

"BEYOND ONE'S OWN POWER"

INTRODUCTION

The meditation today begins with a story taken from the book, "The Kingdom Within" by John Sanford. The story is about an old well on a family farm up in New Hampshire. For many years the main house of this farm had been supplied with water from this old well that stood just outside the back door. The water from the well was cold and pure, a joy to drink. The well never ran dry. Even in the hottest and driest of seasons, this old well faithfully yielded up its cool, refreshing water.

There came a time, not too long ago, when the family decided to modernize main house. Electricity replaced the old kerosene lamps. An electric stove took the place of the kerosene burner. Modern plumbing and running water were installed. All of this necessitated a modern well and a deep artesian well was drilled. No longer needed, the old well near the back door was sealed over for safety's sake as well as to be kept in reserve should the occasion ever arise when it might be needed.

The author tells how a number of years later he was determined to uncover the old well and to inspect its condition. When he removed the cover he expected to see the same, dark, cool, moist depths he had known as a young boy growing up on that farm. But he was shocked, for the well was bone dry.

He asked around in order to learn what had happened. He learned that a well of this kind is fed by hundreds of tiny underground rivulets along which seep a constant supply of water. As water is drawn from the well, more and more water moves in along the rivulets, keeping these tiny apertures clear, open and unblocked. But, when such a well is not used and the water is not regularly drawn, these tiny rivulets close up.

The well had dried up - not because there was no water, but because it had not been used.

DEVELOPMENT

And herein lies a lesson for all of us to consider. The author of the book, Dr. Sanford, draws a very clear and concise conclusion. To him, the soul or the spirit of a person is like a well. What happened to the old well can also happen to the spirit of a person if the living water of God does not flow in and through the person. The spirit of a person can dry up. All it takes is a bit of neglect, carelessness, disuse and some mis-placed priorities.

The rediscovery of the power "that worketh within us" - that power beyond ourselves and tied in with the creative and personal side of Christianity is what made the Apostle Paul write in Galatians that phrase which provides us with a springboard for today's meditation:

"I live; yet - not I, but Christ liveth in me"

To me, this bold declaration is one of the most startling statements to be found anywhere in Paul's writings. It was not a theory proposed by Paul, but rather the testimony of an experienced fact. "I live; yet - not I, but Christ liveth in me."

In his own life, Paul demonstrated what it is to be reborn, a "new person" in Christ.

CHILDREN'S DAY CELEBRATION: June 2, 1985

GREETING TO THE CHILDREN

Today we're celebrating Children's Day in our Church. We greet the boys and girls of our Sunday School who have joined us down here for a little while this morning before they head to their class session elsewhere in the Church building.

A FINE YEAR

Our Sunday School has had a fine year. It ends next Sunday with a party on the roof.

I'd like to say thank you to all those who have helped in our Sunday School this past year. Yes, it's been a grand year...going back all the way to September.

We think of some of the highlights of the year:

Thanksgiving Sunday
Christmas and Advent Sundays
The Pageant
The presentation of the Pins and
the Bibles.
Our Lenten Offerings.
Palm Sunday and the Palms and the music.
Mother's Day and the baptism of Ayisha.

Our thanks to the leaders - Mr. Bell, Miss Davenport....and all those who lend a hand teaching the children...talking to them about Jesus and the Christian way. Also Michele Arnold, Nursery Coordinator.

SUMMER TIME

Looking ahead to the Summer Sundays....even though we won't be having our formal classes, we will have some informal gatherings for children....each Sunday. So don't take a vacation from the Church. Do come.

And remember Saturday, June 22nd - the day of our Church Picnic...we'll have our good time together that day.

I asked Mr. Bell for a list of all those who have worked in the Sunday School this year....I'd like to read their names to you and then let's thank them in the customary way.

Hymn 223 "When I Walk With the Lord".

Christ was now the intimate companion of Paul's soul. He did not say "I am Christ" or "Christ is Paul", but rather "Christ lives in me". It was the mind of Christ that gave content to Paul's concept of the spirit. It was this that guided his conscience, shaped his conduct, undergirded his life.

