

"FOR HIS SAKE"

INTRODUCTION

When David at last became the King of all Israel, he did a rather unusual thing. He asked if any of Saul's family were still alive. You'll recall that Saul had been his predecessor on the throne of Israel, and also that he was David's great enemy. On more than one occasion, Saul had tried to do away with David, and on more than one occasion he had almost succeeded in doing so. According to the story, one of Saul's grandsons was still living. This young boy was ushered into the presence of King David. You might expect that under the circumstances David would have taken this opportunity to eliminate the one last member of the dynasty that he was replacing. In so doing his throne would then be secure. But instead David did a very generous thing. He gave the boy all the land that had belonged to his father, and he also gave him a permanent place at his own table.

I think that all of us recognize this as a rather generous and extraordinary thing for David under these circumstances to have done. We ask ourselves why. Why did he do this. We know why he did because he told his friends. He did it for Jonathan's sake! Once again going back to our knowledge of the Old Testament, we recall that Jonathan was the boy's father, and that as a young man Jonathan had been David's closest and most intimate friend. And in spite of all of the political intrigue and the family feuds, David still loved Jonathan. David could easily have displayed his authority and exterminated the house of Saul to the very last man, but he was moved instead to do a very generous thing for the sake of Jonathan.

OBSERVATION: PEOPLE ARE BASICALLY SELFISH, BUT..

Now this particular incident from the life of King David leads us to make this observation that people, in general, are basically selfish. They're selfish in the sense that they're always looking out for their own best interests. Their natural inclination is to think of themselves first and foremost. But sometimes we do see people who act against their own best interest and sometimes do things at the risk of their own life. For instance, take a man who hasn't eaten for days. He's very hungry, and he obtains a loaf of bread. His natural inclination is to eat the loaf of bread. But he doesn't for this man has a child. And the child is also hungry. He gives the loaf of bread to the child. He does it, shall we say, for the sake of the child. Or take another example. A man is sent on a long assignment oversea, and is separated from his wife and family. While overseas, he becomes infatuated with another woman. It would be to his own natural interest to make the most of the alliance, but he closes the door when he remembers his wife. He says "no" for her sake.

Pablo Casals is a name that is familiar to all of you for he's one of the great musicians of our time, and one of the best cellists of all times. I was interested to read somewhere recently that some years ago, back around 1946, Pablo Casals declared that he would not accept an invitation to play anywhere as long as a free regime was denied the people of Spain. Now here's a man who is a creative artist, a man whose entire life is to play and to make music and give music and to share it, who has renounced all of this for the sake of his people.

Sometimes, of course, when people behave in this fashion the cost is relatively small. I think that all of you remember the way the

ILE DE FRANCE turned from its regular course in the summer of 1956 to go to the rescue of the sinking ANDRIA DORIA. The captain gave the order for this for the sake of the people who otherwise might have drowned. The cost in terms of money and time was relatively small. But in another sea disaster forty four years earlier when the Titanic was going down and the last boat was being filled with people who would eventually survive the disaster, a maiden lady by the name of Edith Evans said to Mrs. John Murray Brown: "You go first. You have children at home waiting for you". And the last boat went down to the sea without Edith Evans. In this case, the cost was very high.

To be sure, these situations are all different, but yet there is at the very heart of each one of them this strange and interesting attraction of one person for another. In all of these situations, we see one person rising completely out of the shell of his own self-interest and self-comfort, doing those things that exceed his own pattern of behavior, and being infinitely greater than himself. I think we have here a very significant fact concerning human nature one which we ought not to forget especially in times like these when people are apt to be a little cynical about human life and think that there's little more to a person than this desire to always think only in terms of himself. It's this fact of the capacity of one person to respond completely to the needs of another person, and to be drawn completely outside of himself for the sake of another that often surprises us. And I might just add a brief warning. It can work one of two ways. It can either lift a person up, or it can drag a person down. Herod, for instance, beheaded John the Baptist for the sake of Herodias. But David did what he did for the sake of Jonathan.

FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS

Now we can easily carry this line of thought one step further and point out that more people have been moved to do things that they would not have done naturally for the sake of Jesus than for the sake of any other person who has lived, or for the sake of any other cause that has ever existed. More people have been moved to do things that have cut completely across the grain of their own self interest for the sake of Jesus than for the sake of any other person we know of. Just think of some of them.

We can begin with perhaps the greatest of them all, the Apostle Paul. Paul - proud as a peacock by nature. An intellectual aristocrat. Sophisticated in the ways of the world. Paul, after meeting Christ on the Damascus Road, spent his whole life serving plain and humble people, risking his life for the sake of Jesus! And then moving across the centuries of our own time to another titanic figure, that of Albert Schweitzer. Schweitzer - a man of great talent and genius. A man who by the age of thirty had already distinguished himself in three different fields - music, philosophy, and medicine. Here we have a man who has spent the greater part of his life serving the black man in central Africa. We ask ourselves why, and we find the answer in these words: for the sake of Jesus.

