We enter the school of life without our consent. As another has said, our little spoonful of existence is measured out to us and no questions asked. I think most of us, had we been consulted, would have entered this school in spite of its difficulties. Naturally, there are some exceptions. It became the fashion a few years ago for certain ultra-modern youngsters to remind their parents of the fact that they did not ask to be born. Of course, they were speaking sober truth. Their parents might have spoken with equal truthfulness by reminding them that they would not have asked them to be born had they known they were going to be such graceless nitwits. But whether willingly or unwillingly, we have all been entered in the school of life.

Not only do we find ourselves in this school, but we are confronted by certain courses that are required. Of course, there are very inviting courses that are electives. But this is by no means true of all the courses. I have known educators who believed that all courses ought to be matters of choice. But whether they were wise or not, the fact remains that God does not run His school in that fashion. There are some courses that He requires regardless of the aptitude or taste or willingness of the individual. To face this fact, therefore, is a matter of plain commonsense.

What are some of these required courses?

1. There are certain requirements growing out of our physical needs. Whatever may be our attitude towards food all of us must eat. Of course, we have a
variety of choices as to what we shall eat and when and how much. But yet we
must eat if we are going to live, whether willingly or unwillingly. This is a
requirement. The same is true of sleeping. We may sleep too much or too little,
but sleep we must. However hard we may fight against it, dame Nature will at last
close our eyes, even though the penalty for sleeping might be death. There are
certain physical needs that are requirements.

2. The second requirement I mention is change. There are those who revel
in change. They love to push the furniture about in their rooms. They love to
push their fellows about. They would like for the sun to rise in the west now
and then for the sake of variety. Then there are others who hate change. They
find the particular little rut in which they travel very comfortable. Their
idea world is a static world, But whether we like it or not we ourselves, our
fellows, our world is in a constant flux of change.

3. The third requirement I mention is conflict. Life is a battle. Some
fight far harder than others. But even the flabbiest of failures does not accept
defeat without some effort at victory. Battle is a necessity. The sooner we make
up our minds that to live in a world like ours is to face the necessity of struggle,
the better it will be for all of us. To refuse to fight is in a profound sense to
refuse to live. It is only in a world of conflict like ours that we can come to
our best.

Conflict is universal because temptation is universal. We may diminish our
temptations by the choosing of the best possible friends and the most wholesome
environment. We can increase our temptations by putting ourselves in the wrong
crowd. We can increase them by being disloyal to the opportunities of our common-
place days. But there is no possible escape from temptations for any of us.
During the middle ages many serious-minded men sought to escape temptation by
hiding themselves in monasteries and in the dens and caves of the earth. But
when they reached their place of refuge, the face of temptation was the first
face into which they looked. Jesus lived in the experience of constant victory, but this fact did not exempt Him from temptation. He was tempted in all points like as we are, and yet He was without sin.

4. A fourth requirement with which we all must reckon is judgment. Our fathers used to preach rather lurid sermons about the judgment to come. We have far less to say about the judgment that we are to face on life's other side, but we do recognize that there is judgment in the here and now. We live in an ordered world, a world where we reap according to our sowing. That does not mean that our Lord pays us off every Saturday night. But ours is a world where we must face the consequences of our choice whether those consequences are welcome or unwelcome. We have to learn that in choosing a wrong road we also choose a wrong goal however unwelcome that goal might be. David in choosing his sin with the wife of Uriah had to choose also the horrible consequences of that sin, though it broke his own heart as well as the hearts of others.

In one of McGuffey's readers there is a story of a man who barked his shins against the grim law of sowing and reaping until they became embittered by it. "I am tired of an ordered world," he said indignantly. "I wish I were in a world of chance." Then says the story, he went to sleep and when he waked, he was in a world of chance. Suddenly he took the toothache. He remembered what he used to do for toothache in his ordered world. He drank some hot coffee and held some of it in his mouth and found relief. But when he tried the remedy he expected to work now he found the coffee that he expected to be hot cold as ice. "What does this mean?" he asked indignantly. "Nothing at all," was the answer. "We put the coffee on the fire. Sometimes it boils, sometimes it freezes. There is never any telling what the results are going to be. But it is your kind of world." But it is not ours. We live in a world where the law of sowing and reaping is in constant operation.

5. The final requirement of course that I mention is pain. A very wise poet of the long ago declared, "Man is born to sorrow as the sparks fly upward."
Life deals far more harshly with some than with others. But however sheltered our lives may be, sooner or later trouble comes to us all. Life begins with pain of birth and ends with pain of death. In between there are experiences that blind our eyes and wet our faces with tears. There are sorrows in life against which we must press our aching and bleeding hearts and nobody altogether escapes.

II

What do we as pupils in the school of life do with these requirements?

1. Some of us try to escape them. We seek to make ourselves exceptions to the rule. This is true, for instance, in dealing with our physical needs. I knew a minister personally some years ago who made up his mind that he could be clothed in the God-head bodily. He sought to attain this high end by ignoring the demands of his physical body. He decided that he could live without eating. He was a strong, husky chap, but before many days he was a wizened, ghastly creature. Instead of being clothed with the God-head bodily, he came very near to being clothed with his own shroud. All that saved him was that when he fell in to a coma on night, he was hurried to the hospital by his physician who saved his life by forced feeding.

Then there are those who seek to get through life without conflict. They make up their minds that they are going to live on Easy Street. But they find that Easy Street often ends in Rotten Row. They find also that even Rotten Row has its battle, its hard days, and its bitter nights. It is impossible, I repeat, to escape conflict altogether, but sometimes in an effort to do so we forfeit our strength and throw away our birthright.

No more can we escape the grim fact of temptation and the disappointment of our wrong choices. Often enough we fancy that we are exceptions to the rule. Often we persuade ourselves that the government will be caught, but we ourselves are shrewd enough to hoodwink the laws of nature and gather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles. When Jehu came to Jezreel in search of Jezebel, this hard
and brilliant woman did not hide. She rather dressed her hair and painted her face, and greeted her pursuer with a sermon. "Had Zimri peace," she shouted, "who slew his master?" Zimri had sinned and had reaped the consequences of his sin. Jezebel is warning Jehu that he, too, must reap according to his sowing. "Be sure your sin will find you out," she is saying. "Quite true!" answers Jehu. "Sin always finds the sinner out. Now by way of illustration who is on my side?" he shouts. A few faces appear at the window. "Throw her down!" is the brief command. There is a struggle, a shriek, and a queen's body is being hurled through the air. Jezebel is reaping as she has sown. But she believed that law would never operate in her own case. She as millions of others felt herself an exception.

Then we are often amazed and peevèd because we do not always escape that suffering that is a part of the human lot. We hear the sobs of our fellows. But they are blown to us as if they came to us from a distant land. Then by and by like a bolt from the blue tragedy comes to us. We walk blithely forward until something trips us. Then we fall. But instead of rising to start again, we lie there in self-pity, saying, "Why should this happen to me?" And thus we become a burden to ourselves and to others. Having faced the requirements, some try to duck and be exceptions to the rule.

2. Then there is a second group who face these requirements grimly and seek to see them through in their own strength. These are far more admirable, generally speaking, than those who try to be exceptions. The first is the failure of the coward. This latter is often the failure of the courageous. Their experiences make them not only strong but hard. They become like rock, the rock against which the ship wounds itself to go to its death instead of like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. We often sing the song of such a man as if that song were Christian. It is rather thoroughly pagan and humanistic.
"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

"In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud,
Under the bludgeonings of chance,
My head is bloody but unbowed.

"Beyond this world of grief and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade;
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

"It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."

Yet what a pathetic mess this captain has made out of the business of living.
His present is as black as the pit from pole to pole. His future has no better promise than the horror of the shade. Surely we need a better Captain than that.

3. Then there is a third group who face up to these requirements. They neither try to duck them nor in grim and sullen determination to see them through. They seek to use them. That is a way that is open to all of us.

III

How shall we meet and master the requirements of the school of life?

1. The first and fundamental step is faith in the One who planned the course. We admit that there is much in the course from which we naturally shrink. Yet if we believe in the God whose plan it is we can accept it not grimly but gladly. But what must we believe about this God who has placed us in our kind of world?

First we must believe that He cares. We must believe that He is our Father and our Friend. He runs His school in love, using no more pain and no more heartache and disappointment than He can help. Ralph Conner tells of a wild and willful little red-haired girl who once rode the plains of the great west until she received a hurt in the fall from a horse that made her a great sufferer and made it impossible that she should ever ride again.
REQUIREMENTS IN THE SCHOOL OF LIFE

"I must....."
—John 9:4

We enter the school of life without our consent. As another has said, "Our little spoonful of existence is measured out to us and no questions asked." I think most of us, had we been consulted, would have chosen to enter this school in spite of its difficulties. Naturally there are some exceptions. It became the fashion a few years ago for some ultra-modern youngsters to remind their parents of the fact that they did not ask to be born. Of course they were speaking sober truth. Their parents might have spoken with equal truthfulness by reminding them that they would not have asked them to be born had they known that they were going to be such graceless nitwits. But whether willingly or unwillingly, we have all been entered in this school of life.

Not only do we find ourselves in this school, but we are confronted by certain courses that are required. That is true of every one of us. Jesus Himself was no exception. "I must," He said again and again. That same word certainly befits our lips. Of course, there are some very inviting electives open to us. But this is by no means true of all the courses that are offered. I have known a few educators who believed that all courses ought to be matters of choice. Whether in so thinking these were wise or not I cannot say. But this fact I can affirm with certainty. God does not run his school in that fashion. There are courses that He requires regardless of the aptitude or taste or willingness of the individual. To face this fact, therefore, is a matter of plain commonsense.
What are some of these courses that are required?

1. There are requirements that grow out of our physical needs. Whatever may be our attitude, for instance, toward food, all of us must eat. There is, of course, a wide latitude of choice as to what we shall eat and when and how much, but eat we must. That is not an elective; it is a requirement. The same is true of sleep. Some may choose to sleep too much; some may choose to sleep too little. Some energetic souls may prefer not to sleep at all. But however energetic we may be, we have to sleep. Nature sooner or later will close our eyes in sleep even though the penalty for such sleep might be death. There are some needs of the body, therefore, that are requirements.

2. A second requirement is temptation. Some may be indifferent to temptation. Others may resent it. But whatever our attitude, no single one can avoid it. Temptation is an absolutely universal experience. Of course, there are ways that we can diminish or increase our temptations. We can also diminish or increase our chances of victory. But there is no way we can escape temptation altogether. We cannot escape, for instance, through a wholesome environment. A good environment can greatly lessen our temptations. The child born into the wholesome atmosphere of an old-fashioned country home such as I knew as a boy has a far better chance than the child of the slums. Yet even the best of environments cannot give us complete exemption. The wise writer of the book of Genesis emphasizes this fact when he pictures the first temptation as taking place in a garden so close to heaven that God came to walk in it in the cool of the day.

It is a great help toward resisting temptation to be well born. Happy is the youth that has flowing in his veins the moral momentum of a clean and pious ancestry. By our own failures and follies we can handicap our children. It is possible for us to stand at the upstairs window of life and pour the acid of weakness into the faces of our oncoming boys and girls. It is also possible for us to share with them our strength. But there is no possible way of saving them from temptation altogether. This, too, the author of Genesis emphasizes by showing us man falling
into temptation though fresh and clean from the hand of God.

Then we can lessen our temptations by the winning of the small battles of life's commonplace days. There is little doubt that the supreme treachery of Judas at the end of his journey was but the sum total of the petty treacheries of his ordinary days. When Daniel opened his window toward Jerusalem and prayed in spite of the king's decree, he was but giving expression in one great test of loyalty to the smaller victories of his yesterdays. But while our moral victories can help, they cannot exempt. Jesus never lost a battle. Yet that fact did not exempt Him from temptation. "He was tempted in all points like as we are," says the writer to the Hebrews, "yet without sin." Temptation then is not an elective but a requirement.

This is just another way of saying that we live our lives in a realm of choices. We have to listen every day to the upward call and to the call that leads downward. Every day we stand at the forks of the road and must choose the one way or the other. This means conflict, struggle. The fact that temptation is universal means that life is a battle. There are those that seem to refuse to fight. They seem to insist always on the easy road. Yet I am persuaded that even the flimsiest failures put up some bit of a fight. We see the failure, but we fail to see the conflict that went before. Temptation and conflict then are experiences of all of us.

3. A third requirement is judgment. Our fathers used to preach rather lurid sermons about the judgment to come. We have far less to say about the judgment that we are to face on life's other side, but we have far more to say about the judgments that we experience in the here and now. We have just said that temptation is a universal experience. Every man is tempted. Every man must also face the results of his temptation. Every man must reap according to his sowing. This does not mean, of course, that God pays us off at the close of each day or even every Saturday night. If we thus reaped in exact mathematical fashion, a man would deserve no more credit for his right choices than a hireling for working for
his wages. But no individual, no nation gets away with anything. Judgment is a requirement in life's school.

4. The fourth requirement I mention is change. There are those who revel in change. They like to push about the furniture in their homes. They like to push their fellows about. They would have the sun rising in the west instead of the east if they could just for the sake of variety. But while there are some who delight in change, there are far more who hate it. There are those who have dropped into comfortable ruts mentally, spiritually, and otherwise, from which they are loath to be shaken. There are those who, consciously or unconsciously, long for a static world and even for a static God. But this is impossible. Whether we like it or dislike it, change is a universal law of life. We ourselves, our loved ones, our world are in a constant flux of change. Change is a required course.

5. Finally, suffering is one of life's requirements. It has been well said that life begins with the pain of birth and ends in the pain of death. Between the two events there is a strange mingling of sunshine and shadow, of laughter and tears. This is not to deny that much of our suffering comes as a result of the follies and failures and sins of ourselves and of others. But when all this is taken into account, there are tragedies that we cannot fully explain. There are sorrows in life against which we must press our aching and bleeding hearts, shrink from them how we may. Sooner or later to all of us, however sheltered, comes the experience of pain.

II

What are we as pupils in the school of life to do with these requirements?

1. There are those who flunk the course by seeking to be exceptions to the rule. They decide that these are required subjects for everybody except themselves. For instance, everybody has to eat. It seems that to that there would not be a dissenting voice. Yet I knew a minister personally a few years ago who made up his mind that he would be clothed with the God-head bodily. He sought to do this by refusing to eat. He was a strong, husky chap, but he became a wizened
and ghastly creature. Of course, he was not clothed with the God-head bodily. On the contrary he would have been clothed with his own shroud had not his physician hurried him to the hospital and saved him by forced feeding after he had fallen in a coma as the result of his long fasting.

Since there are those that fancy themselves exceptions to the rule that all must eat, we need not be surprised to find those who persuade themselves that the law of sowing and reaping operates for the other fellow, but not for themselves. Silly souls may allow their sins to find them out but they themselves are far too shrewd for that. They are sure that they have developed sufficient cunning to reverse the laws of nature and to rather grapes of thorns and figs of thistles. That was Jezebel's conviction. It has been the conviction of many another. When Jehu, you remember, came to Jezreel in search of that cruel and brilliant woman, she did not hide. She rather dressed her hair and painted her face and posted herself at the window to preach this soldier a sermon.

Listen to her sermon: "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?" Jezebel is reminding Jehu that Zimri had sinned and had paid the penalty. "We reap," she is saying, "according to our sowing. Our sin finds us out." Jezebel believed that was true in everybody's case except her own. Jehu even believed it was true of Jezebel herself. "Be sure your sin will find you out," said Jezebel. "Right," said Jehu. Then as if by way of illustration, he shouted to those with that ill-starred queen, "Throw her down." There was a struggle, a shriek, a dull thud upon the cobblestones, and the dogs had a banquet of human blood, just as they did when they lapped up the blood of murdered Naboth, Jezebel's victim.

Then there are those who seem to fancy that they can escape change. There are mothers who never wish their children to grow up. There are also those, both men and women, who fight in utter desperation to keep from growing old. But we pass from childhood to youth, from youth to middle life, from middle life to old age whether we wish it or not. The more we resist getting old, the heavier old age sits upon us. Sometime ago I visited a great preacher for whom I had a pro-
found admiration. He was then sixty-nine years of age. But this good man disappointed me greatly by turning to me with the desperation of a cornered animal and saying, "It is awful for a man who has lived his life in the thick of things as I have, to get old and to get where he can't carry on any longer." I believe God has as much a plan for December as for January. Therefore, I propose to grow old without fear.

Finally, there are those who refuse to face up to suffering. They go blithely forward through peaceful years. Then like a bolt from the blue, tragedy comes. Something trips them up, and they fall flat. But instead of getting up and starting again, they lie in self-pity and bewail their lot. They cry weakly, "Why should this happen to me?" Thus they become a burden to themselves, a burden to others, and a disappointment to God. Thus there are those who, though seeking to dodge the inevitable, end by flunking the whole course.

2. There is a second group made up of men and women who are far more sturdy than these. They are those who face life's requirements bravely, but who seek to carry on in their own strength. These also fail. There is the failure of the courageous, while the other is the failure of the cowardly. But both end in disappointment to themselves and to their Lord. The poet pictures such a man in "Invictus". This song is sometimes sung in churches as if it were Christian. It is not Christian at all. It has a certain sturdy courage about it, but it is thoroughly pagan and humanistic.

"Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be,
For my unconquerable soul.

"In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud;
Under the bludgeonings of chance,
My head is bloody but unbowed.

"Beyond this world of grief and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

"It matters not how straight the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate—
I am the captain of my soul."

It sounds very brave for one to claim that he is "the master of his fate and the captain of his soul." But according to his own confession, this captain has nothing of which to boast. His present is altogether forbidding. In fact, it is as "black as the pit from pole to pole." His future has not even a horizon where he can hope for a dawn—"Beyond this world of grief and tears, Looms but the horror of the shade." Surely we need a better captain than that!

3. Then, there is a third group that not only accept these requirements but use them and thus come to their best.

III

How then can we meet and master the requirements of the school of life?

1. We need a firm confidence in God. In other words we need an unflagging faith in Him who has planned the course for this man-making school that we call human life. We need to believe that the Headmaster has at least these three characteristics.

First, speaking for myself, if I am to make the best of this course, I must believe that it is planned by One who is interested in me personally. It was my privilege as a youth to attend the famous Webb School at Bellbuckle, Tennessee. I owe to old Seawney, as his boys affectionately called him, an unpayable debt. I had not been in this school many days before this great man took time to take me alone for a personal conference. He talked to me about his hopes for me and about my own possibilities. He had the name of being rigid in his discipline, as he was. But I was braced and heartened by the fact that he was interested in me personally. There were times when I had to lean my shoulders hard against this conviction.

This same bracing conviction is needed in the school of life. There are times when the course does seem exceedingly hard. There are times, in fact, when life for many becomes so difficult that there is no seeing it through except through faith in a God who is our Father and who loves us with an everlasting love. There
is an all but infinite difference, when life goes to pieces, between the man who believes in the love of God and the man who can find no better explanation of the grim tragedy than that given by Thomas Hardy as he closes his book, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles.*—"Thus, the President of the universe had finished his sport with Tess."

Second, if I am to pursue this course successfully, I need a solid conviction, not only of the love of God, but also of His wisdom. To refer again to my old teacher, I knew that attending Webb School there were certain requirements. Old Sawney was strong for the study of Latin and Greek. Naturally, there were those among both parents and pupils who objected to majoring on such subjects. Once an objecting father said, "I do not care for the classics. I want my son to have a practical education. I want him to know how to milk a cow." "Right," said old Sawney. "So do I want my son to know how to milk a cow, but I want him to know how to do something else that a calf can't beat him doing." So I took the prescribed course in the faith that my headmaster knew what he was about. Many today would say he was vastly wrong. However, even yet, I am not convinced that he was.

Now just as I needed confidence in the wisdom of my teacher, so do I need confidence also in the wisdom of God. I need to believe that God knows me perfectly, and that His plan for me is the wisest possible. I need to believe that, even in the seemingly harsh and cruel, He is both loving and wise. When the mother eagle comes to her brood, not to bring them food, but to tear their home into shreds and to toss them out over the cliffs, that looks cruel and senseless. But what is she after? She is teaching them to fulfill their destiny. They are made for the cloudland and the upper air. Even so, I must believe that through the hard experiences that come to me, God is seeking to teach me flight sunward and Godward. In wisdom and love He is trying to bring me to my best.

Finally, if I am to make the best of this prescribed course, I must believe, not only in the love and wisdom of God, but in His fair play. What was the trouble with the man of one talent? He made up his mind that his master would not play fairly
with him. He was proud of his one talent until he found one friend who had two and another who had five. Then he went home in dismay to bury his talent in the ground. What could he do in competition with those who were so much more richly endowed than himself? When he explained his conduct, he said, "I was afraid. I was afraid that my master would require as much of me with my small gifts as he did of my friends with their large." Some of us feel that way about God. But He does not grade us according to our achievements, but according to our faithfulness. Hence, all have an equal chance. Every man to whom He can say, "You have been faithful," receives highest honors.

2. Thus believing in God, we are to commit our lives to Him. In faith we are to become laborers together with Him. This is what an honor student did in the long ago. Having loved with a love that issued in obedience, he tells us with radiant face what he has learned in the school of life. "We know," he declares, "that all things work together for good to them that love God." The same knowledge is open to us. While confessing that sometimes the requirements seem grim and hard, we are sure that if we face them in the fellowship of God every one of them will minister to our enrichment. Thus, we shall find that this world with all its tragedies is the best possible world for the growing of a soul.
"Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it brings forth much fruit."

John 12:24

It would be safe to expand this translation a bit. It would then read as follows: Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground it remains dead. But if it die, it lives and becomes fruitful! Here Jesus brings us at once face to face with two of the deepest longings of the human heart. First, the longing for life. However greatly we may differ in temperament and circumstance, however greatly we may differ in our estimate of those values that we believe would contribute to life, all of us are eager to live. We do not desire a mere rivulet of life. We long for life abundant. Tennyson was speaking to a universal passion when he sang,

"'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
'Tis life and not death for which we pant;
More life, and fuller therefore I want."

When Jesus therefore speaks of the life abundant he is speaking home to a universal longing.

A second longing that is universal is the longing for usefulness. In a profound sense, of course, usefulness is tied up with abundant living. Nobody can really live joyously who knows that he is counting for nothing. "The shock of uselessness," says Huxley, "is the greatest that can come to a living organism."
"The Price of Life"

Here is a grain of wheat, how is this lifeless thing to live and be fruitful? How can it find life abundant? It can only do so by dying. And what is true for the grain of wheat is true for ourselves. If we want to live richly, if we desire to live so richly as to have not only life for ourselves, but life to share, such life can come only through death. The price we may pay for life is death.

I.

This is not simply a bit of antiquated preaching. It has the backing of the great writers of the Bible. This teaching comes to a climax in the words of Jesus. Over and over he emphasized the fact that to seek to save life was to lose it, that it is only as we die that we really live. But this is not only the teaching of the scriptures, it is the teaching of experience. It is also the teaching of modern science. The wisest of the psychologists are saying today substantially what Jesus said nineteen centuries ago. According to these scientists there are four deadly foes to abundant living.

1. There is enmity and hate. The best of the psychologists declare with one voice that resentment and hate lay waste personality. They tell us that it is impossible to live richly while nursing a grudge. Of course that is what Jesus said long ago. The one condition of forgiveness that he made was our willingness to forgive. He can no more forgive the unforgiving than he can make light to be darkness at one and the same time. Hate makes for death. Therefore Jesus cannot give life while we cling to death. Your hate may hurt the one who is the object of your resentment, but whether it does or not, it will work death for you and will rob you of all joyous living. I have yet to find a happy hater.

As a school teacher years ago I boarded in the home of a very able physician. That physician was a rather plain spoken individual. He had red hair, and oftentimes he lost practice by speaking his mind. One day the patient of another
physician sent for him. "My doctor," she said, "will not tell me what is the matter. I have sent for you to know the truth." "Do you really want to know?" he asked. And she answered in the affirmative, told here that her whole system was being poisoned by her anger and hate. I am quite sure that he was right. A woman of my acquaintance died recently. I do not know what the doctor's diagnosis was, but I am quite sure that one of the contributing causes was her hate. I think she was the bitterest woman that I have ever known. The Scripture, and experience, and science all say that if we wish to live we must be rid of hate.

2. A second foe that disrupts personality and robs us of light is a sense of guilt. I am aware that it is possible to tamper with conscience till it becomes an unsafe guide. Yet conscience never becomes wholly dead. There is always a voice that condemns when we do wrong and approves when we do right. No man can live joyously when he is tormented by a sense of guilt. The ugly actual as compared with the beautiful ideal takes the joy out of life. It robs us of peace. Sometimes the agony of it becomes so intense that we feel like sobbing with Paul, "O wretched man that I am." But whether our sense of guilt is keen and bitter, as long as we possess such a sense, it robs us of life.

Naturally we realize that Jesus taught all this centuries ago. When torn and discorded personalities came to him his word was, "Thy sin be forgiven thee." Again and again he said, "Thy faith has made thee whole, go in peace." He knew there could be no abundant life till these patients of his had been relieved of a sense of guilt. Therefore today the Bible, experience, and psychologists all tell us that a sense of guilt is a deadly foe of life.

3. A third foe against which the psychologists warn us is fear-anxiety-worry. Sometimes our fear is born of a sense of guilt. If you have a soiled and secret page in your life story, that fact makes you afraid. There is no telling when somebody will find it out.
"The Price of Life"

"You are like one, who on a lonesome road;
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having walked once,
Turns and walks on
And turns no more his head."

But if your worry comes from more innocent causes, it still cheats you out of life. It makes you a burden to others, it makes you a burden to yourself. It is a deadly foe of health. It takes work a long time to kill us, but it does not take worry long to fray our nerves and rob us of our vitality and fit us for the undertaker. Worry is a foe of life.

4. Finally, modern science tells us that if we are to live we must get rid of self-centeredness. We used to think that the declaration, "He that seeketh to save his life shall lose it," was all right in the pulpit. It made good preaching, but it was not quite practical. But we have come to discover that it is just as true as the law of gravitation. It works just as surely as the law of sowing and reaping. The sea that gets without giving becomes the Dead Sea. The same is true of men.

Now I have used self-centeredness last because it is in a profound sense the source of these other three foes that lay waste life. Why do we hate? Because we are selfish. Our ego has been wounded and we want to strike back. Why do we have a sense of inward guilt? Because we need to be set right in our inner life. Our worries and fears come largely from the same sources. Once get rid of our selfishness and we get rid of all the evils that lay waste life. And how do we get rid of self-centeredness? By centering life on something outward and higher than ourselves. In other words, we only live in proportion as we give ourselves.
II.

This brings us face to face with two plain and gripping facts.

1. All superlative living comes as a result of superlative giving. It is hard for us to believe this. We are so prone to take the opposite view. We are so prone to ask, "Where do I come in?" The grain of wheat that puts that question first will never live. If it is to become a green and growing something it must fall into the ground and die. That is literally and emphatically true for ourselves. It is only as we die to self that we really live.

Some of us know this in our own experience. We can think back now to some hour of desperate struggle, some Gethsemane where we really parted with life. We can think of a grim hour when we could shout with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ, nevertheless yet I live. And yet not I but Christ liveth in me." But even if this experience has not been ours personally we have been privileged to know such. Here and there we have met radiant souls who have in a profound sense died to themselves. Wherever we have found such there was about them a superb, special beauty. Wherever we have found them we have felt in our hearts that they were living abundantly, whether they were sick or well, whether they were rich or poor, whatever their circumstances. I make bold to say that there is not a fully dedicated man or woman in all the world that is not living richly regardless of circumstances.

2. A second fact is this, that this grain of wheat not only finds life by dying, but it finds its highest possible usefulness. We can be helpful by the giving of small gifts, but the superlative servants of mankind are those that pay the last full measure of devotion. The measure of a man's power to help, other things being equal, is the measure of the fullness of the dedication of his life to God and to his fellows. Wherever such souls farm, flowers always bloom and the wheat fields grow golden.
It is just this fulness and dedication that accounts for the supreme usefulness of every great soul. Jesus in spite of the greatness of his intellect; in spite of the roominess of his mind, would have been no more worshipped today than Plato or Socrates but for the fact of the fullness of his dedication. The supreme magnet of mankind is not the intellectual Christ, but the crucified Christ. "Lifted up from the earth he does draw all men unto him."

There is a charm and beauty that comes from life laid down that can come in no other way. Beautiful human flowers can be found in many places, but they grow in their rarest perfection in the rich soil of self-giving. "Gethsemane is always the rose garden of God." It is said that years ago there was a great artist whose pictures had a peculiar power and charm that won the heart and mellowed the soul of every beholder. The secret of this rare charm was attributed in a large measure to a certain crimson that the artist had splashed upon his canvas. Other artists tried to imitate it, but all in vain. At last the artist died, and as they prepared him for burial they discovered a half-healed wound over his heart. Then they understood. As he had painted he had dipped his brush into his own heart's blood.

This fact we face as we face the cross. Superlative living and superlative usefulness come only out of superlative giving. The price of life is always death to self. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it die, it brings forth much fruit." That was true for Jesus. That is equally true for you and me. For this reason we sing,

"Must Jesus bear the cross alone and all the world go free,
No there's a cross for every one, and there's a cross for me."
WHY ARE WE HERE?

"Jesus knowing -- that he was come from God, and went to God -- took a towel, and girded himself -- and began to wash the disciples' feet". John 13: 3, 4 and 5.

Here is a scene that the sheer beauty is almost without equal even in the life of Jesus Christ, our Lord. It has been suggested that here Jesus gives His conception of what life is all about. Who are we and why are we here? What is life for anyway? How is it to be used? What is the meaning of these mysterious personalities of ours? What is life to mean to you, to me, to our fellows?

Not everybody finds a satisfying answer to that important question. In fact, I am afraid that more fail in the high quest of a sufficient answer than succeed. Here, for instance, is a brilliant poet by the name of Gay. What is his answer? It is only this pathetic sob: "Life is a jest, And all things show it; Once I thought it, But now I know it". Here is a certain famous Frenchman dying with a hollow laugh on his lips: "Ring down the curtain", he chuckles, "the farce has played out". Here is another highly successful Englishman who has reached this conclusion: "Youth is folly; manhood, struggle; old age, regret". And even the prince of all the poets concludes: "We are such stuff as dreams are made of and our little life is rounded with a slip --- Out, out brief candle, life is but a walking shadow; a tale told by an idiot, mere of sound and fury, significant of nothing".
I.  

Why is it, I wonder, that so many that are wise in the wisdom of this world have found life so poverty stricken in meaning? I think that we can find the answer in this that our knowledge, as much as we pride ourselves upon it, has very little light to throw upon man's origin, upon his destiny, or upon what he is here to do.

1. First, where did man come from? Frankly, science does not know. Genesis speaks of dust. Science speaks of a very low order of life. It is a choice, as another has said, between mud or monkey. Science is sure that man has come a long way from a very lowly origin. Of course, his lowly beginning does not discredit him. Another has reminded us that the fact that the first music was made by tom-toms does not discredit Handel's Messiah. But as to the real origin of man, science does not know.

2. Then what is man's destiny? Here the wisdom of this world is, if possible, even more ignorant. What is the meaning of this mysterious world of ours with its births and deaths, its triumphs and its tragedies. Where is humanity going? All that our modern artists can tell us is that it is going back to dust and nothingness. As a recent sceptic said: "If we knew where we were going, we might choose our road but it seems that we are going nowhere".

3. Since we do not know the point from which we set out, since we are not certain of the goal to which we are traveling, naturally we are not very sure of the road. The truth of the matter is that if we do not know where we are going, the road doesn't matter. Life for the best of us is only a joyride, without the joy. Our greatest assets are no better than liabilities if we have no conception of our goal. To the ship that is bound for no harbor, no wind can possibly be favorable. All this sounds gloomy enough, but it is the best that human wisdom can do.
II.

Now suppose we turn aside from this gloomy picture and listen to the words of our Lord. In asking that we give Him a hearing, I am not now affirming that His interpretation of life's meaning is correct but I do claim this - that His interpretation sounds reasonable, assuming that there is a God who loves us. I am declaring further that His interpretation of life's meaning is big enough to satisfy our deepest needs and our deepest longings.

1. Whence then do we come? According to Jesus, we come from God. Our Lord was conscious of that origin for Himself. He was equally sure that God was our Father as well as His own. In the fourth gospel, we read these words: "There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." I have a perfect right to scratch out the name John, for the present, and insert my own name. You may insert yours. If ever at any time, any place, any man was sent into the world, then you have a right to claim that high origin for yourself.

In saying this, I am not denying man's kinship with the lower order of life. When Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus, he ends with this significant word: "son of Adam, Son of God." There you have it. Human nature is not essentially bad as some claim. We come into this world a bundle of possibilities. Our characters are good or bad. There are two roads stretched before our feet. One bends downward and ever downward until it loses itself in the quagmire of desolation and death. The other climbs upward and ever upward to where the light lingers even when the sun is set. There is nothing too bad to say about man at his worst. There is nothing too good to say about him at his best. He is a strange mixture of dust and deity, but he came from God.

2. What light does our Lord throw on man's destiny - Jesus knew that he was come from God and was going to God? Where does this strange trail of human life lead? It leads back to the everlasting arms. This does not mean that Jesus had ever lost God. He was living with him in the here and now. It was the
consciousness of this that made Him sure that He would go on living with Him through eternity.

The Bible is beautifully reticent about life beyond death. To me that is very encouraging. Those who seek to tell us just what Heaven is like part company with the scriptures. It would be impossible to describe Heaven to you and me as it would be to describe a Beethoven symphony to one who had been born deaf. But upon this Jesus and the saints seem to agree. Life beyond death is to mean an evergrowing fellowship with God. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is."

Here then is our origin. We came from God. Here is our destiny. We can sing with the saints of yesterday—"We are traveling home to God". That is the goal of all our journeying. He is our heart's true home. That is what the psalmist meant in the long ago when he sang—"Lord, Thou has been our dwelling place in all generations." We have a kingly origin. We are facing toward a kingly destiny.

III.

Now since we have this kingly origin and this kingly destiny, what of the road that leads to it? Listen again to the words of our Lord: "Jesus knowing that He was come from God and was going to God took a towel and girded Himself and began to wash the disciples' feet." When Jesus set himself to travel the road back to his Father's arms and to his Father's heart, he sought to do so by stooping to lowly tasks of human helpfulness. He bent to wash feet that had grown weary and soiled with life's journey. For Him the whole purpose of life from the cradle to the journey's end was just an opportunity to work with God in the service of His needy fellows.

Why, I wonder, did not one of the friends of Jesus volunteer for this lowly task. Suppose He had said to Simon Peter: "Simon, the servants are all away.
Nobody is here to wash the feet of the Master and of your friends. Suppose you perform this lowly task." Simon would doubtless have been indignant. He had just been arguing with these friends of his as to who was greatest. He would have said to himself at once: "Why, if I wash the feet of James and John they would both think they are bigger than I am." Why did he miss the way? He lacked Jesus' consciousness of his royal origin and of his kingly destiny. He got so busy looking out for himself that he missed the open road to greatness.

It is a common tragedy. There is only one simple reason why any of us miss the life abundant. That is by seeking to save ourselves. If I seek to save my right arm by putting it in a sling and refuse to use it, I lose it. It is the same with every treasure. To refuse to give is to refuse to live.

This is not theory. It is a fact that is evident to every man that has a seeing eye. All the blessed people are the burdened people. There are people who are so busy trying to help others that they have in some measure forgotten themselves. We take one of two attitudes in the last analysis, all of us. We either sit and selfishly glare at others and say, "Helping you is no business of mine", or we take it upon ourselves as would our Master.

Let me get down to cases for a moment. Our religion is essentially a religion of the cross. Soon our boys who have been betting their lives every day on the worthfulness of the cause are coming back. If our church is to command their respect and their loyalty, they must find something of that same self giving spirit in us. The question is, will they find it? Will it be pronounced enough to be irresistible?

Why is it that we have less than one-half as many present at our evening services as in the morning? Does this not mean that many of us are attending only for ourselves? That we feel satisfied with the morning service? That we do not come back because of lack of a personal need, but how about others? Our congregation is made up largely of young people. Fifty young people are
furnishing our music. Remember that the conception of the worth of the church that these young people take with them tomorrow will be the conception that we give them. You have no right to let them down. It is easier to stay at home I know, but in so doing you are cheating others and in cheating others you are cheating yourself. Being one among many is a lowly service but it is not so lowly as the one to which your Master stooped. It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord.

"He took a towel and girded Himself and began to wash the disciples' feet." It was that complete self giving that won him his crown. "Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but humbled himself and took upon himself the form of a servant and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross".

Here then is our starting point and our goal - the eternal God. Here is the road we are to travel day by day, the road of self forgetful service. To refuse that road is to refuse to live. To travel it is to live now and forever. When France went to pieces in 1940, there was an American girl with a child of some four years of age whose husband was taken prisoner. The mother tried to flee France with her child. When she was on the train and coming near to the Spanish border, the conductor told her that unless she got off the train she would certainly be arrested. She got off the train at a little station under the shadow of the Pyrenees Mountains where she sat all night with her child. The next morning a kindly old man whispered to her that if she would make her way to the top of the mountain by seven o'clock that night, she would find some other refugees. There would also be a guide that would lead them across the mountains.

She made the long journey up the mountain where she succeeded in contacting seven or eight Jewish refugees. At last the guide came and the set out upon their
A long and tiresome journey. It was December. The weather was cold. All the other refugees were old people. Now and then one would fall. "I am old and tired. I have lived my life. Go on and leave me," they would say.

What then was done to revive this man who had fainted? The fellow who had fainted would hear the child talking to him and his back. Then his face would quicken and those in front would hear the child talking to him and his back. Bye and bye, he would be out ahead. Thus the whole company got across the mountains to safety because they were handicapped with the burden of a little child. Thus they won their way to freedom. It is by some such self-giving that we shall win our freedom if we ever win it. This cross is a burden. It is a heavy weight but it is a weight that supplies the only real wings that humanity can know.
THE THRILL OF DISCIPLESHIP

"So shall ye be my disciples."

John 15:8

We are thinking today of discipleship. Were you to ask the average man of the world his conception of discipleship to Jesus Christ, what answer would you expect? In other words, what does the ordinary man, outside the Church, think of the business of being a Christian. Does he think of it as a privilege, or as just another troublesome problem? Is it a prize to be eagerly possessed or a rather boring burden to be shunned? Does it narrow and cheapen life or does it broaden and enrich it? Does it put coveted treasures in our hands, or does it wrench from our grudging fingers much of the treasure that we already possess? Is it a help or a hindrance, an asset or a liability? Does it put an extra strain upon life, or does it relieve the strain by giving rest?

There is little doubt as to the answer to these questions. The man outside the Church would tell you frankly that he honors and respects a genuine Christian. He might even add that he expects to be a Christian himself someday. He would confess readily that there are certain circumstances under which it would be very desirable to be a Christian. This would be the case if he were in trouble, or very old, or just slipping his tired feet into the shadows. But for one in the thick of the fight, for one having to carry on in his kind of world, discipleship would not be so good. In fact, it would be more of a hindrance than a help. For this rea-
son, he postpone the assuming of this weighty burden as long as possible.

How, I wonder did this man come to hold such a conception? He certainly did not come to it by a careful reading of the New Testament. Neither did he do so by associating with those who have given Jesus a real chance. I am afraid he got his conception from just such faulty Christians as ourselves. We are often sadly lacking in winsomeness. folks, as a rule, do not look at us and say wistfully "I would give the world to live like that." For many of us, being a Christian has been a rather stale, treadmill affair, a prosaic doing of certain duties in which there was little thrill, and for which we had little enthusiasm.

1.

In thus thinking discipleship as of little worth, are we right or wrong? Suppose we clarify our thinking by turning to the source book of Christianity, the New Testament. How is discipleship pictured there?

1. Take its Founder, for instance. One day this Carpenter turned his back on his shop and went out to win disciples. What did he tell the people that he sought to win? He never appealed to their laziness and cowardice by telling them that to follow him was the easiest way to get through life. With engaging frankness, he told them that the way was narrow. He told them that to follow him meant the denial of self. He told them that real discipleship meant facing the cross. But in spite of this, yes, and because of it, he declared that being a Christian was not a mere problem, but a privilege. In fact, he declared that it was the supreme privilege. Of all the privileges that life had to offer, being his disciple was supreme.

"The kingdom of heaven," he declared, "is like unto treasure hid in a field? the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." It is a thrilling pic-
ture. Here is a farmer going about his daily task. He is doing his prosaic work in a prosaic fashion. The field in which he works is not his own. He is just a renter. Possibly today he is using the hoe instead of the plow. As he swings his hoe, he strikes something. At first, he thinks it is a rock. But as he lifts his hoe, he catches a glimpse of something bright. He hurriedly rakes the dirt away to find that he has struck some rusty metal. He searches further to find that he has unearthed an iron chest. With shaking hands he prises open the lid. And lo, there before his amazed eyes is a treasure rich beyond all his dreams.

What does he do next? Does he look down at this golden hoard and say sadly, "Well, since I have found all this stuff, I suppose it is my duty to claim it, and put it into circulation. Personally, I do not care for it, but I suppose I had better get possession of it anyway. But I will put it off as long as I can." No, he does not say that. Instead, he hurriedly kicks the dirt in place to conceal his find, runs as fast as his feet will carry him to the owner of the field, asks him the price, then, without the slightest effort at making a bargain, promises the sum required. How silly for him to have done otherwise! He has found a treasure. "Discipleship..." said Jesus, "is like that. it puts into your hand a treasure that is of supreme value."

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Here once more Jesus is picturing discipleship as the highest of privileges. This jeweler is more than a mere merchant, he is a connoisseur of pearls. He has an eye for beauty. He has spent a lifetime acquiring precious jewels. Then one day he discovers a pearl of such matchless beauty that he gasps in eager wonder. He had never dreamed that any pearl could be so beautiful. He has some beauties of his own upon which
he sets a high value. But when he asks the price of this amazing pearl, and discovers that it would cost him his very all, he pays the price, not grudgingly, but with feverish eagerness. Then, when the trade is made, he hurries home, hardly daring to believe in the reality of his own good fortune. This, according to Jesus, is an imperfect picture of the same privilege of being a Christian.

There were those who heard these extravagant words and turned away in utter disbelief. But there were others who took them seriously. In fact they believed them so strongly that they actually forsook all to follow Jesus. What did they find? Did they complain, he promised more than he could fulfill, excited expectations that he had to disappoint? Both by what they said and what they were they declare that the half had not been told. They are incredibly joyous, generous, and strong. They have a courage that nothing can frighten and a song that nothing can hush. Persecuted, they rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Stoned, they pass through the bloody ordeal with loving hearts and shining faces. They proclaim by their lips and by their lives that they have a treasure of such unspeakable value that they are glad to die rather than surrender it.

But while all this is convincing, it is not our only evidence. The testimony of the saints of that distant yesterday has been the testimony of countless millions since that far off day. There are some of you listening to me at this moment that could give a testimony just as real and convincing as any of the long ago. I have seen that in the lives of many Christians whom I have met along the way that convinced me beyond a doubt that they had found the pearl of supreme value. In fact, every man in every generation who gives Jesus Christ a real chance realizes that all his extravagant promises may be taken at their face value. If you want to find the supreme treasure, you will find it in becoming a loyal disciple of Jesus Christ.
II.

This is the case because of what discipleship involves. What does it mean to be a Christian? Sometimes it means very little. Always it ought to mean so much.

Generally speaking, when we think of discipleship, we think of it only in its outward aspects. We think of what we are to give up, of the unpleasant and unwelcome duties that we are to be called upon to perform. We think of having to join the Church, to pay to the Church, to listen to sermons, many of which are quite boring. We think of the heavy strain of accepting Jesus' way of life, of going out actually to imitate Jesus.