"I live. Yet, not I - but Christ liveth in me". (Galatians 2: 20)

We can feel the joy and the earnestness of Paul as he writes to say that for all of us life can take on new dimensions when we are in touch with that creative source of power which rests at the heart of all life. For the Christian, this source of power "beyond ourselves" is the spirit of God which flows to us through the person of Christ.

It was Jesus himself who said to the woman at the well in Samaria,

"Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

And the woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst nor come here to draw."

A HUNGER AND A THIRST

We have to face the fact that there are scores of baptized, church-going Christians who have never really allowed this power of the Christ spirit to take hold of their lives. Oh, we spend so much time and energy tinkering with the institutional machinery, running our programs, intellectualizing our faith. At times we live and act as if it all depended on our own human efforts.

I believe that part of our trouble is that we have not given the spirit of God as it comes to us in Christ its full chance to surface, to flow in and through our lives. We miss the joy. The well has dried up. We may be neglecting the very things such as prayer and Bible study and the "quiet time" that are the key to this amazing power.

We're so busy. With some it may be a case of misplaced priorities. Late Saturday nights. Neglect. We seldom slow down to "let it happen". Even when we come to worship our minds may be somewhere else.

I sense a growing hunger and thirst on the part of people today for the kind of experience in the church that will help them to get in touch with God's power. Prayer. Study. Meditation. People, I feel, are searching for it. It is God's spirit in us which unites us with Him - giving us a new life, making us "new creatures", enabling us to overcome the drag of human sin and selfishness. I believe that there is no one to whom this may not happen - no matter how old, or how set in one's way he or she may be.

ILLUSTRATION

I remember several years ago when Artur Rubinstein celebrated his 90th birthday and how in an interview that day he was asked two questions.

The first question had to do with how he kept his piano pieces he played over and over again from becoming routine and ordinary. He responded by saying, "Every day I am a new man and every occasion is a new moment for me".

The second question had to do with how he felt when he stepped out onto the stage and sat down to play. He said this:

"When I sit down to perform it is no longer I,
but a secret power that takes over me...."

A secret power. He was acknowledging the power of his audience. He needs his audience as much as the audience needs him. I think something of the same sort of thing applies to Christian fellowship. It is a power that is more than any one person alone can give or provide.

It certainly is a well-known fact that creative spirits - artists, poets, novelists, dancers, musicians - are aware of being possessed by a power greater than their own. Their work is their own PLUS - and in that PLUS, we find the supreme, energizing power breaking through and flowing in us.

BACK TO PAUL But back to Paul. "I live. Yet, not I - but Christ lives in me". In the early days of the Christian movement, when the disciples of Jesus came together to talk, to remember, to reminisce, to reflect on all that Christ meant, His presence was strangely and strongly felt. They spoke of their experience on the road and how they recognized Him when He broke the bread.

Today, as we break the bread and share the cup, we do so in the assurance of God's redeeming love and living Presence. Be open to the inflowing and indwelling spirit of the Eternal God. Remember that the water of God runs deep and is without limit, and there is no need for our souls to be dry if only we will lift up from the depths of ourselves the living contents with which God can fill each of our lives.

The power is there. We need to let it flow in us and through us. "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. The water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life".

PRAYER Almighty and everliving God, who has promised to receive everyone who turns to Thee - kindle our hearts, we pray, with a deepened awareness of Your presence and nearness.

Down inside some of us carry a brokenness too deep for telling. Some of us are madly in love with a past that can never be again. Many of us are tired trying to sustain the image of a self that no longer exists. Others of our number have become worldly wise and so sophisticated at the expense of neglected prayer and a seldom opened bible, and yet yearn to feel that oneness with You which marked our earlier years in other parts of this land.

O Thou whose name we bear, thou hast loved us, love us still - until our conflicts are resolved, our imbalances corrected, our sins which are many lose their appeal for us before the beauty of your righteousness. Speak to us the word we need to hear and let that word abide in us through the week ahead. All this we ask in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen