to leave ^{the} results with you and with Him. If there are those that repent and are reborn, I shall be glad,

and I shall continue to give my testimony. If nobody responds, I must still in the fear of God continue to give my testimony. The test that God is going to put to you and me is not how much we have accomplished - it is how loyal we have been to our convictions. To those who will finally count, he does not say, "Ye have been successful," but, "ye have been faithful."

A few years ago a vessel was going to pieces off Cape Hatteras. The life guards were ordered out. One of them, seeing that the wind was to seaward, said to the captain, "We can go out to the wreck, but we can never get back, the wind is against us." And the old captain said to him solemnly, "It is not necessary to get back, it is necessary to go." And that is true for you and me. It is not necessary that we win applause, it is not necessary that we win success, as the world terms success - it is necessary to be true.

OVERESTIMATING OUR POVERTY

"We have here but five loaves and two fishes."

Matthew 14:17

This declaration was born of perplexity. Those who uttered it were obviously worried. Here is the scene. After days filled with hard work Jesus has purposed to go into retirement with his disciples. It is evident that the Master believed in periods of rest and solitude as much as he believed in periods of work. For a really strong religious life solitude is as essential as mingling with the crowds. Now and then I meet a man who tells me he never took a day off in his life. It is my opinion that such men have made a mistake. I have an idea that they would have loved their work and done it better if they had. I have an idea also that they would have been easier to live with if they had. Anyway our Lord and Master certainly knew how to live life to the fullest, and again and again he went into retirement.

Now, it was out of one of these days set aside for rest that our story was born. The spot that Jesus had chosen was an uninhabited and grassy nook upon the shores of Galilee. Both Jesus and his friends looked forward to this picnic. I am sure the disciples were quite eager about it. It would give them a chance to have the Master to themselves a while. This had been impossible in the rather hectic days through which they had been passing. But their hopes were doomed to disappointment. The keel of their boat had scarcely touched the shore till the crowds began to gather. First they came by scores, then by hundreds, then by

the thousands. These troublesome folks had learned of the Master's whereabouts. They at once forgot his needs and thought only of their own.

Naturally his friends were disappointed. But Jesus gave the multitude welcome. As always, he threw himself into the raw wounds of their needs. All day long he taught, and healed, and listened to endless stories of tragedy. Now the day is almost over. But these annoying folks will not leave. They are not merely troublesome they are now becoming a problem. There is nothing here for them to eat. They are hungry. Some of the children are doubtless weeping from hunger already. How are they to be fed? That is what worries the disciples. At least that is one of their worries. Another is the fact that Jesus seems entirely unconscious of what is happening. He is going right on with his work as if the situation were not a bit desperate. Of course, these disciples love their Master. They have no end of admiration for him. But they do not quite trust him. In that they are like ourselves. They feel that he is too starry-eyed. That he is not practical like themselves. Therefore, if the situation is to be saved from disaster they must take it in hand.

I.

What did they propose to do? They came to Jesus with a suggestion that is very like many of our prayers. There are folks still who believe that the purpose of prayer is to inform God of their needs, and of the needs of our world, as if he did not know. And to tell him what to do about it, as if he did not have a plan. Some fancy they can worry God till they get him to go their way and to do their will. So these came with a purely negative suggestion. "Send them away that they may go into the villages round about and buy themselves food." The suggestion you see is put in a positive form. Yet it has nothing constructive about it. All it suggests is a way of escape for the disciples themselves. Here is a

need they say. Let us dodge it ~~while~~ we can.

Now life is constantly bringing us face to face with problems. We are constantly getting into difficult situations where we are sure that something ought to be done. Yet, like these disciples we are prone to seek a way of escape. Sometimes we do this by trying to shift our responsibility to other shoulders. We are sure that something ought to be done, but we are equally sure that we are not the ones to do it. The best that we have to offer is to send those in need away.

Here is a very human story found in the Book of II Kings. There is a well to do farmer who is out harvesting his grain. He has an only son, a little chap who is too young to take part in the work. But he wants to go out to see his father at his toil. He is given permission. But the sun is too hot for him. He is taken suddenly ill, a sun stroke perhaps. Naturally he hurries to his father for help crying, "My head, my head." But the father is too busy to be bothered. Certainly the grain must be harvested before it rains. Therefore, instead of gathering his son in his arms and going in quest of a physician he turns him over to a servant, saying, "Take him to his mother." The end of it was that the boy died.

We are not told how the father felt about this in the after days. But I have an idea that he never forgave himself for trying to shift his responsibility. This is one of the commonest sins of our day. Of course, few of us think of passing the responsibility of feeding and clothing our children to other shoulders. But so often we depend upon others for whatever help they receive morally and spiritually. Though we know that the most important factor in a child's life is religion we leave that weighty matter to others. Sometimes we even forget to cooperate with the faithful teachers in the Church-school who are willing to share our responsibility with us. Let me remind you that your children are your very own. And that you cannot shift that responsibility except at their peril as well as the peril of yourself.

There are times when we try to dodge our responsibility by running. We read of a certain Psalmist who found himself in a situation that bristled with difficulties. He felt life would be easier anywhere else. Therefore he sobbed, "O that I had wings like a dove. How soon would I fly away and be at rest." There was a preacher once named Jeremiah who had an appointment that he did not like in the least. We hear him crying bitterly, "O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place for wayfaring men. That I might go from them." And when Jonah was appointed to ~~Ni-gveh~~ ^{Ni-gveh} he flatly refused to go. "And Jonah rose up to flee from Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." But we can't dodge a responsibility by running. Yet the sad fact remains that all of us undertake it. We stand as these disciples in the presence of tragic need and have nothing constructive to offer.

II.

Why was this the case? Why did these friends have no better suggestion than to send these hungry folks away?

It was not because they were entirely indifferent. It was not because they did not have any desire to help. I believe that almost everybody desires to be of service. There is an instinct for helpfulness in almost every human heart. To be convinced of this, start to moving something about the house. Your books for instance. And that little youngster of yours will want to carry the largest book in the lot. Witness ~~ed~~ those who have returned to England during this terrible war. Actors have gone back from the soft life of Hollywood. They are there because they yearn to help.

In the immortal story that Jesus told of the labors in the vineyard when the landlord went forth at the ninth, eleventh, and twelfth hour of the day and found idlers standing in the market place, the reason for so doing was because no man had hired them. I am quite sure there are tens of thousands that would like to

work in the church if someone would give them a clearly defined something to do. Of course, there are those who still ask that question, black with hate and streaked with murder, "Am I my brother's keeper?" But that is not the rule. The reason you Sunday school teachers are doing what you are doing is because you want to help. The most joyful people in the world are the people who feel they are making some kind of contribution. The most miserable people are the people who know they are not making any contribution. That is the teaching of the Scriptures. It is also the teaching of the greatest scientists. Hucksley says that the shock of uselessness is the greatest shock that can come to a living organism. These disciples therefore did not offer this seemingly selfish and cowardly suggestion because they were indifferent to human need.

Why then, I repeat, this suggestion? It was not because they did not desire to help, but because they felt themselves inadequate. The need was entirely too big for their meager resources. Here were thousands of people to be fed and only five loaves and two fishes upon which to feed them. Of course they felt powerless. To undertake to feed so many on so little seemed to them sheer futility. They appointed a committee to make a survey of the situation. They brought back a report that sounds very much like the report of a modern church committee. It ran something like this: "Whereas we have surveyed the need and find that there are five thousand men to be fed besides women and children; whereas we have taken account of our resources and have found that we only have five loaves and two fishes. Be it resolved that we send the multitude away."

"But," says one fanatical member of the committee, "have you counted up all your resources? I am aware that you have counted the fish and all the loaves, but are these all you have? Have you taken into consideration the goodwill of ourselves, the consecration of those who are willing to help? Doesn't human personality count for something? Then have you counted in our Lord and Master? May be he might be a

bit of an asset in the face of a situation like this. The trouble with you is that you overestimate your poverty. You are rather poor in things, but you are rich in the presence of a present and adequate God."

Now the mistake made by the disciples is blind blunder, one that has been repeated over and over again. The supreme tragedy of the individual, of the church, of our world today, is that so often it reckons without God. So often we face our responsibilities, we carry our burdens, we meet our grim tragedies absolutely alone. This is all the more tragic in the face of the fact that we have a loving God who pervades us as the atmosphere. A God in whom we live, move, and have our being. All the while this God is offering his infinite resources. But we have somehow failed to learn to avail ourselves of that help. There is no tragedy equal to that. Too many of us are trying to get on without God.

III.

Now here was a situation that was certainly headed toward failure. Here was a situation that seemed absolutely certain to end in defeat rather than in victory. Yet, it did not so end. What seemed destined to be collapse was changed into a conquest. How did it come about?

1. These disciples found out that they did not have to meet this trying situation alone. While they were scheming and planning ^{it} ~~there~~ came to them suddenly that their Lord might have some light to throw on the matter. John tells us that himself knew what he would do. As God had a plan for this situation so he has for every situation. Whatever may be your problem--It may be one of sickness. If such is the case God is available for you. He can either bring health out of sickness or he can make even your pain to become a pin. He can change your cross into a crown. C. G. Jung tells us of the folks that consult him about their health, practically everyone over thirty five years of age is suffering because of a lack of a

satisfying religion. Protestantism has not made enough of the relation of religion to health.

May be your problem is one of financial loss. May be it is some other handicap. More likely it is a sense of bewilderment, a puzzling question of what contribution you can make to a world that seems on the point of going to pieces. May be you are benumbed by some sorrow. Whatever your problem, however great your need, this I affirm, that God has the answer. He has a plan for you as an individual. He has a plan for his church. He has a plan for his world. Nothing, however tragic, takes him by surprise. He never gets to the place where there is nothing more that he can do. Remember then if you have failed, if you have come to a door to which you find no key, remember that if you are sold into some kind of slavery as was Joseph, that God has the answer. He can make your very slavery a roadway to a fuller freedom.

2. Not only does God have a plan, but his plan is constructive. He never seeks to help by merely ~~destroying~~. We used to ask a question, "why doesn't God stop the war?" The only answer is that he cannot unless he acts out of character. Of course, the God who created this world could destroy it altogether. He could drop troublesome, bloody Germany and cruel Italy, and self-centered Japan into the sea. But that is ~~not~~ a remedy that is purely negative. It would be as futile so far as bringing about any permanent help as the suggestion of these disciples to send the multitude away. It is useless to send anybody away for two reasons.

First, there is no abiding help except in God. The longer I live the more sure I am that all plans for human betterment that are not founded upon Him and the principles for which He stands are doomed to failure. Whoever you are, however brilliant you may be, however successful, life for you can never arrive if you leave God out of the reckoning. That has been demonstrated in countless millions of desperate lives. The Young Ruler felt the spell of Jesus, but he felt the spell of his riches even more. He went away. But in the facing away from Jesus he did not face a fuller

life. "He went away grieved."

What is true of the individual is true also of the group and of the nation. We have whole populations today that are seeking to save themselves apart from God. They are trusting in certain political theories. They are trusting in force. But all such Godless schemes are doomed to failure. It is written into the constitution of things that there is no getting on without God. "Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keepeth the city the watchman waketh but in vain." I think we can agree this morning that there is no answer to man's problem apart from God.

Second, they need not depart not only because away from God there is no answer, but because God does have the answer. This God is adequate to our needs. He is saying to us in our perplexity, "My grace is sufficient for thee." He is telling us in our weakness that he is able to make all grace abound unto us that always having all sufficiency we may abound unto every good work. He is our hope and there is none other. "And now Lord what wait I for my hope is in Thee." "There is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." He has the answer and He alone.

IV.

But how shall we avail ourselves of our present, eager, and sufficient God? If he surrounds us with his love and power and sufficiency as the water surrounds the vessel, why then are our lives so often empty and futile? It is because so few of us learn how to avail ourselves of the resources that our Lord is infinitely eager to put at our disposal. This I think is our greatest loss and greatest grief. While we sweat and strain under our weary load He is saying all the while, "Do not I count for something." "Son, thou art ever with me and all that I have is thine." It is his grief that we will not receive what he longs to give.

How then did these disciples avail themselves of the power of their Lord and thus meet the problem that confronted them? The answer is so simple that we will

not believe it. They met the situation through cooperation with God. The relationship between God and man is one of mutual dependence. When Paul undertook to tell how Christianity spread over the pagan world he did not account for it as man's work alone, nor as God's work alone. He accounted for it in this fashion. "I planted, Apollos watered, but it was God that made it grow." That is, the pagan world was changed. A winter day changed by spring because a few men cooperated with God. This cooperation is a necessity. That means--

1. God is absolutely dependent upon man. We speak of God as omnipotent. That is true in a sense. In another sense it is not true. God limited his own omnipotence when he created you and me. By making us free he limited his own power. Because he made us free there are evils that we commit that God cannot prevent. If you want to go from this place to be dishonest, to steal from your neighbor; if you want to go from this place to commit murder, God cannot prevent it. He has trusted men so fully as to leave him free.

Because man is free God cannot save this world without him. God cannot make a single group, a single community, a single state to be good and true without the consent of those concerned. Not only so, but he cannot make the weakest man in the world honest. He cannot make him clean against his will. All the eternal God can do as he stands before the door of the weakest soul alive is to knock. He will never encroach upon the sacred precincts of personality. Whether he comes into your life or not depends upon your own consent. "He is the vine we are the branches. But the vine cannot bear one single grape except through the branch."

2. If God is dependent upon us so we are dependent upon him. "Apart from me," he said, "ye can do nothing." But as we cooperate with God then the impossible becomes possible. We have discovered that in some measure in the realm of the spiritual. We have discovered it somewhat more fully in the realm of the physical. All the powers that we use today, telephone, electricity, were available for Abraham. Science has just discovered U 238. One pound of it is equal to five million pounds of coal.

One pound is equal to three million gallons of gasoline. These amazing powers were not discovered through defiance of God's laws but through obedience to them. I am quite sure that the God who made such vast powers available to us in the realm of the physical has not left us impotent in the realm of the spiritual. Powers beyond our dreams are ours if we learn the technique of cooperation.

How shall we learn it? As practiced by these disciples it is very simple. Of course as giving this as an example we may suffer some oversimplification. Yet, the whole story is told in this simple passage. What the disciples had to do was to put their resources, all their resources, into the hands of Jesus, and to give what he gave back to the crowd. That is the answer for us. When we give all, he gives all. "He that spared not his own son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with Him freely give us all things?" There is absolutely no measuring the power of a fully dedicated life.

My message is ended. I am praying that some of us at least may be eager enough and courageous enough to act upon it. May be you are a bit desperate. May be life has fallen into ruins. I am thinking of that rather familiar story that has been told before. It is a story of a man with a theoretical religion. His wife died of a lingering disease. He loved her devotedly. In desperation he prayed for her earnestly. But she slipped away none the less. He felt that God had let him down. He became bitter. Then reached the wretched conclusion that there was no God at all. One night in sheer bitterness he printed on a sheet of paper in big letters this tragic sentence. "God Is Nowhere." The next morning his little girl found that sentence and rushed to her father with shining face and sparkling eyes. She said "Look what this paper says, 'God is Now Here.'" You can read life either way. If you read it in the little girl's way you will read it truly, and you will read it in a fashion that will bring you the only real answer to life's need. May God help you to do this.

OVERESTIMATING OUR POVERTY

"We have here but five loaves and two fishes."

Matthew 14:17

Jesus was a strenuous worker. He declared, "My father worketh even till now and I work." But it is evident that Jesus believed no more in working than he did in resting. It would be interesting for you~~r~~ to take the gospel of ~~the~~ *Luke* ~~and~~, for instance, and go through it and see how consistently Jesus went into retirement for a day of rest. Now and then a man boasts to me that he has never taken a holiday in his life. I doubt if such a one is to be congratulated on his wisdom. The chances are that he would have been easier to live with and done his work better if he had taken a day off now and then. Jesus knew how to handle life I think we will agree as well as any man that ever lived. He, therefore, not only worked, but went again and again into retirement.

This day was to be a day of rest. Jesus had gone with his disciples for a picnic. The spot that they had chosen for their outing was a bit of grassy shore by the Lake of Galilee. I can imagine the disciples looked to this day with great enthusiasm. They were eager for a variety of reasons, not the least of which ~~they~~ *was a desire* ~~wanted~~ to have the Master to themselves for a little while. The days before had been a bit strenuous. They had had too little time alone with their great Friend. But now apart from the crowd they were to have Him for a whole ~~today~~ to themselves.

But their plans miscarried. The day was not a day of rest but of work. They were busy, I daresay, even beyond the ordinary.

This was the case because the crowd had discovered their plans. These were as eager to be with Jesus as the disciples themselves. Therefore the boat in which they were sailing to their destiny had no sooner touched the shore than the people began to gather. First they came in straggling groups of twenty, then in hundreds, then thousands. Soon there was a vast multitude. They came each with his own story to tell. Each with his own pressing need, his own heavy burden. And Jesus with his usual self-forgetfulness gave himself to ministering to them without reserve. He threw himself with abandon under every man's burden. The disciples did not have him to themselves for a single moment. They, along with their Master were busy all day. And now the night is coming on and these troublesome creatures will not leave. By this time they are hungry, some of the children are crying. And ~~the disciples and~~ these friends of Jesus are thoroughly worried.

This is the case not only because they have lost their holiday but because this crowd has become a problem. Something ought to be done about them. But the Master seems blissfully unconscious of the pressing need. He is going right ahead with his preaching and his teaching. Blissfully unaware, so it seems, that the day is far spent and that the crowd is hungry. These disciples loved this Master for himself. They had no end of admiration for him. But they do not quite trust him. They feel he is a bit too starry-eyed. He is not quite practical. Therefore they feel that unless the day is to end in tragedy instead of triumph they themselves must take the situation in hand. It is evident that Jesus is not going to do anything. So they come forward with a kind of prayer. It is such a one as we often pray. They inform the Lord as to the situation and tell him what He ought to do about it.

I.

What is their suggestion?

This,—"Send the multitude away." You notice that it is purely negative. It gives no promise of help to the multitude. It only offers a way of escape for themselves. Here they are face to face with human need. Here is a situation where somebody ought to act and act ^{con}structively. But their one thought is how they themselves may escape. It is so human and so modern that it is quite as new as the last broadcast we heard just before coming to church. We, as these of the long ago often seek to escape from responsibilities we do not care to meet.

1. Sometimes we escape by merely standing ^{from} under. We follow the old time custom of passing the buck. Here is a very human story taken from the Bible. It is harvest time. The day is hot and wistful. A busy and successful father who is a farmer is out harvesting his grain. He has one small boy. This boy is eager to go out into the fields to be with his father. But the sun is too hot for him. He is taken suddenly ill. Naturally he hurries to his father saying, "My head, my head." But the father is busy. Of course the grain has to be harvested. Therefore instead of gathering his son in his arms and hurrying to a physician he puts him in care of a servant and says, "Take him to his mother." He is too busy. He has other matters more important. Therefore we read that the child died at high noon.

I wonder what that father thought in the after days. I wonder if he did not sometimes say with another father who shirked his responsibility, "My son, my son, would God I had died for thee." Of course there are not many parents who neglect the physical welfare of their children. But the same cannot be said of their religious welfare. We know, all of us I think, that the most important factor in the life of our children is religion. There is nothing so needful as the right kind of religion. But too often we are so busy with other affairs that we give no attention to this worthwhile matter. Many parents who would not think of depending upon the community for the physical needs of their children leave to mere

chance their deeper spiritual needs. We sometimes stand from under the responsibilities that confront us in our own home.

We have this same tendency in the world without the home. There are few people in our city that do not believe that the Church with all her faults stands for those values without which the individual and the nation cannot live. We desire a clean city. A city where our boys and girls will have the best possible chance to grow into God-fearing men and women. But we leave the responsibility of the building of such a city to others. We have a keen realization of the needs of our church. While realizing something of the contribution that it is making we realize that that contribution could be far greater. But we refuse to take the task of making it so upon ourselves. When our young people throng us demanding an opportunity to attend Sunday school, the best we can say is, "send them away."

2. Sometimes we dodge our responsibility by actually taking to our heels. A member of my church in Birmingham was having domestic difficulties. "My best friend," he said, "is my hat. When things grow too stormy I grab my hat and run away." That is all right in limits. But some run clean away to the divorce court. Shirking responsibilities by running is an old device. It is as old as it is futile because we can never get away from an obligation by running away. Yet we have all felt like doing this again and again.

We find this longing expressed by some of the greatest prophets. Jeremiah once had an appointment that he did not like. "I wish," he said, "I had in the wilderness a lodging place that I might leave ~~my leave~~ my people and go from them." Here was another prophet named Jonah. He is assigned to the city of Nineveh. He does not like Nineveh. Therefore, "he fled to Tarshish." Here is the Psalmist in a situation that bristles with difficulties. He does not feel that he has the gallantry to meet those difficulties. Therefore he wants to get away. "O that I had wings like a dove," he cries desperately, "for then I would fly away and be at rest."

Often we feel that life would be far easier if we were anywhere else except in the prosaic place that we are, facing the impossible problems that we face. So as these disciples we want to pass our responsibilities to others or run off and leave them altogether. The best that these friends of Jesus have to offer is this,—"Send the multitude away."

II.

Why did they take this attitude?