I suppose that sometimes in the pulpit we are inclined to take only the spectacular people as illustrations for things of this sort, but mind you there are scores and scores of unnamed people who have done heroic things for the sake of Jesus - things like adopting an orphan child, or helping a young man through college, or staying with

a dying cause or institution in order to get it back on its feet. Things done for the sake of Jesus.

It reminds me of two young men who in the summer of 1942 started a farm in Georgia. It was called Koininia, and it was to be an experiment in racial equality. Sixty residents, forty-five of whom were white, and fifteen of whom were negroes. Things went along well for several years without any trouble, and then people began to talk about it, the way they often talk about things of this type. And then when the Supreme Court made its ruling on integration of schools, the rumors than really began to spread. Things happened. First of all the roadside stand where they displayed their produce was torn down, but the men repaired it. Then the retailers in the town nearby refused to purchase any of their goods. Finally the stand was blown up by dynamite, and the insurance men cancelled their policies. Not long ago one of the men connected with the farm said: "I bear no resentment to the people who are doing these things to us. I was born and raised in this country and I know how they feel. I would probably feel the same way if I had not seen some of the teachings of Jesus".

Soing things for the sake of Jesus. Take that thought and place it in your mind and think about it. Certainly this man from Nazareth is one of the most powerful magnets, if not the most powerful one of all, for lifting men out of their small selfish selves into something finer and greater, something more expansive and more inclusive, lifting them up into the potentialities of human beings created in the image of God. Of course he doesn't attract everyone, and there's no use in pretending that he does. He didn't when he lived on earth, and he doesn't now. Some people never get close enough to see what he really is or what he really expects of them. Others who get close enough to him sometimes don't like what they see and they turn away from the way of life he presents, a way of life that often calls for a good many reversals of the things that they have planned and upon which they have built their lives and set their hearts. And then those he does attract are not always brought up to the high possible level. And how well we know that. But those who are attracted to him and fully committed to him find themselves continually going out of their way for his sake. And there's something stirring in them that makes them really alive and makes them dissatisfied with a purely self-centered life.

SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO YOU Today, in these closing minutes, I would like to speak directly to your hearts. I've often tried to speak to your minds for I feel it's important that we know something about our faith, but today I would like to speak in a very direct, frank and personal way to your hearts. And there are two reasons for my doing this.

The first reason is for your own good. I think the most important thing for all of us to do is to take a deliberate step in order to get outside of ourselves. It's not an easy step mind you, but I think it's a step that we all ought to try to make. I think we ought to outgrow some of our childish fears and selfish ways, and not let ourselves be encrusted or paralyzed in the small and little channels in which we often live our lives. All of us have tremendous possibilities and potential. All of us have great capacity to reach out and up for the great and the good things of life. And I say this to all of you, and I include myself in it, if you're satisfied to draw all life around you in a circle until everything revolves around you, and you have a good job, and a wife you

love, and a family you're proud of, and an income which enables you to meet all of your obligations to society in a respectable fashion, if this becomes the end of your life, then you have become one of those lost people wandering over the face of the earth without any real purpose in life and without any real joy. And so I say to you, if you can find anything under God which can draw you out of those little selfish ways that we're all born into, you had better turn to it. But I invite you to be drawn into the company of those who know and serve Jesus.

And then the second reason for making this personal and direct approach to you is simply this that the world in which we live will not even be tolerable until all of us are able to act and think beyond the circle of our own selfish interests. It may sound trite and common place to you for it's so obvious. And yet it covers a wide range. The southerner for instance must find some incentive to think of and treat the negro in terms quite different from those he has been accustomed to. He must come to see him not only as he fits into the white man's economy, but also as he fits into God's over all plan for all his children. For many people it may come down to a question of being a Christian first and a southerner second. And may I hasten to add before I lose any of my good southerner friends that the northerner must be able to look with a great deal of patience at the southerner, not only from his own personal point of view, but as part of a great nation with its own problems and peculiarities. And I would even go one step further and add this that the westener has somehow got to rise above his own self interest long enough to look at the communist and see him as a person, not merely as a threat, but as a person with his own fears, and frustrations, and who like himself is trying to rise above the dead level of existence. And I suppose that you and I, and this is where it comes down to us and becomes more of our struggle, you and I must be able to rise above our own self interest long enough to see our wives and our husbands, our parents and our children, our business associates, our roommates, and yes even our friends in church fellowship as persons, real persons, apart from any role he or she may play in our own lives.