Now, all this is involved in being a Christian, but this is not the whole story. If it were, the task of discipleship would be a dreary one indeed. Take the matter of imitating Christ, for instance. That may do as a starting point, but not as a goal. This is true in the first place, because imitation is always a fairly prosaic affair. The imitator is lacking in originality. He is lacking in spontaneity. Then imitation falls short because it is so difficult. It puts too great a strain upon us. Did you ever play a game called "Follow the Leader?" If the leader happened to be your equal, well and good. But if he was strong and vigorous and athletic, while you were weak and awkward, then following the leader was impossible. I recently heard a very brilliant preacher instructing a group of ministers, made up largely of circuit-riders, on how to preach. He did his job with such superb intellectuality that it half-angered me. I knew he was not helping these ill-equipped men. He was merely leaving them depressed and discouraged. But how much more depressing is Jesus if he is no more to us than an example! To follow one who is perfect puts a strain on us that we simply cannot bear.
What then is it to be a Christian? Discipleship, according to the parable of which our text is a part, is a relationship to Jesus Christ. To this, I am aware, all will not agree. There are those who look upon being a Christian as merely sharing Jesus' faith in a fatherly God. But Jesus was different from other teachers in that he directed men, not simply to his words, but to himself. He did not point them away from himself to the truth that he taught. He rather said "I am the Truth, I am the Way, I am the Life." "I am the vine," he says, "ye are the branches." That is, to be a Christian is to be related to Jesus Christ as the branch is related to the vine.

III.

What is the nature of this relationship?

1. The branch bears a vital relationship to the vine. It is of the same nature as the vine. To be a Christian then is to share in the divine nature. "Whereby are given unto us," says Peter, "great and exceeding precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." That is what Paul meant when he said "Let this mind, this character, this disposition, be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." To be a Christian is to share the nature of Christ. The Christian, therefore, is one who does more than imitate Christ, he reproduces him. He is able to say, "For me to live is Christ."

2. The branch is absolutely dependent upon the vine. It has no life, no greenness, no fruit, no beauty when separated from it. The same is true of us. "Apart from me," says Jesus, "ye can do nothing." Of course, that is not literally true. There are many things that we can do apart from Jesus. Not only so, but we can do some of them better. We can win worldly success apart from him. We can win fame apart from him. We can "wade
through slaughter to a throne and shut the gates of mercy on mankind," apart from him. Men are doing that today. But the verdict of Jesus is that all such winnings prove but dusty nothings. They soon slip from our clinging fingers. Even while they last they fail to satisfy. To be a Christian, then, is to share the nature of Christ, to depend upon him, and to live in his fellowship.

3. The branch is in constant contact with the vine. Being a Christian is to share the nature of our Lord. It is to depend upon him. It is also to share his fellowship. It is to have him as our constant companion. "Ye are my friends," he tells us. He is present to sweeten every joy, to lighten every sorrow. There are those who know him as their daily companion and who are being day by day transformed into the same image, from glory to glory. To be a Christian, then, is to know as a personal experience something of the companionship of Jesus Christ our Lord.

IV.

Suppose we enter into and maintain this beautiful relationship, what will be the outcome?

1. Abundant life. How does the branch manage to live? All the resources of the vine are at its disposal. When John was undertaking to tell something of the amazing difference that Jesus had made in his own life and in the lives of his friends, he put it in these words—"Of his fullness have all we received." If we are related to Christ as the branch to the vine, we are constantly receiving that supremely beautiful gift of life.

2. Power in prayer. "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." How is it that our Lord can make this extravagant promise with safety? He certainly could
not grant the request of every kind of man. There are many false whose prayers, if answered, would wreck both themselves and others. Those who think of prayer as a persistent pestering of God till he turns from his will to do their will, think of a kind of a prayer that would be a curse rather than a blessing. Perhaps the prodigal prayed for bread when he was hungry among the swine. But he did not get it. If he had, he would have remained there. God woos us among the hogs, but he feeds us at home. One of the supreme privileges of this beautiful relationship with Christ is power in prayer.

3. Fruitfulness. "He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." Almost everybody desires to be useful. We can think of few tragedies more bitter than to have come and grown and gone without ever having known the thrill of being of service. I saw a letter sometime ago written to a faithful young minister. It was from a woman who was finding a once sunny path darkened by heavy shadows. She was facing slow and torturing death from cancer. But she said to her pastor what Paul said to those friends of his at Philippi. "I thank God upon every remembrance of you." What a compliment! To be thus related to Christ is to have somebody devoutly thanking God that you have come their way.

4. Such a life glorifies God. This is the purpose for which we are here. "Let your light so shine before men," said Jesus, "that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven." Paul in his letter to Titus urges a group of slaves to "adorn the doctrine of God." What a high and holy privilege! By the way they live out their gospel, they are to show its amazing beauty to a doubting world. This is the privilege of all who live in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. The first glimpse that most of us had of the beauty of the Lord, was in the face of
one of his friends.

Listen to this story. During the war days two young officers, neither of whom was a Christian, decided to attend service. The minister preached an earnest and simple gospel sermon. At its close, he made a direct appeal for decisions for Christ. One of these young officers went forward, and united with the church. When these two friends were out on the street again, the one who had not gone forward, who was a bit of a skeptic, said, "Jim, I am sorry you did that. You let your emotions get the better of you. You will find that there is nothing in it. If you will go with me I can show you a hundred mistakes in the Bible." "May be you can," came the modest answer, "but you cannot show me that I have not a peace and joy in my heart that I have never known before."

Days passed by and there came another night when these two were together, not at the church, but on the field of battle. There was a lull in the fighting and they had a few minutes for conversation. "Jim," said his friend, "there has been something I have wanted to say to you for a long time. I may not have another chance to say it, but I want you to know how I feel. Something happened to you that night you went forward to unite with the Church. I have tried not to believe it, but I must. You are different, you have a gallantry, a courage, an unselfishness that you did not have before. Something beautiful has come into your life that has remade you. Tell me about it." And there in the dark he told that simple story so old, and yet so abidingly new. To be a Christian then is so to share in the nature of Jesus that our fellows must take knowledge of us that we have been with him. I can think of no higher privilege than that.
"THE CHURCH—ITS RESOURCES"

John 16:7 "Never the less I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away for if I go not away, the conqueror will not come, but if I depart I will send him unto you."

I.

Last Sunday we considered the program of the church. We faced the fact that our Lord has set us to the accomplishment of no mean task. He has not called us to do the work of pygmies. Our undertaking is stupendous beyond anything ever before undertaken upon this planet. The exploit of Alexander the Great was as nothing in comparison with this. To kill men is easy. To make them Christlike is difficult. To set up a kingdom of force is no great task. But to bring about a reign of righteousness is the greatest possible task.

Now Christ has set us to no less an undertaking than the conquest of the world. We are to so labor that the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. For this consummation we are to pray. For this we are to work. And if we thus work and thus pray, we are to do so expectantly. We are to do so in the confidence that the task to which we are called is sure to be finally accomplished.

II.

But how are we to have this confidence? The undertaking is great almost beyond our dreams. What are our resources?

1. We have a physical equipment for the accomplishment of our task greater than any the world has yet seen. We have magnificent church buildings. These stand in every section of our city and this is as it should be. It is my conviction that the church building ought to be as handsome and as commanding as anything that is built in the interest of industry and commerce.

Then all over the land we are building magnificent Sunday School
The church—its resources.

Plants. At last we are coming to recognize the value of the child. We are coming to see that the kingdom of God moves forward on the feet of little children. We have here one of the best Sunday School plants in all the land. It is a monument to our faith in Christ and to our conviction that he was right in his estimate of the value of child life.

2. Then we have financial resources greater than every before known. America is so rich today that its very wealth is going to become a millstone unless consecrated to God. I have seen bees drowned in their own honey and men by the thousands today are being spiritually drowned in their own wealth. America is worth more today than any other five nations on the face of the earth. A large part of this wealth is in the hands of the church. Surely our financial resources were never so great.

3. Then we have vast resources in terms of men and women. Never were there so many well equipped men in the ministry. Never were there so many intelligent and capable laymen in the pew. Now I am conscious of the fact that it is not quantity that counts in a moral fight with quality. Yet it is worthy of consideration that we have so many millions today who are actively identified with the work of the church.

4. But our supreme resource does not consist in either buildings, money or men. Our supreme resource is that which we do not see. Our text brings it to our attention. Jesus is having his last conversation with his disciples. He has told them that he is going away. They are heartbroken. They do not see how they will endure the dull drab days ahead. Days in which he will no longer be near, when they will no longer hear his voice nor feel the touch of his hand.
The church--its resources.

Christ understands their fearful forebodings and stills their fears. "My going away," he declares "is not going to be a loss. It is going to be a gain. You have been happy in my personal presence. You have rejoiced in your fellowship with the visible Christ but there is something better ahead of you than that. When I am gone I am going to send you another Comforter and he will abide with you forever."

It is only natural that the disciples did not see how Christ's going could be to their advantage, even though he promised to send them a Comforter. The heart breaking days immediately following the crucifixion, when by. Then came the ascension. Then the disciples spent ten days in waiting and expectant prayer. Then the Comforter came. "They were with one accord in one place when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder like fire--and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

It is this coming of Jesus in the person of the Holy Spirit that constitutes the supreme wealth of the church. Here is our one absolutely essential resource. Our visible machinery is good and necessary, but which will prove utterly worthless unless it is in power by His presence.

While I was at the world's fair I had the privilege of seeing some of the most beautiful trains upon which I have ever looked. The engines were polished until they aintillated and sparkled. But they did not move an inch. They had no fire. Hence they had no power. I was in a house the other day that was well wired with machinery. It was all in perfect condition but the current was turned off.
The church—its resources.

That is just the tragic situation in many of our churches. They have excellent machinery but no power. Splendid wiring but no current. That was what Paul found when he visited the church at Ephesus. The machinery was there but it was disconnected from the dynamic source. That is the reason he asked that searching question, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" Machinery is good, but it is not enough. "For it is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," sayeth the Lord.

III.

What is the Spirit of Christ to do for the Church?

If we give him right of way in our hearts and in our church what will be the results?

1. The spirit is to assist us in the important task of praying. The modern church is weak in many places but it is absolutely safe to say that it is weakest in its praying. We certainly do not give prayer the important place that Christ gave it. We certainly do not give it the important place that was assigned to it in the early church. Paul never wrote to a single one of his churches without requiring their prayers, except one. And that church had backslidden. He believed that the meanest slave could by his prayers anoint his lips with grace and power. He urged his converts to help by prayer.

It is safe to say that to pray right is to do almost everything else right. But to fail to pray is to fail everywhere. Now we are plainly told that we know not how to pray as we ought. Oftentimes we are foolish in our desires. Oftentimes we are powerless in our asking. But there is a way to make our praying effective. 
The church—its resources.

"The Spirit himself helpeth our infirmities with groanings that cannot be uttered". Prayer that is offered in the power of the Holy Spirit is mighty, victorious and conquering prayer.

2. We need the Holy Spirit to assist us in the understanding and appreciation and interpretation of the Word of God. We believe that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. We believe that all scriptures are inspired of God. That is, that the men who wrote these gospels were divinely illuminated. Therefore if we get the finest understanding of that which they wrote under the illumination of the Spirit, we shall need to be illuminated by that same Spirit.

What a privilege it would be to read Shakespeare with the great poet himself as teacher. But there is a greater privilege than that. That is to read the word of God with his own Spirit as teacher. How many thousands could testify with new appreciation and delight in the word that has come to them after they have read it in the consciousness of the fact that the Spirit that inspired the writer was helping them to its understanding.

3. Then it is the work of the Spirit to impart power. "Each shall receive power", says Jesus "after that the Holy Spirit has come upon you." This power works in many directions.

(1) It means power for testimony. "I will give you a mouth and a wisdom that men shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." In the passage of which our text is a part, he tells us that when the comforter is come to us, he will through us, convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment. That is, he will prove to the world that it is in sin. He will prove to the
world that Christ was righteous. He will prove to the world the fact of judgment.

Is this the effect of our testimony today? Are men convicted of sin when they come to our Sunday school classes? Are they convicted of sin by our conversation? Are they convicted of sin by our preaching services? Are they convicted of sin by our daily personal lives? We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that such is not the case to any great extent. There was never a day in recent years I am sure when there was so scant a conviction of sin. Nothing seems wrong to vast multitudes today. There are no constraining "Thou shalt nots." Every man seems bent on doing as he pleases with little or no sense of sin in the matter.

Is there a way to bring conviction? There is. Peter found an effective method on the day of Pentecost. Those who heard him were cut to the heart. They cried out in their terror, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The church has witnessed such conviction here and there all through the centuries. During the great revival under Wesley, men fell by the multitudes under the convicting power of the message. What was the secret? These men gave their testimony in the power of the Spirit. Christ was making good his promise that when he had come to them he would through them convict the world of sin.

(2) His spirit brings a fuller realization and understanding of Jesus himself. The illumination that came to the disciples at Pentecost brought them to an understanding of Jesus such as they had not been able to gain during their years of association with...
The church--its resources.

him. It is the work of the Spirit to take the things of Christ and show them unto us. It is the work of the Spirit to make Jesus a winsome and sustaining reality to our hearts.

Is Christ real to you? If so, you have a courage that you could not possibly have any other way. If so, there is a strength within you that could come in no other way. If so, you have comfort in sorrow that could be brought by no earthly friend. The man who realizes in his heart the personal presence of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, has a present possession that is worth infinitely more than the treasures of a million worlds.

(3) The Holy Spirit not only enables us to realize Christ but to become more and more like him. He plants and cultivates within the garden of our hearts those winsome graces that Paul calls the fruit of the spirit. What a ravishing list. The fruit of the spirit is loved, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, self control.

It is the Spirit of Christ in our hearts that enables us to love people even those who are unlovely. He gives us peace and joy in the midst of a restless world. He keeps us gentle and patient when others have lost their temper and are kicking things to pieces. In short, he enables us to give that most irresistible argument--the argument of a transformed life.

IV.

How are we to avail ourselves of our resources? It is useless to be rich if we never use our money. It is useless to be talented if we allow our talents to go to waste. It is useless to
live in a world of such marvelous possibilities if we never harness any of those possibilities. There was as much electricity in the days of Abraham as there is today but he and his fellows allowed it to go to waste. The radio would have worked just as well then as now. So would steam. All the resources that make up our conveniences were available then but they were not harnessed and utilized.

Likewise it is true that all the resources that belonged to the early church; all the resources that belonged to the apostles; all the resources that belonged to Wesley and his followers, belong also to us. Not only is this true but we have opportunities far greater than that. How are we to put the resources that are at our disposal to work in the bringing in of the kingdom of God? How are we to receive his Spirit that is our supreme resource?

1. We must realize our need. We must face the fact that there is no doing the work to which God calls us without him. Jesus Christ himself was no exception to the rule. He himself was annointed of the Holy Spirit. He himself said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has annointed me to preach." And when Peter summed up the story of his life, he did it in these words, "Whom God annointed with the Holy Ghost and with power who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."

2. We must desire this blessing. God cannot give that which we do not desire. The man who wants nothing from God receives nothing from him. Therefore he cries today as in the long ago, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink. He that believeth on me as the scriptures hath said, out of his inner life shall flow rivers
The church—its resources.

of living water." God grants the gift of his Spirit to him that is thirsty and to him only.

3. Then if we are to avail ourselves of the infinite resources that come with the Spirit of Christ, we must be surrendered. God cannot give himself to an unsurrendered heart. "We are the receivers of these things as is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey Him." But if we obey, he will certainly respond to our needs by the gift of himself. ("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?") If you will yield your life to God he will accept it and fill you with His Spirit.

Now a church so surrendered and so filled will be irresistible. It will be a glorious church. It will not have a spot of wrinkle or any such thing. It will be a winsome church. Fair as the moon and bright as the sun. It will be a competent church. "Terrible as an army of battles". It will be a church to draw the weary to its fold. It will be a church to make sin afraid. It will be a church to make the very powers of darkness tremble in its presence. May God help us to open our hearts this day for the incoming of the Comforter. Then and then only will ours be such a fascinating and victorious church.
THE PROMISE

"Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come. But if I depart I will send him unto you."

John 16:7

Jesus is having his last conversation with his disciples on this side of the grave. At last it has broken upon their dull minds that their Master is really going away. In spite of all that they had hoped for him he is going to permit himself to be done to death. It seems absolutely too terrible to be true. They cannot see how they can possibly carry on without him. They cannot imagine how they can face the dull, gray days that are ahead when they shall long for the touch of the vanished hand and the sound of the voice that is still. With his going their sun will be set. For with his death, hope and joy and laughter will die also.

But upon these dark thoughts Jesus breaks with this amazing promise,—"I am not going to leave you as orphans. I am going to come back in the person of the Spirit. Because this is the case, my going will not prove a loss but a gain. It will not prove a hindrance but a help. It will not mean my absence, it will mean a nearness such as you have never experienced before. It is expedient for you that I go away. As long as I am with you in the flesh I can only be at your side. But when I have gone away I will be able not only to be beside you, but within you as an ever-present living reality."

I have spoken of this as "The Promise." I have done so for two reasons.
First, that is the way the writers of the Bible spoke of it. Then I have done so because this is the all-inclusive promise. The Bible is preeminently a book of promise. A certain reader interested in statistics has undertaken to number its promises. They ran into the thousands. But here is the promise that includes all of them. The promise of the Spirit, the promise of the personal presence of God himself. "It was this promise," so the writers of the New Testament tell us, "that was fulfilled at Pentecost."

I.

What happened at Pentecost? What does Pentecost mean to you and me today? Pentecost ushered in a new era. It is the greatest event in the Christian Church. But in spite of this fact I am convinced that there is great confusion about it. A great many good people have got their eyes so focused on what was outward and passing that they have missed what is inward and essential. Suppose in our study this morning we forget the rushing mighty wind, suppose we forget the fiery tongues, suppose we turn our eyes away from those things that we confessedly do not understand and fix them on other essential facts that we cannot help but understand. In the judging of the meaning of Pentecost it seems to me the first essential is to learn the difference that Pentecost made in those that participated in it. The disciples of Jesus along with some three thousand others passed through this experience. What did it do for them?

1. It remade them. Here certain foreign and home-born Jews heard the gospel message for the first time and it changed their whole life. But it was not these alone who were remade by this experience. The disciples were also remade. Up to this time they had been followers of Jesus, up to this time they had been imitators of their Master. But through this experience they ceased merely to imitate and came to reproduce. Imitation is always a rather shallow and ugly something. It may be very tiresome. Through this experience these men came to
say, "For me to live is Christ."

Here then we are brought face to face with what our fathers call regeneration. Modern preachers and teachers have been a little shy of the word in recent years. There is a gracious promise in one of the Psalms that says, "When my father and mother forsake me then the Lord will take me up." When we preachers and teachers began to forsake conversion, regeneration, then the scientists took it up. It has been a favorite study of the psychologists. They believe in it with all of their hearts. They know that men and women may be reborn. They do not always call that experience, regeneration, Some call it re-education, some orientation of reality. But a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. They all agree that we may be reborn. This is one something that happened to the participants at Pentecost.

2. By this experience these people of varied tastes, these people separated from each other by various chasms were welded into a brotherhood. It was after this experience that Luke could write of them, "The multitudes that believed were of one heart and one soul." Of course it was not a perfect brotherhood. But it was near enough to perfection to be the most amazingly beautiful something that the world had ever known. It was something, too, that was new. Every reader of the New Testament can see that one of the prime purposes of Jesus was to build a brotherhood. He gathered about him twelve men as a nucleus. But it is at once amazing and depressing to realize how far short he fell during his own ministry. These friends whom he was trying to make into a brotherhood went into their last meal together spitting hot words at one another as they argued who should be greatest.

But after this experience they were possessed by a new spirit. They that were rich shared with those in need. "No man said that ought of the things that he possessed was his own." Some have regarded this as a kind of communism. Of course such is not the case. There was no community of earning, but only in spending. And that for a limited time. But the spirit was the spirit of brotherhood.
This spirit pervaded the entire group. The pagan world looked on with awed admiration as they whispered, "How these Christians love each other." And because they themselves yearned both to love and to be loved, they were drawn into these little colonies of heaven that soon spread all over the Roman Empire.

It was this brotherliness that was one of the secrets of the winsomeness of the early church. Such a church is still the most beautiful something in all the world. There is absolutely nothing that we could do that would mean more toward the bringing of the Kingdom of God than the building of a brotherly church right where we are. It is equally true that our Lord and Church is represented many times unbrotherly. When the saints get to fighting among themselves then the devil can take a holiday. You remember how Cadmus slew a dragon one day. Then he pulled his teeth and sowed the teeth broadcast in a field. Every tooth sprouted and sprang up into an armed giant. When Cadmus looked into their ill natured faces he was filled with terror. But he took a pebble and hit one of the brutes on the ear. This started a fight among themselves. Each man killed his neighbor and Cadmus did not have to strike a blow. The same has happened to many a church. This experience welded these early saints into a brotherhood.

3. This experience gave to those who had a part in it a passion for witnessing. They had a story to tell that was infinitely too good to keep. At once we read that "Peter stood up with the apostles." He stood up to explain the marvelous event that had taken place and to invite all to participate in it. So effectively did he speak that three thousand were won to Christ. Then a little later he and John were on their way to the temple to attend a prayer-meeting. In all probability this prayer meeting was a stale and dead affair, but they knew they did not help it by merely letting it alone.

On the way they were met by a professional beggar. This beggar held out his lean palms and begged for a penny. Peter and John searched their empty pockets and found they had nothing to give. But because they could not give money they did
not refuse to give anything. With the same enthusiasm with which they had witnessed before the multitude, they shared their marvelous experience with this nameless nobody. The result of it was that he was remade. There was a new face at prayer meeting that day. "For he entered with them into the temple walking and leaping and praising God."

The conversion of this man made such a sensation that it got the disciples into fresh trouble and brought them larger opportunity. They were arrested and spent the first night in jail. The next morning they were brought before the highest court of the land. The members of this court were indignant, but they decided to be lenient. Therefore they let them off with this light sentence, "They commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." But these apostles instead of thanking the court and expressing their appreciation looked them frankly in the eye and told them that what they ask was simply impossible. "We cannot," they declared, "but speak what we have seen and heard. We cannot do so because there is a great obligation upon us. We cannot do so because it is as natural to us as it is for a bird to sing, or for the grass to grow green at the kiss of the springtime." That they did their work well is evidenced by the fact that when they were arrested again a few days later this court told them with high indignation, "We commanded you not to speak, and yet you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching." Not only so, but they filled the whole Roman Empire. The message spread over the world because those who had passed through this experience had a passion for witnessing.

4. Then this experience brought to those participating in it a dauntless courage, a joyous optimism that absolutely nothing withstand. They faced stark impossibilities with gladness. No ridicule, no opposition, no form of death could dampen their ardor. The more they were opposed, the more they spread. The more they were crushed, the more vigorous they became. The more they died, the more they lived. They had an assurance of victory that made them serenely courag-
"The Promise"

One day two of them were shamefully whipped. Think of a grown man being drawn to the whipping post and beaten till the blood ran down to his heels. But when this happened to the apostles or Jesus, the greatest of them, the amazing story declares, "They departed because they were counted worthy to suffer for his name." They were possessed of a gallantry, a high-hearted courage, a dauntless optimism that amazes us to this day. But it makes us wistful and heart-hungry while it amazes us. Timid men who a few weeks ago had fled at danger like frightened sheep now dare death unafraid because of what happened at Pentecost.

5. Finally, through this experience these men became men of amazing power. "What we need," one said recently, "is more influential men in the church." That is right. It always gladdens me to see a man of influence come into the church. But what we need even more than influential men is powerful men. These early saints were not greatly influential, in fact they did not have influence enough to stay out of jail. They did not have influence enough to save themselves from the whipping post, the stake, and the cross, but they had power enough to shake the world. When they found themselves in hard straights they did not appeal to Nero, they appealed to almighty God and went on declaring His marvelous gospel. According to the promise they had received power through the experience at Pentecost.

II.

This then is the effect that Pentecost had upon those who participated in it. This is not a matter of speculation, it is not a matter of theory, it is a matter of history. It is written not simply upon the pages of the New Testament, but upon the pages of history. Something happened here that up to that time was unique. Something happened that made selfish men into new creatures. Something
happened that made divided men into a brotherhood. Something happened to give these men a passion for sharing, dauntless optimism, and an amazing power. What was that something? What then did happen at Pentecost?

Suppose we consult those who were present. I think they are credible witnesses. What did Peter and the rest say happened? They claimed that at Pentecost God had come in the person of the Holy Spirit. They claimed also that at Pentecost they had not come simply to find new evidence of deity of Jesus or of his resurrection, but that they had come to a new awareness of Jesus himself. They came to speak of the Holy Spirit as the spirit of God as well as the spirit of Jesus. They claimed that through this experience there had come to them a new and definite spiritual certainty. That they knew Jesus Christ as a present reality, living both with and within them.

This was their conviction. Were they right or wrong? I think all the evidence is favorable of the truth of their contentions. I find it easy to believe that they had come to a new and definite awareness of God through this experience for at least two reasons. First, through this experience they became the kind of men that we would expect God-possessed men to be. They were possessed of a quality of life akin to that of Jesus. Wherever they went they reminded people of Christ. Even those least willing to confess the fact had to take knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus.

Second, because they possessed the quality of life that Jesus possessed, they did the kind of work that we should expect such men to do. Wherever they went lives were remade. Wherever they went they went to proclaim a living Christ. They did not spend their time denouncing false gods. They spent their time holding up through life and lip a present living Lord. And as they did this, age-old evils vanished as stars vanish at the sunrise. As they did this they accomplished the impossible. The rugged wilderness of that day and the solitary place did become glad and the parched desert did blossom as a rose. That happened that any
sensible man would have said was utterly impossible.

Think of it. And then that little handful of people went into the upper room. They had no prestige, they had no great scholarship, they had no social standing, they had no wealth, they hadn't even a house of worship. And yet something happened to them that enabled them to remake the world. They said that what happened was that they had received the Holy Spirit. They said in the giving of the Holy Spirit God had given himself. They declared that as they went out to tackle their impossible tasks they did not go alone. That what they did was not by might nor by power but through the living God. The truthfulness of their contention is a matter of history.

III.

What then does this mean to us? There are those who look upon the experience of these early saints as something altogether too high for them. They have come to confuse it with what is sometimes called 'a second work of grace.' The spirit-filled, they believe is not for the ordinary Christian, not for the normal, but for those who live on a superlatively high plain. But this is altogether wrong. This experience is not abnormal. To miss it is to be subnormal. This is what every truly regenerated man and woman has a right to expect for himself or herself. "The promise," said Peter, "is unto you." It belongs to you by right.

How then are we to enter into this experience. Here again the words of the Apostle, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." This experience then is not for the few, but for the many. It is not for the superlative saint but for every Christian. It is for every man who is willing to repent. Wherever any man any where repents of his sin, that is, changes his mind in such a way as to lead him to change his life and give that
life over to God, that man then and there receives the Holy Spirit in his fullness. God is not a divided personality. Whenever he gives himself to us he gives his whole self.

How then do we explain the fact that so many enter into experiences after regeneration that were even richer than the one that they experienced when they were converted. This is explained by the fact that though the moment you repent God gives himself to you, you do not always give yourself in fullness to him. Always you surrender as far as you know, otherwise there is no conversion. But every real Christian knows that as he enters into the fellowship of his Master the Lord constantly reveals to him new areas that have not been surrendered.

"Rise and stand upon thy feet," said the Master unto Paul. "And I have appeared unto thee to make thee a minister and witness both of these things which I have seen and of those, which I have not seen." Paul's experience was a growing experience. So yours and mine are to be. Therefore though we receive the Spirit when we repent, we receive Him in his fullness as we enter day by day deeper into his fellowship.

Here then is an unspeakable privilege that is the right of everyone of us. In our days of desperate need we can go forth to our tasks with that bracing awareness of God that will give us a quality of life that will satisfy our own needs and give us something to share with others. Believe me, there is no man in all the world that has such power as the man that can make Christ real to others. We can only do that in proportion as he is real to ourselves. I confess that it has been very hard for me to learn this. At the lack of learning it I have faltered and failed a thousand times. Through our own inadequacy our Lord is saying to us over and over what he said to his friends long ago, "Apart from me you can do nothing."

But he is also affirming that there is a great adequacy for those who will avail themselves of the infinite resources that God gives to everyone that is
willing to receive it. It is said that when the great violinist, Paganini was
going to play before a distinguished group of musicians, a friend, to test him,
substituted for his fine violin a cheap and ordinary fiddle. The great artist
did not discover the substitution till he was going on to the stage. At first
he was dismayed and angered. Then he pulled himself together and said, "I will
show them that the power is not in the violin, it is not in the instrument, it is
in Paganini." And so it is for us. The power to reproduce Christ, the power
to win others to him is not in ourselves, but it is in Him. And He gives all as
we give all. There is no other way to victorious Christian living.
"In this world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

- John 16: 33

Just at present, the optimist has fallen into disrepute. His place has been taken, in great measure, by the cynic. We give ear to the disillusionist, to the fed-up, to the man who tells us that life is only a purposeless mess. Such sentiments are more in harmony with the spirit of our age. Some of us have passed through tragic experiences that have left us broken in spirit, disillusioned and with little hope for the dawning of a better tomorrow.

But in spite of this fact, and because of it, the sane optimist was never more greatly needed than today. But mark you, I use the word "sane" optimist, for there is a type of optimism that is of little value. In fact, it is often times a positive evil. We have all known optimists of this kind.

1. There are those whose optimism is born of ignorance. They face the future in the spirit of Polly Anna simply because they do not know what is going on in the world. I went to see a man some time ago who was slowly dying of an incurable disease. But I have seldom seen any man so optimistic about his recovery. He was joyfully and sunnily on his way to vigorous physical health. But his optimism was not thrilling - it was pathetic. I knew it was a child of ignorance. He was optimistic because he did not know the facts.
2. There is another type of optimism that is born of cowardice. Such a one has some idea of the facts but refuses to face them. I was reading some time ago of a certain scientist down in the South Sea Islands who saw one of the natives eating figs. The scientist broke open one of those figs and looked at it through the microscope and saw it was fairly alive with vermin. He induced the native to look through his microscope that he might know what he was eating. The sight filled this native with such utter disgust that he smashed the instrument into fragments and went serenely on eating his figs.

Now he was an optimist but his optimism was born of a cowardice that would not dare face the facts. We sometimes urge people to look on the bright side. That is good and sound advice, provided we do not ignore the dark side. The man who sees only one side does not face the facts. There is no virtue in meeting danger by thrusting our heads into the sand like an ostrich. To be optimistic because we refuse to see is not therefore a sane optimism. It is just to live in a fool's paradise.

3. There is another type of optimist whose hopefulness is born of a false philosophy. He hangs the theory that there is an upward trend in all nature and that things, individuals, and society are inevitably growing better and better. This philosophy perhaps reached the height of its power just before the outbreak of the World War. Millions were then convinced that humanity had run past its supreme limitations and that there was an open road ahead to a flawless civilization.

But the stern facts of experience tore this complacent philosophy into a thousand dirty and bloody shreds. This was one of the chief causes of
the bitter disillusionment that followed in the wake of the War. We were so sure that we had won and even when the War actually came, we were so sure that we were fighting in the interests of peace. Then when it was all over and we found ourselves impoverished in purse, impoverished in idealism, impoverished in faith and hope, then we became bitter and felt that God had let us down.

But God had not let us down, we had let Him down. We know now that if there is any progress made in our lives individually, we are the ones who are going to have to make it. God will help us, I know, He is infinitely eager to do so if we give Him a chance, but we must co-operate with Him. He stands at the door and knocks but we must open the door to Him. If we fail to do so, we can keep Him shut out forever. If we simply let ourselves go, we will not gravitate to a larger manhood and womanhood, we will rot down physically, mentally, and spiritually.

What is true of the individual is true also of the group, as organizations, as nations, - we do not tend inevitably upward. If there is anything done in our generation for the building of the Kingdom of God, we are the ones that in co-operation with God must do it. What is accomplished toward the bringing in of the Kingdom in this day must be done by ourselves. If we do our part, God can be counted on to do His; but if we fail, the whole scheme for a better world fails.

This fact, of course, ought not to make us pessimistic, it ought to hearten us. It simply means that we live in a sane and ordered world. A
world where the law of sowing and reaping operates with absolute certainty.
If you violate the laws of the body, you will be destroyed. The same is
true in the realm of the spirit. If we prepare the way of the Lord, in our
generation, the Lord will travel over it. But if we prepare the way of Mars,
Mars will travel over it. But to fail to realize that there is no inevitable
upward trend is to become possessed of a false and destroying optimism.

4. Then there are those whose optimism is born of circumstances.
They are optimistic as long as they themselves are strong and well. They are
optimistic while they are prosperous, while the Sea of Life is smooth and every
moment is jeweled with a joy. But when their bodies become broken and wracked
with pain, when they find themselves battling hard to keep the Wolf from the
doors," when some fierce tempest is upon them and death is laughing midst the
torn shreds of the rigging, - then their optimism gives way to despair. This
is the case because it is built on a wrong foundation.

It is only fair to say, of course, that pessimism can be just as
superficial as optimism. There are those who are pessimistic because they
are ignorant. They are pessimistic because they will not face the facts.
They love to hear themselves groan. They refuse to see what God is doing and
what man is doing. They know that social injustice is abroad but they refuse
to hearten themselves by the fact that more people are aware of it and in
rebellion against it than ever before. They see the frantic preparations for
war but refuse to see that more people are today thinking in terms of world-
peace than at any hour since the morning stars sang together.
But a sane optimist is one who can see all the facts, who can dare all of the dangers that threaten, who can see his plans go wrong and his best dreams seemingly come to nothing and still refuse to give way to despair. Such a man is as "a hiding place from the wind, as a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

II.

When we seek for an optimist of this kind, we cannot do better than to turn to this Book. Upon its pages we meet some of the most gallant-hearted men of all the centuries. Here we come to know the prophets. Many of them who in dark and tempestuous days kept alive their own hopes and the hopes of a beaten and conquered people. They were men who stood upon their watch-towers in brave anticipation of the dawning of a better day.

But the finest examples of sane optimism we find in the New Testament. Take Paul, for instance, how much it cost him to become a Christian. He tells us frankly that he has "suffered the loss of all things." Wherever he went, he had to face opposition and bitter persecution. He knew the inside of more Roman jails possibly than any man of his day. He had intimate acquaintance with the whipping post. There was hardly a square inch on his body that did not wear a scar. We find him at times without his freedom, without his
books, without enough clothing to keep him warm, - but we never find him without hope. "I am always confident," he shouts as he looks at us with radiant face and sparkling eyes.

Yes, Paul was a dauntless optimist; but to find optimism at its best, we turn not to Paul but to Paul's master. The story of Jesus should naturally be one of the most depressing stories ever told. It tells of the coming of one who is the very incarnation of God, but He was not welcome. He was hounded and hated and at last hung on a cross.

But He was never in despair. Till the end, He cherished the highest hopes and in the midst of seeming defeat He declares that if He is lifted up from the earth, He would draw all men unto Himself. He was sure that His church, in spite of its seeming weakness, could never be destroyed. "I will build my church," He declared triumphantly, "and the gates of death shall not prevail against it." He was equally sure of the triumph of His cause, "Fear not, little flock," He says, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."

III.

Now, I think you will agree with me that an optimism like that is something to be greatly desired. The disillusioned and fed-up pessimist may be a bit amusing as he voices our whines and gives expression to our cowardice, but here is one who breathes upon us like a spring time. His influence breaks
up the drought of the heart and sets the fields of the soul to flowering. What is the good of an optimism like that?

1. It is a source of deep and abiding joy. It is possible to live on when hope is dead, though many are not brave enough to do it. I buried a suicide some months ago. As I looked into his tragic face, I said to myself, "Man, why did you do it?" And the answer seemed to come back, "I lost hope. Today was wretched. I saw the troop of tomorrows coming in just as bitter as today, I saw I could not stand it and flung out of life." To lose hope is to lose your song.

2. Then this type of optimism is a source of power. It enables a man to stick to his task when others give up and quit. It is hard to keep toiling; it is hard to keep traveling after you have become convinced that you can never arrive. It is hard to keep enthusiastically at work at a task when you have decided that it can never be accomplished. If you have given up all hope of becoming Christ-like, you have given up your struggle to achieve that highest goal. If you have despaired of the possibility of a glorious church without spot or blemish, you have ceased to strive for it, you have become convinced that the Kingdom of God on earth is an impossibility, then your arm has become paralyzed, in the battle to make it possible. Hope is a source of power. To fight victoriously, we must fight hopefully.

3. Then the sane optimist is a source of joy and courage to others. Pessimism is contagious, I know, but thank God, so is optimism. Despair can be caught, but so can hope. Here is a group of 276 men on board an ancient vessel in the Mediterranean Sea. A terrible storm is upon them. It has lasted
now for almost two weeks until it has worn down their morale. "All hope," says Doctor Luke, "that we should be saved was then taken away." They had all given themselves up to black despair. But there was one exception. He is a prisoner on the way to Rome to stand trial, but this prisoner comes to take his place among these desperate men. He lifts his voice above the shriek of the wind and the crash of the thunder and shouts, "Be of good cheer, for there stood by me this night an angel of God whose I am and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; for thou must be brought before Caesar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." And what happened? Then were they of good cheer. They shared Paul's courage and in the strength of that courage they made their way safely to land. Therefore, if you want to help today where help is most needed, learn to give hope to the hopeless.

IV.

But how can we do this. We cannot make others hopeful if we are hopeless ourselves. We cannot win others to an optimistic view of life if we ourselves are inwardly defeated and pessimistic. The first step then in giving hope and courage to others is to find them for ourselves. How shall we do this?

What was the secret of the hopefulness of Paul? Or better still, what was the secret of the optimism of Jesus? It certainly was not born of ignorance nor of cowardice. No man faced life any more fearlessly than He. It was not
born of any false philosophy as to inevitable progress. Certainly it was not the result of the sunny circumstances in which He lived and in which He died. If ever the circumstances of a man's life should have driven him to despair, it would have been so in the case of Jesus. Yet He remained the supreme optimist. Why?

1. He was optimistic because of His firm faith in God. He believed in a God who was a Father. He believed in a God who was actively and mightily at work in the world of His day. He believed in God as continuously present in His own life. "He that has sent me is with me," He declares joyfully, "the Father hath not left me alone." No man can share the firm faith of Jesus in God without sharing His optimism.

If, therefore, we are to be optimists, we are to be men and women of faith. Paul's sane optimism is absolutely impossible without it. If the God that Jesus revealed is all a myth, if there is no one who loves us closes than breathing and nearer than hands and feet, then we are indeed without hope. Bertrand Russell does not believe in such a God. Therefore, he is speaking the language of sanity and reason when he says, "Only in the scaffoldings of despair can man build his house without being destroyed." But if Jesus is right, then no man need despair.

There are sources available that are completely adequate. Do you remember that Old Testament story of how a certain king sought to capture Elisha. Elisha was in the city of Dothan during the night, the king's soldiers surrounded the city and shut off every avenue of escape. The next morning the prophet's servant went out, saw the soldiers, and was frantic with fear. He
rushed back to tell his master and naturally he was not surprised when Elisha began to pray, but the content of his prayer must have struck him dumb. "Lord," he prayed, "open the eyes of the young man that he may see." And when his eyes were open, he saw that the resources of God were infinitely greater than the resources of the enemy and his despair was changed to hope. So it would be with ourselves when we really believe in God.

2. Then Jesus had firm faith in man. He had every reason not to have. One friend denied Him, another betrayed Him. But He went on believing. This, not because He evaded the facts, He never shut His eyes to man's sin. He believed that there were those who were lost. He was in the world to seek them. "I am come to seek and to save that which is lost."

But in spite of man's sin and lawlessness, He believed in him. He believed there was something in man to which His gospel would appeal. He believed that every man was capable of being saved and brought at last to perfection. He believed that this hate-torn world could be utterly changed. He believed that the Kingdom of God could come a fact in this present world. To that end He toiled; to that end He died and He taught us to pray "Thy Kingdom come...." He believed the commonwealth of God could be built out of faulty men and women like ourselves. It was this faith that made Him the dauntless optimist that He was. Such a faith will do the same for us.

But how can we have it? How do we come to trust God? By venturing on Him. How do we come to trust men? By venturing on and for them. Those who believe most in human nature are those who are daring most for it. I read not long ago of one whose pessimism drove him to an effort of suicide. He
threw himself off a pier into the sea. But he had a friend who loved him much. This friend suspected his intentions and saw the fatal jump and plunged at once after him. Now, it so happened that the would-be rescuer could not swim a stroke while the would-be suicide was an excellent swimmer. He, therefore, could not allow his friend to drown. He saved him and the thrill of doing something helpful was so great that it was the beginning of a new day. He lived hopefully because he recovered his faith, recovered it as you may recover yours if you have lost it, or may find it if you have never done so -- by a whole-hearted effort to do some good in the world.
CHANGING HEARSAY INTO EXPERIENCE

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John 18:34

This is a dramatic scene. Pilate is standing face to face
with a prisoner who is none other than Jesus Christ. The moment,
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But now that Pilate stands face to face with his prisoner, he
finds him strangely disturbing. If this man is a pretender, he is
certainly not like any other that he has met before. In spite of
himself, this Roman governor is impressed. Therefore, with mingled
awe and amazement he asks Jesus this question, "Art thou the king
of the Jews?" In reply Jesus asks this daring and searching question,
"Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of
me?" Pilate, "are you speaking from hearsay or out of your own experience?
Am I your king?"

That, I repeat, is a daring question. It is evident that Jesus
had hope for Pilate. When Herod questioned Him, our Lord answered never a word. So long had Herod stopped his ears to the truth, that he had lost his capacity to hear; so long had he shut his eyes to the light, that he had gone blind. But Jesus sees fine possibilities in Pilate. He believed that this Roman governor is yet capable of a high choice. Therefore, He holds open the door of his Kingdom with this question: "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" Thus Jesus invited Pilate to change hearsay into experience. Pilate was impressed, but not enough to make the change. We have just reminded ourselves of his tragic blunder as we recited our creed, he "suffered under Pontius Pilate."

Now, there is a sense in which this story is entirely unique. Yet, there is also that in it that comes very near to everyone here. We are met in this holy place as the avowed followers of this Christ. We have by uniting with this church acknowledged His kingship. But is that kingship reality? In other words, is your religion a matter of hearsay or of experience? If it is only hearsay, then you have missed the highest and the best. This is not to say that hearsay is of no value. It is of vast value, but in the realm of religion it is not enough.

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We are indebted to hearsay for almost all the small knowledge we possess. How much, for instance, do you know about history? Very little at first hand. I am told that there was once a man named Julius Caesar, who conducted a campaign in Gaul. I am told further that this same Julius Caesar wrote commentaries about his campaign. These commentaries have been the plague of many a school boy. But
whether Julius Caesar really wrote them or not, it is impossible for me to say. The one thing about them of which I can be sure is that somebody wrote them and that they gave me no end of trouble. I do not even know who discovered America except from hearsay. This is the case because whoever made the discovery beat me to it. I must depend on hearsay for this as for almost every other fact in history.

In like manner, I take the little I know about astronomy from hearsay. I am told that the sun is 93,000,000 miles from the earth. I am told also that this sun has a temperature at its surface of 12,000 degrees Fahrenheit. But I have never tested the truth of either of these statements. I never intend to. I am quite sure that if the astronomers are a few feet off in their measurement one way or the other, life will go on for me practically the same. I am equally certain that if in estimating the temperature of the sun, they have made a mistake of one or two degrees, it would not greatly upset the noiseless tenor of my way. In matters of astronomy I take the word of the astronomers.

We have a saying that runs like this: "I am willing to take your word for that." So I am in a great many matters. For instance, I am told that if I drop my hand on a red-hot stove, it will not only be very painful, but the hand will receive permanent injury. I will take your word for that. I do not intend to try it. There is a very popular drink that according to the scientists seems to stimulate while it really depresses. When taken internally, it causes the driver of a car to feel more fit to cope with an emergency, while in reality he becomes less fit because all of his reactions have been slowed down. There are those who are allergic to this drink. Such it masters and enslaves. Such it rots down both in body and soul.
But all this I take on hearsay. I never intend to put this drink to the test.

Naturally, there are those who do not agree with me. They must find out for themselves. If a cocktail is offered in the social circle, they take it. Sometimes they begin the custom from curiosity. Sometimes they begin because they feel that it would be a discourtesy to refuse. A young lady complained recently of how terribly embarrassing it is to have to make such refusals. But it seems to me that all the embarrassment should be on the other side. At least I believe that I have just as much right to my convictions as you have to your lack of convictions. Nor do I think it a matter of shame when I refuse to take a needless risk. If my hostess were to say to me, "Here is a sandwich; it is spread with a high grade poison." I should not be tempted in the least to do other than take her word for it.

Even in matters of religion hearsay is priceless. It is such hearsay that makes this book we call the Bible, the most precious in all the world. Listen to this, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears." Just what fears were yapping at the heels of this frightened psalmist, he does not see fit to tell us. He does tell us, however, that as he called on God, the whole wolfpack took flight. That is only hearsay, but it is hearsay that warms my heart and gives me hope. We must all be unspeakably grateful for the hearsay that comes to us out of the Scriptures.

Priceless also, is the testimony of the saints throughout-the centuries. We all owe to them an unpayable debt. Then, how greatly we are enriched by the testimonies of those whom we have known personally. I can never be sufficiently thankful for the God-possessed men and women whom I have known along the way. I am being
constantly strengthened, gladdened, and encouraged by the faith of others. Certainly, hearsay in the realm of religion is of vast importance. Rightly used, it will lead to the supreme enrichment. Yet hearsay is not enough. To achieve its purpose, it must be changed into experience.

- II -

Why is this the case?

1. This is the case, in the first place, because it is only experience that can satisfy the human soul. It is well to know about God. Theology is the queen of all sciences. Yet no knowledge about God can take the place of knowing God himself. I may be an expert on bread. I may know all about its food value and how to prepare it, but not even the most perfect knowledge of bread can satisfy my hunger. However much I may know about water, my tongue will become swollen, my lips parched, my body tortured to the point of death unless I experience water by actually drinking it. It is fine to know about flowers. Botany is a lovely study. But no knowledge of botany can take the place of the perfume of the honeysuckle, nor the red of the rose. Even so, no knowledge about God can take the place of knowing God through Christ.

When, therefore, the psalmist sings, "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." he is voicing a universal longing. When Job wails, "O that I knew where I might find him." he is uttering a cry that has sobbed its way through the centuries. When Philip prays, "Lord, shew us the Father," he is praying a prayer that is as old as man. It has been offered in some fashion by men of every age and of every kindred, tribe and tongue.

What is the matter with our tired and restless world? If Isaiah were to appear on our streets today, would he not search us with his
question of long ago, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not bread, and you labor for that which satisfieth not." Our world is fretful and hungry for something or Someone that it has not found. This is true even of many people in our churches. Some of you have not found in religion what you once hoped to find. You are absolutely certain that the Lord is a shepherd, but there is no song in your heart because you have not yet learned to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd." You are certain that God loves all men, but you have not yet come to say out of your own experience, "He loved me, and gave Himself up for me." Hearsay is good, but unless we translate it into experience, we never come to that spiritual certainty that alone can satisfy.

2. In the second place, it is only those who change hearsay into experience who have an adequate passion for the sharing their experience with others. To know any worthwhile fact is to be possessed by an eagerness to share our knowledge with others. When Galileo was being tortured for saying that the earth moved around the sun, he recanted, but as soon as the agony of his torture was eased, he reaffirmed his original conviction. Being sure, he had to share.

If such eagerness to share the truth is characteristic of the scientist, it is even more so of one who has found reality in religion. Do you remember that leper of whom Mark tells? Life had dealt very harshly with the leper. It had dealt so harshly that though he still believed in power, he no longer believed in love. So he came to the Master with this imperfect prayer. "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus responded to his imperfect faith and healed him. Having healed him, the Master gave him this warning: "Say nothing to any man." So what? The healed man simply could
not keep it. I have an idea that he fairly shouted to the first man he met, "Look at me! A little while ago I was a leper; now my flesh is like that of a little child. I am cured." So did he blaze his story abroad that the Master could no longer openly enter the city.

It was this certainty that gave voice to the great prophets of the Old Testament. Some of them spoke with reluctance. Take Jeremiah for instance. So little did his preaching seem to accomplish except to make the preacher hated that more than once he made up his mind to quit. "What is the use?" he said to himself. "Those to whom I preach do not repent, they only hate and persecute me. I will never preach again." But as often as he made that resolution, he had to break it. This he did because the word of God was as a fire shut up in his bones. The burning convictions of his heart made silence impossible.

This same passion for telling their story belongs emphatically to those whom we meet on the pages of the New Testament. There are two of them before the same court that a few weeks ago had sentenced their Master to death. The court decides to give these two offenders a light sentence. They command them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answer, "We cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard." They are under the urge of a mighty assurance. They are in the grip of a compelling certainty. It is easy to keep silent about a religion of hearsay, but you can no more silence a religion of experience then you can dam up Niagara.

3. Not only do we need to change hearsay into experience to satisfy the longings of our own hearts and to give us an adequate passion for sharing our experiences with others, but we need to do
this in order to have power for witnessing. There is something compelling about a man who has made himself master of a subject, whatever that subject is. How gripping is the message of the man who brings fresh and authentic tidings of God! When the crowd turned away from hearing Jesus, they said with awe, "He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes." What was wrong with the scribes? Their religion was largely a matter of hearsay. But Jesus could say always what he said to Noodemus, "We speak that we do know, and testify that which we have seen."

It was the same note of authority that enabled the early saints to turn the world upside down. Who would ever have chosen a Samaritan woman of soiled reputation for an evangelist? Yet when she left her water vessel and hurried into the village, she was so sure of Jesus that we read, "Many believed because of the saying of the woman." Thomas loved Jesus with all his big heart. But he would have been worth little as a witness had he not come to say, as he fell at the feet of his Master, "My Lord, and my God." The power of Paul to convince the men of his day and of all days was born not simply of the fact that he was vastly gifted. More compelling than his great ability was his great certainty. The fact that he could say, "I know whom I have believed." made him a man of power. This same certainty is needed by us. We are not going to make any great dent on our hard world by the proclamation of a gospel that we only half believe.

- III -

Is this certainty possible for us? If so, how can we find it?

It is my conviction that this certainty is possible for everyone of us. This is not to say that all men have an equal capacity to realize God. There are some who see with clearer vision than others, but all men can realize Him in some fashion. "If any man is willing
to do His will, he shall know." This promise is not for certain elect souls who have a special aptitude for religion. It is for any man, for every man who is willing to do His will.

Not only does this word tell us that religious certainty is for everybody, but it also indicates the conditions upon which we may possess such certainty. In order to be sure of God, it is not necessary to be perfect, it is only necessary to be willing wholeheartedly to do the will of God. If we are to realize God, we must make a complete, sacrificial surrender to Him. We must be willing to put ourselves and all that we have into His hands. To all such God gives Himself, "We are His witnesses of these things as is also the Holy Spirit whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

Sometimes this awareness of God comes instantly. Those who have been accustomed to dealing with sick souls personally can testify that they have seen men pass instantly into a knowledge of God. I, myself, have seen a face suddenly lighted by the glory of God just as a landscape is lighted when a cloud passes from the face of the sun. But such instantaneous awareness does not always come. There are those who having surrendered become aware of God gradually. The light that breaks on them is more like the slow dawning of day. But if any man surrenders and persists in that surrender, he will come to certainty. He will realize the truth of those words from Hosea, "Ye shall know, if ye follow on to know the Lord."
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place of knowing God through Christ.

When, therefore, the psalmist sings, "As the hart panteth after the
waberbreaks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God," he is voicing a
universal longing. When Job wails, "O that I knew where I might find him, he is uttering a cry that has sobbed its way through the centuries. When
Philip prays, "Lard, show us the Father," he is praying a prayer that is
as old as man. It has been offered in some fashion by men of every age
and of every kindred, tribe and tongue.

What is the matter with our tired and restless world? If Isaiah
were to appear on our streets today, would he not search us with his
question of long ago, "Wherefore do you spend money for that which is not
bread, and you labor for that which satisfieth not." Our world is fret-
ful and hungry for something or Someone that it has not found. This is
true even of many people in our churches. Some of you have not found in
religion what you once hoped to find. You are absolutely certain that the
Lord is a shepherd, but there is no song in your heart because you have not
yet learned to sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd." You are certain that God
loves all men, but you have not yet come to say out of your own experience,
"He loved me, and gave Himself up for me." Hearsay is good, but unless
we translate it into experience, we never come to that spiritual certainty
that alone can satisfy.
2. In the second place, it is only those who change hearsay into experience who have an adequate passion for the sharing of their experience with others. To know any worthwhile fact is to be possessed by an eagerness to share our knowledge. When Galileo was being tortured for saying that the earth moved around the sun, he recanted. But as soon as the agony of his torture was eased, he reaffirmed his original conviction. Being sure, he had to share.

If such eagerness to share the truth is characteristic of the scientist, it is even more so of one who has found reality in religion. Do you remember that leper of whom Mark tells? Life had dealt very harshly with him. It had dealt so harshly that though he still believed in power, he no longer believed in love. So he came to the Master with this imperfect prayer. "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus responded to his imperfect faith and healed him. Having healed him, the Master gave him this warning: "Say nothing to any man." So what? The healed man simply could not keep it. I have an idea that he fairly shouted to the first man he met, "Look at me! A little while ago I was a leper; my flesh is like that of a little child. I am cured." So did he blame his story abroad that the Master could no longer openly enter the city.

It was this certainty that gave voice to the great prophets of the Old Testament. Some of them spoke with intense reluctance. Take Jeremiah for instance. So little did his preaching seem to accomplish except to make the preacher hated that more than once he made up his mind to quit. "What is the use?" he said to himself. "Those to whom I preach do not repent, they only hate and persecute me. I will never preach again." But as often as he made that resolution, he had to break it. This he did because the word of God was as a fire shut up in his bones. The burning convictions of
the heart made otherwise impossible.

The case made otherwise impossible.

The heart made otherwise impossible.

The heart made otherwise impossible.

The case made otherwise impossible.

The heart made otherwise impossible.

The case made otherwise impossible.

The heart made otherwise impossible.

The case made otherwise impossible.
not come to say to the risen Christ: "My Lord, and my God." The power of Paul to convince the men of his day and of all days was born not simply of the fact that he was vastly gifted. More compelling than his great ability was his great certainty. The fact that he could say, "I knew when I have believed," made him a man of power. This same certainty is needed by us. We are not going to make any great dent on our hard world by the proclamation of a gospel that is only hearsay.

III

Is this certainty possible for us? If so, how can we find it?

It is my conviction that this certainty is possible for everyone of us. This is not to say that all men have an equal capacity to realize God. There are some who see with clearer vision than others. But all men can realize Him in some fashion. "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know." This promise is not for certain elect souls who have a special aptitude for religion. It is for any man, for every man who is willing to do His will.

Not only does this word tell us that religious certainty is for every- body, but it also indicates the conditions upon which we may possess such certainty. In order to be sure of God, it is not necessary to be perfect; it is only necessary to be willing wholeheartedly to do the will of God. If we are to realize God, we must make a complete, sacrificial surrender to Him. We must be willing to put ourselves and all that we have into His hands. To all such God gives himself. "We are His witnesses of these things and also the Holy Spirit whom God hath given to them that obey Him."

Sometimes this awareness of God comes instantly. Those who have been accustomed to dealing with seeking souls personally can testify that they have seen men pass instantly into a knowledge of God. I, myself, have seen a face suddenly lighted by the glory of God just as a landscape is
lighted when a cloud passes from the face of the sun. But such instantaneous awareness does not always come. There are those who have surrendered, become aware of God gradually. The light that breaks on them is more like the slow dawning of day. But if any man surrenders and persists in that surrender, he will come to certainty. He will realize the truth of those words from Hosea, "Ye shall know, if ye follow on to know the Lord." Every one of us can thus change hearsay into experience.
THE COWARD

"When Pilate heard that, he was the more afraid."

—John 19:8

That is strange language to refer to a Roman governor. This man belonged to a hardy race. It was a race that prided itself on its strength and its courage. The Roman version of the Flood was that when the ark rested upon the ground a man and a woman emerged and walked away from the ark, each throwing stones over his shoulder. Every stone thrown by the woman became a woman. Every stone thrown by the man became a man. "Hence," said these proud and sturdy Romans, "we are a strong race, seeing we sprang from stones." Pilate was a part of that strong race and yet ye was afraid.

It is evident that from the very first of this trial Pilate had felt the tormenting fingers of fear. His conduct is not that of a bad man; it is rather that of a weak man who did not have the courage of his convictions. For this reason it is impossible for us to feel about Pilate as we do about those who shared with him in this legal murder. For instance, we can feel little pity for Annas, that wicked old spider who spun his web ruthlessly out of sheer envy and greed and hate. We have little pity for his almost equally ruthless son-in-law, Caiaphas, whose one aim was his own interests. But for Pilate we can have some sympathy. We find ourselves wishing that we could help him. At times we could even weep over him if we could find any tears bitter enough. He blackened his name with an immortality of shame not so much because he was bad as because he was a coward.

To be convinced of this, it is only necessary to re-read his story. Pilate was very reluctant to have anything to do with Jesus at all. Strange rumors
had been going about the land with regard to this Man. Pilate's devoted wife
had become interested. No doubt she had spoken to her husband about Him. Pilate
had never seen him. But he had enough superstition not to want anything to do
with Him. When at last he was forced to sit upon the case, he was eager to do
the right thing by his Prisoner. From the beginning, he was bent on releasing
Him. There is no doubt in my mind that the friendliest face into which the Master
looked that grim Friday was the face of this Roman governor. But in spite of
Pilate's sense of justice, in spite of his eagerness to release Jesus, he failed.
We remind ourselves all over Christendom every Sunday of his cowardly deed as
we say our creed—"He suffered under Pontius Pilate."

I

Pilate's first great blunder in dealing with Jesus was in seeking to be
neutral. He was reluctant to take any stand with regard to Him at all. This
is evident from the first. When Pilate was roused out of bed early Friday morning
by these fanatical Jews, he was evidently in a rather black mood. For one thing
he was perhaps unwilling to get up so early. Then these Jews for whom he had
a huge contempt refused to come into his palace. They refused because they
could not be contaminated by going into the house of a pagan. That in itself
was an insult that aroused Pilate's anger. These vassals were better than their
masters. Not only would they not come into the palace, but Pilate had to go
out to them to sit on a case that was unwelcome. All these circumstances added
to his indignation.

As he confronted the mob that was gathered between the two wings of the
palace, he opened the proceedings with this routine questions: "What charges
bring you against this man?" They did not answer him with due courtesy. "If
He were not a malefactor," was the answer, "we would not have brought Him to
thee." That was no way to answer a governor. With growing indignation Pilate
said, "Take Him and judge Him according to your law"—implying that "You have already judged Him." Then they gave this shocking reply, "We have not the power to put any man to death." Thus they told Pilate tactfully that they had not only pre-judged the Man but that they were demanding the death sentence.

From this answer Pilate knew at once the crime of which Jesus was accused. He was accused of being a pretender to the throne of Caesar. Pilate was quite sure that the charges were groundless. It was laughable to think of a carpenter's usurping the power of Caesar. But though the charge was absurd, he dared not refuse to investigate it. Knowing that he could make no headway with the investigation in the presence of the mob, he had the Prisoner brought into the palace so that he could question Him face to face.

It was when Jesus was thus brought into the Palace that Pilate saw Him, doubtless, for the first time. The amazement of this Roman governor is very evident. Jesus is certainly not the type of man that he expected to see. As these two men face each other, the One utterly friendless, the other the representative of Rome, the most powerful and compactly organized government on the earth, Pilate is at once bewildered and afraid. "Thou?" he hisses in amazement, "Art thou a king?" Pilate is sure that here is no rival of Caesar. Then Jesus answers calmly, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself or did another tell it thee of me?"

What a kingly and daring answer that is! Jesus has forgotten Pilate the Governor. He is thinking of Pilate the man. He is thinking of this needy human soul with its vast possibilities. He is seeking to bring Pilate's question out of the realm of hearsay into the realm of experience. "Pilate, am I your king? Are you mouthing words that others have given you or are you speaking out of your own experience?" It is a question of deathless importance. How about you? Is He your King? Are you speaking out of experience or out of mere tradition? Can you say with Paul, "I know Whom I have believed"?
Pilate is even more amazed. "Am I a Jew?" he answers. "Thine own nation has condemned thee." Then Jesus becomes definite. He declares, "I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world that I might bear witness of the truth. Pilate, I am a King in the realm of the truth." Then looking wistfully at this Roman governor, He probes his heart. He looks into the deeps of his conscience. He is saying to him, "I am a King in the realm of truth and I would like to enroll you as a subject." And He holds the door open invitingly to Pilate and gives him an opportunity to enter. Think of the madness of that! Here is a Jewish Prisoner inviting a Roman governor to become His subject and that Roman governor does not laugh. Instead I can imagine he looks with knitted brows. Then he answers, "What is truth?" No less an authority than Bacon said that Pilate was sneering, that he was sarcastic. I do not think that was the case at all. Pilate was a skeptic. He had broken with his own religion. He had watched the votaries of that religion as they rotted down in their sins. He had heard religionists and philosophers discuss the truth, but he had never seen the truth incarnated. When he asked this question, he was not sneering, he was not laughing, he was strangely disturbed. But he was telling his heart that he was almost daring to hope that he had discovered reality but that there was really no hope. "What is truth?" He asked it rather in a wistful despair that was almost daring to hope.

From this soul stirring interview Pilate went back to face the Jewish mob. He had reached a conclusion. According to the letter of the law, he had a perfect right to condemn Jesus. Jesus had confessed that he was a king though not after the order of Caesar. But Pilate had no proof of that except the statement and personality of Jesus. The Master produced no witnesses. But while he could have said according to the letter of the law "Guilty!" he did not say it. On the contrary he faced the mob with this verdict—"Not guilty as charged!"
But the leaders and the mob were not satisfied with this verdict. They determined to have a verdict of guilty. Their own experience with Pilate had told them that he could be made to yield to pressure. He had done so before. Therefore, they began to make up in noise for their lack of a case. Then one shouted, "He has stirred up the people all the way from Galilee. Ah! That word "Galilee" came like music to Pilate's ears. "He is from Galilee, is He? Then He belongs to Herod's jurisdiction. I will send Him to Herod. Thus, I will get Him off my hands."

This resolution was no sooner taken than Jesus was on the way to this scummerly ruler who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. Possibly Pilate as he watched Him disappear dusted his hands with a heedless sigh and said, "Well, that is that!" Possibly he was a bit ashamed of himself that he had not had the courage to stand to his convictions and let Him go free since he knew He was innocent. But the responsibility was now Herod's. But Herod's only interest in Jesus was as a sleight-of-hand performer. When Jesus refused to amuse him and his soldiers, they draped Him in an old purple horse-blanket as a mark of their contempt for His claims of royalty and sent Him back to Pilate.

But Pilate has not yet made up his mind to judge the case. He will force the decision upon the crowd. He remembers that there is an old Jewish custom by which the crowd has a right to choose a certain prisoner to be set free. As a rule their choice was unlimited, but today he is going to limit it. He be-thinks him of the worst prisoner in Jerusalem, a revolutionary murderer whose name is also Jesus. He sends for this brute of a man and stands him beside Jesus and says, "Which Jesus will you choose—Jesus the Christ or Jesus Barabbas?" To his utter amazement and indignation, they shout "Not this man but Barabbas!"
Pilate is losing ground. His efforts to dodge his responsibility are getting him more and more involved. He has become a creature of shifts and devices. Now in sheer desperation he turns to them to put to them a question that is his very own, the most important question ever asked. "What then shall I do with this Jesus which is called Christ?" It is a terrible hour when a man allows himself to be manoeuvered into a situation where he must ask a mob or any man what to do with a question of duty and privilege. This was Pilate's question. It is yours and mine. Every man is born into the world with a Christ on his hands. I have a right to choose Him as my Saviour and Friend. That is my heaven. I have a right to reject Him. That might become my hell. Pilate began by saying, "I will do nothing with Jesus. I will be neutral."

But he had to take his stand even as you and I. We can no more be neutral with regard to Jesus than we can ignore the law of gravity. We can no more ignore Him than we can the law of sowing and reaping. Every man must face this question for himself. Every man must enthrone Him or dethrone Him. "He that is not for me is against me." That is a word from the lips of Jesus. It is true in the nature of things. We may do the wrong thing with Jesus, but every man must do something. Every man must do something in the here and now. It was true of Pilate. It is true of you and me. There is no neutrality.

II

When Pilate was thus forced to take some kind of stand with regard to Jesus, he made his second tragic blunder. He decided upon compromise. Of course, the very fact that he was willing to compromise is evidenced to the mob by the fact that Pilate was on the run. What was Pilate's verdict? "No guilty." Since Jesus was not guilty, there was but one thing to do with Him and that was to release Him. If He was guilty as charged, there was but one thing to do, and that was to crucify Him. Since Pilate had said "Not guilty" there was but
one course open and that was release. But that course Pilate was afraid to take.

What then did he do? He said to those Jews, "The Prisoner is innocent. I am not going to share with you in the legal murder of an innocent Man. I have a sense of justice. I cannot have a part in any such crime. But since you so greatly object to His being released, I will take a middle course. I will not kill Him outright. I will half-kill Him. I will scourge Him and let Him go." Pilate knew that scourging would be a terrible injustice, but he salved his conscience by saying though that would be an evil it would be the lesser of two evils. It is better than killing Him outright.

Now scourging was a terrible punishment. The prisoner was tied against a post. The whip was usually composed of nine thongs tipped with lead. Many a man had died under such scourging. Often those slugs of lead bit through the abdominal wall and the sufferer was disemboweled. It was after this fashion that Jesus was scourged. Then Pilate, bidding for the sympathy of the mob and for the admiration led the Prisoner before them.

"Behold the man!" he said. There were two meanings in the word. "You hate Him. You have been thirsting for His blood. Well, you have it. His back is gashed. He has suffered unspeakable torture. That ought to be enough even for such bloodhounds as you." Then it was an appeal to their admiration. "See how He stood up under it! Behold His courage, His serenity, His poise. Behold the Godlike dignity that has been His through it all. What a Man!" says awed Pilate. "Look at Him. Surely shame will keep you from asking more suffering than this from one so manly." But they only shriek the louder and give an additional reason for His execution. "He ought to die," they cry, "because He has made Himself the Son of God." "And when Pilate heard that," the story said, "he was the more afraid."