It was not because of any failure on their part to realize the need. They saw with clear eyes that this multitude needed help. Their refusal therefore to be of any service was not because they saw no use in trying to serve. It was not because there was no need. There may be many things upon which we cannot agree this morning, but upon one fact, I think, there is universal agreement. And that is this:-Ours is a needy world. There are personal and individual needs. There are domestic needs. There are social and national needs. Something ought to be done for our desperate world. All of us I think are sure of this.

Neither did these disciples want to send the multitude away because they were indifferent to their needs. They were really eager to help. I may be too optimistic, but I believe that the vast majority of men and women in our day really want to help. I do not think that as a rule we are indifferent to human suffering. We are not altogether calloused to human need. Those who are a part of suffering London today are not trying to escape their part of the hardship. They count it as their right to get under the burden with their fellows. These disciples too were willing to help.

What then was the matter? Why send the multitude away? The need was there. They would like to have helped. But they did not see how they could. They felt inadequate. They looked over the huge crowd then counted their resources and found them as they thought pitifully inadequate. They made a survey and said, "There are

thousands to be fed and we have here but five loaves and two fishes." "But is that all you have? Is there no wealth except that you hold in your hands? Are the capacities of this church measured solely by its material resources. Does not the faith, the goodwill, the consecration of you who are listening to me count for something? Five loaves and two fishes, you say, haven't you left out your Master? Is it not possible that he might count for something?" Here we come to the saddest tragedy of the individual and of the group. So often we reckon without God. Having recited our creeds we stagger under our heavy burdens alone as if God were either unable or unwilling to help us. These disciples were rich in the possession of Jesus Christ. But they did not count on Him at all. Do you? It is impossible to be entirely destitute so long as God is ours. We overestimate our poverty when we reckon without God. These disciples who were going to carry the load themselves and were going to fail at it found the day of defeat changed into victory because of the presence of their living Lord.

III.

How did this come about?

1. While they were planning and scheming in a futile sort of way they discovered to their amazement that their trying situation had not taken Jesus by surprise. As John tells the story he says, "He himself knew what he would do." Then the whole burden of the responsibility was not on the shoulders of the disciples, Jesus had a plan. He has a plan in your life. Whatever may be your burden, whether it is sickness or loss or loneliness, God is in the midst of your situation. He has a plan for you as an individual. A plan that if you fall in with it will work to your eternal good. He has a plan for his world. This earthquake that has overtaken civilization has not taken God by surprise. He has a plan for bringing good out of our present evil.

By this I do not mean that everything that happens is according to the will of

God. Nothing could be further from the truth than that. There are many wrongs that are taking place that God cannot prevent without acting out of character. But though God cannot prevent the evil that has come into your life or your world, believe me he is not defeated by it. God could not prevent Joseph's brothers from selling him into slavery. But by the cooperation of Joseph he could make that slavery issue into a larger freedom. God could not prevent his Sons' dying on the cross. But he could make that cross the supreme magnet of mankind. Whatever tragedy has come to us, whatever problem is ours God is in the midst of it with a definite plan that will make it work for our good if we only give him a chance.

2. Not only does God have a plan, but it is a constructive plan. Notice again the plan of the disciples. It is purely negative. "Send the multitude away." But Jesus answered, "they need not depart." Why not? For two very good reasons.

First, they need not depart because there is no help apart from God. If our infinite Lord does not have the answer there is no answer. I think intelligent men are coming to see this more and more. Every step we take away from him we take not toward life but toward death. All our schemes for human betterment that leave God out are doomed to failure. "Except the Lord build the city they labor in vain that build it. Unless the Lord keep the city the watchman waketh but in vain." We are learning through our own tragic experiences the truth of the declaration of Jesus, "Apart from me ye can do nothing."

They need not depart in the second place because our God is present and is adequate to our needs. "And now Lord what wait I for my hope is in Thee." And there is no sure hope anywhere else. "There is none other name under heaven whereby we may be saved. But he is our sufficiency. He is able to make all grace abound that always having all sufficiency in all things we may abound in every good work." There is no need that he cannot meet, no burden that he cannot help us to carry.

This is more than mere theory. It is the experience of countless millions. There are some of you now listening who have tested it in times of stress and struggling and found Him abundantly equal to your needs. There is a story of a husband and father who lost his wife. He had prayed for her recovery after a fashion. He had all-but demanded her at God's hands. But his wife had died. His mistaken faith went to pieces and he became for a time an embittered atheist. One night he printed in big letter^s these words, "God Is Nowhere." The next morning his little girl who shared the simple faith of her mother found that bit of paper and rushed with it with shining face and sparkling eyes to her father. "Look what I found," she says, "God Is Now Here." That is the message of this story. Our adequate God is now here, available, equal to our deepest need.

3. Finally, these disciples discovered the technique by which they could make the power of God available. How have we learned to use so many of the powers that were hidden in our visible world from our primitive fathers. The ether waves were just as eager to carry their message as they are today. Electricity was just as willing to serve them as it is to serve us. But they did not know how to use it. Science is on the point of learning to explode the atom. They will thus make available new powers called neuranium. One pound is as strong as five million pounds of coal or three million gallons of gasoline. But we learn to use these powers not by defying them, but by obeying them. "We have here but five loaves and two fishes," these disciples said sobbingly. "Bring them to me," was the answer of Jesus. God is absolutely dependent upon us. He is the vine we are the branches. The vine can bear no fruit without the branches. We are also dependent upon him. It is when we give him ourselves; it is when we cooperate with him that the impossible becomes possible. It is when we cooperate with him that we are able to do, not perchance all that we long to do, but we are able to do even better. We are able to do all that he purposes for us.

If the feeding of five thousand with these few loaves and fishes seems incredible I can tell you a story that is **actually history** that is far more so. Here is a little

handful of ordinary men and women going for a service to the upper room of the temple. Count them, there is little more than a hundred. They are part of a city and of a nation that hate and despise them. They are a conquered province of a great Roman world that seems hopelessly dead spiritually.

"On that hard pagan world secret lust fell

made human life a hell."

But this little handful of people cooperated with God and went forth to face stark impossibilities girded by a sense of his presence and his power. And what happened? That world was remade. They breathed upon the morally dead world of that era like a springtime. And what everybody said was impossible became possible. We are dependent on God, He is dependent upon us. Ours is a needy day, a desperate day. But we can do all things through Christ who gives us strength.

Simon's Adventure of Faith

Lord if it is you, bid me come to you on the water. Matthew 14:28

We are indebted to Matthew alone for this story of Simon's daring adventure. Being so unique it has naturally aroused a good many questions. But to this I think we can all agree--First, the story is quite consistent. I cannot recall another incident in the New Testament that in my opinion gives a more accurate picture of this impulsive and fascinating man. Second, though the sea upon which Simon here adventured is different from the ones we must dare, the same empowering faith is as essential for us as it was for him.

Part I

Look at the background. Having commanded his disciples to get into their boat and go to the other side of the lake, Jesus himself retires into the silence of the hills for prayer. It was then late afternoon. Here in communion with his Father, our Lord loses all sense of time. The sun sets, the shadows gather, the stars steal into the night sky. But in the consciousness of the light within him, he is unmindful of the night. The very language of the story awes the heart and sets the soul to dreaming. "When evening came he was there alone".

"O Sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee
The silence of eternity,
Interpreted by love."

The heavenly serenity of this scene is the more impressive because of its sharp contrast with the plight of the disciples. In obedience to their Lord's command, they had set out hopefully on their journey. But they were perhaps not half way across the lake before a

sudden squall swept down upon them. The good humored sea was soon whipped into a towering rage. To make matters worse the wind was from the shore to which they were struggling. Soon all progress was stopped. Bend at the oars how they might, they were getting nowhere.

Some on board were not men of the sea. Therefore not being accustomed to such dangers they were thoroughly frightened. Even to those who had followed the sea from their youth the situation was so fraught with peril that they saw little chance of escape except by going with the wind back to the shore they had just left. But this would be to disobey their Lord. Therefore they continued to fight with frantic futility.

While they thus battled with outward dangers there were inner foes that were equally threatening. Had not Jesus commanded them to cross the lake? Did he not know that he had laid upon them a task that in their own strength they could not perform? Why then did he seem utterly indifferent? Why did he not come and change what was impossible into the possible? By such questions all of them were perplexed. All of them were tormented by a sense of frustration and defeat.

Then as if in answer to their unspoken prayers, they saw their Master coming to them walking on the sea. At this all their lesser fears were driven out by one overmastering fear. If a stormy sea had frightened them, this haunted sea was more frightening still. Therefore they cried out in utter terror. At once their Lord spoke to them. "Be of good cheer, it is I. Be not afraid". (I like the Authorized Version here)

The reaction of the disciples to this word was at once spontaneous and instant. Their fears vanished. They felt the relief that comes from having escaped a deadly danger. They at once rejoiced in a sense of security. "Since he has come", they said to themselves, "we

are now safe". But for Simon this security was not enough. The coming of his Lord has stirred within his adventurous soul a longing to do the impossible.

We all have a capacity to influence others. We all move our fellows to do the good or the bad. Jesus had this power to a superlative degree. One day, for instance, when the disciples came upon him at prayer, though they had been seeing men pray all their lives, though most of them had themselves been men of prayer all their lives, yet they felt they had never seen real prayer before. Here was something so beautifully genuine that it made their own prayer life look shoddy. But if they were rebuked by such praying they were also heartened. "We have never prayed like ~~this~~", they said in their awed hearts, "but by his help we can." Hence their prayer, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Even so in his longing to do the impossible Simon prayed, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water." We are not told what Simon's friends thought of this prayer. Their response was doubtless quite varied. Perhaps Judas looked at him with a touch of scorn and said, "There you go losing your head as usual. You know quite well that it is not possible for you to walk on the sea. Even if it were, what would be the good of it?" A very practical man is Judas. He prides himself on keeping his feet on the ground. He seems to have had no scales for weighing life's finer values. Hence he saw even the beautiful deed of Mary in anointing her Lord ^{as only} ~~to be~~ sheer waste.

But if the others did not scorn, they still did not approve. I can imagine that Brether Andrew was frightened. He might have taken Simon by the arm and said, "Steady now, Simon. You can hardly stay on top of the water as it is. Let well enough alone." But it is by refusing to let well enough alone that we make all our progress. I am thinking of a congregation that was having shameful difficulty in raising sufficient money for their bare running

expenses. But a daring pastor led them into a ^{the} Missionary adventure. So what? The old squeaking pump that they once had to prime was changed into an artisan well.

But whatever Simon's friends thought of ^{his} prayer, this is a certainty. Jesus was pleased by it. Being sometimes accused of madness himself, he seems to have had a peculiar fondness for such kindred souls.

When, for instance, a mother came to him asking healing for her daughter, his reply was so blunt as to seem downright shocking. "It is not fair", he said, "to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." If I had received an answer like that I fear I would have gone away utterly discouraged if not resentful. But at ~~this~~ shocking answer the face of this mother glowed like a sunrise. "Yes, Lord", she answered, "yet even the dogs ~~eat~~ the crumbs that fall from their master's table." "One crumb from your hand", she seems to say, "will be enough for my need and for ^{that of} my afflicted daughter". At that Jesus answered with boundless enthusiasm, "Great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire". Even so Jesus answered Simon's mad prayer. He did so with one word, "Come".

Part II

What was Simon's reaction, now that he had prayed himself into a position where he must act? He might have answered, "Lord, that "come" of yours seems a very small word. Is that all you have to offer? Can you not strengthen it by a few guarantees?" But the Lord who said, "Let your yes be yes and your no be no" will practice the same himself. This "come" expresses at once his willingness and his power to help. Beyond this not even he can go.

When a certain nobleman came one day asking that Jesus heal his sick son, our Lord responded by saying, "Go your way, your son shall live." What would we have done under such circumstances? I'm

afraid I should have continued to tug at his sleeve saying, "I don't feel like he is going to get well. Can't you make that promise a little stronger?" But that is as strong as even God can make it.

"What more can he say than to you he hath said?"

The answer is nothing.

Trusting in the sufficiency of this "come", Simon kicked the boat from under his feet and stepped onto the water. That is faith. Faith that is real always goes into action. If his conduct looks mad it is because we are such slaves to the visible. On what was Simon depending before he stepped upon the water? He was depending on a few planks and his own skill in manning an oar. On what does he depend as he kicks the boat from under him? He is depending upon him in the hollow of whose hand the seas rage and rear. Thus by faith, Simon was able to do the impossible. This he did to his own joy, to the inspiration of his fellows and to the approval of his Lord.

Part III

But this victorious adventure of Simon did not last. Soon his triumph begins to change into tragedy. Simon is sinking. How disappointing--yet, how human! I daresay we have all had similar experiences. "I almost lost my footing", said a psalmist of the long ago. "Amen", says John the Baptist, remembering how he had turned to Jesus with the ^{cr}ashing fear that his devoted loyalty had been no more than a mistake.

But even in the midst of his failure, Simon was a helpful word for us. When he realized that he was sinking, he did not make a frantic effort to return to the boat. No more did he, in his pride, refuse to face his failure. He might have said, "If I call for help all these friends of mine will say 'I told you so'". He did not even dare to undertake to see it through on his own strength. Instead he turned once more to Jesus.

He turned in prayer. It was a definite prayer. Simon did not here pray for the whole world. He did not even pray for his friends. He prayed for himself alone. It was a brief prayer. If we are listless and indifferent, it is easy to pour out a whole Niagra of words in the name of prayer. But when we are eye to eye with tragedy we come at once to the point. It was a prayer of confession and ^{of} faith. "Lord, save me", he cried in desperate earnestness. Now what? Immediately Jesus reached to grip the helpless hand of his fainting friend and ^{lift} led him to safety.

Part IV

Now when Simon was once more at his Master's side, our Lord asked him a question. It was not exactly the expected question. He did not ask, "Why did you undertake the impossible? Why did you not play it safe as did your friends?" There ~~he~~ ^{Simon} was looking like a half-drowned rat, while not one of the others had even wet his feet. "We didn't even try", they might have boasted. But for that they were not approved. Among those sure to receive the well done of our Lord, there will not be one whose ^{sole} ~~and~~ boast is, "I didn't even try".

"Why did you doubt?" our Lord questioned. "Why did you surrender your faith?" Jesus's primary purpose in this question is not to show how Simon came by his doubt. It is rather to affirm the utter madness of that doubt. He is asserting that faith in God is always and forever completely sane. The most intelligent something that any man can do is to trust God.

But how did Simon lose his faith? The answer is obvious. He took his eyes off Jesus and fixed them upon his difficulties. "When he saw the wind", he no longer saw his Lord. I imagine that his friends might have hastened his defeat by pointing out his dangers. "Look at that big wave", Thomas might have shouted. Simon looked, lost his footing and began to sink.

Had Simon announced his theme for his Sunday's sermon, he would have named it "The Problem of the Wind" or "The Problem of the Waves". Looking thus at his problems he might have helped his hearers as well as himself to sink. This does not mean that our problems and difficulties should be ignored. But we are to see them in the presence of God. When we become more conscious of them than we are of our Lord, then failure is sure.

Years ago I was sent to a church that had received what amounted almost to a death blow. A much loved minister had seemingly become glaringly unfaithful. He had to be dismissed from the ministry. Many believed that he had been grossly mistreated. Everybody had an opinion-- almost everybody seemed angry at everybody else. As the pastor I was discouraged almost to the point of desperation. Never Had I seen a more boisterous sea. But while almost the whole congregation seemed hopeless there was one man who refused to despair. He too saw our difficulties, but he saw them with the eye of faith. So what? Within a few weeks there was such a wonderful change that it could only be explained in terms of God.

Of course Simon could have failed just as disastrously had he fixed his eyes on his advantages. Suppose he had said to himself as he walked on the water, "Thank God I am not as other men. I can see this through under my own power". His failure would have been just as sure. On the heels of the Soviet Sputnik there came this boastful word. "The universe has passed under new management". What was our response to this devilish boast? Sad to say, we responded very much as Pagans and as childish Pagans at that. We dashed off in embarrassment to the laboratory to build a bigger and better Sputnik.

But while we are not to ignore scientific progress, it is of infinitely greater importance that we do not ignore faith in God. Science

does not have the answer. If so, how strange is it that at the very moment ^{that} scientific knowledge ^{has reached} ~~at~~ a new climax, our sense of futility ^{and} insecurity has also reached a new climax.

Multitudes seem to have taken the Soviet boast about a new management seriously. But there is nothing new in that boast. New managers have been coming on the scene ever since the birth of despotism. Here is one of those new managers camped with his army at Lachish, just 35 miles from the defenseless City of Jerusalem. He write a letter to Hezekiah, the king of that city. In this letter, speaking for the king's own good, he warns him not to look to God for deliverance. He is to exercise some commonsense and realize that since he has taken over, God can do nothing to help.

But Hezekiah could not accept that boast. So we read that he spread the letter out before the Lord in believing prayer. Then came an answer through Isaiah. "Because you have prayed to me...this is the word that the Lord has spoken. She despises you, she scorns you--the virgin daughter of Zion". How did it end? The manager, with a few others, lost his job.

"And the widows of Ashur are loud in the wail
And idols are broken in the temple of Baal
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord."

This question on the part of Jesus is an affirmation, I repeat, of the supreme sanity of faith. There are many reasons why we doubt. But not one of these reasons is justified by the facts. "Why did you doubt?" Under some circumstances Simon could have talked at length. But in the presence of his Lord, he was utterly dumb. Faith in God is always sane. It is always justified.

Not only is faith sane. It gets results. It gets results when all else fails. A thundering Goliath can be very terrifying. But

giants have a way of falling before a weaker David who goes to battle girded by the power of faith. In fact it was the conviction of Jesus that while without faith, failure and defeat were inevitable, with it every worthwhile victory was a certainty. "All things are possible to him that believeth". By faith we can help our torn and tortured world. By faith we can surely find the highest usefulness for ourselves. Therefore with the assurance that faith makes the impossible possible we can all join heartily in this prayer, "Lord I believe, help thou my unbelief."

THE MOTHER

Matthew 15:28

"O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

The text is a shout. It is an irrepressible cry of joy. This woman seems to have delighted Jesus beyond measure. She seems to have filled his heart with hallelujahs. Of course these words brought joy unspeakable to the woman herself. They told her that her petition had been granted. They told her that she had won healing and enrichment for her daughter. But the one whose joy was supreme in this hour of triumph was the Lord Himself. He is so much more eager to give than we are to receive. Hence this spontaneous shout of victory: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

I.

Who was this woman that brought such joy to Jesus Christ and such victory to herself?

1. She was a mother. Therefore, we are not surprised to find her a great lover. For real motherhood is largely the same in all times and climes. Whether she lives in the Occident or lives in the Orient matters little. It matters little whether she is a queen mother hugging to her heart a prime child or an outcast Hagar breaking her heart over an outcast Ishmael. Whoever she is and wherever she is, her love is about the most divine and Christlike something that this world has been privileged to know.

2. She was a mother with a broken heart. She had a daughter who, while once a joy, had become a sorrow. Years ago this daughter had come like a flood of sunshine into her life. But now she is a bringer of shadows. Her coming had been the signal for the bursting of springtime upon the hills of her heart. But now that springtime has changed into winter with its withered flowers of hope and of beauty. This mother is in tears today, and the secret of her tears is the daughter that she loves better than she loves her own life. For did she not love, she would not suffer as she now suffers. But since she loves she cannot but sob.

Just what was wrong with this daughter we do not know. The story says that she was a demoniac. Maybe this possession had brought to her physical disease. Maybe it had stolen the roses from her cheek and the elasticity from her step. Possibly it had brought some mysterious mental malady that had dethroned reason and tumbled her mental powers into ruins. More likely still, it was some moral evil. Maybe sin had got its defiling hands upon her. Maybe her girlish feet were beginning to walk in the path of her whose feet take hold on hell. But whatever form this evil took, this at least we know - it was wrecking the daughter and breaking her mother's heart.

And you will agree at once that this mother is by no means in a class to herself. There are tens of thousands among us who can enter into sympathy with her. There are many, thank God, who can rejoice over their sons and daughters with joy unbounded. But there are others who cannot but grieve. There are others who are compelled to sob out the names of their daughters morning after morning and night after night into the ear of God only. When a young woman whose identity was unknown was found dead in one of our cities recently, scores and scores of mothers hurried to the morgue in the fear that the dead girl might be her own. The mother of our text was a mother with bitter and biting grief. And the name of such mothers that live among us today is legion.

II.

Now what did this mother of the long ago do with her heartache? What did she do with the burden that she did not feel able to carry? Answer: She brought it to Jesus. She came and fell down in His presence and cried "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon." Notice she did not pray "Have mercy upon my daughter". She said "Have mercy upon me." She ~~had~~ identified herself with her child. She was bleeding through her wounds. She was sobbing through her tears. She was suffering in her sin. She came saying "Have mercy upon me."

And we cannot but admire the wisdom of this Gentile woman. She did then what every mother ought to do. She did what every father, what every burdened man and every woman on the wide face of the earth is privileged to do and ought to do. "In everything" says Paul, "with prayer and supplication ~~and~~ with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." It is our privilege to bring all our cares, all our joys, all our sorrows to Him. We have a right to come to Him with the big things and with the little things. Everything that concerns us concerns Him. We are invited to make every interest of our lives a matter of prayer.

Not only is it our privilege to pray, not only is it our privilege to tell Jesus about our joys and our sorrows, our hungers and our thirsts, not only is it our privilege to tell Him about the needs of ourselves and the needs of our friends and of our Church, it is our solemn duty. Prayer is the mightiest force in the world, and we have no right to fail to use it. "As for me", said the old prophet long ago, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." The mother who refuses to pray, the father who refuses to pray, any man who refuses to pray is not only cheating himself, he is not only robbing those for whom ~~he~~ should pray, but he is sinning against God. This woman, then, who brought the needs of her child to Jesus did the wise thing, and she did the right thing. She was doing just what she ought to have done. And when ~~you~~ make your home and your loved ones objects of prayer, ~~you~~ are not only exercising a great privilege, but ~~you are~~ fulfilling a great obligation.

III.

What response did Christ make to this appeal?

The answer to this question is a bit bewildering. Everyone who reads the story thoughtfully must feel somewhat disappointed at the first. Here is a thoroughly appealing prayer. It even stirs our compassion. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a demon." There is longing in the cry. Every word comes from a ~~her~~ loving heart, baptized in tears. And what answer does this tender Savior make? What is the reply of Him who came to seek and to save that which is lost? He made no answer at all. Thus it stands written: "He answered her not a word."

Now that is not the way we expected this New Testament story to read. Yet why be surprised? I am speaking to a Christian audience this morning. But if the history of our prayer life were written, it would read, ~~I~~ fear, very much like the first part of this woman's story. We have been saying prayers since childhood. We can hardly remember a day when we did not say some kind of ~~a~~ prayer. But what response have we had? What answer has come from the Christ to whom we have made our appeal? For many the answer may be summed up in this one tragic sentence: "He answered not a word."

Because this is true prayer has ceased to be a vital part of the program of vast numbers even of those who are accustomed to think of themselves as Christians. How few there are among us who give prayer its rightful place of importance! Too few of us consider it a mighty means for the winning of the lost. Too few think of it as the greatest of all forces for the bringing in of the Kingdom of God. Certainly it is the mightiest weapon that can possibly be put into our hands. Yet many of us never employ it. It holds in its hands energies transcending that of electricity or radium. But we allow it to go unused. We have failed to test its efficacy. We have never prayed conqueringly. The outcome of our praying has so often been this: "He answered not a word." Therefore many of us have ceased to make any serious effort at effective, prevailing prayer.

IV.

Why did Jesus fail to give an immediate answer to this woman? The fact that she was a Gentile seems to have been a hindrance. But it certainly was not the one of supreme importance. This is evidenced by the fact that this difficulty was overcome as soon as the conditions of prevailing prayer were met. We feel safe, therefore, in saying that the real cause for Christ's delay was not the nationality of the petitioner, but the state of her heart. There are many hindrances to ~~the~~ prayer. Some one or more of these hindrances may have made an instant answer to her prayer impossible.

8

1. She may have failed for lack of ^avictorious faith. She had some faith or she would never have come to Jesus. But she may not have had sufficient faith to claim the blessing for which she longed. Faith is

the hand that takes. Christ cannot give what we will not take. That means He can only give in proportion to our faith. Whatever faith this woman may have had at the beginning of her prayer, it is evident that it was vastly increased before she came to her final victory. We feel safe, therefore, in saying that it was at the earliest moment possible that Christ said: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

2. It is possible that her answer was delayed for lack of whole-hearted earnestness. For however earnest she was at the beginning, we cannot fail to see that she became more earnest before she obtained her request. But whether this was the cause of her failure or not, of this we may be sure - that it is the secret of much useless and ineffective praying on the part of ourselves. Indifferent and half-hearted praying never wins a hearing. It does not from you. If your child makes a request of you and makes it in a fashion that indicates he does not care whether you grant it or not, then you do not grant it. It is the earnest appeal that brings you and me to the doing of the bidding of our children.

The same is true in God's dealing with ourselves. It is the earnest, energized prayer that avails with God. It is when Jacob cries in white heat earnestness "I will not let thee go except thou bless me" that he is changed from a suppliant to a prince. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force." It is when one of these violent men gets upon his knees that the angels open the windows. That was the secret of the victory of Moses. "Let me alone" said God, "that my anger may wax hot against them." But Moses refused to let God alone. He clung to Him in desperate prayer till his people were pardoned. That was the secret of the victory of John Knox. "Give me Scotland" cries that ~~hat-headed~~ saint upon his knees, "Give me Scotland or I die!" And God gave him Scotland. And his hands are upon the sons and daughters of Scotland for good to this day. Earnestness is essential everywhere. It is an absolute necessity in the business of prayer.

3. Christ may have found it necessary to delay His answer to this woman because of a lack of surrender. Certainly that is the cause of many an unanswered prayer among ourselves. It is absolutely impossible to pray when there is a quarrel between you and God. When you are upon your knees in the secret place, does there slip into your mind a practice or habit in your life to which you know God objects? Are you doing day by day things that you know are a grief to your Lord? Then you cannot pray unless you are willing to give up those practices.

Or, what is more common still; are you refusing to do what you know God wants you to do? Is there an apology you ought to make? Is there a wrong you ought to right? Is there an obligation you ought to meet? Is there a burden that you have thrown down that you ought to take up and carry? Have you refused to deal fairly with God in the matter of money? Have you refused to deal fairly with Him in the matter of His Church? Have you stood before His altar in other days and promised to be true to Him, and then hidden your letter away in some trunk, or left it to be forgotten in some far away town or village? Have you faced the need of a family altar in your home and yet have refused to erect one? You will

never really pray till you get to the place where you are willing to do your duty.

An unsundered will - no hindrance is more fatal than that. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me." To do so would be to encourage us in our sin. It would be a calamity unspeakable. God woos us in the far country as the swine trough, but He never feeds us till we come home. The vilest man alive may come with boldness and confidence before God if he is only willing to give up his sin, if he is only willing to surrender. But if he is not willing, then all prayer for him is an utter mockery and an utter impossibility. This every man knows who has ever tried to pray ~~and~~ and to do the thing to which God objects at the same time. An effort to pray under such circumstances is about the most exquisite torture that one can know.

Prayer, then, to be of any worth must come from a heart that is willing to obey. How strikingly does Shakespeare teach this lesson in Hamlet. Hamlet's Uncle, you remember, has killed his own brother. By the murder he has obtained his brother's queen and his brother's kingdom. He wants to keep these, but at the same time he wants forgiveness for his foul deed. He wants to offer a victorious prayer for pardon, but it is impossible.

"O! my offense is rank, it smells of heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
A brother's murder! - Pray can I not;
Though inclination be as sharp as will,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And, like a man of double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood?
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offense?
And what's in prayer, but this two-fold force, -
To be forestalled, ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd, being down? Then, I'll look up;
My fault is past. ✓ But, O! What form of prayer
Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder? -
That cannot be; since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardon'd, and retain th' offense?
In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offense's gilded hand may shove by justice;
And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law: but 'tis not so above;
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence. What then? What rests?
Try what repentance can? What can it not?
Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?
O, wretched state! O bosom, black as death!

O, lamed soul! that, struggling to be free,
Art more engag'd."

V.

How did this mother finally win?

1. She persisted. She did not allow her seeming defeat to kill her faith. It only gave it greater strength. She did not allow her seeming failure to destroy her earnestness. It only served to make her the more in earnest. She did not allow the silence of Jesus to make her turn away in despair and go home in the conviction that God did not care and did not answer prayer. In the face of silence, in the face of seeming denial, she persisted. When she could no longer argue, she threw herself at His feet and sobbed out that brief and pointed and mighty appeal: "Lord help me."

And here again the mother is our teacher. It is right to persist in prayer. It is the will of God that we persist. Jesus, you remember, "spake a parable to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." Over and over again he sets the seal of His approval upon persistent, unceasing, importunate prayer. This He does because He knows that it is only as we persist that our prayers can be enriched with those qualities that make them irresistible. It was thus that this mother conquered. It is only thus that we shall conquer. For all the saints who have mastered the high art of prayer through the centuries have been men and women who know how to persist.

2. She took her stand humbly and obediently upon Christ's own words. "It is not right" said Jesus, "to take the children's meat and cast it to dogs." The words sound harsh and forbidding. It seems to me that had I been in her place I should have gone away in utter despair. Or I might even have been filled with resentment. I might have turned away in rebellion and hot anger. But not so this mother. She took these words of Jesus and with daring ~~and~~ faith and humility turned them against Himself. "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

There was no getting round that. She is willing to accept without question the place to which her Lord has assigned her. Here is a surrendered will. And how marvelous is her faith. She asks only for the crumbs. She does not ask for a kingdom or a crown. She does not ask for a place of leadership or of power. She seems to say "Just a crumb from thy hand, O Lord, will be sufficient for me and for mine for time and for eternity." No wonder Jesus responded to her with joy unspeakable - "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

What a message is this for the mother of today! How greatly every mother needs to learn the ~~the~~ art of prevailing prayer. But this message is not for mothers only. It is for every man and every woman. It is for every boy and every girl. There is a power within reach of our hands that is irresistible. We may have used it poorly and ineffectively in the past. But that is no reason for our failing to use it victoriously in the future. Our record yesterday may stand written in this tragic fashion:

up results. Our business is to do our task and speak our word for God as we have opportunity, whether men appreciate or do not appreciate, whether they respond or do not respond. It is not our duty to save the world. It is our duty to do our best.

It is said that

Years ago there was a storm off Cape Hatteras. A ship was caught in the tempest and was being torn to pieces. The captain of the life saving crew ordered the boat to be launched that they might go to the rescue. One of the crew ran to the captain and said: "It is useless to go. The wind is seaward. We can get out to the wreck, but we can never get back." And the captain answered simply; "It is not necessary to get back. It is only necessary to go." And so it is for you and me. It is not necessary to win the world's crowns. It is not necessary to be even successful as the world terms success. But it is necessary for us to do right as God gives us to see the right in utter scorn of the consequences.

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The Mother - 7.

"He answered not a word." But even tho this is the case, tomorrow it may be changed to these glowing words:- "Great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

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M O T H E R

Matt. 15:28

"O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

The text is a shout. It is an irrepressible cry of joy. This woman seems to have delighted Jesus beyond measure. She seems to have filled His heart with hallelujahs. Of course these words brought joy unspeakable to the woman herself. They told her that her petition had been granted. They told her that she had won healing and enrichment for her daughter. But the one whose joy was supreme in this hour of triumph was the Lord Himself. He is so much more eager to give than we are to receive. Hence this spontaneous shout of victory: "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

I.

Who was this woman that brought such joy to Jesus Christ and such victory to herself?

1. She was a mother. Therefore, we are not surprised to find her a great lover. For real motherhood is largely the same in all times and climes. Whether she lives in the Occident or lives in the Orient matters little. It matters little whether she is a queen mother hugging to her heart a prince child or an outcast Hagar breaking her heart over an outcast Ishmael. Whoever she is and wherever she is, her love is about the most divine and Christ-like something that this world has been privileged to know.

2. She was a mother with a broken heart. She had a daughter who, while once a joy, had become a sorrow. Years ago this daughter had come like a flood of sunshine into her life. But now she is a bringer of shadows. Her coming had been the signal for the bursting of springtime upon the hills of her heart. But now that springtime has changed into winter with its withered flowers of hope and of beauty. This mother is in tears today, and the secret of her tears is the daughter that she loves better than she loves her own life. For did she not love, she would not suffer as she now suffers. But since she loves she cannot but sob.

Just what was wrong with this daughter we do not know. The story she was a demoniac. Maybe this possession had brought to her physical disease. Maybe it had stolen the roses from her cheek and the elasticity from her step. Possibly it had brought some mysterious mental malady that had dethroned reason and tumbled her mental powers into ruin. More likely still, it was some moral evil. Maybe sin had got its defiling hands upon her. Maybe her girlish feet were beginning to walk in the path of her whose feet take hold on hell. But whatever form this evil took, this at least we know - it was wrecking the daughter and breaking her mother's heart.

And you will agree at once that this mother is by no means in a class to herself. There are tens of thousands among us who can enter into sympathy with her. There are many, thank God, who can rejoice over their sons and daughters with joy unbounded. But there are others who cannot but grieve. There are others who are compelled to sob out the names of their daughters morning after morning and night after night into the ear of God only. When a young woman whose identity was unknown was found dead in one of the cities recently, scores and scores of mothers hurried to the morgue in the fear that the dead girl might be her own. The mother of our text was a mother with bitter and biting grief. And the name of such mothers is legion that live among us today.

II.

Now what did this heathen mother of the long ago do with her heartache? What did she do with the burden that she did not feel able to carry? Answer: She brought it all to Jesus. She came and fell down in His presence and cried "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." Notice she did not pray "Have mercy upon my daughter." She said "Have mercy upon me." She had identified herself with her child. She was bleeding through her wounds. She was sobbing through her tears. She was suffering in her sin. She came saying "Have mercy upon me."

And we cannot but admire the wisdom of this Gentile woman. She did then what every mother ought to do. She did what every father, what every burdened man and every woman on the wide face of the earth is privileged to do and ought to do. "In everything" says Paul, "with prayer and supplication and with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." It is our privilege to bring all our cares, all our joys, all our sorrows to Him. We have a right to come to Him with the big things and with the little things. Everything that concerns us concerns Him. We are invited to make every interest of our lives a matter of prayer.

Not only is it our privilege to pray, not only is it our privilege to tell Jesus about our joys and our sorrows, our hungers and our thirsts, not only is it our privilege to tell Him about the needs of ourselves and the needs of our friends and of our Church, it is our solemn duty. Prayer is the mightiest force in the world, and we have no right to fail to use it. "As for me" said the old prophet long ago, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you." The mother who refuses to pray, the father who refuses to pray, any man who refuses to pray, is not only cheating himself, he is not only robbing those for whom he should pray, but he is sinning against God. This woman, then, who brought the needs of her child to Jesus did the wise thing, and she did the right thing. She was doing just what she ought to have done. And when you make your home and your loved ones an object of prayer, you are not only exercising a great privilege, but you are fulfilling a great obligation.

III.

What response did Christ make to this appeal?

The answer to this question is a bit bewildering. Everyone who reads the story thoughtfully must feel somewhat disappointed at the first. Here is a thoroughly appealing prayer. It even stirs our compassion. "Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou Son of David, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." There is longing in the cry. Every word comes from her loving heart, baptized in tears. And what answer does this tender Savior make? What is the reply of Him who came to seek and to save that which is lost? He made no answer at all. Thus it stands written: "He answered her not a word."

Now that is not the way we expected this New Testament story to read. Yet why be surprised? I am speaking to a Christian audience this morning. But if the history of our prayer life were written, it would read, I fear, very much like the first part of this woman's story. We have been saying prayers since childhood. We can hardly remember a day when we did not say some kind of a prayer. But what response have we had? What answer has come from the Christ to whom we have made our appeal? For many the answer may be summed up in the tragic sentence: "He answered not a word."

Because this is true prayer has ceased to be a vital part of the program of vast numbers even of those who are accustomed to think of themselves as Christians. How few there are among us who give prayer its rightful place of importance! Too few of us consider it a mighty means for the winning of the lost. Too few think of it as the greatest of all forces for the bringing in of the Kingdom of God. Certainly it is the mightiest weapon that can possibly be put into our hands. Yet many of us never employ it. It holds in its hands energies transcending that of electricity or radium. But we allow it to go unused. We have failed to test its efficacy. We have never prayed conqueringly. The outcome of our praying has so often been this: "He answered not a word." Therefore many of us have ceased to make any serious effort at effective, prevailing prayer.

IV.

Why did Jesus fail to give an immediate answer to this woman? The fact that she was a Gentile seems to have been a hindrance. But it certainly was not the one of supreme importance. This is evidenced by the fact that this difficulty was overcome as soon as the conditions of prevailing prayer were met. We feel safe, therefore, in saying that the real cause for Christ's delay was not the nationality of the petitioner, but the state of her heart. There are many hindrances of prayer. Some one or more of these hindrances may have made an instant answer to her prayer impossible.

1. She may have failed for lack of victorious faith. She had some faith or she would never have come to Jesus. But she may not have had sufficient faith to claim the blessing for which she longed. Faith is

the hand that takes. Christ cannot give what we will not take. That means He can only give in proportion to our faith. Whatever faith this woman may have had at the beginning of her prayer, it is evident that it was vastly increased before she came to her final victory. We feel safe, therefore, in saying that it was at the earliest moment possible that Christ said: "Woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

2. It is possible that her answer was delayed for lack of whole-hearted earnestness. For however earnest she was at the beginning, we cannot fail to see that she became more earnest before she obtained her request. But whether this was the cause of her failure or not, of this we may be sure - that it is the secret of much useless and ineffective praying on the part of ourselves. Indifferent and half-hearted praying never wins a hearing. It does not from you. If your child makes a request of you and makes it in a fashion that indicates he does not care whether you grant it or not, then you do not grant it. It is the earnest appeal that brings you and me to the doing of the bidding of our children.

The same is true in God's dealing with ourselves. It is the earnest, energized prayer that avails with God. It is when Jacob cries in white heat earnestness "I will not let thee go except thou bless me" that he is changed from a suppliant into a prince. "The Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent taketh by force." It is when one of these violent men gets upon his knees that the angels open the windows. That was the secret of the victory of Moses. "Let me alone" said God, "that my anger may wax hot against them." But Moses refused to let God alone. He clung to him in desperate prayer till his people were pardoned and saved from doom. That was the secret of the victory of John Knox. "Give me Scotland" cries that hot-hearted saint upon his knees, "Give me Scotland or I die!" And God gave him Scotland. And his hands are upon the sons and daughters of Scotland for good to this day. Earnestness is essential everywhere. It is an absolute necessity in the business of prayer.

3. Christ may have found it necessary to delay His answer to this woman because of a lack of surrender on her part. Certainly that is the cause for many an unanswered prayer among ourselves. It is absolutely impossible to pray when there is a quarrel between you and God. When you are upon your knees in the secret place, does there slip into your mind a practice or habit in your life to which you know God objects? Are you doing day by day things that you know are a grief to your Lord? Then you cannot pray unless you are willing to give up these practices.

Or, what is more common still; are you refusing to do what you know God wants you to do? Is there an apology you ought to make? Is there a wrong you ought to right? Is there an obligation you ought to meet? Is there a burden that you have thrown down that you ought to take up and carry? Have you refused to deal fairly with God in the matter of money? Have you refused to deal fairly with Him in the matter of His Church? Have you stood before His altar in other days and promised to be true to Him and then hidden your letter away in some trunk, or left it to be forgotten in some far away town or village? Have you faced the need of a family altar in your home and yet have refused to erect one? You will

never really pray till you get to the place where you are willing to do your duty.

An unsundered will - no hindrance is more fatal than that. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, God will not hear me." To do so would be to encourage us in our sin. It would be a calamity unspeakable. God woos us in the far country as the swine trough, but He never feeds us till we come home. The vilest man alive may come with boldness and confidence before God if he is ~~fully~~ willing to give up his sin, if he is only willing to surrender. But if he is not willing, then all prayer for him is an utter mockery and an utter impossibility. This every man knows who has ever tried to please God and to do the thing to which God objects at the same time. An effort to pray under such circumstances is about the most exquisite torture that one can know.

Prayer, then, to be of any worth must come from a heart that is willing to obey. How strikingly does Shakespeare teach this lesson in Hamlet. Hamlet's Uncle, you remember, has killed his own brother. By the murder he has obtained his brother's queen and his brother's kingdom. He wants to keep these, but at the same time he wants forgiveness for his foul deed. He wants to offer a victorious prayer for pardon, but it is impossible.

"O! my offense is rank, it smells of heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
A brother's murder! - Pray can I not;
Though inclination be as sharp as will,
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And, like a man ~~of~~ double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood?
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offense?
And what's in prayer, but this two-fold force, -
To be forestalled, ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd, being down? Then, I'll look up;
My fault is past. But, O! What form of prayer
Can serve my turn? Forgive me my foul murder? -
That cannot be; since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder,
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardon'd, and retain th' offense?
In the corrupted currents of this world,
Offense's gilded hand may shove by justice;
And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above;
There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence. What then? What rests?
Try what repentance can? What can it not?
Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?
O, wretched state! O bosom, black as death!

MY CHURCH

".....!I will build my church!..."

Matthew 16:18

I love these bracing words. In a world of uncertainty they have a language of assurance. Where so much else is giving way, I can lean my weak shoulders against them with the ~~assurance~~ ^{certainty} they will never let me down. How foolish that would have sounded to the leader of the despots of that distant day. The man who utters them was quite young, barely out of his twenty's. He had never builded anything, so far as human eyes could see, except a few nameless articles in a carpenter shop in a backwoods village. Yet here, with a kind of holy swagger, he is saying, "I will build my church".

If we feel a tendency to laugh with incredulous scorn at these words it is a mark of our ~~utter~~ stupidity rather than of wisdom, for after all, ^{while} this strange man is ~~more than~~ a village carpenter. He ^{is for more} ~~is~~ a Divine Son of God. Therefore, he has made something else besides chairs and tables and yokes for oxen. ^{He has fashioned the heavenly world.} He has also dipped his hands into the chalice of eternity and made the oceans to drip and the rivers to flow. He has kindled a million suns; he has flung out every star ^{that} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~that~~ will cast its anchor of pearls on ocean, sea and river. "All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made." Therefore, it is but sanity to take him seriously when he declares with such bracing certainty, "I will build my church".

I

What do you think of this institution to which Jesus gave his fast ^{abilities} ~~emotions~~ and for which he died? In considering this question

I am going on the principles laid down by the great Samuel Johnson that folks need not so much to be instructed as to be reminded. This church has been in process of building for nineteen centuries. It has crossed all seas, it has ^{penetrated} ~~passed~~ all continents. Today it is the one world-wide institution - the one institution that girdles the globe. What do you think of it?

1. Strange to say there are thousands who do not think of the church today. There are tens of thousands in so-called Christian America for whom the church simply does not exist. There are hundreds in Charlotte who pass our church doors every day with little more understanding of what we are, and what we are undertaking to do than if they had been born centuries ago in darkest Africa. The fact that we do not exist for some is partly their own fault; partly it is the fault of ourselves. Blessed is the church that cannot be ignored.

2. Then there are those who think of the church only to snarl and to condemn and to criticize. Some of these are outside the church. They have never given themselves an opportunity to know what the church is about. I have recognized the fact that much of the criticism of the church that we see in magazines and elsewhere is written by folks who do not have any first hand knowledge of the church and who write out of the abundance of their ignorance. Their criticisms are usually twenty-five to fifty years behind the times.

I read from one such critic some months ago. He was condemning the church for putting so much money into its buildings. He declared that those vast sums of money ought to be used to feed hungry bodies and hungry ^{minds} ~~mouths~~ of men. Of course, he ignored the fact that the church has always led in the feeding of the hungry

bodies and equally hungry minds of men. Ninety percent of our institutions of higher education were founded by the church. Though the church represents approximately fifty percent of our population, ninety percent of all the giving is done by the church. If you were to take out of the coffers of our Charlotte institutions the money given by the church, those institutions would generally have to close their doors.

Some who criticize the church do so out of a spirit of love because they are zealous for her honor. Some do so in a spirit of resentment. They feel that the church has in some fashion let them down. Some members of the church has wronged them. Some pastor has neglected his duty towards them. They have become sore and sour, not wholly without reason.

Then there are others who look askance at the church and talk it down because it is easier to find fault than to help build. When the ten spies decided that they would not have the gallantry and the grit to fight for the land of promise, they excused themselves for their cowardice by saying that the land was not worth fighting for. Even so, when the church comes with its high demands, they turn away declaring that the church is so imperfect, so full of hypocrisy, that they cannot identify themselves with it. Such criticism is a smoke screen behind which to hide their cowardice.

"Upon a rock stands prone my soul
A diver, lean, undressed.
And looks and fears the shock.
And turns and hides its shame in
Some poor sorry jest."

3. There is a third group that is friendly to the church. They have stood at her altar and taken upon themselves her solemn vows, yet they are superficial in their loyalty. With them the church is an entirely secondary matter. They give it the crumbs of their time and of their

devotion. They smile upon it, patronize it and weaken it. These "damned with ~~false~~ ^{faint} praise, assent with ~~timely~~ ^{live} ~~leer~~, and without sneering, teach the rest to sneer." Jesus looked upon the lukewarm churchman as the deadliest foe with which he had to deal. *Communists.*

4. Then there is a fourth group, thank God!. These really belong to the church. *longing to* ~~Being~~ of Christ's church, they put his work first. These are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. I am thinking of one such now. He was at one time president of twenty-seven different organizations in his city, one of the busiest of busy men. Yet his church always came first. ^{There} ~~It~~/was never a service when he was in the city that he was not there unless he was ill. And when he came in it was like turning on another light. Thank God for those who love the church and put it first. They are the hope of the world. Jesus thought so well of the church that he invested his life in it.

II

Why did Jesus give himself to the building of the church?

I know that it is said of us preachers some time that the reason we preach is because we could not ^{succeed} ~~suit~~ at anything else. Of course, it would be needless for me to reply to this silly slander further than to say that after mixing with men of various professions for some fifty years, I think the ministry has about as high a batting average as men of other professions that I know. But even assuming that this is true for me and for many of my brethren in the ministry, we could hardly say that that was true of Jesus. Here is the supreme spiritual genius of mankind who died when he was just out of his ~~twenty~~ ^{early} ~~twenties~~. He had a ~~most meager~~ little handful of precious years to invest. Where did he invest those quick moving and priceless days? Answer, he invested them in the building of the church. What then, I repeat, is this institution so worthwhile that Jesus turned aside from all else to build ~~it~~?

1. As members of the church we are disciples of our Lord. A disciple, as you know, is a learner. We who belong to the church have seen in Jesus the supreme teacher and have come to sit at his feet. Jesus gave himself to the building of the church because it was, in a sense, the school of Christ. *"He taught them"*

If you remind me that we are still very ignorant, I am quick to confess it. It is because we are conscious of our ignorance that we have come to him. If you remind us how shoddy we are, I answer we are not in the church because we are good, but because we have seen the beauty of Incarnate Goodness in Jesus Christ, and are undertaking to be like him. The church is not a group of people who have arrived. It is made up of people who are on the way.

2. As members of the church we are witnesses; witnesses to the reality of God revealed through Jesus Christ. We are witnesses to a power that can snap our fetters and break our chains and lift us out of our weakness and loneliness back again to God. As witnesses we declare out of our own experiences with Paul - "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God to salvation".

3. As church members we are part of a brotherhood. An imperfect brotherhood, yes, but in spite of its imperfections the best and the most hopeful that the world has ever known. As the builders of the brotherhood we are seeking not a secondary good but an essential good. Since we have come to a family nearness, we must come increasingly to be possessed by a family spirit of good will or we will tear ourselves and our fellows into bits.

4. As churchmen we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt is that something that gives a tang to the feast of life.

Without salt, the most lavish banquet is/^{an} insipid and repulsive affair. Without the saving salt of this Christlike faith, life becomes dull and purposeless and boring. The other day a young chap, ~~graduate~~ ^{graduate} of Princeton University, blew his brains out because he declared that he had nothing for which to live. Had he exposed himself to Jesus Christ and to his church, he would have been gripped by a purpose vast as eternity.

Then salt is a great preventive. It stands in the presence of insidious rottenness and disintegration and says, "You shall not pass". Every major tragedy that has come to our world has come for lack of the saving salt. Salt is a luxury but it is far more. It is a necessity. Such, Jesus asserts, is the case of the church. It is that institution without which the individual and society rots down.

As members of the church we are the light of the world. We not only give a tang to the feast of life, we are not only the great preventive, but we are the light that guides, the light that ^{vanishes} ~~vanishes~~ the darkness of sin and hate and brings in the new day of righteousness and peace. Jesus gave himself to church building because a church is a necessity, because it is that institution without which ours is a hopeless world.

III

it is
Now/^{this} institution, this body of disciples, this company of witnesses, this brotherhood, this institution that is the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that Jesus proposes to build. With a holy audacity he stands in the face of all, ^{Opposition} ~~the infinite~~ and declares "I will build my church" and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

What is he saying? He is declaring that he will build his church in the face of opposition. Building is always costly. Jesus knew when he set out upon this gigantic and necessary undertaking that it was going to cost his own heart's blood, but he declared that he would not only build

this church in the face of opposition but that he would build it in spite of opposition. So he has done and so he does.

How is he building? ^{1. By Obeying, as his custom was. It is still the custom} He builds through consecrated men and women. ^{where 2 or 3"} The church is builded out of folks, the old and the young. Our Lord is eager to build you and me into this holy temple.

Not only does Jesus build this church out of men and women, boys and girls, but he builds his church through them. What is done for the building of a better church in your day and mine depends not upon Christ only, but upon ourselves. If our Lord is to build a better and stronger church here on this corner, he has to do it through you and me. He has no other way.

Since our Lord must build through us, what ought we to do about it? Answer - we ought to be church builders, every one of us. "Let everything", said Paul, "be done with a view to building". Everybody ^{ought to} can help to build the church of Jesus Christ because everybody ^{help} can ~~build the church of Jesus Christ~~. Everybody ought to do it. About that there is no argument.

Then we face this further fact. If we refuse to build, by that refusal we help to tear down. What does it cost to build? It costs our best. What does it cost to destroy? Nothing. If you own a farm and want to change that farm into a wilderness, you do not have to lift a hand. All you need to do is to let it alone. If you have a business in Charlotte and want to wreck your business, you do not have to dynamite your store or even sell on credit. All you need to do is to neglect your business. It is even so with the church. If you want to wreck this magnificent church, if you want to turn this beautiful and costly sanctuary into an abode of bats and spiders, you do not have to be at each other's throats, you do not have to run your minister out of the city, you do not have to throw stones through the windows; all you need to do is naked nothing.

Do fight on side of Communism - do nothing

One of the saddest spectacles of our modern life is the increasing numbers of unlighted churches that we see all across America on Sunday evening. Believe me, when the lights go out in the church they go out around the world. What are you to do to keep your church radiant on Sunday evening? If it were left up to three-fourths of the members of this church, it would be as dark tonight as a funeral vault. Why would this be the case? Not because you have no sense of obligation. Not because you have ceased altogether to care. You have been interested enough to take upon your soul the solemn vow of the church. You ~~are~~ perhaps interested enough to make a contribution. You ~~are~~ interested enough to attend with more or less regularity in the morning. Why not at night? There are a few who have a reason but for most of us it is not a conviction that the church will do as well with darkness as with light. The plain and simple truth is that we leave the evening service alone because it is easier. We leave it alone because we want Christianity without the cross and thus we cheat ourselves and thus we cheat others. Our Lord is infinitely eager to build his church. He is infinitely eager, increasingly to build this church. But he has no way of doing it except through our consecrated cooperation.

IV

Now, I confront you this morning with this fact. It is the truth about all of us. We have only one life to invest - a little gleam of light between two eternities and then no second chance forevermore. Where are you going to invest your life? Where are you going to deposit your treasure? As for me, I am putting mine in the church of Jesus Christ. In doing that I am putting myself and my all in his hands. Here is an investment that will never fail.

Look back to this scene of the long ago. Here is a young man sur-

rounded by a little handful of fishermen. They haven't enough wealth among them to have established a decent country store. Death for their leader is only six months away. A few years beyond that cross is the mighty Roman empire, unsheathing her sword to destroy the church. At last the bloody task seems so complete that the Roman emperor erected a triumphal arch in token of the fact that the last Christian has been swept off the face of the earth. Yet the passing centuries have ~~buried~~ that triumphal arch so deeply into oblivion that nobody knows today where it stood. But the church has girdled the globe. Today, I repeat, it is the one world-wide institution on this earth.

Thank God for the privilege of being a part of it! I owe her an unpayable debt. It was the church that gave me my Christian home. I am indebted to the church for a father who was strong and clean and courageous in his fight for righteousness. I am indebted to the church for a mother whose eyes were homes of silent prayer. When love came into my life, it was the church that solemnized my marriage. When sorrow came and I was called to part from some I loved, it was the church that made me sure of a morning's joy with my Lord and with those I loved beyond this world with its griefs and its graves. I speak as a glad churchman. My one sorrow is that I am not a better churchman. I want to live and work within her sacred walls. I want to go out when life's fitful fever is over undergirded by her everlasting gospel. God grant that this may be so with ~~us~~. us.

my church - Matt 16:18
intro - there is a solid certainty.

I What is this Church

1. Principles (1) supreme teacher (2) shows us what we are (3) what we may be in this or power to be saved
2. Brotherhood - (1) His one but not creed not baptism - if that saves, then Jesus never saved anybody - Acts 4:13 - True (2) It is what won attention in year 1 (3) Pass so strict - South Seas - no pronunciation without, have 100 of 10
3. Body of Christ
4. Self-Positive Jangy - Preservative

II What is Our Attitude to it

1. Same. forget (1) own fault (2) ours
2. Same of pass (1) Hurt insiders (2) AA smoke screen (3) committed Anti-God Russia
3. Half-hearted - lukewarm
a - ugly - on fire
4. Belong - friends

III What Ought Attitude To Be

1. That of Jesus (1) loved it (2) to hurt church to hurt them (3) gave himself for it and to it (4) the work to be done
2. So be - Imitation of Saints

IV The Wisdom of this

1. It is joyful news
2. A guarantee against loss
a - protest scene
3. So I present to you my spiritual mother.

that first preaching mission Acts 2: 14
Intro - this is the first Christian mission
It is known as Pentecost - it is unique and
unrepeated. For them, for see

I The Congregation

1. Highly prejudiced
2. They had been shaken out of complacency
3. Something had happened that made them question

II The Preacher

1. Simon - one of twelve - He had had a great success - had recently denied his Lord
2. He was back by his fellow saints.
a. Important on heart and soul
3. Backed by Spirit. "Spoke as Spirit led"

III The Sermon - "This is that!"

1. An explanation - "This is that!"
He explained it in terms of God
2. An accusation - Guilty of death of Jesus
This does not mean you did it personally
3. A proclamation - He is your King & your Lord and King - so repent him ^{heartily}

IV The Reaction to Sermon

1. Not laughter, ridicule, indifference
2. Cut to heart
3. Sought light
4. Received answer

V What Did The Answer

1. Repents and be baptized
2. To quench
3. Gift of Holy Spirit
4. Three thousand - "Greater works than these"

My Church - Matt 16:18

I will build my church - I believe those words. They have a ring of certainty. In a word when so much is fluctuating and faltering, here is something that goes to the fact. The words pass over it and it is not gone
I what think you of the Church

1. Some do not think at all. a. It is in part their own fault. b. For often it is ours. But there are thousands who pass our class who have no idea who we are or what we are about. Bless the church which cannot be ignored. What can this mean?
2. Some who think only to remove
 - (1) Those who have fighting interest - they failed to get office or got feelings hurt - some have a real complaint
 - (2) Those who are fighting straw men
 - a. For much money - hungry bodies & minds
 - (3) Those who fight church because it is friend of freedom. If you are against church you have at least two allies - the devil & Communism
 - (3) Those who make criticism a smoke screen

3. ~~the~~ The friendly who - triple - Tuckerman
Have who put first what Jesus put first

4. II Why did Jesus put it first
not because he cared do nothing else
(1) But of what it is - clarify our witness
1. Principles 2. Brotherhood - 3. Witnesses
4. Body 5. Salt. As such a necessity

III How He Builds -
1. of people - we are this material
2. Through us - no other way
3. Every man can be - have ought to be a church builder

IV How can we build - Jesus
1. you ought to belong - Jesus
2. you ought to contribute by money
3. you ought to attend - Jesus did his custom

V Conclusion
1. Some - death of leader - of church
2.

2. many of Acts
Program
of church

WHAT IS THE CHURCH

"I will build my church and the gates of death shall not prevail against it."

Matthew 16:18

"Feed the Church of God which he has purchased with his own blood."

Acts 20:28

For the ten Sunday mornings of this Church Loyalty Crusade the pastors in Oklahoma City are to consider with you various aspects of the Church of the living God. It was my privilege to be a member of the committee that selected this subject. I urged it because I believe that we need anew to face the facts about the Church. Before we act aright with regard to any institution we must think aright regarding that institution. It is my conviction that we have come upon days of much confusion with regard to the Church. If we were to inquire of a cross section of the citizenship as to the meaning and worth of the Church, I can imagine that the answers received would be vastly varied and surprising. Because of this confused thinking I want us to begin with this question.

I.

What do you think of the Church? How is the Church regarded by our city as a whole?

1. There is a large group that simply do not think of us at all. There are hundreds, even thousands for whom we do not exist. They pass our doors day

by day with no more conception of our aims and purposes than if they were Hottentots. This group is not made up of vicious people. Some of them are quite decent. Some are interested in the building of a better city and a better world. But in that enterprise they simply fail to reckon with the Church.

2. Then there is a second group for whom we exist, but for whom we count for very little. Some of these think of us enough to be antagonistic. When the Church is mentioned they uniformly have something detrimental to say. The reason for this antagonism may be some personal slight that they have suffered. Sometimes it is born of ignorance. The Church is not above criticism, but few of those who write critical articles about the Church have any first hand information. They are usually speaking from hearsay. They are also very often from twenty to fifty years behind the times.

Then there is a third reason for this critical attitude that is more common than one would suspect. There are those who criticize the Church because they have not the gallantry to live up to its demands. In their heart of hearts they know that they ought to be standing for the values for which the Church stands. They know that they have no more right to sponge off the Church for the moral uplift that comes to their communities than they have a right to sponge off others for their daily food. But it is easier to talk the Church down than to take it seriously. When the ten spies found that they did not have the courage to fight for the land of promise they brought back a report that it was a worthless land and not worth fighting for. Often we try to comfort our outraged consciences by talking down the cause that we have not the grit to support.

Upon a rock stands prone my soul,

A diver lean undressed

And looks and fears the shock--

And turns and hides his shame

In some poor sorry jest.

3. Then there is a large group who have some appreciation of the Church, who would not live in a community where there was no church. Yet, they refuse to assume any responsibility for its program. They are too indifferent to avail themselves of the privileges that it has to offer. These take the Church for granted. How many treasures we undervalue simply because we take them for granted. We had a wonderful sunrise, but few got excited over it because we take a new day for granted. We take our health for granted oft times till we lose it. Too often we even take our loved ones for granted till they pass beyond the reach of our hands and the call of our voices. "O! if I had her back," sobs Thomas Carlyle after Jane had gone. "O, if I had here back for only five minutes to get to tell her through all the forgetful years I loved her." We even take God for granted. Therefore, we often assume the same attitude to his church. If one were to tell you that within another year the last church in America would be closed forever, that never again would men and women, boys and girls be permitted to gather together for worship, we should rise in angry and tearful protest. But often we throw these opportunities away simply because we take them for granted.

4. Then there is a final group who take their church seriously. These find in the Church the foundation of their holiest hopes, the well spring of their deepest joys. They can sing with the poet--"I love Thy Church O God, Her walls before Thee stand." I recall a dear friend who was one of the most important men in the business life of his city. He was at one time president of twenty-seven different organizations. But he always had time for his church. He was chairman of the Official Board, he was Sunday school superintendent, he built himself into hundreds of lives. I saw him as the waves of two devastating tragedies passed over him, but I never heard him utter one word

of complaint. I never saw him when he was not full of courage. I never knew him to come into a service that his presence was not like turning on the light. The supreme devotion of his life was his devotion to his church.

Now it may be that you have come to think slightly of the Church. It may be that you think of it with indifference or with antagonism. It may be that you seldom think of it at all. It may be you think that modern civilization has run past the Church. That while it may have accomplished some worthwhile tasks in the long ago, it is at the rear of the procession today. It may be that you think that the really big events are being accomplished by other organizations.

II.

Suppose then we clarify our thinking by turning to the pages of the New Testament and see what those who layed the foundations of the Church thought of it.

1. What place did the Church occupy in the mind of Jesus? This is a question worth considering. He was the greatest spiritual genius of all time. How did he think of the Church? I reminded you recently that the central enthusiasm of Jesus was the Kingdom of God. The first sermon he preached he declared that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The theme of his conversation after his resurrection was still the Kingdom of God. He worked for the Kingdom, he died for it, he lives for it. He prayed for it. He taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come."

How did he set out to build the Kingdom? He sought to accomplish this end by the building of a few men into a brotherhood. He spent his ministry forming a society of brotherly men that he called the Church. There were many ways in which he might have invested his little handful of years. But when he looked about him for the most important and the most rewarding institution in

which he might invest these precious years he chose the Church. He declared, - "I will build my Church." His was a constructive life. He declared that he had not come to destroy. It requires no great intelligence and no great heart to tear down. A building is expensive. Jesus gave his life to the building of the Church. He did this because he believed it to be the most worthwhile of all institutions.

2. The man who approached nearest to Christ in spirit and mind was St. Paul. This man was also one of the great intellects of all time. If you stand Paul in any sort of valley his head will touch the stars. The man who discredits the intellectuality, the genius of Paul only discredits himself. How did this intellectual giant think of the Church? He thought grandly of it. As we read Paul's letters, attention has been called to the fact that we find him in two opposite attitudes. There are times when he is bowed down with grief and shame. There are other times when he is on the mountain top athrill with holy joy.

We may ask what are the times he has his lips in the dust in penitence? It is when he is remembering that once he persecuted the Church. God forgave him of his sin, but Paul could never forgive himself. That penetrating question "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" never ceased to ring through this great man's soul. He never ceased to shed bitter tears over the fact that he was blind enough to persecute the Church, and in persecuting the Church, to persecute the Master himself. For it came to him in that moment of revelation that no man can fight the Church without fighting the Christ of the Church. When, therefore, as another has pointed out, we find him at his lowest is when the memory of his persecution of the Church is rolling over him like a flood.

But there are other times when he is athrill and athrob with joy. There are times when he had burst into song like a mocking bird that is reveling in

springtime. There are times he is exulting in the privilege of building the Church. "To me," he sings, "is His grace given that I might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ." Why such joy? Because in so preaching he is building the Church. He calls all his fellow-saints to share that high task. "Let everything," he said, "^{be done with} ~~have~~ a view to building." "Take heed to yourself and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit hath made you over^{see} to feed the Church of God which he has purchased with his own blood." Upon the pages of the New Testament, therefore, the Church looms as an institution of supreme worth.

III.

Why, I wonder, did Jesus Christ and Paul, why do so many of the choicest of saints through the ages, think so well of the Church? They did not do so because they were blind. I am sure they did not do so because they were less wise and less earnest than the critics of our own time. It is my conviction that they had solid ground for their faith. It is my conviction that we as churchmen may have solid ground for our faith today. These thought well of the Church for at least three reasons.

1. They thought well of the Church because of what the church is in itself. What is this institution we call the Church? On the pages of the New Testament it has been called by various names. It is represented by various symbols. Let us look at some of them. First, that little group of hand-picked men that Jesus gathered about himself personally were called disciples. What is a disciple? A disciple is a learner. Peter, James, and John, and their fellows were students in the school of Christ. They believed that they had found in Jesus the supreme Teacher. As church members we too confess that we are disciples. If in scorn and sarcasm you remind us of our spiritual ignorance, if you rebuke us for being so little like our Master, we are forced

to confess that we deserve the rebuke.

But having so confessed we are able still to lift up our heads for this reason:-It is because we are aware of of our need to know more of Christ and to be more like him that we have become members of his church. The Church is not a glass case for the display of specimens of perfection. It is in a sense an educational institution. It is a school where we are learning, sometimes very slowly, to be like our victorious Lord. The Church through the centuries has been the supreme educator. Practically all our best schools were founded by the Church. I confess with shame that I haven't learned of my Lord as well as I should, but I confess without shame that I have matriculated in his school.

2. I am one of his disciples. ^{PP} Second, Paul speaks of the Church as ^{the} ~~a~~ pillar and ground of the Truth. That is, it is the business of the Church to proclaim the truth. The Church, of course, is interested in all truth, but there is one type of truth in which the Church is a specialist. The Church is entrusted to a peculiar degree with the truth as it is in Jesus. Its supreme business is to tell men and women the good news about God. Having entered his school they are to go out to witness to what they have learned, not simply about God, but to witness to the indwelling presence of God himself. As churchmen we are God's witnesses to the world, rendering through this witnessing a service that no other institution can render. ^{PP} Third, Paul speaks of the Church as the body of Christ. We realize the meaning of that. This body that you see is not myself. In the strictest sense of the word you have never seen me, I have never seen you. Our real selves are invisible. But this body is the instrument through which my real self makes its impression upon the world. I look out through these two windows that I call eyes, I walk upon these feet, I minister through these hands. Without this body I could not carry on in the world as I am carrying on now.

It was Paul's faith and the faith of the saints that the Christ who had

once walked in visible form among men is with us still in the presence of the Spirit. He lives in us individually. Above all else he lives in his Church. It was to his Church that he gave the promise of the Holy Spirit. It was upon the Church that he came in power at Pentecost. It is through the Church, his body, that he must carry on his work today. It is through the lips of the Church that he speaks his message. It is through ~~the ministers~~ ~~of~~ the Church that he continues the ministries that he began long ago in Judea and Galilee. The Church is the body of Christ.

4.

the Brotherhood

2. These thought grandly of the Church because ~~being what its disciples witness to the truth, the very body of Christ,~~ it rendered the highest possible service to the world. There are many institutions today that are helping to feed the hungry and to cloth the naked. There are those that are carrying on educational enterprises. There are those that are contributing to charitable organizations. But all these agencies learned their ethics from the Church. All of them prosper in a large measure as the Church prospers. I think too, you would discover another fact, that those who are making their work effective are for the most part, churchmen. For instance, we have a Community Chest. Who are those that make that possible? Not as a rule those without the Church. You would find that the men who are carrying on the church are carrying on about every other worthwhile organization that is doing helpful business in our world today.

5.

Witnesses

~~at~~ The supreme service of the Church, ~~I repeat~~, is keeping alive in the hearts of men a sense of God. What is man's supreme need? You know the answer to that question. It is God. There is no getting on without him. "As the heart panteth after the water brook, so panteth my soul after thee O God." That is the cry of an ancient saint. It is also the cry of the present day saint. Not only so, but it is every man's cry. God has placed in every human heart an insatiable hunger, a burning thirst, that none but himself can satisfy.

At whatever fountain you may be drinking this morning I can say to you this word with absolute assurance, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. Never will you find real satisfaction there. But whosoever drinketh of the water that Christ giveth shall never thirst. It shall be within him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The best minds of the centuries have believed in the Church because it has helped men to get acquainted with God.

IV

How About Using Your Life as Jesus Used His?
7. ~~Then these men of genius have believed in the Church because it offers the sanest and most satisfying way to use life.~~ Jesus said I am going to use my life for building. He realized that building was costly. He said, "I will build my Church and the gates of death shall not prevail against it." By that he meant that the gates of death would fight against it. The gates of death have fought against the Church through the years. Many a time it has looked as if victory was with death. But such has never been the case. Jesus declares that he will not only build in the face of opposition, but in spite of opposition.

Here then is an institution in which you may invest your life with the assurance that it will never let you down. Some of you have made bad investments, you have trusted the wrong enterprises, you have put your money in the wrong bank. It is all gone now, and you are coming toward the sunset with the wolf of poverty howling at your door. But here is an institution in which you may put your very all with the assurance of never losing. For in giving yourself to the Church you are giving yourself to the Christ of the Church.

Some years ago an old minister was slipping out to a more intimate fellowship with God. As he was going he heard the church bells ringing. Then he turned to his faithful wife, who in love had walked with him through the years, and said,—"Let the rest go, you stay." And, of course, she stood by. And so I say to you, other values may go. The sweetest of friendships may slip out

of your life, but here is one value that abides. It is as everlasting as God. "Let the rest go, ^{we are} ~~as~~ we face Christ and his Church, "you stay." Then we may be sure that he will stay and see us to the journey's end and beyond.

"I will build my Church." That was what life meant for Jesus. Suppose we make it our life purpose. Some of you are yet in life's green spring. You have, perchance, many radiant tomorrows to invest. Where can you find a better place for the investment of your life than in the Church? Let us join with our Lord in saying it from our heart, "I will build my Church." I will build the Church that has been made mine ^{by} ~~with~~ the sacrificial toil and tears of those who have gone before. I will build my Church, the Church at whose altars I was dedicated to God in my young and tender years. The Church that consecrated my marriage when love's morning had its dawning. The Church that sweetened my sorrows by deathless hopes when the one I loved the best "passed to where beyond these voices there is peace." I will so build my Church that I will be able to leave those that come after a stronger and more joyous and more radiant and Christ-like Church than I found. I can suggest to you no higher mission than this.

"THE CHURCH--IT'S IMPORTANCE."

"Mathew 16:18-- I will build my church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it."

I.

Jesus is ^{announcing} ~~answering~~ his life purpose. Why has he come into the world. He has not come as a destroyer. No minister is ever rich that is purely destructive. The ministry of Jesus is to be constructive. Such a ministry requires effort and sacrifice. To merely tear down and destroy requires little or no brains. ^{for} The idiot with a match in hand can destroy more in an hour than a score of strong men can build in a year.

Jesus tells us not only that his work is to be constructive but he indicates what he is going to build. This supreme master builder-- to what constructive task does he set himself? The answer ought to startle us. He is not here to build a fortune; neither is he here to build a great educational institution though all our great institutions have been indirectly established by him. He is not here to build a great common wealth though every great nation is only great in proportion as it is shot through with His spirit. He passes by all these important tasks, to give himself to the task of building the Church. When he sums up his life purpose he declares, "I will build my Church."

The work of building the church was not only the task of Jesus during the brief years that he was with us in the flesh; ~~That~~ has been his task since the beginning of time. That is his task today. He is so closely identified with the church at this moment that to help the church is to help ^{it} him. Paul, you remember, was doing his best to destroy the infant church but Jesus arrested him one day with this question, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me" and Paul came to know that he could not work injury to the

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last and lowest and least of the members of the church without working injury to Jesus Christ himself.

II.

Why did Jesus elect to give his infinite energies to the building of the church?

He did not do so because he was unfit for any other task. There are those who sometimes accuse us of the ministry of doing just that. I have heard it said myself of certain preachers that they were in the ministry because they could not make a living at anything else. Of course, as a rule nothing could be farther from the truth. God's ministers have had a high average of intellect. They have made a great contribution to the world's enrichment. It is true that we have given the prominent place in all our histories to the wielders of the sword and to the destruction of human life. But the largest contribution has often been made by these un-named and un-noticed preachers.

But even assuming that many of us could do nothing else, we cannot possibly make that assumption about the Christ of God. No man has possessed larger capacities. The power of him was a continued source of amazement to every one who came into his presence. Here was a man that could but set his hand and mind to any task under heaven and could have succeeded at it. But he turned aside from all these to give himself to the work of building the Church.

It is safe to say also that Jesus did not select the vocation of church building through any lack of knowledge. His was a clear brain. He had a ^{grip} ~~crop~~ of facts such as none other ever possessed. He knew the world's needs as none other has ever known them. He knew

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how to go about helping this needy world in the best possible way and possessing that clear knowledge, he could find no finer way of investing himself than in the task of building the church.

Why then did he become a church builder? He did it because he regarded the church as the most important institution in the world. He has come to the world on a mission of salvation. He is come to invest his life in the wisest way possible. He has come to give his energies to a service not that is secondary but that is of primary and ^{of} supreme importance. Therefore, he chose to become a church builder. He did so because it was ^{His} the firm conviction that the most ^{worthwhile something} wonderful church under heaven was ^{the Church} of the living God.

III.

Why did Jesus think thus wisely of the Church? In other words, why is the church the most important institution in the world?

There is one supreme reason. The church is important because it is the agency through which God is going to bring about that good day when the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and Christ. The church is God's agency for the bringing in of the kingdom of Christ. It is through it's ^{all} travels and conquest that the answer to the petition "Thy kingdom come. They will be done on earth as it is in Heaven", is at last to be realized. The church is here to bring about that good day ~~when~~ ^{when} ~~for everybody and every man who lives~~ ^{shall} within the circle of the Divine Will.

The Church seeks the accomplishment of that purpose in two directions:

1. By the prevention of evil wherever possible. "Ye are the salt of the earth" says Jesus. Now salt gives a tang to life. The

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feast becomes very insipid^{id} without salt. Salt has a sweetening power. But above all ~~case~~^{else} it is a conserving force. It prevents rottenness. It stands as a foe of ~~this~~^{dis} intergradation and decay.

~~So the church stands as a foe of every form of evil.~~

Every disaster that has come to this world has come from^a lack of this saving salt that belongs to the church of Jesus Christ. Why did the flood come? Why were Sodom and Gomara swept away? There was a lack of saving salt. The same accounts for the great disaster that we know of as the French Revolution.

When Elijah was taken to heaven Elisha shouted after him, "My father, my father, the horsemen of Israel and the⁴ chariots thereof"--What did he mean? He meant "There goes Israel's standing army. There goes the man who has been for these years the only protection of this Nation."

The only safe guards that count in the long run are those that are spiritual, ⁿ ~~Not~~ those that are material. History bears testimony to the fact that England was on the verge of a financial^{ly} Revolution, ^{similar} to that of France. How was this ^{order} dissection prevented? Not by the ^{organizing} working of armies, but by the preaching ^{from} John Wesley and his followers. These men came with hands ^{heads} and heads full of the saving salt of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the nation was preserved.

The ^e church is to prevent evil by helping to create the best possible atmosphere. It is to prevent evil by getting hold of the children for the church in their young and tender years. A man may be born again when he is old, but it is a great risk to run ^{lost} and ~~if~~ when this miracle occurs much has been ~~risked~~. Therefore the church of Christ ^{brings} comes to their children ^{our} ~~in~~ with the

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privilege of ^a ~~the~~ whole life ^{for} of Jesus. It comes with its offer of an opportunity to be as clean at the end of the journey as when we sleep ^{at} our first sleep and dreamed our first dream.

But not only is the church the great power for the prevention of evil ^{It is} ~~but~~ also ^{a power} for ~~the~~ conquest. It seeks to keep the sheep from ever going astray. But if for any reason it fails in the task, it goes after that which is lost. It is entrusted with the gospel for the lowest and for the most hopeless. It proclaims a Christ who is able to save unto the uttermost, all that come unto God by him.

Now since the church is here to build up the kingdom of God there is no need in which it is not interested. There is no want that it does not stand ready to supply. There is no grief for which it has not a word of consolation. There is no loneliness that it cannot comfort. There is no burden that it cannot help to bear. If you have been ^{so} wounded in the battle ^{the}. ~~After~~ you find that you must keep on living when there seems nothing for which to live--in the church of Jesus Christ you can find a new meaning for life. ^{Here} ~~where~~ you can find the power that will enable you to mount with wings as eagles--To run and not be weary--and to walk and not faint.

IV.

Since the church is of supreme importance, what ought to be your attitude toward it?

Certainly it ought not to be one of antagonism. Yet there are many that have assumed this attitude today and such has been the case all through the centuries. There are many in this hour and some of them even with their names upon some church roll who in their hearts are hostile to the church. They do not help.

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They Seek to hinder. They do not build, they criticise.

They there are those who are openly indifferent. This institution that in the mind of Jesus was a supreme workth is worthy of no thought on their part at all. They live in a community that is made safe by the influence of the church. They enjoy thousands of blessings and privileges that come from the church but they do so without gratitude. They do so without any thought of making any returns. They are moral parasites. They get without giving.

What then should be our attitude. Our attitude ~~is~~ ought to be that of Jesus. What was his attitude? Surely we shall not go wrong in following him.

1. He loved the church. He loved it well enough to live for it. He loved it well enough to die for it. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and all the flock over which the Holy Ghost has made you over-seers to feed the church of God which he had purchased with his own blood". If ^E every Christ-like man loves the church, ^{he} he is able to sing from his heart with Wesley "I love thy church, O God".

2. We ought to be loyal to the church. Christ is loyal. The church of his day was in large measure ~~largely~~ spiritually dead, and ~~unfaithful~~. But he never allowed the unfaithfulness of the church to make him unfaithful. We read that he went to the ^Snyagogue on ^{the} Sabbath as his custom was. There are many today that are too wise; ^t too busy, or too good to go to Church. Such was not the case with our Master. He was always loyal.

3. We ought to reverence the church. Christ did so. When he found the temple being ~~desecrated~~ by the money changers his soul ^{fairly} leaped to his feet, fire eyed and defiant. He seized a scourge of small cord and drove them out. He believed that God's Church ought

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to be regarded with reverence.

This is the lesson you need today. I wonder if we might not hear our Lord say as he said in the time of Isⁱrahah. "Who had ^{required} entrusted this ^{of} to your hands to tread my courts". Reverence is becoming in the house of the Lord. The grabbing of hats and the putting on of overcoats at the close of service before the benediction ; ~~Conversations before~~; These are unbecoming and irreverent.

4. We ought to put the church of Christ first. That is what he did. That is what we must do if we would be like Him. He calls upon us to put his church first. Not because that is the easiest way. He never told us that the building of the Church in this world was going to be an easy task. On the contrary he said there would be opposition. "I will build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." What he implies is this. Though the gates of hell shall not prevail, they will fight. They will oppose the church in every inch of its progress. Building always means sacrificien ^t ~~towards it~~.

But though we ^{are} were to build in the midst of opposition, we are going to build in spite of opposition. Even though the task is not easy it at least offers us an opportunity to make the wisest investment of our lives, and it is an investment that is absolutely sure of success. There are a thousand enterprises ⁱⁿ which you may ^{might} invest your life, ^{but} the end would be ^{rather} ~~hardly~~ a disappointing failure. If you give yourself to the task of building the church you will give yourself to an undersaking that is certainly going to end in victory.

"The gates of Hell shall not prevail"- What an absurd statement that would have seemed to the kings and conquerors of that far off day. The world was in a chaos of hate. A young man

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recently from a carpenter shop, without enough money to have run a fruit stand in a back alley in any city is talking to a little handful of fishermen as poor as himself, and he is telling them that ~~in times and conditions of like character~~ he is going to build a church that is destined to conquer the world. As he said it a magnificent temple of ^{one} ~~Dinah~~ towered above them with her throngs of worshippers as if in sarcastic laughter.

But nineteen centuries have slipped by since then. During these centuries every instrument of opposition and torture that human ingenuity could devise ~~had~~ ^{has} been turned against the Church. ~~They have been fed to the lions.~~ ^{Its} ~~His~~ members have been fed to the lions. They have died on ^{forests of} ~~fiery~~ crosses. ~~It went so far that even~~ ^{at last} a Roman emperor erected a Triumphal Arch to commemorate the fact that the last ^{Christian} ~~church~~ had been swept from the earth. But the hard hand of the centuries has thrown that arch in ^{the} dust. And the magnificent temple of ~~Dinah~~ has given place to weeds and ruins and forgotten ^{places}. But the church of Jesus Christ has gone on conquering and to conquer. ~~Put~~ Christ's Church first and you will make an investment that will pay the largest dividends. You will give your life to a winning cause, ^{for} ^S some great day soon or late the Church of Christ is going to triumph and ^{He} he is going to reign from the rivers to the ends of the earth. ¹¹ The Kingdom is coming. ~~Christ tells ye the story. God's heaven exalted shall change the earth which he shall be full with his knowledge and glory as waters that cover the sea.~~

O tell ye the story
 God's banner exalted shall be
 The earth shall be
 Of His knowledge and glory
 As waters that cover the sea

MY CHURCH

"I will build my church." (Matthew 16:18)

I

This morning we are thinking of the Church. We are thinking of that institution for which and to which Jesus gave his life. What think you of the Church?

1. First there are those who do not think of it at all. The Christian Church has now been doing business in the world for nineteen centuries. During those years it has battled with every form of ~~people~~ ^{evil}. It has crossed all seas. It has penetrated all continents. Its ~~is~~ consecrated servants have laid down ashes on all shores. Yet there are millions in so-called Christian America for whom the Church hardly exists. There are hundreds that pass our doors day by day who have little more conception of who we are and what we are seeking to accomplish than if they had been born a century ago in darkest Africa.

The fact that so many do not think of us at all is partly the fault of these thoughtless ones. There are those who are so preoccupied with other things that they hardly have time to think. There are others who deliberately refuse to think. Then their thoughtlessness is in part the fault of the Church. It is our business to compel people to think. We have failed in some fashion to win their attention. One striking fact about the early Church was that it could not be ignored. At Pentecost we read, "The people came together greatly wondering, saying what do these things mean?" Blessed is the Church that cannot be ignored. We can afford

to be hated, persecuted, but we cannot afford to be so listless and indifferent as to be ignored.

2. There is a second group of ~~the Church~~ ^{the church} who think of it only to criticize it. I have met those along the way for whom the mere mention of the Church was a signal for indecent criticism. Sometimes these had what they considered a reason. Sometimes they had been disappointed by some member of the Church. Some had been wronged even by a minister of the Church. That wrong had ~~wronged and had~~ left a wound that was hard to heal. It is easy to criticize the church adversely. We who belong to it recognize that fact but to our critics we say this: "We know that we are not doing the job any too well. If you have a better way for heaven's sake come in and help us. We need you and the world needs you."

Then there are others who criticize the Church as an alibi. They find that it is easier to talk the Church down than to live up to its obligations. When that famous fox found a vine full of delicious grapes the sight made his mouth water. But when he discovered that in order to possess the grapes he must climb and when he realized that climbing would be at once difficult and dangerous instead of telling the truth and saying, "The grapes are lovely but I have neither the gallantry nor the grit to possess them," he rather consoled himself by declaring that the grapes were not worth having, thus implying that he had all the grit that was necessary but the prize wasn't worth taking. Yes, we often discount the task that we lack the grit to ^{live up to its demands} do."

prone
"Upon a rock stands / my soul
A diver lean, undressed,
And looks and fears the shock and turns and hides
its shame
In some poor sorry jest."

3. There is a third group who feel kindly toward the Church. They sometimes attend it. Many of them even belong to it but they have never taken their membership very seriously. While they would never think of living in a community where there was not a church, yet they have never

made up their minds to give it their whole-hearted support. ~~These even~~

"These even damn with faint praise, assent
with civil leer,
And without sneering teach the rest to
sneer."

Perhaps there is no greater foe of the Church today than those who give it a half-hearted and luke-warm support. These tell the world in the strong language of conduct: "I have been on the inside. I know what the Church has to offer and I rate its offerings as of small and secondary worth."

In affirming that these halfhearted, luke-warm supporters are about the worst enemies of the Church and of the Christ of the Church I am only quoting from the New Testament. Listen to these words: "I know thy works that thou art lukewarm. Thou art neither cold nor hot: I would that thou wert either cold or hot. So then that thou art neither cold nor hot I will spue thee out of my mouth. Literally, I am about to vomit you up." The most uninteresting individual in the world and the most useless is that type who is a timorous foe and a suspicious friend. We always have with us the halfhearted, those that dwell in the suburbs of Christianity, never venturing down to where the lights are bright and where the great traffic of the soul is carried on.

4. Then there is a further group that in my opinion are the hope of the world. These are made up of the people who think grandly of the Church. They put it in that place of importance that we find given to it on the pages of the New Testament. Let us turn then to this handbook of the Church, the New Testament, and see what place the Church occupied in the hearts of those who founded it and helped to build it.

Look first at him whom we call Lord and Master. How did he think of the Church. His life was very short. He was executed when he was just well out of his twenties. Where did he invest his little handfull of precious years? Answer: He invested them in the building of his Church.

To that task he gave his days and nights. It was to the Church he gave his toil and his thought. It was for the Church that he gave his life. "Take heed therefore to yourself^{self} and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Jesus hath put the building of the Church first.

^{But} first in the mind and heart of Jesus it was first in the hearts of his friends. Take Paul for instance. There are times as another has pointed out when Paul is fairly crushed to the earth with a sense of his own unworthiness. The sins of his bloody yesterdays fill him with confusion and shame. He finds it hard to believe that even the Christ of infinite love can forgive one who has sinned so deeply. What is that ugly crime for which he finds it impossible to forgive himself. It is this. He once persecuted the Church. He once sought to destroy that institution that Jesus had built at the cost of his life and with which the risen Christ was then and is now identifying himself. For when the risen Christ said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me," he was saying that to strike at the Church is to strike a blow at God.