IN CLOSING All I can say is this that I don't know of any other influence that is strong enough to lift men out of their narrow channels of life and self interest other than the influence of this man from Galille. And so the question that I put to you this mornig is ~~xxx~~ not so much what you believe about Jesus theologically (although this is important), but rather what response are you making to him personally in your own life? Are you making any at all? Are you attracted to him? Does his way of life stir you? Is there anything in you that shivers up and down your back when you think of the response that he made to the situation which he faced, the way he dealt with the opposition, with the littleness in men, with reality, with pain, and suffering and even death. My hope and prayer is that all of you who are part of this Christian fellowship and who worship here each Sunday will come to know him a little better than you now do, so that you will want to serve him, so that you will respond in some measure to him. In so doing, it may then be that when you come to a crisis moment in your life, you will do something unusual, something extraordinary, something surprising, something that's perhaps even shocking to your friends, just as David did, not just for Jonathan's sake, but in a deeper sense, for the sake of Jesus! Let us then bow our heads in a moment of silence and think on these things. (Pause) Help us, Lord Jesus to know thee more clearly, and to love thee more dearly and to follow thee more nearly. Amen.

INTRODUCTION:

When David became King of Israel, he did a very generous thing. He asked if any of Saul's relatives were still alive. Saul - enemy. He did a very generous thing to a surviving relative of his old enemy. Why? Strange behavior. We are told he did it for Jonathan's sake.

DEVELOPMENT:

This incident leads us to an observation about people in general. People basically selfish. Inclination always is to act in their own interest, and to look out for number one. But from time to time, you see someone act against their own interests for the sake of someone else.

- A. Man - loaf of bread. Shares with his child.
- B. Man - separated from his wife, meets another woman, could have an affair, but closes the door because he remembers his wife.
- C. Pablo Casals -
- D. Captain of the Ile De France.
Titanic....
- E. Four chaplains, and recent chapel dedicated to their memory.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT:

Interesting to note that more people have been moved to do things for the sake of Jesus than any other person we know of.....

- A. Paul
- B. Schweitzer
- C. Koininia - farm in Georgia.

PERSONAL APPEAL TO EVERYONE IN THE CONGREGATION:

- A. For their own good, invite you to be drawn into the company of those who have really come to know Jesus.
- B. The world we live in will not be tolerable unless we are able to think and act beyond our own selfish interests.
 - 1. The southerner
 - 2. The Westener
 - 3.
- C. Influence of Jesus....

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15 YEARS AGO

WW II Sacrifice of 4 Chaplains Is Symbol of Unity Before God

By **GEORGE W. CORNELL**
AP Religion Writer

It happened 15 years ago, on a dark, cold night, in 25 shattering minutes. But it still stands as an enduring symbol of men's basic unity before God — whatever their ecclesiastical labels.

Four chaplains of the torpedoed troop transport *Dorchester* — Protestant, Catholic and Jew — went to their deaths, arm in arm, to save others.

Today, their deed is forging an ever-growing chain of memorials across the country — landmarks and monuments of an ideal.

But in conduct, "we're still tragically short of it," said the Rev. Dr. Daniel Poling, a noted Protestant clergyman and editor, whose son was one of the four chaplains.

"The sad fact of experience seems to be that it was easier for them to die together than it is for us to live together."

Accounts of the *Dorchester* sinking Feb. 3, 1943, told how the four clergymen gave up their own life-jackets to soldiers who had none, then went about calming panicky men, some frozen to rails in terror and led them to lifeboats.

At the end, it was said that as the ship went down in the darkness of the North Atlantic, the four chaplains stood with arms about each other, intoning the Lord's Prayer. "Our Father, who art in heaven . . ."

"They were touched, for that magnificent moment, by their creator," said Col. James B. Murphy of Boston, a 1st Army Catholic chaplain. "With impending, they were bound

together as brothers."

In the years since the event, its spirit has been commemorated in many ways and places — in paintings, plaques, street names, busts and interfaith chapels — the major one dedicated in 1951 in Philadelphia.

Thousands visit and worship there annually, before the revolvable chancel altar. Many hotels, airports, colleges, hospitals and companies have obtained plans there for similar chapels of their own.

Dr. Poling, editor of the *Christian Herald*, is the chapel's head chaplain, and preaches there regularly. The place — and the principle — stand "for unity, not uniformity," he said.

"That's the thing we have to keep plugging away at," he said. "Each man loyal to his faith, but linked in a basic unity above the petty differences."

That is the posture in which the four died — Chaplains George L. Fox, Cambridge, Vt., Methodist; Clark V. Poling, Schenectady, N.Y., Reformed; John P. Washington, Newark, Catholic; and Alexander D. Goode, York, Pa., Jew.

And the lesson lingers. Another new chapel honoring them was dedicated in New York this month — the new "Universal Chapel" in midtown Manhattan. It's a part of a continuing story — an ever-tenuous vision.

"It's realized more often in mil-

itary life than anywhere else," said Lt. Col. Joseph Sides, Methodist, of Columbia, Mo., "common in war, especially out the field."