Pilate, you remember, was a skeptic. He had lost all faith in the gods
of his religion. But here was a Man so vastly different from any that he had ever met before that he was half ready to believe the wildest rumors about Him. "The Son of God? Maybe He is. He certainly has a majesty, a winsomeness, a power surpassing any man that I have ever met." Therefore, with this word ringing in his ears, Pilate makes up his mind to question Jesus again. Therefore, he hurries back into the palace and puts to Him this question, "Art thou the Son of God?" And what answer does Jesus make? "He answers him never a word."

Why was Jesus silent? Had he lost all patience with this cowardly official? Had He become indignant against him? No, He refused to answer because He knew that the answer would do no good. At the first trial Jesus spoke to Pilate with eagerness and hope. But Pilate had refused to listen. The man whose only response to the truth is to scourge it will cease to hear the truth. The man who refuses to obey the light will lose his capacity to see the light. There is an awful truth in that old doctrine of the unpardonable sin. We can refuse to see until our eyes go out. H. G. Wells has a horror story whose awfulness consists in this—that in a certain dismal castle the candles that are lighted go out one by one. That is the horror of what has taken place in Pilate's soul. The lights have gone out.

III

Now Pilate, having failed in an effort to be neutral, having failed to win by compromise, makes one more effort. He still seeks to release Jesus. But he is met again by defeat. "Their shouting prevailed," Luke tells us. Then out of this shouting came one clear voice. Whose voice it was we do not know. I imagine it was the strident, cracked voice of Annas, the shrewdest and the most ruthless of the lot. What is he saying? "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend." Ah, that was the fatal shot. That was the knock-out blow.
At that Pilate went hot and cold. "Take him and crucify him," he said, "But I find no fault in him." Thus setting out with the purpose of neutrality, he ended by the crucifixion of an innocent Man.

It was thus that Pilate branded his name with an immortality of shame. But we must bear in mind that Pilate did not have one-thousandth part of the chance of the religious leaders that shared with him in this crime. He did not have one-thousandth part of the chance possessed by you and me. This strange Carpenter had produced quite a stir as He had entered the city not quite a week ago. Pilate knew quite well what a stern and suspicious master was Tiberius Caesar. He knew how plausible and unscrupulous were these Jewish enemies. He knew that if he dared to release this Prisoner he would doubtless lose his own place. He might even lose his own head. The pressure upon him was desperately heavy. Pilate, therefore, in his futile effort to save his Prisoner played a far kinder part than the average politician of that day would have played.

What was the outcome? Did he go down to his house that night horrified and ashamed? Did he go home hating himself for the guilty thing that he was? I think he was a bit ashamed of allowing the mob to browbeat him. His subsequent conduct in refusing to remove the superscription from the cross when the Pharisees objected to it indicates a defeated man who is trying to recover some self-respect. But he did not feel that he had committed a ghastly crime. Instead he washed his hands in the presence of the mob saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. See you to it."

There are those who have pictured Pilate in the after days as broken and tortured by remorse. There is no evidence that such was the case. We wish we could believe it. But having blown out the light within his soul, I am confident that he went on to the end of his journey with never a pang. Had he suffered his case would have been far more hopeful. I think Anatole France comes closer to the truth. He pictures Pilate living in retirement in a lovely villa in his
later years. One day an old friend of Jerusalem days pays him a visit. They talk of old times. "Do you remember," said the friend, "that queer Prisoner that you sentenced to death. His name was Jesus of Nazareth." Pilate was thoughtful for a moment and then shook his head. "No," he said, "I do not seem to remember." That is a worse hell than washing one's hands in remorse. To have looked into the face of Jesus and then have forgotten that every such a man lived—such forgetfulness is surely hell!
THE POLITICIAN

"He who delivered me up to you is more guilty than you are."

—John 19:11

I

We are thinking together of the man who was most guilty of the death of Jesus. There were many sinister faces gathered about the Cross. There were many who looked at Jesus with hard eyes and murderous hearts. But there was one who was guilty above all others. Who was that man? It is not easy for one of us to assess the guilt of another. In fact, it is next to impossible. I can know the wrong that you have done, but I cannot know the pressure of temptation and the resistance on your part before the crime was committed. There are so many factors that enter into the determining of our guilt that judgment in the strictest sense is beyond our power. It is for this reason that Jesus forbids it. "Judge not," He says. Again, "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" It is impossible for the wisest of us fully to judge the guilt of any man.

In seeking for the one most guilty of this greatest crime of history, however, we are not left to our own devices. We have a most enlightening word from the lips of Jesus Himself. In His conversation with Pilate, He declares, "He who delivered me to you is more guilty than you are." That in itself left Pilate out. Of course, this Roman governor was terribly guilty. Of course, there is a stain upon his hands and heart that all Neptune's ocean could not wash out. He had it in his power to set Jesus free. He had it in his power to save the life of this innocent Man. He not only had the power, but he had the willingness if it had not cost too much. But under the pressure of fear—fear for his position, fear for his life—he threw Jesus to the mob, as one would
throw a bone to a hungry dog, protesting at the same time his innocence. Pilate is guilty, but his is not the supreme guilt.

Nor are we to look for this supremely guilty man among the mob that shouted for the death of Jesus. This mob was amazingly bloodthirsty and ruthless, as mobs ever tend to be. It is wonderful how much more cruel a mob can be than the individuals that compose it. Men will commit deeds of brutality as a part of a mob that would fill them with utter horror if they were called to act alone. It was this mob who offered a choice between Jesus the murderer and Jesus the Prince of Life, said, "Not this man but Barabbas." It was this mob who, when Pilate said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it," called down that horrible curse upon themselves, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Every man in that mob had his individual guilt. But there was one more guilty than any of them.

Who was that man? I can guess the name that is in your mind and upon the lips of many of you. "Judas," you are ready to answer. But with this I cannot agree. In so saying, I am not minimizing the crime of Judas. His was one of the most ghastly and terrible of all history. He was a false friend. He took the tenderest caress of love and forged it into a weapon of treachery. He betrayed his Lord with a kiss. So terrible was his guilt that he could not live with himself. He found it necessary to fling himself out of the world. Jesus Himself said of him, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born." But I do not think that even Judas was supremely responsible for the death of Jesus. He had it in his power to betray, but he did not have it in his power to deliver Him to Pilate.

Who did deliver Jesus into the hands of this Roman governor? Beyond question, the group responsible was made up of the religious leaders of the day. Who was the leader of these leaders? Two names stand out conspicuously. They are the names of Annas and Caiaphas. They are spoken of as the high priests but only
one of them was a high priest in reality. That was Caiphas. Annas is referred to as high priest again and again, but he was not in reality a high priest at all. He had been a high priest in other years. He was given the title now because, in spite of the fact that he had been put out of office, he exercised the powers of the high priest. And mark you, these powers were not exercised by every ex-high priest. The sons of Annas had been high priests also but they had no such powers. The leader of this church group, beyond a doubt, was Annas.

It was Annas to whose home Jesus was brought that fateful Thursday night immediately after His arrest. "To Annas first," the story says. He was brought to Annas first I am sure because Annas was the leader. It had no doubt been at the orders of Annas and through his shrewd manipulation that Jesus had been arrested. I daresay it was Annas who had made a tool out of Judas. It was certainly Annas before whom Jesus had his first trial.

That trial gives us some further insight into the character of this shrewd and cruel man. When Jesus was brought into his presence, the story says that Annas questioned him about His disciples and His doctrine. Of course, Annas knew about this or he would not have had Jesus arrested. But he laid no charge against the Master. He tried rather to make the Master convict Himself. But Jesus was too keen for him. "I have taught," He replied, "in the synagogue and in the Temple. I have said nothing in secret. If you want to know what I have said ask those that heard me."

That answer evidently aroused the indignation of Annas. One of his ruffians, therefore, slapped the face of Jesus. Whether Annas commanded this blow we are not told. But it was surely struck with his knowledge and consent. It shows something of the brutal despotism of the man. This too gives us an illuminating commentary on the meaning of that hard word of Jesus—"If a man smite thee on the one cheek turn to him the other also." What did Jesus do in this instance? He
did not turn the other cheek; He rebuked the smiter. "If I have spoken falsely," He answered, "prove it. If I have told the truth why do you strike me." Jesus' words, therefore, are not to be taken in a crassly literal fashion. Always we are to act in the spirit of love.

When Annas had failed in his effort to make Jesus convict Himself, he sent Him down to Caiphias where He was tried a second time. Here the questioner was not Annas but the son-in-law of Annas, Caiphias. Two witnesses were produced. They had been rehearsed for the purpose. But those who had their coaching in charge had not done a good job. Therefore, the witnesses contradicted each other. Caiphias, therefore, asked the Master if He were the Son of the Blessed. And when Jesus answered in the affirmative, he rent his clothes. Then it was that they delivered Him to Pilate. But the power behind the scene in all this, I am sure, was Annas.

II

Who was Annas? He was a keen and shrewd politician. He was seventy years old at this time. We resent him all the more for this. He had lived long enough to learn a bit of tolerance and kindness. He had lived long enough to appreciate the values that last. But the passing years had not sweetened him. They had only made him hard. We sometimes think that sin loses its grip the older we get apart from divine grace. But such is not the case. The older we get in sin the harder we get.

Here, for instance is a disagreeable man who is hard to live with. Unless under God he takes himself in hand, he will not grow more agreeable as he grows older. By the time he is an old man, he will be so sour as to be almost impossible. Here is a man who at forty becomes a money-lover. If he does not consecrate his money, by the time he is old he will be its bondslave. A preacher, an acquaintance of mind, said that sometime ago he went to sit up with a rich neighbor who was past eighty years of age. This neighbor was not a Christian. He
watched by his bedside for an opportunity to speak to him. About two o'clock in the morning the patient wakened, beckoned to the minister with a bony finger. And the minister, thinking that now his time had come, bent over the bedside expecting to hear a request for prayer. But instead, the old miser asked this question, "Do you know of any place in your city where I can invest my money so it will bring in big interest?"

Years ago Annas had become a high priest. He had been elevated to the highest and holiest office among his people. Possibly he had won this office through merit. Possibly at that time with the dreams of his youth still in his heart, he was a good man. Perhaps he had been reared in a pious home, trained by a godly father, cradled in the arms of a consecrated mother. Maybe for a time he discharged his office faithfully and well. But by and by something went wrong.

What happened it is impossible to say. For some reason Annas was discharged from his office. Maybe his success was a wine that was too heady for him. Maybe he abused his privileges. There is one tradition that he passed death sentence upon a man who was contrary to the law of Rome. Anyway he was put out of office. But having been discharged, he was not willing to give up his powers and his privileges. He had five sons. He put the oldest into the high priesthood. When he went out, he put in his second son, then his third, then his fourth, then his fifth. Finally, he put in his son-in-law Caiaphas who was holding the position when Jesus was crucified. But always behind the scene this cunning politician was pulling the strings.

Annas, therefore, would have been quite at home in our modern world. A politician is a man whose one ambition is power and graft. He may have many fine qualities, but his first question is always this—"How can I vote so as to perpetuate myself in office?" In my state a few years ago liquor was voted out. But there was one city in that state whose mayor refused to close the
saloons. That mayor was impeached and put out of office. He then began to build up a machine. He built this machine by constantly rewarding his friends and punishing his enemies. Today he has about as firmly entrenched himself in that city as Hitler is in Germany and there seems nothing that anybody can do about it. This is the history of not a few American cities.

How was Annas able to succeed so well? One great aid to power was the fact that he managed to get the rich revenues of the Temple very largely in his control. When worshipers came to offer sacrifices, they had to have a dove or a lamb or a bullock. Annas and his family held this monopoly. They had to buy these birds or animals from Annas. Also, when Jews from foreign parts came up to the Temple, they had to change their foreign money into the coin of the realm. Annas also held this monopoly. He could charge almost any rate of exchange that he wished. Therefore, he became vastly rich. He could offer a large fat bribe. Any politician who has plenty of money is likely to be able to perpetuate himself in power.

Then the success of his evil enterprise was helped by the complacency and the cowardice of the good and by the itching palms of the bad. Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. That is an old word, but it is true today as it ever was. Whenever rascals take over a city or a state they do so as much because the good are indifferent and cowardly as because the bad are bad. When Annas began to graft, when his corruption began to be a stench in the nostrils of decency, I am sure that some said something ought to be done about Annas. But most of the respectable people were too busy, and those who were not too busy said, "Well, I would do something but I am afraid it would hurt my business." So Annas took over and became one of the prize political criminals of that ancient world.

Not only was this man a political grafter and trickster, but he was a quizling as well. His nation was under the heel of Rome. But this fact stirred no resentment in the heart of Annas. Rome enforced the law, Rome crushed rebellion,
Rome made Annas secure, guaranteed to him his stolen privileges. Therefore, Annas was hand in glove with Rome. He was willing to be a part of a subjected nation in order to be able to play his shrewd political game as religious gangster.

III

But why was Annas so antagonistic against Jesus? Such an antagonism was in the very nature of things. Annas and Jesus could no more agree than light could agree with darkness. They could no more agree than the lion and the lamb could lie down together. Jesus was neither indifferent to the abuses of Annas, nor was He afraid. By being the kind of man that He was, He was a revelation of the ugliness of Annas. These were both religious men. But how shabby Annas looked in contrast with Him who came not to be ministered unto but to minister.

Not only did Jesus rebuke Annas and discredit him by being the kind of Man that He was, but He rebuked him yet more by what He did. One day Jesus went into the Temple to find that the prayers of the saints were hushed by the clamor of the money-changers. The songs of the Levites were being drowned by the bleating of sheep, the lowing of cattle, and the howls of herdsmen. In hot indignation Jesus seized a scourge of small cord and drove them out, saying, "It is written that my Father's house shall be called the house of prayer, for all nations, but you have made it a robber's cave." And who was the prize robber to whom Jesus referred? It was none other than Annas. That scourge that Jesus held stung the face of Annas and kindled a rage in his heart that demanded revenge.

The outcome was what every sensible man knew would happen. This young Prophet without friends, pitting Himself against Annas and his crowd, was hopeless. All He got for His pains was a cross. I can imagine that Annas went back to his palace that Friday feeling that he had chalked up another victory. He went back chuckling inwardly that a young Rabbi like that should have the rashness to oppose a man of his standing and of his ability.
But the fact that Anna's won this battle does not mean that he won the war. A few days later the highwayman death took all his treasure from his miserly fingers and a penniless old scoundrel staggered out into the dark. What became of him beyond death we do not know. When last seen, he was in hell. It was a hell that was so dark that he could stand in the presence of incarnate goodness and see nothing in Him except something to hate and to crucify. If there is any darker hell than that, I cannot imagine where or what it could be.

Anna's was a man of rare ability and rare opportunity. Had he lived up to his opportunities he could surely have saved himself. He might thereby have gone far toward saving his nation. But blinded by his own interests he cheated himself and helped to wreck every life that touched his. No man ever goes right alone—thank God for that! But it is equally true that no man ever goes wrong alone. This man had his chance. There were many that were influenced by him. Had he stood for the best, he would have drawn a multitude toward the heights. Standing for the worst, he drew them toward the depths.

And mark you, we will miss the meaning of this tragic story if we fail to realize our kinship with Anna's. What was it that wrecked him? Just this—he put self first. He put things above conscience. He went down and took others down with him. I used to cut timber in the hills of Tennessee. Sometimes we would fall a giant oak, measuring four to five feet in diameter. Now and then a friend would say, "It seems a pity to cut a great giant like that." So it did. But there was something more pitiful still. As the giant crashed to its ruin, it threw out its wide spreading arms and caught other trees. Here it laid hold on a slender young pine, there a poplar, there a hickory. And it did not crash to its ruin alone. Neither did Anna's. His was simply the sin of selfishness. Let him that is without that same sin cast a stone at this wily politician of the long ago.
The Friend of Caesar

If thou let this man go, thou art not Ceasars friend. 

This marks the end of the most famous trial of all history. This was the decisive word. It was the knockout blow. It was the final and fatal shot. Up to this moment we had hope for Pilate. He had lost ground. He had allowed himself to become a creature of shifts and devices, but he was still fighting for his life and for that of his prisoner. But when one shouted from the crowd, "If thou let this man, thou art not Caesar's friend". Pilate went hot and cold. He then threw his prisoner to the wolves and consigned his name to an immortality of shame of which all Christendom reminds itself when it repeats from generation to generation, "He suffered under Pontius Pilate".

It was Pilate who sentenced Jesus to death. He perpertuated this crime after he had declared him "Not guilty". Yet it is impossible to feel about Pilate as we do about those Jewish fanatics who shared in this legal murder. For Annas that cunning old black widow spider who spun his web in secret we have no sympathy. Nor do we have any for his son-in-law Caiphas who shouted blasphemy so loud that he drowned the voice of conscience. But we find ourselves pulling for Pilate. He had a sense of justice. He wanted to do right. Under circumstances less compelling he would have done right. We are inclined to feel sorry for him, even to weep for him if we could find any tears bitter enough. How did Pilate come to his ruin?

At a dangerous and a dangerous cross.

His first blunder was an effort to be useful. Strange rumors had been blowing about the countryside and along the streets of Jerusalem regarding this prisoner. Pilate wanted nothing to do with it. Therefore when he was routed out of bed early Friday morning he met the situation with a scowl. He was a bit angry that he had awakend so early.
was more angry still because he had to judge an unwelcome case. He hated Jesus.

Then Pilate was further incensed by the fact that it being the Passover season those fanatical Jews felt themselves too good to come in to the judgement hall. They were willing to murder an innocent man but they were not willing to defile themselves by going into the home of a Gentile dog, even though he was their governor. Therefore reluctantly Pilate went out to them with the question, "What charge do you bring against this man".

Their answer was abrupt. "If he were not a criminal", they answered, "we would not have brought him to you." "We have already judged him, they affirmed, "and found him guilty. Take him and judge him according to your law." Their answer is yet more shocking, "We have no right to put a man to death". That means that they have not only found Jesus guilty, but have sentenced him to die.

Pilate now realized that he must sit on the case and that the charge is a capital offence. Jesus is accused of being a pretender. Knowing that he could not examine Jesus in the presence of the mob, he orders him to be brought into the palace. Here I think Pilate came face to face with Jesus for the first time. There they stand looking each other eye to eye in the hall of justice.

"Thou", gasps Pilate, "art thou a king"? This Roman governor has confronted pretenders and criminals before but he has never confronted a man like this. I think Pilate was utterly amazed, not only so, but he felt strangely awed if not positively afraid.

In answer to Pilate's question of his kingship Jesus makes this reply, "Are you saying this of yourself or did others tell thee of me? Are you speaking from hearsay or experience?" Startling as it may seem, Jesus is probing Pilate's heart. He is saying, "Am I your King?" "I am a king, not after the order of Caesar, but in the realm of the truth."

"To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world that I might bear witness to the truth."
Our Lord is here appealing to Pilate. He is seeking to win him. He knows there is much good in him. He is loving him as if Pilate were his only child. He is holding open the door of his kingdom to Pilate, longing to enroll him. "Pilate I am a king in the realm of the truth." But Pilate, though deeply stirred, turns away not flippantly, I am sure, but rather desperately saying, "What is truth?" At that Pilate takes verdict to the AYAW mob. "Not guilty", he says. But this should have been final, but it was not. The mob would not have it. Therefore they began to shout additional charges. One was this. "He stirs up the people, even from Galilee." When Pilate heard that word Galilee, it opened what he hoped was for him a door of escape. If Jesus was from Galilee, then he belonged to Herod's jurisdiction. Herod would have to sit on the case. That would save Pilate from a most embarrassing situation.

At once he bundles him off to Herod. This dirty fox was glad to see Jesus. Not because he had any sense of need, but because he wanted to be amused. He looked upon Jesus as a kind of Houdini who would entertain him. But Jesus met every question that Herod put to him with utter silence. Then having made sport of him, he sent him in contempt back to Pilate and the governor had his unwelcome prisoner on his hands once more.

But Pilate has not yet exhausted his resources. He remembers that at this season the crowd has the right to choose the freedom of any prisoner they desire. But Pilate limited their choice. He picked out the worst man that he knew and put him along side of the best. They were both named Jesus. Which shall it be," he asks, "Jesus Barabbas or Jesus the Christ?"

At this moment it would seem there was an interruption. A slave entered, kneeled before Pilate and gave him a letter. That letter was from Claudia, Pilate's wife. It read like this, "Have nothing to do with this just man. I have suffered many things in a dream to-day because of him." But this delay gave Annas and his crowd an opportunity to pass the
word to the mob. Therefore they asked for the release of Jesus Barrabas while the shrieked for the crucifixion of Jesus the Christ.

Then it was that angry and fearful Pilate flung out this question, "What shall I do to this Jesus which is called Christ?" That was the question before the court at that moment. It is the question of every century, of every nation, of every church, of every individual. The answer we give will decide whether civilization will live or die. It is a supreme question. If we answer it aright, even though if it were possible we might give the wrong answer to every other question, life would still be a thing of victory. But if we give the wrong answer though if were possible, that we might find the right answer to every other question, life would still be a tragedy as deep and dark as that woven out of the warp and woof of desolation and death. Pilate knew the right answer. But for fear of the crowd he did not give it. Therefore he said, "I will scourge him and let him go."

A second fatal step that Pilate took was compromise.

Having pronounced Jesus "Not guilty" there was but one right course open to Pilate. That was to set the prisoner free. But there were strong arguments against this. If he should free Jesus he would make strong and unscrupulous enemies. These enemies might appeal to the emperor. They might even have Pilate recalled. Therefore he dared not say, "I know what is right and I am going to do it at all costs."

But if he dared not release his prisoner no more was he willing to participate in a legalized murder. He had a sense of justice and fair play. Therefore he said, "I am not going to be as bad as you want me to be. I will not sentence a man to death whom I know to be innocent. Nor will I be as good as I know I ought to be. Instead, I am going to take a middle course. I will scourge him and let him go."