There were times when Paul is fairly crushed with the remembrances of his sin. There are other times when he fairly tosses his head among the stars. He possesses a joy that is unspeakable. What is the source of his gladness? It is this: He has been entrusted with the task of helping to build the Church that he once sought to destroy. "To me," he shouts hardly able to credit his own good fortune. "To me is this grace given that I might preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Once forgiven it became the passion of his life to build the Church. It is a task that he commends to you and me. "Let everything," he urges, "be done with a view to building."

"The best people I have known," a chap said some time ago, "didn't belong to any kind of church." Well, I differed with passionate earnestness.

I have known a great many decent and respectable and upright folks who were not identified with any church but by far the best people that I have known belong to the church. I have known them in the humblest walks of life, as well as in the highest. I am thinking now of a layman who was president of twenty-seven different organizations in his city, one of the busiest of busy men, but he was not too busy to attend every service of his church and whenever he came his presence brought new warmth. His coming was like turning on another light.

In my old-fashioned country home I learned to think well of the Church. I have come to prize it more and more with the passing of the years. I owe everything to it. It gave me a Christian home. It gave me a father and mother who were wise and devoted enough to dedicate me at its altars in life's fresh morning long ago. It consecrated my marriage. When death came it buried my dead and enabled me ^{while I was} to see an emptiness where there was once a home ~~and~~ still to shout, "Thanks be unto God who givest us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I speak then to you today as a lover of the Church. I am a churchman. My grief is that I am not a better churchman.

II

What is this Church for which Jesus gave his life? What is this Church, the building of which was Paul's supreme joy and has been the supreme joy of the saints through the centuries. Of course it is not a thing of wood and stone. It is not the house that makes the home. It is the people who live in it. The Church therefore is made up of folks --but what kind of folks? Here again we can clarify our thinking by turning to the New Testament.

First, when Jesus gathered about him a little company of friends he called them disciples. What is a disciple? A disciple is a learner. These

fishermen became students in the school of Christ. They began to follow him without any clear conviction as ^{to} his deity but as they lived with him and learned of him they found in him a teacher so supreme that they knew that he not only taught the truth but that he was the truth.

Thus as we meet here this morning we meet as disciples. If our critics remind us of how ignorant we are, we confess it. It is our sense of ignorance that has caused us to enter this school. We are here not because we have arrived but because we are on the way. Since we are learners there is a place in the Church for those who are imperfect. There is a place for the old and the young, there is a place for little children. We do not go to school because we are educated but because we are not. We do not join the Church because we are saints but because we are seeking to learn to be Christlike.

In the fellowship of our Lord our sin and selfishness are rebuked. We are told that the Africans never realized that they were black until they saw their first white man, David Livingstone. It is against the white background of Jesus that we realize our moral and spiritual ugliness but if he rebukes he also hardens us. If he shows us what we are he also shows us what we may become. Christlikeness is ahead for every disciple who will continue in his school. "We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is." As church members therefore we are not perfect. We are not a few museum specimens put on exhibition. We are learners in the school of Christ.

2. Another name given to the Church in the New Testament is brotherhood. As members of the Church we are a brotherhood. Nothing is more obvious to the reader of the New Testament than the fact that Jesus came to bring up a brotherhood. The one mark of discipleship, the one acid test he stated was a man's love for his brother. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another." The

Church of the first century bridged every chasm that in that day divided one man from another. It bridged the chasm between Jews and Gentiles, between master and slave, between conquerers and conquered.

In so saying I am not claiming that the Church even then was a perfect brotherhood. The shouts of Pentecost had hardly died before we read this tragic sentence: "There arose a murmuring." That is a familiar sound in many homes. It is familiar in every human organization. Even the Church is not exempt. This is the case because the Church in every age is made up of imperfect individuals like ourselves. Some of us are not easy to live with. There are always those who have a fighting interest in the Church rather than a building interest. Yet in spite of its faults the Church has made the nearest approach to brotherhood of any other organization. Since brotherliness is essential if civilization is to survive in building a brotherhood we are making a contribution that is not only needful but absolutely essential.

~~THE~~

3. As church members we are witnesses. That also is fundamental. It is the very heart of our marching orders. "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." We read in Matthew the final commission of Jesus as recorded in Acts is this: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaris and to the uttermost parts of the earth.

It was this witnessing on the part of the membership of the early Church that caused it to spread across the world like a prairie fire. These early saints vanished from Jerusalem, went out to lay almost violent hands on every passerby to tell of the amazing difference that Jesus Christ had made in their own lives. They had gripping stories to tell. They did not deal in hearsay evidence. They had first-hand knowledge of that of which they spoke.

Thus they witnessed by word of mouth, they witnessed as we must witness today by speaking to our friends personally. They witnessed also by what they were. There was about them a radiance, a peace, a poise, a joyful certainty that made the pagan world wistful. They won as another has pointed out because they outlived those about them. Their conviction was summed up in the words of Peter before the highest courts of his day: "We cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard." They spoke by what they ~~heard~~^{were}. They spoke by what they did, By their lips and ^{by} their lives, they proclaimed the unsearchable riches of Christ.

4. Jesus called these friends of his salt. What a suggestive word that is. Salt is a luxury but it is far more--it is a necessity. It matters little how richly laden a table may be for dinner today if salt is absent the feast will be a failure. The little girl told the plain truth in her essay on salt. "Salt," she declared, "is that stuff that makes food taste bad if you don't put it in it."

Salt is a great preventive. Every ruinous tragedy that comes to this world comes from the lack of salt. How did we lose prohibition after fighting for a century to win it? We lost it from lack of character. There wasn't enough saving salt to keep out the enemy that we had once banished. Salt stands in the pathway of invading rottenness and declares: "It shall not pass." The tragedy of the flood was not that certain men ceased to live but that they ceased to be fit to life. There was not saving salt to keep that ancient society from falling down. Without the saving salt of the Church society is certainly doomed.

5. The final name by which we are called is the Body of Christ. Of course this is figurative language. What is this body? It is the house in which I live. It is the instrument through which my personality makes its contribution to the world. There is a real sense in which you have never seen me and I have never seen you but what my inner self does it must do through this body. Here is a man named Turner. He had a way of

stealing the fleece from God's clouds and the sheen from God's rivers and the crimson and gold from God's sunset and flinging them upon the canvas. But however fine his art, that art would have been impossible without his body.

Once Jesus walked the common rugged ways of our world. He bent over outcasts. He gave hope to the hopeless. He told all men that they were the sons of God. He gathered little children in his arms and blessed them. But long ago he was hung on a cross. Yet he still carries on his work through his Church which is his body--that is, he speaks through your lips, ministers through your hands, walks on errands of mercy upon your feet. Thus as disciples, as a part of a brotherhood, as witnesses, as the salt of the earth, as the body of Christ, we belong to an institution that is the one hope of the world.

III

What are we going to do about it?

1. Since the church is so important we ought to be glad to belong to it. Years ago a girl in the sweet radiance of life's springtime became your wife. She gave herself to you. You gave yourself to her. You belong to each other. So truly we belong to the Church. The Church has a claim on me. I belong to it. It has a right to my earnest and ardent devotion.

2. I ought to seek to do for this Church what Jesus did. He said, "I will build my church." That was the task that engaged him while he walked among men. It is the task that engages him today.

How does he build? He builds his Church out of ordinary men and women like ourselves, Not only are we the material that goes into the building. We are also, under his guidance, its builders. The Church is builded of and through human personalities. Our Lord is seeing to build you and

me more fully into his Church.

Then Jesus builds his Church in the midst of opposition. That is implied in the declaration: "The gates of death shall not prevail against it." To build anything of worth is costly. It is cheap to tear it down. We can wreck the best building in the world by simply letting it alone, but building costs something. Our Lord through us is building today in the midst of opposition. To build a strong spiritual Church at the heart of this city can only be accomplished at the price of sacrificial toil.

But if Jesus builds in the midst of opposition he builds in spite of opposition. Look at the scene in which these words were first uttered. It is at Caesarea Philippi. The cross is only six months away. He with his nameless friends is speaking under the very shadow of the temple of Diana. He is in the presence of religions that have grown old and well established. Beyond the crucifixion his persecution so bitter that one emperor erected a triumphal arch in token of the fact that the last Christian had been swept off the face of the earth.

So what? ^{That} triumphal arch has been so thoroughly trodden into the dust that history does not even know where it stood. Yet the Church lives still and the gates of death have not prevailed against it. Many a time it has seemed defeated. Many a time it has seemed done to death. Yet it has always come to a resurrection. We are glad to be a part this morning of that living Church. It is our joy to help, to build it through our presence, our witnessing, and our prayers. If you invest here you can never lose. It means that you will use life as he used it who said: "I will build my Church and the gates of death shall not prevail against it."

WHO ARE WE?

"I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."
--Matthew 16:18

"Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

--Acts 20:28

I

This morning we are thinking of that institution of which we are a part. The church, of course, is not a building any more than a school is a building. It is folks that make a church. What kind of folks? In other words, as members of the church, who are we?

1. We are learners in the school of Christ. When Jesus walked among men, he gathered about him a group of ordinary men who under his teaching became extraordinary. He called these men disciples. They were pupils in his school. He gave his days and nights to teaching them. He taught them by what he said and by what he did. He taught them even more by what he was. He so taught them that by and by they were vastly transformed. He so taught them that in after days they became so like their Teacher that even their enemies took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

Now as members of the Church, we too are learners in the school of Christ. We are found in him, the supreme Teacher. We have found in him not "a" way, but "the" way. He has that to say that not only enriches life and enables us to live abundantly. But he has that to say that is absolutely essential to the business of living. To ignore his teaching, to disregard his way, is to be greedy for tragic failure, individually and socially. It is to court tragedy not in some far off tomorrow but in the here and now.

If our critics remind us of our ignorance, we are ready humbly to confess it. As our boys and girls do not go to school because they know, but because they do not know, so we have become pupils in the school of Christ not because we have arrived but because we know that we have not. The church is not a museum. It is not a glass house where perfect specimens are put on exhibition. It is not an institution made up of good people. It is rather a school made up of people who have seen the beauty of the Lord in the face of Jesus Christ and who are seeking to learn of Him.

The fact that the church is not perfect is not so much our shame as it is our hope. It is my joy to be a member of the church. If the church were a perfect institution, I should be robbed of that joy because I am imperfect. Nothing more silly was ever said than this: "Show me a perfect church and I will join it." A perfect church would not welcome imperfect people such as we are. Even if it should receive us, we should only be greatly embarrassed because we know that we would have to spoil its perfection as soon as we entered.

Not only is the fact that the church is not perfect the reason I am permitted to belong to it, but it is also a supreme reason that I ought to belong to it. A perfect church would not admit me. A perfect church would not need me. I could do it no good. I could do it nothing but harm. But because the church is not all that it ought to be, then I am needed. Because the church has not arrived, you are needed. If you are seeking for a place where you can render a service that nobody else can render, you can find that place in the church. As churchmen, we are learners in the school of Christ. We are pupils of him whose teachings are absolutely essential for the life of the world. More and more men are coming to see that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

2. As churchmen we are a part of a brotherhood. Here again, we must say this brotherhood is not perfect. These disciples that Jesus gathered about him, he sought to weld into a brotherhood. His progress was slow. The brotherhood never became all that he longed for it to be. But it was and has been the best that the world has known. It offers a plan of living and a power of achieving that plan that we

must learn or commit suicide.

What is our supreme tragedy today--I have said it before but cannot say it too often--we have come to possess the family nearness without the family spirit. Four great powers are holding together today and are acting somewhat in a spirit of brotherliness. But this brotherliness is born not so much of good will as of dire necessity. We cling, for instance, to Russia and Russia to us because of our need one of another. Our interests lie in the same direction. But ten years from now or twenty years from now our interests may seem to lie in different directions. Then what? The same forces that now bind us will then divide us. We cannot build a brotherly world except through mutual good will. That means that this type of brotherhood taught and in some measure realized by Jesus Christ is the hope of the world. Here then we are dealing not with a luxury but with an essential.

3. As a church we are the body of Christ. That, of course, is figurative language. Jesus walked our world in a human body. He spoke through human lips. He ministered through human hands. He went upon his errands of mercy upon human feet. Doctor Luke sums up his rich and healing life in a single sentence: He went about doing good. That single life has done something for the world that no other life has ever done so fully.

By and by Jesus left the world and returned to the Father. But with his going the work that he had begun did not cease. Hear the opening of the book of Acts: "The former treatise have I made.....of all that Jesus began both to do and teach." Since his going away he has accomplished results immeasurably greater than those he accomplished in the days of his flesh. This he has done through his body, the Church. This body that I wear is not myself. You have never seen the real me. It is the house in which I live, the instrument through which I make my impact upon the world. It is through the Church that Jesus is carrying on his work. The Church is healing and ministering and witnessing to the power and presence of God somewhat as Jesus did in the long ago. If you remind me that the Church is not the only institution that is helping to heal the world's open sore, I answer that every other institution

that is exerting the lifting power of an ounce learned its ethics from the Church and prospers in large measure as the Church prospers.

4. Finally, as churchmen we are the salt of the earth. What a homely and familiar something is salt! In describing his followers as salt, Jesus meant that a Christian is a positive force. When he is absent he is missed. When he is present he makes a difference. If you make no difference in your home, in your church, in your community, you are not a Christian.

Then salt is that something that gives taste to the feast of life. However many rationing points you may have squandered for your Sunday dinner, without this homely ingredient of salt, it would be a failure. All of the rare dishes in the world would be insipid without it. So is life without the saving salt of Christianity. So the most handicapped have found it. So also have the most highly privileged. Here is a man who sampled every dish that life had to offer. But having tasted them all, he spits them out as one would dry ashes, saying, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit."

But perhaps the supreme function of salt is that it is an antiseptic, it is a preventive. It stands in the pathway of sin, of moral rottenness, of the tragedy resulting from moral rottenness and says to the whole vile troop: "You shall not pass!" "If thou hadst been here," said Martha wistfully to the Master, "my brother would not have died." Whether that was true in that particular we cannot say. But how many fine things have died in your life and in your home and in our community just for lack of the saving salt of Christlike character. In truth it is perfectly safe to say that every real tragedy that has come to the world in the life of the individual or of the nations has come just for lack of saving salt.

For instance, what was the need of Sodom? The supreme need was not better banks and finer industries. It was lacking in salt. Ten salty souls could have saved the city. When Elijah was taken from the world, what did Elisha shout after him? "My father, my father, the horseman of Israel and the chariot thereof!" We who attended the Kiwanis Club here this week were reminded again of what you have

been told--that it was not the statesmen, it was not the army and the navy that saved England from collapse in the eighteenth century, but it was the saving salt of the Wesley Revival. As churchmen we are learners in the school of Christ. Seeking to master that teaching without which there can be no life that is real, we are a brotherhood offering to a world red in tooth and claw the only solid answer to its big problem. We are the body of Christ, giving our Lord a chance to do through us what he ~~would~~^{did} through his own bodily presence in the long ago. We are salt, giving life its tang and its meaning, offering to men and nations that without which the world rots down. Thus, we are not mere luxuries. We are not mere appendices added on to the book of life--we are absolute essentials.

II

Since this is the case how ought we to think of the church? Suppose we turn aside from the clamor of the vast crowd and listen to authentic voices. I know that there are those who do not think of the church at all. There are many in Jackson for whom the Church simply does not exist. I know there are those who criticize the church. Sometimes they do so justly for the Church is not perfect. Often they do so because they are ignorant of what the Church really is and of what the Church is undertaking to do. The reason some stand idle in the marketplace is because no one has hired them. There are literally millions outside the Church who are there not because they are bad or wrong thinking people, but because nobody has ever taken the time intelligently to sell them on the Church.

Often they criticize the church as a smoke-screen behind which to hide their cowardice. Not daring to meet the challenge of the Church, they blame the Church instead of frankly confessing that they have not the grit to measure up to its demands. Then there are those who "damn with faint praise and ~~consent~~^{assent} with civil leer, and without sneering, teach the rest to sneer." These are the ones who say, "Yes, I belong to the Church, but I do not work at it much. If we are fair minded, we shall not take the testimony of any of these because they have no real right to speak.

Suppose then we listen to some who can speak with authority. What place, for instance, did the Church occupy in the mind and heart of Jesus? Here is One whom we call Lord and Master. Here is One whom even unbelievers must recognize as the greatest spiritual genius that ever lived. How did He think of the Church? He thought grandly of it. He died when he was just out of his ^{twenties} ~~thirties~~. But he thought so grandly of the Church that he invested all his precious little handful of years in its building. It costs to build. "What does it cost," one asked ^{Hugh} ~~Quentin~~ "to build an institution like the London University?" "One man's life," was the answer. That is what Jesus invested in the Church. ^{Millions have benefited themselves with it} "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." Jesus thought so grandly of the Church that he builded his life into it.

Here is another man. He ^{perhaps} came closer to possessing the mind of Christ than any other man ~~perhaps~~ in the New Testament. He was one of the greatest intellects of all time. How did Paul think of the Church? As his Master he thought grandly of it. As another has pointed out, when we find Paul at his lowest, when we find him with his face in the dust in heart-broken shame, it is when he is remembering how he had once persecuted the Church. As he thinks of this, he calls himself less than the least of all the saints. He is amazed at the ~~forbearing~~ love of God in forgiving him for a sin for which he has never been able quite to forgive himself.

On the other hand when we find this great hero with his head among the stars, when we find him shouting for sheer joy, he is thinking of his privilege of belonging to the Church and of being able to have a part in its building. This was the cause to which he gave his life with a song. This is the word that he left to you and me, "Let everything be done with a view to building. Let your daily attitudes, your daily words, your daily prayers, your daily work, be bent toward this highest of all high ends, toward the building of the Church."

If then our Lord thinks so grandly of the Church, if those who understood him best share in his sense of its supreme worth, you and I would do well to give heed.

We shall certainly do well to learn from him whom we call Lord and Master. If the Church was worthy of the best that our Lord had to give to it, it also ought to be worthy of our best. We ought to express our convictions of this fact in certain definite ways.

1. We ought to belong to the Church. Here is an institution that is absolutely essential. Here is an institution build of God, established of God, but carried on through human instrumentality. Every one of us agrees that it ought to be carried on. But whose business is it to carry it on? It is yours and mine. It is the business of every man, woman, and child ~~whoever~~ you are, whatever your circumstances. It is your highest privilege as well as your solemn duty to God and man to belong to the Church.

2. Having become a part of the Church, it is your privilege and duty to support it. You are to support it ~~with~~ ^{by} your money. A Church that does not need the financial support of its members is not to be congratulated, it is to be pitied. It is headed not toward life but toward death. It is a great privilege to receive the blessings of the Church. "It is more blessed to give," said Jesus, "than to receive." Every man, woman, and child ought to have a part in the financial support of the Church. Not only ought we to support the Church by our giving, but we ought to support it by attending upon its services. The Church can live in no other way. To give to the Church and to refuse to attend it is to seek to build with one hand while you tear down with another. Every man who comes to Church helps every other man to come. Jesus was regular in his church attendance. If you are to be a growing and helpful Christian, so must you.

Then when you move from Jackson to another community, you ought to take your church letter with you. There is a law derived from the Bible whose sanity will appeal to every one of us: "So act that your conduct is worthy to become a principle of universal law." That is, so act that if every one of your fellows acted in the same fashion you would build a better individual life, a better home life, a better community life and a better world. You cannot do this unless you keep your membership with you. If everybody acted as those who are acting who fail to move their

membership the Church would lose nineteen out of every twenty of its members. In other words the man who fails to keep his church membership with him is helping the institution to which he pledged his solemn faith not toward victory but toward defeat.

4. Not only ought every man to join the church, attend the church, contribute to the church, keep his membership with him, but he ought to engage in its activities. He ought to be a part of its school. The Sunday School is not the father of the Church. It is the child of the Church and as a child of the Church it needs the support of the Church. We are living in a day of wide-spread juvenile delinquency! Look into it. These delinquents do not come from the Sunday School--they come from the group that do not attend.

III

How then I ask you are you going to act toward this institution of supreme worth? Are you going to help to build or help to tear down? By your daily life and conduct, you are going to do one or the other. I urge upon you the high privilege of church building. We ought to give ourselves to this greatest of all enterprises for these two most obvious reasons:

1. If the Church is to be built in our generation, we are the ones that are going to have to do it. I know that Jesus said, "I will build my church." That is profoundly true, but he builds it of human material. He also builds it through human instrumentality. Soon our boys are coming home. Whether we win them back or lose them will depend upon the kind of church they find. The kind of church they find will depend upon what you and I do about it before they get back. The one chance God has at this generation is through us.

2. Then I offer the Church as the greatest opportunity because what you invest here can never be lost. Some of your investments have failed to pay off. Here is one that will not fail. "I will build my church," Jesus declares, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." That is, "I will build my church in the midst of opposition." That is true. Buildings are always costly. Being a real

Christian always means a battle--a battle with your own selfishness, a battle with your laziness, a battle with your indifference. But if Jesus builds his Church in the midst of opposition, he builds it in spite of opposition. By our neglect and failure we can weaken the church but no man can destroy it.