Now scourging was a terrible torture. Men had died under it. Therefore Pilate said I will not kill him outright. I will half kill him. But when
he took middle grounds he took impossible grounds. No man can be neutral on a question of right and wrong. If you will not fight on the side of justice, apparently according to the nature of things, you must fight on the other side. "He that is not for me is against me is true not only of Jesus but of every moral issue. Not only so, but there is no position that Jesus dreads quite so much as that of the luke-warm, the half-hearted, the straggler, the sitter-on-the-fence. That is worse than positive opposition. Such a position is back of the only instance of divine disgust that we meet in the Bible. Not only is it ugly in itself, but its end is tragedy.

Having taken the middle course and scourged Jesus, he led him forth bleeding and gashed to face the mob once more. This I think was an appeal for their sympathy. "Behold the man", he said, "look how he has suffered. Look at his torn and tortured body." That should be enough for blood-thirsty jackals like you." It was also an appeal to their love of gallantry. "Look with what magnificent courage he has stood up under this torture. See the sublime courage of the man".

But instead of being softened, they gave an additional reason for his execution. "He ought to be put to death because he has made himself the Son of God", they shrieked. "When Pilate heard that he was the more afraid. He hurried into the palace for his final interview with Jesus. "Whence art thou"; he said with mingled awe and amazement. Pilate had no faith. He was beginning to feel that this man might be more than human after all. How did Jesus answer? He made no answer at all. As he had been silent in the presence of Herod, so he became silent in the presence of Pilate.

Why is this the case? It does not mean that he had lost all patience with these two sinners. Our Lord is always broadcast; but it is possible for us, to smash our receiving sets so that his broadcasting will no longer register. That is what Pilate had done. That is what we are in constant danger of doing. It is possible for us to hear and refuse to respond until we become deaf. It is possible to
look in the very face of the light until our eyes go out.

Part III

From this unsatisfactory interview Pilate went out to declare once more his conviction of the innocence of the prisoner. Then it was that somebody shouted a word that was caught up by the mob. "If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend." At that Pilate's knees went weak. He had to have Caesar. He could not lose his friendship. Even though he bought it at the price of losing friendship with himself, he could not give up the friendship of Caesar, not even for the friendship of God.

Thus he faced his big chance and threw it away. What became of Pilate? There are many traditions. Let me mention three. 1. He is pictured as having been beheaded and thrown into a certain lake. Every year at the season of the trial, his body rises and he washed his bloody hands in the lake. 2. Anitole France says that when Pilate was an old man a friend called to see him, a friend who had known him in the days when he was governor in Jerusalem. "Do you remember the friend questioned, "that strange young Rabbi whom you sentenced to death?" Some of his friends claim that he even rose from the dead. "Pilate listened thoughtfully then shook his head, "I have forgotten all about it." That is a hotter hell than the other, to have come face to face with Jesus and to have forgotten it altogether. 3. The Coptic Church affirms that Pilate, after leaving office was converted and died at last in the triumph of living faith. Whether this is true or not true, we cannot say but we may be sure of this. It is a possibility. There is nothing surer than the eagerness of our Lord to forgive any sin however great. He is ready to forgive ours. So close with this age old question, What shall I do then with this Jesus who is called Christ?"
MARY THE STEADFAST

"But Mary remained."

John 19: 20 (Neymouth)

I.

This is a part of the story of Mary Magdalene. The text does not tell us just who Mary was. Various stories have been spun about the character of this wonderful woman. Since her name first occurs in the opening verses of the eighth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke, she has been identified by some with the outcast woman, whose story is told in the seventh chapter of this same gospel. Scholars have commonly agreed that such identification is without foundation. While this is the case I think it only fair to say that Mary Magdalene has much in common with this sinful woman who stole in from the dark to anoint the feet of the Master with her tears, and to wipe them with the hair of her head. This she has for one thing—she is a great lover.

When Mark mentions Mary he identifies her as the one out of whom Jesus cast seven demons. Seven, as you know, in the Bible denotes completeness. Mary, therefore, is represented as having been completely demon possessed. Many have concluded from this that she was a moral leper. Harlotry was regarded as a form of demonic possession. But this may not have been true in the case of Mary Magdalene. Her trouble may have been mental or physical rather than moral. She may have been rescued from the horrors of insanity rather than the horrors of sin.
There are others who have identified Mary Magdalene with Mary of Bethany. This, too, is without sufficient foundation. But here again it may be said that both these Marys have much in common. The woman who recklessly broke her alabaster box of precious ointment to anoint her Lord, was a woman who could love with abandon. Were it proven that Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene and the woman who was an outcast were all the same woman, I should not be so greatly shocked as some commentators. There is insufficient grounds for identifying these, but Mary of Bethany is just the kind of woman that in her young and tender years might have loved not wisely but too well. Having been betrayed she might have gone away to a distant city. Having been redeemed she might have come home again. Though, I repeat, we can not identify Mary of Bethany with Mary Magdalene, yet, it is a bit strange that Mary of Bethany living so close to Jerusalem is not mentioned among the women that stood about the cross, or among those that came to anoint the body of Jesus after he was dead.

But while the text does not tell us who Mary of Magdalene was, it gives us an insight into what she was. From this brief sentence we get a glimpse of her firmness, her unyielding loyalty, her steadfastness. "The disciples went away," the story tells us, "but Mary remained." That is what Mary was constantly doing. It was characteristic of her entire relationship with her Lord. When Jesus was alive Mary was among those who ministered to him. When Jesus died on the cross Mary stood by. When he was buried Mary was still there. Thus we feel justified in calling her Mary the Steadfast.

In the story before us she acts true to her character. Already on Easter morning when it was yet dark--there was physical darkness, there was a darkness of despair that was far more profound--"But when it was yet dark Mary came to the tomb of Jesus. When she found the stone rolled away and that the tomb was empty she hurried with the story of her discovery to the home of John." There
were two disciples in this home, John and Peter. What volumes does this fact speak to the honor of the beloved Apostle. "When Peter, covered with shame and confusion because of his cowardly denial of his Lord was ready to throw himself away, John took him in." What Peter became in the after days he owed to John more than any other. Mary then came to tell these two disciples, even if they were so close to their Lord. "The tomb is open," she said, "and the body of the Lord is missing." These two devoted friends naturally set out at once to investigate. "John being the younger out-ran Peter and came first to the door of the tomb." But being finely sensitive he does not rush in. But Peter comes panting up and dashes into the tomb at once. Then John goes in and notices that about the grave cloths, that compels his belief in the resurrection. But neither he nor Simon saw the risen Christ. Soon they went away more hopeful than they had come. But their hope was built not upon a vision of the risen Christ, but merely upon evidences of his resurrection. Mary was not so easily satisfied. Therefore, we read that while the disciples went to their own home, Mary remained.

II.

When was it that Mary remained?

1. She remained when all others had gone. That was characteristic of her. She was the last to leave at the cross. When Jesus was dead she still did not leave, but waited to see him layed in his tomb. When his most devoted disciples had gone away, Mary still remained. That is, she stood by when all men, both friends and foes had gone their way.

2. Not only did she stand by when all others had gone, but she stood by when she knew that her great Friend was dead. She stood by when hope was gone. As she waits she has no more expectation of seeing a risen Christ than does Pilate or Annas, or any of the other enemies of Jesus. Most of us quit when hope is
dead, But Mary still remained.

Why was this the case? It was not, I repeat, because she had the faintest idea that by waiting she might see the risen Christ. The declaration that "The hallucination of a passion-crazed woman gave to the world its resurrected Christ," is utterly absurd. This would imply that Mary, while long expecting Jesus, and by long brooding over that last expectation, at last fancied what she did not see. But as she waits here she waits not for a living Christ, her one hope is to recover the body of a Christ that has been done to death.

Why then, I repeat, is she waiting? She is waiting because, though she sees not the slightest hope of recovering anything that she has lost except a dead body, she loves too well to go away. Love at its best even lives on when hope is gone. Years ago a young man undertaking to climb a difficult path of the Alps fell to his death. Scientists estimated at the rate which the snow moved where the man fell, the body might be recovered in forty-five years. Forty-five years later there was a white haired old woman waiting at the spot. That woman was the young man's mother. Mary had a love like that. So we find her here in the gloaming waiting for the body of Jesus. She loved with a love that would not let her go away.

III.

What was the outcome of this waiting?

She was privileged to see the risen Lord. It was to this steadfast woman that Jesus showed himself first after his resurrection. This was the case, not because our Lord plays favorites. Mary saw him first because she was possessed of a love, of a heart hunger that Jesus could not deny. She saw him first because though in despair she was looking for him. Her face was toward the east so that when the Son of Righteousness arose he shone first upon her. Mary was in quest of a dead Christ. She found a living Christ.
Our Lord is constantly doing better than we ask. He is constantly revising our paltry prayers and making them into something far richer than we dreamed. Often when we ask for a stone he responds by giving us bread, even the Bread of Life. Hopeless, heart broken Mary was here, steadfastly seeking the body of her dead Lord. But he replied to that mistaken quest by giving her a vision of herself—alive forever more. Mary's steadfastness brought her to spiritual certainty.

Not only did waiting Mary receive a vision of the risen Christ, but she was commissioned to tell the wonderful news to others. Because of her steadfastness she was privileged to become the first herald of the resurrection. John having seen the grave cloths went away convinced, but his conviction was based on evidence. As Mary went on winged feet to tell her story she had something better than evidence, she had the vision of Christ himself. Evidences are good, but Christ realized in our own personal experiences is something far better.

IV.

The story of this steadfast woman has something very definite and very urgent to say to ourselves. Hers is a characteristic that in these trying days you and I greatly need. By her firmness she reminds us at once of our greatest danger and our surest road to victory.

1. What is our greatest danger? What accounts for more failures than perhaps any other one cause in the world? We fail, as a rule, not from lack of ability. We fail, not from lack of opportunity. We fail, not because of our friends or because of our foes. We certainly do not fail because God lets us down. We fail because we are so quick to give up. We so readily give way to fainting fits. Naturally, Jesus warns us again and again against fainting. Paul is but echoing his Lord when he urges, "let us not be weary in well doing. For in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

Redheard tells of a man who journeyed to California in the gold days of 1849. He staked out a claim and worked for a while with vigor. But one day he stuck his
pick in the ground in disgust, sold his claim for a song, and set out for home. The man who bought that claim turned up only a few shovels of dirt before he discovered gold. Soon he was a rich man. But the wealth that he discovered belonged originally to the poverty stricken and disappointed man who was trying to make his way back home. He failed, not because there was no gold, he failed because he fainted. My old teacher Sawney Webb used to point out this danger to his students with insistent emphasis. "When you begin an enterprise," he said, "pursue it to fruitage." My father was of that mind. Once when I was a small boy we went into the hills to hunt for cattle. When the going got too rough for the horse he gave the reins to me and told me to wait till he came back. I waited for a while, then I got tired, hitched the horse and started for home. I was not a bit like the boy that stood on the burning deck-- That is, this was not the case till my father caught up with me. I got set on fire somewhat after the same fashion that he did.

How many fine things we have all set out to do, but we played out. We lacked steadfastness. A friend of mine said that one day he traded his marbles and slings and all his boyish treasures for a fiddle that had one string. He made up his mind that he was going to learn to play that fiddle. He brought it home and set himself to the task. But soon he became discouraged and sold it to his brother. That brother was more persistent. He sawed on that one string till the family ran him out of the house. He sawed on it in the yard till they pushed him to the wood lot. Then one evening when he came home, as they sat about the table, he said proudly, "I can play five tunes on my fiddle." When supper was over his father asked to hear him play. He sawed off his five tunes, while the father listened without a word.

The next day that father went to town. And when he came home he had a beautiful new violin. He gave it to the boy, and that boy became a bit of a master.
But through the years this brother looked back to that event, reminding himself of the fact that though he was destined to die with all his music in him, he might have become a first class violinist if he had only not fainted. As you look at your own life and the lives of others, I think you will discover that giving up, fainting, playing out, that this type of weakness causes more failure than any other in the world.

If this is true in our ordinary activities, it is certainly no less true in matters of religion. There is not one of us to whom God has not spoken many times. There is not one of us that has not often looked to the heights and longed to climb. We have again and again had a vision of the better men and women we might be and have longed to realize that vision. But in spite of it all, we find ourselves commonplace, ordinary, often disillusioned. We have all-but failed where we might have succeeded. This is the case not because failure was inevitable but because we gave over the struggle when the prize was in reach of our hands.

Our greatest need, therefore, is something of Mary’s firmness. We all are tempted at times to quit, to faint, to give over the fight, how shall we resist this temptation?

1. We need to keep alive our hope. Here we have an advantage that Mary did not have. Mary was entirely hopeless so far as ever seeing a living Christ was concerned. But this need not be the case with us. We can say with the first amazed discoverer, “Christ is risen indeed.” Though he has not yet become a reality to our hearts we may face in his direction in perfect confidence, knowing that if any man is willing to do his will he shall know.

2. Finally then we need to share in Mary’s loyal love. If we do not care it is always easy to quit. If we do not care we may be quick to faint and give over the battle. But if we really care that steadies us and gives us strength.
Others may fail, others may desert it, but we hold on. There was a certain mother a few years ago whose son turned out to be a useless and dissipated rake. The church of which that mother was a member helped the boy out of one scrape after another. Then he got into one that seemed inexcusable. The Board met and voted to give no further help.

The pastor of the church, who was a tender and gracious man, was appointed to deliver the decision of the Board to the mother. He went with reluctance to the unwelcome task. He told her frankly that the church was not going to help her boy any more, and that if she were wise she would give him up too. But the mother looked at him with pained amazement. "Doctor," she said, "I don't blame you and don't blame the Board in the least. You have helped a great deal, and I appreciate it. But I can't follow your advice. His mother can't give him up. I nursed him in these old arms when he was a boy. I looked the love light into his eyes in his young and tender years. I must stand by. I love him still in spite of what he has done." If we share Mary's love we will share her steadfastness. May God grant us this greatest gift.
"And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus." 

John 19:38

All the evangelists are complimentary of Joseph. They fairly vie with each other in telling what a splendid and lovable man he was. He must have been very winsome and very appealing. The attitude of all the writers to him is one of fine friendliness.

Here are some of the fine things they have to say about him.

1. He was a man of wealth. Of course, money is not necessarily a mark of character. No man is worthy of consideration merely because he is rich. The Bible never fawns upon the rich. No more does it frown. This same book faces the fact that money is neither moral nor immoral; it is nonmoral. Money is power.

   It is contained energy; it is pent-up force. In the hands of a good man it can do great good. In the hands of a wicken man it can do great evil. One man can take a dollar and use it so that the very eagle upon it will turn vulture; to tear at somebody's heart. Another man can so use that same dollar as that the eagle will turn mocking bird to make music in somebody's soul. Money in itself is neither good nor bad; it is power. Whether it does good or harm depends upon how we use it. But the fact that Joseph was a rich man so that he had power beyond that which would have been his had he not been rich.

2. Joseph was a man of position. It is true he had social position. He had also political position. Now, it is as true of position as of money - that in itself it is neither good nor bad. But like money, it opens the door of opportunity. Joseph with a high social and political position, plus his wealth, had power that would not have been his had he been poor and obscure. As a man with high position, he was able to render a high service.

3. Luke tells us that he was a good man - good and upright. The Bible
never engaged in fulsome flattery. So far as I remember, the word good is applied
to but one other man in the New Testament and that is Barnabus. You remember that
choice soul. He was so helpful that his friends gave him a new name. It was a
name nonexistent that signified "Son of Consolation." He was incarnate encourage-
ment. To meet him was to be filled with new hope and new courage. Luke therefore
is putting Joseph in this class by calling him a good and righteous man.

4. Being thus good, he shared the finest faith of his people. He was looking
for the Kingdom of God. Because he was looking for that kingdom, he was working
for it. He was a man buoyed by great expectations.

The religion of the great prophets was a religion of hope. There was much
that was wrong with their day. Yet in spite of the present darkness, they believed
in a better tomorrow. Tormented and oppressed and warred upon, they believed there
was coming a day when men would beat their swords into plow shares and remember
war no more.

Joseph shared in this faith. Along with the choicest of his day, he took his
stand upon a watch tower to look for the signs of a better tomorrow. He lived
expectantly and actively worked for the kingdom of God.

5. Finally and best of all, he was a disciple. One day this patrician had
met the peasant carpenter and had struck his flag to him. He had become a friend
of Jesus Christ. He had become a learner in his school. Joseph was a disciple.
He was not just the kind of disciple we should have desired him to be. I do not
think he was all that Jesus desired, yet those who knew him best believed in him.
and affirmed that he was a friend of their Lord.

II

But having heard all these good things, we are still unable to give Joseph
a clean bill of health. He had one glaring fault. We are tempted to feel as if it
were an almost dangerous fault. He was lacking in that virtue that all mankind
admires. It is admired by the barbarian and by the civilized, by the old and by
the young; by the ignorant and by the educated. That virtue is courage. Joseph was short on courage.

Here is the tragic sentence that his friends had to write about him—he was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews. Well, we do feel that he has let us down. He would have been glad to have spoken with Jesus and associated with him in quiet out-of-the-way places, but to have acknowledged him before the high order of which he himself was a member was a little more than he could manage.

Of this court that condemned Jesus to death, the best that Luke can say of him in regard to this death sentence was that he did not vote for it. Of course, this is not enough. There are times when silence can be as ruinous as loud lies. Why did not this man speak out in defense of his Lord? He surely cared for him. He was a disciple but he was afraid.

My idea is that he was not present on the night that Jesus was sentenced to death. Maybe he stayed away from fear but I can hardly believe that. Had he been that cowardly, I do not see how he could have been a disciple at all. It is my opinion that his friends suspected him and therefore did not invite him. It is something to say that he did not give his voice against Jesus but that is far from enough. He ought to have given his voice in his behalf. It would seem that a man who is ashamed to confess our Lord in the open cannot be a disciple at all. Well, such a conviction, I think, is almost the truth. Yet there is such a thing as a secret disciple. If you are disposed to deny it, I propose Joseph as X of his day. I am convinced also that I have met a few people who in their hearts acknowledged Jesus as Lord but who have never quite had the courage to come out and confess him in the open. Like Joseph, they are disciples, but secretly for fear.

III

What is wrong with this type of discipleship?
1. To try to be a Christian secretly is to take it the hard way. Vital Christianity is never easy. Jesus never claimed that it was easy. But its difficulties are greatly lessened when we make no secret of our loyalty to Christ. We multiply our difficulties when we try to keep our loyalty to Christ a secret.

It is easy to see why this is the case. When I went away to school, I was thrown with boys who came from homes of wealth. Their parents could furnish them not only with the necessities but with the luxuries of life, without having to deny themselves. But such was not the case with my parents. I knew that I was in school at the price of their sacrificial efforts.

Now, there were two courses open to me in managing my financial relations with these friends. I could pretend that I had money, just as much as they. Had I done this and spent after their fashion, my parents could not have kept me in school. Had I done this and refused to spend as they did, they would have considered me as a spungler and a tightwad. There was another course open. That was to say to them frankly, "I am not able to spend as you spend. Since I cannot give to you, I will not take from you." Saying this, I won the respect of everyone whose respect was worth having.

Suppose you are working in an office with others who make no pretense to discipleship. If you are a Christian, there are some things you must do, some obligations you must meet that they ignore. There are some refusals you must make that they do not feel necessary to make at all. When liquor is passed, for instance, you can claim a headache or that it makes you sick. Then they will continue to offer it to you but if you decline yourself, once and for all, the fight is over. One bold declaration will save you of a thousand petty battles. When the farmer discovered that his dog had a tail two feet long when he thought an inch would be enough, he was too kind to cut off his tail at one stroke. Therefore, he took it in chunks at a time for twenty days. Trying to be a secret disciple is to take it the hard way.
2. Trying to be a secret disciple is to make it a dangerous way. The road of life is just littered by the remains of those who thought they could keep their Christianity a secret. Why is it so much easier to make a shipwreck when you fail to come out in the open?

This is the case in the first place because even as the open confession of Jesus strengthens us, just so the failure to confess weakens us. The South Sea islanders believed that when they met an enemy and slew him, the strength of that enemy entered into themselves. That is certainly true in the spiritual realm. Even as an open confession strengthens, so silence weakens.

You remember Samson met a lion one day. Samson was young and the lion was young. They both claimed the same road. Samson was on his way to see his best girl so he refused to be stopped. The result was that the young lion and the young man fell too and Samson rent the lion as if it had been a kid. A few days later, passing that way, he turned aside to see the carcass of the beast that he had slain. He found that the bees had built their nest in this carcass and so he came away with his hands full of honey which is a poetic way of saying that the strength of the lion had entered into Samson. Joseph missed the strength that might have been his and increased his chance of failure by refusing to come out into the open.

3. Then, to undertake to be a secret disciple is certainly to miss your finest usefulness. Joseph became a disciple. Jesus appreciated his secret regard but how much greater help he might have been had he only had the courage to have spoken his mind to the other members of his court, telling them of his love and friendship toward Jesus. I have been in a smoker in a pullman when the conversation grew vulgar and some man would dare utter a protest and the others would eagerly rally to him. They were just waiting for somebody to lead out.

Bear in mind that there are two kinds of hypocrites. There is one kind of
hypocrite who pretends to be better than he is. We are very indignant against him. There is another kind of hypocrite who pretends to be worse than he is. He can be just as despicable and just as great a coward as the other.

What a difference it would have made to his fellows, what a help he would have been to Jesus if when the vote was taken he had risen in his place and said, "I ought to have spoken sooner. I confess with shame that I have been afraid. But I do speak now. This man that you are condemning is my friend. He is more than my friend, he is my Lord and Master." But the help that he might have given, he did not give. It is possible to be a secret disciple, but it is very hard. It is very dangerous. It is least helpful.

IV

Then came a time when timid Joseph came into the open. It took a great deal to make him willing to stand up and be cured. He had to lose his friend before he was willing to confess him. Here he was a bit like his friends and fellow members of the court of Sanhedrin. It took the death of Jesus to bring him to an open confession of him. But, at last, that did come. That is something.

What a day was Easter to the loyal friends of Jesus! What a day it must have been to Joseph. But while there was great gladness in it, there must have been intense shame and regret. The man that he had been too timid to confess, those forces he had failed to stand up to be counted in; these had triumphed now but not through him. I had a friend years ago who stood by me when I was in a hard situation. By and by the difficulty passed and I came fully into the daylight. I shall never forget the joy of my friend. He said, "I knew you would." Joseph could not say that. He missed much of the joy.

But the fact that he waited late must not blind us to the fact that he did come at last. It was he who with Nicodemus gave Jesus a decent burial. His fellow disciples rejoiced at this. I can imagine that John congratulated him in the after years for being able to give the Master the beautiful funeral that he did. I am sure the Master forgave him for his foolish failure and took him to
his heart.

But there is another something of which I am equally sure, and that is that Jesus never quite forgave himself. He missed a great deal by failing to come out in the open. I am talking perhaps to a secret disciple now. You may make open confession of Jesus a year from now, five years from now, ten years from this time, but bear this in mind: never can an open confession mean as much to you, never can it mean as much to your Lord in any future hour, as it can mean in this hour. If you have it in your heart to be a disciple, make an open confession now. It is the only way to find the best for yourself, to give the best to your fellows and to your Christ.
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS
John 21:22

"What is that to thee, follow thou me."

My subject is far more than a bit of impudence. It is the best possible advice. To that every intelligent man must agree. How many a good business has been wrecked because the owner of it neglected it. How many a possible fortune was never made because the man who might have made it did not mind his own business. But this is far more than good advice, it is sound gospel. It is sanctioned by St. Paul. It is emphatically uttered by Jesus Christ Himself. Look at the story. Down on the shores of Galilee Jesus has met his shamed and repentant disciple, Simon Peter. Simon Peter makes a three fold confession of his love to the Master that he had three times denied. In response to this Jesus put upon him the responsibility of feeding his lambs and being a shepherd of His sheep. He then says, "Follow me."

Peter seems entirely willing to obey his Master. This is true in spite of the fact that Jesus has just told him that obedience is going to be very costly. He lets him know quite frankly that if he follows him the end of it, so far as this world is concerned, is not going to be fame or fortune, it is going to be the Cross. It is going to be crucifixion. But in spite of the Cross, Peter resolutely sets his face toward his Lord. Then he thinks of John. Peter and John are friends. What does the future hold for John? Is he going to follow and is he going to suffer martyrdom too?

These thoughts arrest Peter. He leaves off his following for the moment. He must look into this matter. "What," he says, "shall this man do?" The tender Christ faces him sternly. "What is that to thee," he says,
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"Follow me." In plain language, he says to Peter, "What John does is no business of yours. That is a matter between him and his Lord." "Mind your own business Peter. Your business is to follow me. See that you do as you are told instead of stopping to speculate about John."

If that is not a word in season, I am mistaken. You had thoughts of becoming a Christian, but before you moved you looked to your friend. What is he going to do. He did nothing and so you are yet in your sins. Felix was mightily disturbed by the preaching of Paul, but the woman who sat at his side was not disturbed. Felix trembled, but Drusilla did not. "What shall this woman do?" That was his question. Thus he failed to mind his own business. Thus he lost his soul.

An offering is being taken, or a pledge is being made. Here is a man who has made up his mind as to what he ought to do. Then he thinks of a friend of his who is as able as himself. What is he going to do? It so happens may be that he does the little and the mean thing. Instead of following Jesus for himself he drops into the same kind of stinginess. It is not your business what the other man does with the call of Christ. He may obey or disobey. It is your business and mine to follow His call. To be true to the light as He gives us to see the light. Now I am going to lay down three propositions with which I think everyone will agree.

PART I.

Every man has a business.

When Jesus stood at the end of the way, he said, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." That is, I came into the world to perform a definite task. I came into the world to fulfill God's plan for my life. Now that I have reached the end of the journey I can say that
I have minded my own business. I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.

Now just as Jesus came into the world for a definite task, so you and I have come. It is easy to believe that God plans every life. That is the teaching of nature. You can not look open-eyed into the world without realizing it is all the planning and purposing of God. If God plans the things of time, certainly He will plan our lives who are to live forever.

This is the plain teaching of the Bible. As you turn the pages of this book, you find man after man whose life was definitely planned of God. And that life was victorious and beautiful or defeated and ugly just in proportion as it remained within the circle of the will of God. Our Lord declares very definitely that he gives to every man his work. "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you."

I noticed on a door some time ago these words, "No admittance except on business." This is the word that is written over the door that leads into human life. Every man's life's work is born with him. There are no two of us alike. No two of us can do the same things in exactly the same way. God meant something definite when He sent you here. Why are you in the world? You are here because he has something for you to do. You are not without a job. There is a contribution that you can make. Every man born into the world has a business.

PART II.

Every man ought to know his business.

Many people live and die without ever knowing what they are here for. "That man knows his business," we are accustomed to saying of
Mind Your Own Business.

one who does his work exceptionally well. That is everybody's privilege. It is everybody's obligation. Every man ought to know his business. He is without excuse if he does not know it.

How does he know? Broadly it is written here in this book. What was Peter's job. It was to follow Jesus. It was to commit his life definitely to Him. That was first and fundamental. Peter was not sent into the world to criticize John. He was not sent into the world to stand on the side line and ask questions. He was sent into the world for the big brawny task of being a follower of Jesus Christ.

That is our business. That is the business of every man. There are a good many preachers who are not what they ought to be. "Yes, I know," says Jesus, "but follow me." There are some very shoddy Church members too, but how about you? "You follow me yourself." There are many difficulties. "That also is true, but follow thou me." There is a cross ahead. "I do not seek to hide it, but follow thou me."

Not only is it our privilege and duty to know our business in general but we ought also to know the particular task at which we are to toil. It is often hard for a young fellow to find himself. Here is one with youth and capacity but he knows not just where to invest himself. How is one to know?

(1) I believe common sense is of considerable assistance. Other things being equal it is very likely that the Lord wants you to be the thing that you can do.

(2) The need that you see that appeals to you. That need is God's call to you.

(3) You have the promise of a definite leadership of the Holy Spirit.
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In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy path.

Happy is the man who has found himself. Happy is the man who is doing a work that he is confident he was sent into the world to do. I believe there is no greater source of happiness than that. It is a great source of usefulness also. If you are a misfit you are likely to be a failure. The cheapest of all cheap garments are to be had at the misfit establishment. That is also where you find the cheapest folks.

When I was just getting well into my teens I decided that the hand-me-down suits that were sold at Flatwoods were not in my class. I, therefore, sent to Montgomery, Ward & Company for a tailor-made suit. I took my own measurement. Not every man is able to take an accurate measure of himself. I failed at it miserably. When that suit came there was not a man or beast in all the world it would have fit. Hard up as I was, I had to send it back because it was a misfit.

It is possible for you and me to avoid this tragedy. It is possible for us to look up from our task in the consciousness that we are doing the work to which God has called us. This is not true simply of preachers or of missionaries, but of all who are Christians. If we would put our lives in God's hands tonight it would not mean the doing of new tasks for most of us, it would mean the doing of the same task under brighter skies with wider horizons with the glad consciousness that we were doing them under His wise guidance. The first step in realizing God's purpose for us is that we should follow Him. If we will make a beginning we will come to know. I do not mean by this that He will give us a full map of the journey. He may lead us step at a time, but we will go about the task and ordinary duties of our daily lives in the sweet consciousness that we are about the business of the King.
Mind Your Own Business.

PART III.

Every man ought to mind his business.

Surely no body will dispute this. Everybody ought to mind his business.

1. It is possible. There are many tasks that I can never perform. It is absolutely useless to say even to the youngest that you can be and do anything that you desire to be and do. That is not true. There are some folks who could never learn to carry a tune. There are some that could never learn to paint. I am speaking of art. There are a thousand things that are beyond the reach of our hand. You can't do everything. (Peekenpaugh at the bat.)

You cannot attend to the business of the other fellow. He cannot attend to yours. But there is one fine possibility. Each of you can attend to your own. And there is nothing better than that. To do the job that you came into the world to do is success. To refuse to do it is failure. Therefore, everybody can be in the highest and best sense a success.

2. Then to mind your own business is enough. It is all that God asks of you. You do not have to give the world. You do not have to make everybody think as you think. You do not have to get everybody to agree with you or admire you or even respect you. All you have to do is just to mind your own business. That is what the man of five talents did. That is what the man of two talents did. That is what the man of one talent failed to do.

That is all that is needed to save the world. A young fellow stepped one morning into the study of his uncle who was a preacher and
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said, "Uncle what is your text for tomorrow. "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world." The young fellow was thoughtful for a moment then asked. "Why was I born." "If you will take the first step you will know," was the answer. He walked out the door down the street, saved thirteen from burning to death, lost his life in the effort. But as he died he said, "To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world that I might save this thirteen."

To fail to attend to your own business means disaster for you and disaster for others. But mark you, this tending to your own business does not mean living to yourself. It does not mean that you have nothing to do with the other fellow. It is sometimes my business to seemingly interfere with the other man's business. "What I do is none of your business," we are accustomed to saying, but as a rule it is altogether wrong. "If I want to get drunk it is nobodies business." You are wrong. You might as well say, "if I want to steal it is nobodies business." If you steal from me I have lost something. If you get drunk and wreck my car I have lost something too. If you get drunk and break my heart, I have lost something still more precious.

Here is where we so often mistake the purpose of law. Why does the Bible say, "Thou shall not steal?" God is seeking to protect both the thief and the victim, but when the law says it it is thinking only of the victim. Then law is to protect society. There is a law against intoxicating liquor. What is it's purpose? Not to force a man to be sober primarily. It is to protect society against irresponsible conduct of the one who is drunk. It is our business to refrain from evil ourselves and to, insofar as in us lies, to prevent evil being done by others.
Mind Your Own Business.

There was a great wreck in the Subway in New York a few days ago. "What was the cause of it?" "The switchman refused to mind his own business." There is tragedy in ten thousand homes today where fathers and mothers have failed to mind their own business. There is a chill and a fearful weakness in many churches today. Why? Because preacher and people have failed to mind their business.

Such conduct, I repeat, means disaster for those we touch. It means disaster for ourselves. That preacher who told the story of his nephew who was killed in the burning building said that some months later he was in Paris and heard a man tell emphatically about being in a burning building. Then he said with maniacal laughter, "I saved myself. I saved myself." His keeper came and led him away. He then returned to apologise. "I hope that this man did not disturb you. He was in a burning building. He left his friend and saved himself, so it has run him mad." It is your business to save yourself by surrendering to Christ. But you must do more. You must follow Him in an effort to save others. To fail to do so is to lose all. Hell is little more than the mad house of the universe where folks have gone crazy forgetting their business in an effort to save themselves.
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS

1. Keep your own business.
2. Mind your own business.
5. Mind your own business.
7. John 21:22
8. What is that to thee? Follow thou me.
10. Do not neglect your business.
11. Do not neglect your business.
12. Pray for your friends. 

My subject sounds a bit impudent. Yet it strikes a responsive chord in almost every heart. We have all uttered it either articulately or unarticulately. It is far more than a mere impertinence. It contains the highest philosophy of life. It is the very summary of the teachings in the Bible. It fell from the lips of Jesus Himself. It is a matter of such vital importance that to fail at it is to fail at the big business of living. To succeed at it is to be victorious for time and for eternity.

Think of the everyday tragedies that grow out of our failure to mind our own business. How many splendid youth are laughingly throwing away their chances even now! By and by when from romantic young failures they have become prosaic old failures one will say of them, "They had every chance but they threw it away simply because they would not mind their own business." How many fortunes have been made by simply minding one's own business! How many have been lost! I recall a man who was a merchant in our village when I was a boy. In many respects he was a most excellent man. He was an ardent Democrat. As a proof of this he had a dog named William Jennings Bryan. This dog he called Willie for short. Willie assisted at the store. Sometimes he slept in the lard barrel and sometimes in the sugar barrel. Now this good merchant had many friends but in spite of those who were eager to trade with him he went into the hands of the receivers for the simple reason that he did not mind his own business.
All that is necessary in order to wreck any kind of business is just to let it alone. If you are in the business of rearing children all that is necessary for your adventure to end in tragedy is for you to neglect your task. If yours is the fine romance of marriage in order for that romance to be changed into drabbest failure is for you to neglect it. All that is necessary to wreck the sweetest friendship in the world is to neglect the business of friendship. There is nothing worth while that goes on of itself. Every business must be minded or it will end in utter failure.

Look now at this story. Jesus has just been crucified. Though He has foretold His resurrection His disciples have utterly failed to take it in. His death brought about the utter collapse of all their hopes. There was nothing that they could expect from a crucified Christ. Therefore Peter decided that the only sensible thing to do was to brush the star dust from off his hands and go back to the old substantial task of fishing that had engaged him before he became a disciple. Some of his friends joined him, having nothing better to suggest.

They went out to their task in the early twilight and fished diligently the long night through. But they had no success. At last, weary and discouraged, they were making for the shore and as they drew near their landing place they saw somebody standing upon the shore waiting for them. "Children, have ye any meat?" a voice called. And John with his fine spiritual sensitiveness detected the tones of his risen Master. "It is the Lord." he says to Peter under his breath. When Peter heard this, with that impulsiveness that was so beautiful and so often got him into trouble, he sprang into the water and made his way to the shore.
When the others had arrived they found that the master had prepared breakfast for them. It is a beautiful picture. How amazing that these hands that have but recently throttled death and hell and the grave, are not above preparing a meal for a bunch of hungry fishermen who have come in weary from a night of toil. The meal over Jesus asked Peter three questions by way of examining him for the ministry. "Do you love me," was the first question, as well as the second and third. And Jesus said, "Feed my lambs and feed my sheep." Then He went on to give some hint to Peter as to what his discipleship was going to require of him. "In your younger days, "He told him frankly, "you girded yourself and went wherever you pleased. The time is coming when another shall gird you and lead you to the cross." Then He uttered the commandment, "Follow Me" and Peter set out in good faith. But suddenly he caught a glimpse of John. Now he and John had been partners in the fishing business before they became disciples. They had been associated in their fellowship with Jesus. Peter wonders what plans Jesus has for John. Therefore he stops following and puts this blunt and impertinent question, "And what shall this man do?" And Jesus with a sternness born of a great love turns to Peter and says, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." In plain English He says, as Frank Boreham points out, "Peter, mind your own business."

Now here we are brought face to face with three facts upon which I think we can all agree.

I

First, every man has a business. Some time ago I saw this word written upon a door. "No admittance except on business." That sentence was written on the door of entrance into this world. Lowell was right when he said, "Every man's life work is born with him."
Every man and woman of us is here on a business trip. God has a purpose in every life.

We find it all the easier to believe this when we see marks of divine purpose everywhere. This whole universe bears the finger prints of a planning and purposeful God. We read it in the stars.

"What though when solemn silence all
Move round that bright celestial ball,
In reason's ear they all rejoice
And utter forth in glorious voice,
Forever singing as they shine
The hand that made us is divine"

So it is with the rivers that flow in majesty and the laughing brooks that make the meadows green. We can believe with Tennyson that "nothing walks with aimless feet. And if God plans these things that are to pass away He surely has a plan for ourselves who are to live when the stars have fallen like untimely fruit.

Then we can believe that we are all here for business because this is the explicit teaching of Jesus Himself. He declares that our Father gives to every man his work. No man need stand idle so far as the kingdom of God is concerned. The only reason any man is idle in the economic world is because in our selfishness and greed we have fumbled the task. There is ample in this world for every human need. The fact that there are those who are in want is due not to God's failure to provide, but to our failure to rightly appropriate God's blessings.

This fact then we may hold for our encouragement, we may hold as a to our self-respect. We are not here by chance, we are not here to idle, we are not here to count for nothing. We are here on the King's business. When Jesus says to you and to me what he said to Peter, "Mind your own business," he is not talking mockery. He only says that because He knows that every man of us has business to mind.
II

The second fact of which we are reminded in this text is that every man ought to know his business. That is his privilege. That is his duty. That is the gateway to his highest possibilities. One of the greatest compliments we can pay another is to say he knows his business. That means he has found his task and is doing it and doing it worthily and well. That fine possibility is within reach of all our hands. We have the promise of Divine guidance. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct thy path." But there are certain common sense directions that ought to enable every one of us at least in general to know our business. I offer two positive suggestions.

1. Your business, whatever particular form is assumes, is to be constructive. No man is sent into the world to tear down. No man is intended merely to stand on the side line and hurl destructive criticism at the players. When Mary anointed her Lord it was a deed so beautiful that Jesus said the world would never be allowed to forget it. The perfume of that fragrant deed has helped to sweeten all the centuries. But all the contribution that Judas made was to ask a bitter and snarling question, "Why was not this ointment sold and given to the poor?" The man who has no contribution to make to our troubled day except one of destructive criticism, is certainly failing to attend to his own business.

2. Then our business is always cooperative. Every man who is attending to his own business is helping every other man to attend to his, just as every one who is failing is helping everybody else to fail. The reason for our present confusion is this, that failing to attend to our own business we are constantly running into each other. If we were all driving on the right side of the street there would be the confusion and wreckage that we witness today. The man who attends
to his business is cooperating with every brother that is attending
to his.

Now since my business is cooperative that means that I am
to concern myself with your welfare. My business is humanity. My
business is to make my home the best possible home; it is to make
my church the best possible church; it is to make my city the
cleanest and most wholesome city; it is to make my world one where
our boys and girls will have the best possible chance to grow up
clean and strong and Godlike.

This is true of every one of us, whether we belong to the
church or do not, whether we make any claims to religion or repudiate
it altogether. "Am I my brother's keeper" was the question red with
guilt. No man can ask it except one who has utterly forgotten life's
biggest business. The priest and the Levite passed by a wounded man
one day, declaring that he was none of their business. Ministering
in the temple was their business. But the whole world sees upon
their hands the same crimson stain that is upon the hands of the
robbers who wounded him and left him to die by the road side.

Every needy life, every broken heart that you can help in
any way to heal, is your business. To look on need anywhere and pass
it by and say that"it is no affair of mine," is to become guilty
before God and man. Bruce Ismay was on board when the Titanic went
down. He was a large stockholder in the company that owned the vessel.
Saving women and children was none of his business. His business was
to save himself. He succeeded but his name bears the brand of a
biting and burning shame.

Then if you are my business, I am yours. I may shrug my
shoulders and tell you defiantly that I am going to live my own life,
that it is none of your business what I do. But a bigger falsehood
was never told. I remember a young chap when I was a boy who was
found guilty of a number of petty thefts. His wife said of him indignantly that he could make a living if they would let him alone. But folks would interfere with his business. They interfered because he was interfering with their business.

We are fond of saying today, for instance, "If I want a drink it is nobody's business." But it is. No more ghastly lie was ever told than "If I let liquor alone it will let me alone." We are fond of saying that you cannot legislate morals into folks. We all know that. The purpose of the law against stealing is not to make a thief religious. It is to protect society. The law against drunkards is not to force you to be sober. It is to protect society, because everybody knows that a drunken man tends to become a menace.

My conduct then is not my own affair. It is the business of every member of my family. I cannot hurt myself without hurting them. It is the business of every friend I have. It is the business of every member of my church. It is the business of everybody in the wide world. I cannot waste my substance with riotous living. I cannot sin even in the more secret way without robbing myself, and in the process of robbing myself I rob those closest to me. I rob society, I rob the whole world of which I am a part. Humanity, then, is your business and you are the business of humanity.

III

The final teaching of this text is this: Every man ought to mind his own business. This is true for the following reasons:

1. No neglect on my part can excuse neglect on yours.

Peter's attitude seemed to indicate that he would follow Jesus, provided John would also. But if nobody else follows it is your duty to follow. If nobody else does right it is your duty to do right. If nobody else is loyal to his convictions it is your duty to be loyal to yours.
But we are constantly being swept off our feet by the crowd. If we find ourselves guilty of shoddy conduct we excuse ourselves by saying it is no more than what everybody else does. If we stand in the presence of the reed of our church and refuse to let the shadow of the cross fall upon our checkbooks we often excuse ourselves by saying "There are those far more able than I who are giving even less than I am giving." But remember that every man must give an account of himself to God and no failure on your part can possibly excuse failure on mine.

2. Every man ought to mind his own business because it is one of the supreme safeguards of life.

(1) It tends to keep us out of trouble. It prevents our taking needless risks. Most of the difficulties we get into come about because we are where we have no business. No man has a right to take a needless physical risk. No man has a right to take a needless moral risk. Nehemiah was saved in the long ago by tending to his own business. To the voice of temptation he replied, "I am doing a great work up here so that I cannot come down." Said by minding one's own business.

(2) Then minding one's own business prevents life from scattering. So many of you sow yourselves broadcast instead of saying, "This one thing I do." Now we cannot do everything. I remember stopping beside a colored brother when the World Series was being played between New York and Washington. Peckinpaugh was at the bat. He had two strikes against him. This colored brother was pulling for him with all his might, utterly oblivious of the crowd, and was talking to himself, "Hit it Peck! Hit it Peck!" he said desperately, "I can't do everything." Neither can you. Life must be focalized.

There is a story in the Old Testament of a man who is sent to guard a very important captive. In order that this soldier who had been trusted with his prisoner, might be aware of the importance
of his charge he was told that if the captive was allowed to escape his own life would be the forfeit. By and by when they asked the prisoner at his hands he had escaped. The only excuse the poor fellow had to offer was this, "While thy servant was busy here and there he was gone." That is, he got so engaged about a thousand and one secondary matters that he failed to do the one thing upon which his life depended. Every man ought to mind his own business because by so doing he safeguards himself.

3. Every man ought to mind his own business because to do so is all that is necessary for the living of a full and successful life. Why did Jesus say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant" to the man of two talents just as he said to the man of five? It is certainly not because the man who had two had gained as much as the one who had five. He said "Well done" to this man who had won only two talents because he had minded his own business. The man who does that is a victor individually whether he wins a million talents or whether he wins simply nothing at all.

For every man to mind his own business is all that God needs for the complete bringing in of his kingdom. He does not ask you for what you do not have. He only asks for what is in your hand. If you give that you have fully minded your own business. He did not ask the lad for a shipload of food. He asked him for his five loaves and two fishes. And when the lad gave it it proved to be enough, enough to enable the lad to mind his own business, enough to enable Jesus to feed the multitude. There are a thousand things that you and I cannot do that we might long to do. But here is something within reach of the weakest of us. We can mind our own business and that is victory for time and for eternity. So when you are tempted to listen to the voice of the crowd, to take your cue from the multitude, listen to the stern and heartening voice of our Lord as he says, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."