Look at the scene when these words were uttered. Jesus is at Caesarea Philippi. He is sitting with a group of unknown men under the shadow of the magnificent temple of Diana. They have not enough capital between them perhaps to have established a decent peanut stand. Just six months away is the Cross, yet this dauntless young Man tells his friends, "I am going to build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." After the crucifixion, Rome harnessed her best energies for its destruction. One emperor even went so far as to erect a Triumphal Arch in token of the fact that the Christian Church had been destroyed. But the hard heel of the centuries has trodden that arch so deeply into the dust that we do not know where it stood. But the Church still lives on. I am happy to be a part of it. My one sadness is that I am not a better part.

"I love Thy Church, O God!
Her walls before Thee stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
And graven on Thy hand.

"For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end."

MY CHURCH

"I will build my church."

—Matthew 16:18

I

This morning we are thinking about the Church. That we may think intelligently let us turn to the supreme Source Book, the New Testament. How does the Church appear on the pages of this book? What place did it hold in the mind and heart of its Founder. The ministry of Jesus was very brief. He was just out of His twenties when He died. How did He invest His little handful of precious years? **Answer**—He invested those years in the building of the Church. This He did not because there was nothing else that He could do. This He did, not because He was lacking in wisdom. This He did, not because He had no appreciation of the values that really count. He thus invested His life because He regarded the Church as an institution of supreme worth.

The greatest intellect of the early Church was Paul. He is one of the great intellects of all time. Not only was he a man of vast ability, but he was a man who above all others of his day, I think, shared the mind of Christ. He could say truly, "For me to live is Christ." That is, "For me to live is to reproduce Christ." What then did this Christlike man think of the Church? It has been pointed out that there were times in the life of Paul when he was deeply depressed. There were times when he put his face in the very dust in shame. Then there were other times when he girded his heart with praise and fairly walked among the stars. Generally speaking, his times of depression were when he was thinking of the fact that he once persecuted the Church. His times of supreme gladness were those times when he was rejoicing in the privileges of belong to the church and being one of its builders.

II

Why, I wonder, did the Church loom so large in the mind of Christ? Why did it loom so large in the mind of Christlike Paul? Why has it held so large a place in the minds of the choicest saints through the centuries. I think we can find the answer to these questions on the pages of the New Testament. What then is the Church that it should be so highly praised?

1. The Church is a body of disciples. When Jesus gathered the first little handful of men about Him, He called them disciples. What is a disciple? A disciple is a learner. These fishermen--Peter, James, John, and the rest--had found in Jesus a Man they considered the Supreme Teacher. When they saw Him, they were amazed and humbled by their shortcomings and failures. But they were not only reminded of their stupidities but of their wonderful possibilities. "How unlike Jesus we are!" they said. "But how like Him we can become!" Therefore, they enrolled themselves in His school.

As we meet here as church members it is our joy to be disciples of Jesus. If our critics remind us of our ignorance, we confess it. It was because we realized this ignorance ourselves that we entered His school. If they tell us how unlike the Master we are, this we also confess. Our one claim is that we are trying to learn to be like Him. The Church is not a place for perfect people. It is not even an institution made up of good people. It is an institution made up of those who confess their lack of goodness and who are trying to learn that the finest of all fine arts in the school of Christ. As members of the church, we are disciples.

2. The Church is a brotherhood. That ^{is} ~~was~~ ^a the name by which it is called on the pages of the New Testament. The Church is a body of men and women who in a world torn by strife and hate, wet with tears, and soaked in blood are trying to live as members of one family. This is one of their distinguishing marks--"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one toward another."

It was this love for each other that first astonished and bewildered and then won many of that ancient world. "How these Christians love each other!" they whispered in awed amazement. And because they longed to love and to be loved, they were drawn into these little brotherly groups, these "little colonies of heaven".

In saying that the Church is a brotherhood, we are not claiming that it is a perfect brotherhood. It has never been such. This is the case simply because it has always been made out of imperfect men and women like ourselves. Even on the very heels of Pentecost, we read this distressing word, "There arose a murmuring". There are always those who have a fighting interest in the Church. There are always those who are ready to start a row. It is always easier to get folks to hate each other than to get folks to love each other. But while the Church is not a perfect brotherhood, it is the most perfect that the world has ever known. Every organization that makes for brotherliness has learned its ethics from the Church. When we face the hell that has broken loose throughout the wide world in our day, we cannot but realize the superlative importance of an institution whose business it is to build up a brotherhood. That is the business of the Church.

3. As members of the Church, we are witnesses. That is a part of our marching orders. "Ye shall receive power after that the holy spirit has come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." We are to witness by what we are. We are to witness by what we say and do. It was through this witnessing that the early Church brought to men a sense of God. It was through their witnessing that the harsh world of that day was remade. It is the business of every member of the Church to be a witness, to bring to his fellows a sense of God.

4. As members of the Church, as Christians, we are salt. That was a fine word that Jesus Himself spoke with regard to His disciples--"Ye are the salt of the earth." What is salt? Salt is more than a luxury. It is a necessity. It is something that we simply cannot do without. However abundant and choice the

dinner awaiting you at home if it should be without salt you could not eat it. Salt is that that gives a tang to the feast of life. "Salt," said the little girl in her essay, "is that something that makes food taste bad if you don't put it in it."

Just as salt is a necessity, so is the Church. It is not a luxury. It is something that is necessary to give life meaning. Wherever the Church with its tangy message fails to appear, life loses its taste and meaning. It becomes a dull and insipid affair. Not only so, but life rots down. Salt is the great preventive. It stands as a gallant foe against invading rottenness, saying, "It shall not pass ^W without the saving salt of the Church, ^t The individual and ~~the~~ society do not go up--they go down, ^W without this saving salt, ^t The individual and ~~the~~ society inevitably rot. That is not theory. That is fact. The Church, then, is to give a tang to the feast of life and to stand as the irresistible foe of moral and spiritual rottenness.

5. Finally, the Church is the body of Christ. Of course, this is ^{figurative} the language of ~~symbolism~~. What is this body of mine that you see? It is not in reality myself. As I look into your faces, I do not see your real self ^{see}. There is a deep sense in which we never see each other. This body is simply the house in which I live. It is the palace of my personality. If I lose a finger, I have not lost any of my personality. I am the same man. It is true if I lose my ~~good~~ right arm. What then is my body? It is the instrument through which I express myself to the world.

Since this is the case, my body is essential if I am to be useful. The artist Turner must have had a marvelous soul. He had amazing ability to steal the sheen from God's river, and the fleece from God's clouds, and the crimson from God's sunsets, and fling them upon the canvass. But this was made possible not simply through his personality but through his body. If his body had been paralyzed, his ~~heart~~ ^{heart} so far as we are concerned would have gone for nothing. How is Jesus to realize His dream for the world? He is to realize it through

His body, the Church. The feet that once walked about Galilee must now walk on your feet and mine. The hands once stretched forth in human helpfulness must now be your hands and mine. The message that He longs to speak to this bewildered day He must speak through our lips. As the Church, we are the body of Christ. Since, then, we are disciples, since we are witnesses, since we are a brotherhood, since we are the body of Christ, we are an institution not of secondary importance, ^{but} of supreme importance.

III

But how do we think of this supremely worthwhile institution? How is it regarded in so-called Christian America?

1. There are those who do not think of it at all. I think it would amaze most of us to realize that there are millions in America, that there are thousands in our own city for whom we wimply do not exist. These pass our church doors day after day with no more thought of us, with no more appreciation of what we are trying to do than if they lived in darkest Africa. There are many who do not think of the Church at all.

2. There are others who think of the Church only to criticize and condemn. Every mention of it arouses their antagonism. They talk of it sometimes with ridicule, sometimes with a sneer, sometimes with contempt. This critical attitude may be based on sheer ignorance. Sometimes it may be born of the fact that the Church in some fashion has disappointed them. Sometimes one of its members or even one of its ministers has mistreated them.

A young woman came to see me sometime ago who told me an ugly story. When quite young, she had been victimized by a man much older than herself. It so happened that that man was not only a member of the church but a minister. Quite naturally, she came to regard him as a scoundrel. She was right in so doing. But unfortunately this experience had given her a deep-seated prejudice against all ministers. It had made her antagonistic to the church itself. She had even

come to repudiate God and to blame Him for a wrong that was far more grievous to His tender heart than it was to her own. If you are here this morning with a prejudice, remember it was not God that disappointed you but some one who misrepresented Him. It was not the Church that let you down; it was some one who failed to live up to the obligations of the Church.

Then there is another group who criticize the Church because they have not the gallantry to live up to its demands. They know that whoever they are they have no right to sponge off the community for all the moral uplift that comes to them directly and indirectly through the Church. In order to boast of their self-respect while they take the way of least resistance they talk the Church down. When the fox saw a lovely bunch of grapes in the tree that made his mouth water, he did not determine at all cost to possess them. Climbing was too difficult and tricky. He compromised by saying that they were sour grapes. There are those that look at the church and listen to its high demands and, wanting the grit to try to live up to them, say "There are hypocrites in the church," and go their way. They talk down that which they have not the courage to support.

"Upon a rock stands prone my soul,
A diver, lean, undressed,
And looks and fears the shock,
And turns and hides his shame
In some poor sorry jest."

3. There is a third group who support the Church but who are lukewarm in their support. They have not quite the courage to repudiate it altogether. Nor do they have the courage to give it their best. These are the ones who have no technique of Christian living. They give when they have a surplus or when the mood strikes them. They come at odd intervals when they have nothing else they wish to do. But they know absolutely nothing of giving themselves sacrificially to that institution that is the one hope of the world. Instead they "damm with faint praise, ascent with civil leer, and without sneering teach the rest to sneer." This group is perhaps the most dangerous of all. At least Jesus thought so.

"I would," He said, "that thou wer either cold or hot." Any attitude is better than an attitude of halfhearted indifference.

4. But there is a fourth group that is the hope of the Church and the hope of the world. They are made up of the people who care. They are made up of those who really belong to the Church. I like that word--"I belong to the church". I ought to do so. The Church belongs to me. Through the years it has been my spiritual mother. The Church gave me consecrated parents. They gave me a Christian home. I was dedicated at the altars of the Church in my young and tender years. It was the Church that consecrated my marriage. It has been the Church that has buried my dead. It has been the Church that has shouted in the midst of those desolating hours when we say goodbye to those that we love the best, "The victory is ours, thank God."

The Church is my dear treasure, my spiritual mother. Therefore, it is my joy to belong to it. It has a claim upon me that I neither desire nor dare to resist. I rejoice in its victories. I sorrow in its defeats. My dearest hopes are tied up with it. I belong to it and it belongs to me.

"I love Thy Church, O God!
Her walls before Thee stand,
Dear as the apple of Thine eye,
And graven on Thy hand.

"For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend,
To her my cares and toils be given,
Till toils and cares shall end."

My hope and the hope of the world is in those that really belong to the church.

IV

Now since you belong to the Church what ought you to do about it? What did Jesus do? Jesus gave Himself to building the Church. "I will build my church," He said. The task that engaged Him ought to engage us. Jesus builds His Church out of human material. He builds it out of men and women like ourselves. Not only does He built it out of this material, but He builds it through men and

women. If there is to be a better Church tomorrow on this particular corner than the one we have today, you and I are the ones that are going to have to build it. God's only chance at this corner is through us.

Jesus gave Himself to church building though He realized that building is costly. It is cheap to tear down. The finest structure will fall apart of itself if left alone. But building is costly. "How much did it cost to build the Polytechnic Institute of London?" one asked ~~Clinton~~ ^{Clinton Hoag}. "One man's life," was the answer. I have ridden in comfort on the railroad that crosses the isthmus of Panama. But the building of that road was costly. It is said that every cross-tie represents a life laid down. What did it cost to build the Church? It cost him his life. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

One reason that the building of the Church is costly is that it is built in the face of opposition. "I will build my church," said Jesus, "and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The gates of hell--the ~~foes~~ ^{foes} of sin and selfishness and plain laziness--these always fight against church building. But if He builds His Church in the face of opposition, He builds it in spite of opposition. The Church has had many a death, but it has also had many a resurrection.

Now what is ~~our~~ ^{our} supreme business in this hour of crisis? What ought we to do when the gates of hell are threatening us and all we love in a fashion unsurpassed in human history. It is not enough for us to sit down and merely hold our own. I am not interested in the church that is satisfied with holding its own. Neither God nor man is satisfied with the Church that is simply on the defensive. We have got to be a vigorous, conquering church. Such a church is needed in every age. It is an absolute necessity in this age.

What can we do to make our church services more effective? One thing we can do--we can have a more vigorous and effective evening service. Don't misunderstand me. Our evening services have been helpful. But the evening service is different

from the morning service. If they duplicated each other, you would be justified in attending only one. But they do not. The evening service is in a special sense a recruiting service. It is that service above all others through which the church seeks to win new disciples. I can bring testimony to the power of this service through the years. I have served our largest downtown city church longer than any other man in Methodism. I know what can be done. I know what ought to be done. I know what is not being done as it should be.

What can you do to help this situation? You can make the evening service your responsibility. You can make it as much your business as it is mine. I know you can refuse to do so. In so doing you can in large measure tie my hands and defeat my purpose. I am not here as your pastor merely to get on. I am here to do the best possible job for the church and for the Kingdom. I cannot do it without you. What program have you for Sunday evening that is more important than helping to make your church a conquering church? I am convinced that if as many as one out of every six of the members of Galloway Church would make it their business to be here the effectiveness of our services would be multiplied. In sober reason is it too much to ask that you share this supremely worthy undertaking with me? Don't say that it is my business and not yours. I am here to ^{help} preach to people--not to benches. You are here not simply to come because you fancy you might like the singing or the sermon. No service is an end in itself--it is a means to an end. The pastor and the choir leader cannot accomplish that end by themselves. If you would share with us sacrificially in this business which is your business we can make our church a greater power for righteousness in this city and in our needy world.

Therefore, I bring you face to face with this question--Is it worthwhile to do our best or is it not? Is the evening service worthwhile or is it not? If it is worthwhile it is worth making the largest possible success. If it is not, let us stop playing at it and kill it. A few years ago a man drove a spirited team of horses up in front of a country store in one of our southern states. He hung

his finger in the lines while he reached to shake hands with a friend. The horses took sudden fright and dashed down the road. By an almost superhuman effort the man succeeded in seizing the lead horse by the bridle, but they pounded him with their hoofs and with the tongue of the wagon as he clung. At last he succeeded in bringing them to a halt a few hundred yards down the road. But by that time the man was wounded to his death. As he dropped in the road, his friend held his head in his lap. "Jim," he said, "you ought to have turned them loose. The horses and team were not worth it." "Go look in the wagon," said the dying man with his last breath. His friend went and looked in the wagon and there asleep on the bed of straw was the man's six-year-old son. And nobody said that he ought to have turned them loose, nobody said that the price was too great.

Bear this in mind--What we do here is going to color the lives of your boys and girls. It is going to determine whether those who return to us from the War will find here help and healing or whether they will give way to cynicism and despair. This is your chance and mine. We are calling on those boys to give sacrificially to serve at the price of life laid down. Shall we accept those sacrifices in selfish ease and indifference? Or shall we say, "As they are giving themselves for us, so we will give ourselves for them."

MY CHURCH

Mathew 16:18 - I will build my church

These words come to us with a bit of a thrill, ~~if we take them seriously~~. I love them because they have a ring of certainty about them. A ring of assurance. They come with a special fitness because ours is a day of great uncertainty. There have been few days in which the church was so questioned, ~~and was~~ ^{accused by} so mistrusted. The seat of the mournful is ~~full,~~ ^{full,} ~~running over,~~ ^{and} the seat of the scornful has long put out a sign "standing room only". There is nothing more common and easy today than to criticize, smile, and even laugh derisively at this institution that we call the church.

If ~~such~~ ^{these} words ~~as these~~ of Jesus ~~were~~ ^{were} needed today, they were no less needed when they were uttered. It certainly looked like a mad assertion ~~to say~~ for this young man just out of his twenties, unknown to the wide world, to assert "I am going to build my church, I am going to build an institution that will outlast the ages". Had I been by and known the ~~near~~ future, I might have said to him, either with pity or with laughter, "You're going to build a church that will outlast the world? Don't be silly. Six months from now you will be hanging on a cross. Six months from now you'll be uttering those words that are the climax of all heartache and of all failures, 'My God, why has't thou forsaken me?' Six months from now these nameless nobodies that you have gathered about you as followers will, ^{to a man} have fled from you ~~to a man~~, except one, and he will have flung out of life by suicide. ^{yet} ~~And~~ you are going to build a church that will outlast the ages."

And ^s if the near future ^{was} is grim, the far future ^{was} is equally so. "It will not be long till your own people will drive your followers out of their nation. It won't be long till tolerant Rome will grow weary of you because, though it is hospitable to all religion, it is inhospitable to traitors. And you will be ^{your followers will be declared} ~~traitors~~ ^{traitors}

~~traitors~~, ^{because they} ~~And your followers~~ will be too stubborn to burn a bit of incense to the Emperor ^{the little piece} ~~and thus will incur the crime of treason.~~ ~~And~~ Rome will unsheath its sword ^{far in splashing them} ~~against you,~~ and so ~~succeed,~~ that a certain Emperor will boast of the fact that the last Christian has been swept off the ~~face of the~~ earth, and ~~that~~ the Church has been utterly destroyed. And in token of his victory he will erect a triumphal arch to show that the disaster that has befallen the Church has been complete and irrevocable. Yet, strange as it may seem, in spite of a thousand follies, and failures, and sins; in spite of one death after another, this strange institution has always come to a resurrection, and even in our day when so much that is lovely has been thrown into the ash can, it is still the one world-wide institution on this earth. And somehow I believe that Jesus was speaking sober truth when He said, "I will build my Church", and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," and it is going to last forever because the eternal Christ is in it.

PART I

Now what is this Church that Jesus proposes to build?

1. When Jesus was here He gathered about Him a little group of fishermen and whatnots, men not conspicuous for their learning, their social position, their political power, their financial ability. These men became followers of His, not because they were convinced of His unique deity. They found in Him at first the most winsome and the most fascinating personality that they had ever known. They found in Him a teacher superior to their dreams, and so they enlisted in His school and became His followers, and they were known as His disciples. The Church is made up of disciples.

What is a disciple? A disciple is a learner. He is a pupil in the school of Christ. He has not arrived. He is on the way. The Church is not a little handful of people who have found perfection. They are

made up of people who have seen in Jesus the fairest of ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely, and have enlisted in His school and are seeking to be like Him. Therefore when our critics remind us of our follies and failures, and how far we fall short, we are ready to confess. We have not arrived. We are simply on the way.

Why am I in the Church? I am not in the Church because the Church is perfect. A perfect Church would not let me in. I am in the Church for two reasons. The Church is imperfect and will let me in. Second, the Church is imperfect and needs me in. I have said that in other sermons. I can not say it too often. The Church is not made up of perfect people, but of people who have realized their imperfections and are struggling and learning day by day to be like Him. And Jesus has made us sure that our efforts, if we continue, will not be in vain. We shall grow increasingly like Him here and increasingly like Him for ever more. "Beloved now we, the sons of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be, but we know we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." As members of the Church we are disciples.

2. As members of the Church we are part of a brotherhood. "Love the brotherhood", said the apostle Peter, speaking of the Church. Now the Church today is not a perfect brotherhood.. It never has been a perfect brotherhood, because it has always been made up of imperfect people. But it has approached, and did approach in the Pentecost days the closest to a perfect brotherhood that the world had ever seen up to that time. And when these people went out over that hard unbrotherly pagan world these pagans looked at them with wistful eyes and hungry hearts and said, "How these Christians love each other".

Now what is the greatest need of our world, today? What has been the need of our world ever since there were two people on the world?

It is just this; some way to make us love each other; to be able for a man to be a brother to his fellow man. We can't get along with each other. We can't get along as nations. I listened to the debate in the United Nations. These men are struggling to bring about world peace, but I could not help but feel how lacking they were in love for each other. Their quest was largely a selfish quest because they realize that unless they acted as brothers they would likely be annihilated. The greatest need in the world today is a brotherhood.

Now Jesus came to build up a brotherhood. He gathered twelve men about Him and sought to weld them and make them into brothers each to the other. He gave as the one test of loyalty to Himself, "By this shall all men know that you are my Disciples, if you have love one for another". And these brotherly men did change the world. If you turn to the Book of Acts you will see that this little group of Christians bridged every chasm that divided humanity in that day, and they were divided by as many wide chasms as those that divide us. They could not get along with nations. They could not get along as groups. They could not get along as families. They simply could not get along. We are in that condition. We can't get along with each other. But Jesus Christ has the answer through His Church. The Church is here to build up a brotherhood. In doing that we are doing what is the most conserving and profitable thing in the world. We are doing that which is absolutely essential, because with the proximity of a family we must have something of a brotherly spirit or the world will commit suicide. As a part of the Church I am a part of a brotherhood and am seeking to make all men into brothers.

3. Paul spoke of the Church as the body of Christ. This, of course, is figurative language. When Jesus was here he went about doing good.

When Jesus was here He threw Himself into the raw wound of everybody's need. When He was here and passed through those quiet little villages where we should have seen nothing but peace, wretched men, desperate men, rich and poor, came out of their homes to flock round Him because they had needs that nobody else could meet. He touched the world to bring it joy and laughter, and to lift the lower into the higher, and to change human desert into human garden. He went about doing good. By and by they grew indignant at Him, and hung Him on a cross. But His ministry was not ended. Luke begins his book by saying, "The former treatises have I made of all that Jesus began to do and teach. The Book of Acts tells what He continued to do and to teach. How did He do it? He did it through His church. The Church was His body. It was through the Church that He went about the saving of the world. He walked still on human feet and ministered through human hands, and spoke through human lips. The church is the body of Christ.

4. The Church is salt. Everybody knows about salt. Salt is a positive quantity. That is its first characteristic. It is something that can not be ignored. If it fails to show up when it is wanted, it leaves a lonesome place against the sky. And if it shows up where it is not wanted, it can be terribly in the way. Salt means that if you are a churchman, a good churchman, you are a positive quantity. Your contribution is not in that you do no harm, but in that you do positive good.

When I spoke to a young chap some time ago, asking if he was a Christian, he answered, "No, but I'm not so bad". Well, neither is a wax figure in a show window, nor a corpse for that matter. A rosebush is not prized because of the scarcity of its thorns, but the abundance of its roses. An absence of sickness does not mean a presence of

health. The absence of vices does not mean a presence of virtue. If the servants had pulled up all the weeds in the wheat field, if they would have pulled up the wheat at the same time, they would not have a wheat field, but merely a desert. To be a church member is to be a positive quantity, to count positively on the right.

Then salt gives a tang to the feast of life. Without ~~this~~ saving salt, life becomes insipid. As a church member I am to bring some joy, some thrill, some tang into life's feast. Jesus is the most exciting character that ever lived. ^{To} Follow Him for one day ~~requires~~ great courage. You won't encounter dullness. Salt gives a tang to the feast of life if as a church member I am helping to tone life up. To give it meaning and purpose and laughter where it would have nothing but boredom. And if you are bored, the chances are that you are boring, and if you are bored you are not in the reality a member of the church. Then, finally, salt is a great preventive. Every tragedy that comes to life fundamentally comes from lack of salt. "If you had been here," said Martha to Jesus when he came after the death of Lazarus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died". Many a time that is true. How many fine things have died in modern society because we have not had, as church people, the presence of the living Christ. A vigorous, live, spirit filled church, is a great preventive.

A young chap came and presented me a check after a service some time ago, saying "I didn't cash that check today because I heard you preach last night." That didn't get into the statistics of the positive achievement of the church. The church is a great preventive, and being a great preventive, it is also a great conqueror. The church is the salt of the earth. It is that institution without which society rots down.

PART II

Now what is your attitude toward this church that Jesus came to build, and for which He died? Paul said, "Husbands love your wife as Jesus Christ loved the church". There is no greater love than this. He loved it well enough to die for it. What is your attitude toward the church? We do not all think of the church in the same way.

1. Some of us do not think of it at all. There are thousands who pass our churches every day who have no more idea what we stand for and what we are undertaking to do than if the church had never existed. They have simply forgotten. Some times that is their own fault. Some times it is our fault. Blessed is the church that can not be ignored. Blessed is the church that haunts people with the fact that they are in town on a business trip. What can this mean, the bewildered throngs asked on the day of Pentecost. Something had happened. Something had stifled their yawns and excited them and set them to asking questions. Blessed is the church that arouses questions and arouses interest, even antagonistic interest, if no other in the people about it. Some ignore the church. They don't think of it.

2. Then there is another group that think of the church only to criticize it. Some of these have grounds for criticism. The church has been very imperfect. It may have neglected them in an hour of great need. But since the church is the bride of Christ, I don't think He would appreciate too much our peddling the vices of the church over the community. I heard a man preach some time ago and he humiliated the church in the most horrible way. And when he got through he actually had the audacity to invite folks to become a part of it. He practically said we are a bunch of crooks and failures, but come and join us. You can help us to do something that is not worth doing.

Some others criticize the church because they haven't the gallantry

and the grit to live up to its demands. It is so much easier to stand on the sidelines and pick fault with the players than it is to play the game. You know that old story of the fox who looked up in a tree one day and saw the loveliest grapes that he had ever beheld. They made his mouth water, and he decided he must have grapes, they were his favorite fruit. But when he discovered that in order to get them he would have to climb, and in the process of climbing he might fall, he gave it up. And as he went on his journey he said to himself. "Those were lovely grapes. I should have liked to have had them, but I didn't have the gallantry and the grit to climb for them."

No. Instead of telling himself the truth, he lied to himself. He said, "The grapes are no good anyway". So often we look at the church about us and say, "Oh, yes, I would belong to it, but it is no good. It is not doing anything." It is so much easier to find fault than it is to meet our responsibilities.

Upon a rock stands prone my soul, a diver lean, undressed,
And looks and fears the chock, and turns and hides its
shame in some poor sorry gest

Some time ago I went into a small town to hold church, and the very day I arrived I met a gentleman who was getting adring out of an old time well. And I joined him and we fell into conversation, and he turned the conversation to the church, and I was interested. He knew nothing of me, nor I of him. It was amazing how much he knew about the different churches in the village and how utterly futile he found every one of them. Everything was wrong. And when he had finished, I said "It's very fortunate I ran into you ." I said the Pastor of one of these churches has realized that the church is not all that it ought to be and he sent for me to help to make it what it ought to be. I am certainly glad I found you. You know where the church is failing and

how it might succeed. Come in and we will make what is into what ought to be." You know what he did? His eyes didn't sparkle and his cheeks glow, and he gave a ready response; that old story of the Irishman who came over and his friend met him and took him up home. It so happened that a persimmon tree was in his backyard and the fruit was just ripening. He gave this visitor his first persimmon, and he enjoyed it; and then a second and he enjoyed that; and then the third. Then he threw him down one that was green and he started expectedly on that, and after he had chewed a little while, he looked up with tears in his eyes, and he said, "Pat, if you want to hear from the old country you'd better come down now. I'm closing up mighty fast". This chap closed up mighty fast. If you know a better way of making the church effective, for God's sake come in and help us. Men need it and we need you.

Some people simply meet the church with criticism.

3. Then there is a third group that are friendly to the church, even belong to it, but who never take it seriously. They simply shunt it in a second place. They give to it, but they do not need. They attend it when they feel that they have nothing better to do. They are like that church of which Jesus spoke at . They are lukewarm. They are neither cold nor hot. They are straddlers. They are sitters on a fence. They are hitters of the middle of the road. They give the answer that a friend of mine gave when I asked "Are you a Christian?" He said, "Sort of". Now of all the people who are uninteresting, it's the people who never get in earnest about anything. Of all the people who misrepresent Jesus, there is none who misrepresents Him quite so much as the half-hearted man. You can't believe the tremendous truth of the New Testament and be lukewarm and listless about them, if you don't care; if you don't care enough to act; if you don't care to be in earnest, then you don't care at all. There are some who belong to

the church but who are a positive hinderances, because they have never fully committed themselves to Him to whom they have promised their loyalty and their allegiance.

4. Then there is a fourth group that I have known along the way. In my opinion they are the hope of the church, the hope of the world. They are the committed people. They are the people who are , having accepted Jesus Christ, have also accepted His church and have given themselves fully to it. They belong. That carries two ideas. They fit into the church. There are those who do not fit into a society, that are learners in the school of Jesus, and who are really trying to build up brotherhood. They fit in.

Not only do they fit in, but they acknowledge that the church has a prior claim upon them. Fifty-eight years ago I married a lovely girl in the sweet radiance of her twentieth birthday. I speak of her as my wife. She speaks of me as her husband. She has a right so to do. I belong to her. I no more own this right arm than she owns me. She has a prior claim on me. The church has a prior claim on you, if you belong to it. I know those folks that say the best people I know don't belong to any church at all. Well your experience is different from mine. Far and ahead the best I have known have gone to the church. I'm thinking now of one I knew in Memphis. He was a man of considerable wealth. I understand that at one time he was president of twenty-seven different organizations in the city. But what came first? Always it was his church. I was his Pastor for seven years, and he never missed a service, so far as I know, unless he was ill, or unless he was out of the city. There are those who belong . They are the hope of the church and the hope of the world.

~~PA~~ PART III

Now it is this church of brotherly people, this church of salty

souls without which the world rots down, that Jesus proposes to build. How is he going about it?

1. He builds it out of human material. He does not seek for some rare stones to put into it. He builds it out folks such as we are. Folks that have given themselves to Him and allowed Him to shape them into stones for His church. When I first climbed the Washington's Monument I noticed the names of various states on the great stones that were in there, and I began to look for a stone that had the name of my own state, and I found one, and it gave me quite a glow. I should hate to have seen such a monument as that

conviction that they were the chosen

Not only does Jesus build His church out of human material, but He builds it through human hands. He has no other way. If there is to be a better church on your particular street corner in your city, you who belong to it are the ones, under God, who have to build it. He is going to build it through you. He is going to build it, He tells us, in spite of all opposition. The gates of Hades, or the gates of Hell, shall not prevail against it.

They will fight against it, but they will not overcome. It costs something to build. When I was in Washington, the Government sent me to speak to the operators one summer in the Canal Zone. As I crossed the Isthmus the man who had me in charge, my Government guide, said "Every crosstie in this road represents a human life ." "What does it cost to build an institution like this?" /asked ^{they} Quintine Hawk of the Polytechnic Institute of London. "One man's life", he said. It costs something to build, but it costs nothing to tear down. All you have to do to destroy any value, any institution, is simply to let it alone.

Joseph

For instance if you have a good business and you want to wreck your business, you don't have to insult your customers. All you have to do is neglect it. If you have a farm and you want to turn it back to the wilderness, all you have to do is nothing. If you have a home and want to destroy it, all you have to do is nothing. If you have a church, the strongest that has been built since Calvary, all its membership has to do to destroy it utterly is nothing. It costs to build, but it costs nothing to destroy. "I will build my church," said this dauntless young man, "and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it".

Here then is a place to make a safe investment of your life. Some of you have made investments that haven't turned out well. I was passing through a town down in Florida some time ago on a train, when they use to run, and I looked out sleepily through the window and saw the name of the city and smiled to myself and said, "These people don't know that I own an interest in a citrus farm about ten miles from the shore. I had invested in such, but I had never gathered any fruit, since I did not possess a submarine. We have all of us made bad investments, but here is one that is sure.

"Be ye steadfast, always abounding in the work of the Lord." The work of the church, he means. "For as much as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." You can invest here with perfect assurance. A man said some time ago with face lighted by the light of a great victory, he said, "The depression got me. I was chairman of the Board, but when I invited the Board to come to my house, I didn't have money enough even to serve them watermelons, but looking out at one of the most magnificent churches I know in America" he said "I put seventy-five thousand dollars in that. That is saved. Nobody can take that away from me." Here is a place to invest your money, and invest your life, and know you'll never lose it.

Now what is your attitude toward the church? Through our sense of
loneliness

Now I ~~will~~ speak to you as an unashamed churchman. At least my one shame is that I am not a better churchman. It is to this institution I owe an unpayable debt. It was the church who gave me a Christian home. It was the church who gave me a father who knew the way to God's altars, and who was strong and tender and clean. It was the church who gave me my Mother, from whose hands deeds of weekday holiness fell on us noiselessly as snow. It was the church that when love came into my life consecrated my marriage. It was the church that when death came and separated me for the time from some that I loved, gave me assurance of a morning's joy with them. And with Jesus Christ beyond this world with its grief and its grave, just as you, I owe it an unpayable debt. I want to sing with you as we close, at least with our hearts, if not with our lips,

I love Thy church, Oh, God
Her walls before Thee stand.
Here is the apple of Thine eye
Engraven on mine hand.
For her my tears shall fall,
For her my prayers ascend.
To her my cares and toils be given
To the toils and cares she'll mend.

Let us thank God for the church and dedicate ourselves anew to it.

Amen.

" I will build my Church." These are the words of our Lord. They tell us the purpose of his coming into the world. They tell us the task at which he has been toiling since the foundation of the world and at which he shall continue to toil till the end of time. He is one great church builder.

In this sentence also Christ sets his seal upon the supreme worth of the Church. He does not say that he will build a state or a world, but a church. He will toil at this task because it is the one of supreme worth. It will make it his one business because there is no other enterprise that is worthy of the infinite energies of an almighty God. By this word he pins the cross of honor on the bosom of the Church and shows her in her rightful place as the institution of supreme importance.

Now, I am aware that there are many that do not agree with our Lord. I am aware that there are men in plenty that think he might have employed his mighty forces in a better way. For there are many to-day that are ready to find fault with the Church. As one has said the seat of the scornful is full. Also the seat of the mournful. The Church is ridiculed by those without. And sad to say, it is often most severely abused by those within. If I had no better opinion of the Church than some church members that I know seem to have I would quit it at once. No man I think has a right to remain in an institution if he remains only to abuse and slander and discourage.

Listening that is being said to-day would be positively amusing if it were not so tragic. Some are thinking that the Church has had its day. They are expecting a new church after the war. They think that the old is now ready to be thrown on the rubbish heap of things discarded. ~~They think that it stands in the way of man in his upward progress instead of being his supreme help.~~ They think that it stands in the way of man in his upward progress instead of being his supreme help.

But in the face of these opinions of the forum and of the market place we need to turn again to the Book and realize what the Church means to our Lord and to those who came closest to him. He thought it was worth investing his energy in, even to the laying down of his life. He thought it was worth identifying himself with after he had ascended up into glory. For you remember that there was in that day a man whose life purpose was not to build the Church, but to destroy it. And one day that man was going about his task of destruction when he had a vision of the risen Christ and that Christ said to him, "Why persecutest thou me?" And Paul came to realize that in fighting the Church he was not fighting simply a few despised and ignorant men and women, but that he was fighting the very God himself.

And in the after days there was one sin that Paul could never forgive himself was that he had persecuted the Church. It was the thought of that awful sin that bowed his head in penitence and shame all through his days. For he had come to realize how close was Christ's identification with the Church. He had come to know the Church as the body of Christ. It was that organization through which Christ still walked about the work of his ministry. It was the institution through whose hands he blessed and through whose lips he still spoke his message. It was his bride, the one to whom he had pledged his love, the one he had wooed and won and was to marry. It was a temple builded of living stones in which the eternal Spirit had his dwelling. And it is well to remember when we abuse or slander the Church that we are slandering the bride of our Lord. And there was no knightly husband or lover whose heart ever burned within him at the wronging of the wife of his love as the heart of our Lord burns when his bride is wounded and insulted.

I will build my church, says Jesus. What is your attitude? I will build. Dare you say, I will ignore. I will fight. I will seek to tear down? I will build, it is the highest purpose of God, can you find a higher?

II. The text also tells the material out of which Christ is going to build his Church. These living stones that are placed in this holy temple are not simply the rough, unshaped product of nature. What is the Master saying to Peter? Just this, Flesh and blood has not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. That is the living stones that are to be built into this temple, into this church are stones that have been shaped into form and beauty by the hand of God. They are men and women that have been made what they are by the power of God. They are those who have been born again by the power of the Holy Ghost.

This is the one mark of church membership in the highest sense. The real church members are those that have passed out of death into life. They are those who have come from darkness into the light. They are those who have become partakers of the divine nature. That is a great and blessed requirement. It is a privilege that caused the Master to pronounce Peter blessed. It is a privilege that he said was greater even than that of being able to have the spirits of evil subject to you. And there is no substitute for this high requirement. There is nothing that will take the place of this shaping of the Holy Ghost. And there is no greater calamity that can come to the church than to have its membership made up of those who have never been born again.

This tells us not only the marks that the members of Christ's church are to bear, but it also tells us how they are to come by those marks. They are to attain this high position as did Peter. He reached it by confessed faith in Jesus Christ and there is no other way. You cannot get yourself into this august company by your decency or by your acts of charity. It is by the door of confessed faith in Jesus Christ and by that only. No man cometh unto the Father but by him.

Men are not only the material out of which Christ builds his Church, but they are also the agents through whom he builds. Every member of the church is to be also a builder of the church. His every energy is to be turned in that direction. The varied abilities of the living stones are for the one purpose of building the Church. "He gave some apostles and some prophets and some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministering in the building up of the body of Christ. That is what all these gifts are for. That is the one end to which they are to plan and struggle.

That is to be the test of all our conduct. Does it build up the Church or does it hinder. What am I to seek in this conversation? What am I to seek in the teaching of this class, in the preaching of this sermon? Just this, I am to try to build up the church. Now, you can see how unchristian it is when we let baser aims influence us. Some people seem to have but one aim in the Church and that is to do the least possible. Others seem to think that it is their business to run the whole business and if they are antagonized they will try as diligently to tear down as they once did to build up. You as your Master are here as a church builder. If you allow anything to swerve you from that high purpose you play into the hands of the devil.

III. Christ gives us to understand that he will build his Church in the midst of opposition. He never hinted that the building of the Church was to be an easy task. He never left the impression for a moment that he was going to find an ally in the world and the flesh and the devil. He realized that the building of the Church was going to be a difficult task. He realized that it was going to be opposed. He knew from the beginning that the gates of hell were going to fight against it. Hence he made it very plain to those whom he taught that it was going to mean sacrifice.

Right on the heels of this great declaration of his purpose in the world, what follows? Not a picture of triumph and ease and glory. He began to tell them how he must go unto Jerusalem and suffer. To build anything worth while costs something. When Mr. Hogg was asked the price of the great institution that he built he declared that it cost one

man's life. The building of a certain railroad in Africa cost the lives of four thousand men. Building is expensive. Christ knew that it meant a costly work for himself and he never disguised the fact that it was going to be a costly work for any man who was willing to engage in the high task with him.

V.

The text also tells us that the Church is to be built not only in the face of opposition, but in spite of opposition. "I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail." It is a good word to hide in the heart when the rain is on the roof and the sky is ~~dark~~ ~~of~~ ~~oppression~~. I know there have been times enough when it looked like an utter impossibility. I know there have been times when the declaration seemed the declaration of a mad man. It must have sounded that way when it was first uttered. It was spoken to a small group of humble men who were without honor and without power. They were under the shadow of the pomp of old world religions. They were face to face with a moral winter time that seemed to make hopeless the dream of a coming spring. And yet in calm confidence the Master spoke his declaration of final victory.

And the passing of the centuries have shown us that he was speaking only sober truth. The gates of hell have not prevailed. There have been times when it seemed for the moment that they had. When Nero was on the throne it seemed that the building was going to be utterly destroyed. That bloody king erected an arch to commemorate the fact that the last Christian had been swept from the face of the earth. But his arch has been so deeply trodden under the heels of the years that we don't know where it stood to-day. But the church came from that baptism of blood and fire and climbed upon the very throne that had thought to destroy it.

There was a time when it seemed that the gates of hell would triumph from within. The light became darkness and the blackness of the Middle Ages settled down upon the face of the world. But God led a mighty warrior into the conflict and the Reformation was born.

Then came that gloomy day when England lay under the foot of her foe. But God called a man from a little service in Alders Gate St., London. The man had been the object of a revelation. He had had his heart strangely warmed. And that man mounted his horse and rode through the century and the warmth of that hot heart brought the world a new springtime. The Church again became a conquering force mighty with the might of God and terrible as an army with banners.

Then came our own day. Prosperity made our eyes stand out with fatness. Materialism blinded our finer vision. We became worshippers at the shrine of the god of science. We ceased to glory in God and came more and more to glory in men. Then one day while we were busy building peace temples and congratulating ourselves on the new and more humane day to which we had come, a cyclone struck us. The nations that had loved peace slid one by one into the abyss of blood and tears till more than a score were entangled. Then the critics declared that it meant the falling down and the defeat of the Church.

But after four years during which we have been forced to look at a word on fire, what have we learned. We have learned to respect and honor and believe in the Church as never before. We have learned, as Mr. Jefferson points out, a new respect for her method. We have come to believe that preaching, that coming together, that symbols are not useless and foolish things. Instead the State has come to believe in and to adopt them. We have come also to believe in the doctrines of the Church as never before. We believe now in the reality of sin as never before. We believe in vicarious suffering. We believe

in the solidarity of the race. The Church is triumphing to-day as never before.

Men believe the doctrines of the church to-day as never before. They know now that the wages of sin is death. They see it written in the broad letters of more than four million graves. They know now that the doctrine of the cross is true. They know that the innocent do suffer for the guilty. The cartoon in which the Kaiser sees the American millions and asks on what ship they came. The Lusitania is the answer. What does it mean? Simply this, that those innocent victims suffered, but that they did not suffer in vain. That even those little babies that fed with their tender bodies the crawling things at the bottom of the sea helped the world into a larger day by their suffering.

Then we see the need of an institution to do just what the church is doing. Jefferson says that the race has had three great foes, famine, pestilence and war. Famine has been destroyed by commerce. Pestilence has been killed by science. But these have had no power to kill war. They have only made her the more dreadful. There must be a way to destroy war or one day the world will rise up and cut its own throat. There must come a day when men around the world shall brothers be. The hope of that day is lodged in the church. It is the institution of supreme worth.

It is going to abide. Other Kaisers may come to bespatter a world with blood. Revolutions may sweep over the earth. But the church is going to abide. It is going to abide because the eternal Christ lives in it. It is going to abide because the men whom he has redeemed and trusted are not going to disappoint him. He has told them to take his message and disciple the nations. And that they are going to do. They are going to justify his large faith in them. They will not fail him. (The two boys in the trenches. I knew you would come). We will be true and we with his help will conquer. "From victory unto victory his army he shall lead till every foe is conquered and Christ is Lord indeed."