

"IS LIFE WORTH LIVING"

One evening several weeks ago, a young man came to see me in the church study. I had never seen the young man before, and I suppose I shall never see him again. He appeared to be in some kind of trouble. After a few remarks, in which he clearly indicated to me the deep distress in which he was involved, he went on to say that life for him was no longer worth living. Now this young man is not the first person to come to me and share this particular thought. More people, than you would imagine, drift in through the doors of this church during the week seeking some kind of help. Apparently many of them have come to the point in life where they feel the struggle is more than its worth, the strain more than they can take, and the pain more than they can bear. Most of these people are not elderly people, but for the most part are young people, in their late 20's and their early 30's. Their conversation usually centers around the thought which today forms the subject of this sermon: IS LIFE WORTH LIVING.

I imagine that most of you are so busy living life that you're left with little time to question whether life's worth living or not. But there may be some of you here today who have had time to think about this question. It may be that you've never put the words of this question actually on your lips and spoken them, but inwardly, deep in your heart, you may have asked yourself many times whether it was really worth all the struggle, heartache, and sacrifice.

I think that it is good for us right now, while the storm is not raging, at least for most of us, to think about this question. And so the sermon today, departing from the normal procedure, does not revolve around any passage from the Bible, or any text, but rather it revolves around this perennial human question and all that it implies and involves: IS LIFE REALLY WORTH LIVING?

In order to answer this question it might be well for us to ask ourselves another question: WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES LIFE WORTH LIVING. I can't say with any degree of certainty what makes life worth living for you. All I can do is draw upon my own experiences and observations as a Christian minister, and in so doing I would say that there are, by and large, three things that I feel help to make life worth living.

PHYSICAL PLEASURE

The first thing is a certain amount of physical pleasure. This may surprise some of you. But I feel that a person is made not only to endure the hardships of life, but also to enjoy many of the pleasures of living. A person is equipped for both. God has given us five senses. We should use these five senses to bring us into contact with the physical world. Sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell. Just think of some of the pleasures that come to us by way of our senses: the sight of a tree in its autumn splendor, the sight of snow falling softly to the ground; the sound of a Beethoven symphony, the sound of a Shakespearean sonnet, or the simple sound of rain falling on a tin roof; the touch of a person you love; the taste of good food; the smell of lilacs in the spring, or the smell of leaves burning in the fall.

Sometimes Christians are likely to be a little embarrassed concerning the pleasures of life. There are many things that we enjoy and enjoy doing, but sometimes we wonder whether we should be enjoying

these things. We become a bit suspicious of pleasure. I think that we need not have any such embarrassment. To be sure God has given us our senses. They are gateways into the world which He has created, and while He expects us to choose very carefully what comes and goes through those gateways, He does not, I believe expect us to close the gateway completely. The enjoyment of the physical world - one of the things that helps to make life worth living. Not the only thing to be sure, and by itself not enough, but nevertheless one of the important things that helps to make life worth living.

A CHANCE TO BE OF USE. The second thing that helps to make life worth living is a chance to be of use. A person is not only made to live, but he is made to love. I can think of no better way of saying this. A person is not only made to take life in, but he is also made to pour life out. A person cannot be happy, a person cannot realize his potential until he is both taking life in and pouring life out. Those who take, take, take, and never give are usually, according to my observations, the unhappy and lonely people in life.

It's true that some people have a greater capacity to be of use in the world than others. Some people just seem destined for great things, and to occupy places of prominence. People, like Moses, in the Old Testament. They're the leaders of great movements, the creators of great art, the initiators of new ideas. And then there are scores of people like the mother of Moses, people who never make the headlines, people who are nameless, and yet indispensable! It was said of the mother of Moses:

"Looking upon the new child, she saw that he was a proper child, and she hid him from the dangers of the government in the rushes, and thus she gave him a chance to grow into manhood".

we don't know her name. She never hit the headlines. But what an important role she played in the pages of history.

It's true that none of us serve the same purpose in life, but yet each of us serves some purpose. It's not often that you find a person in life who cannot be of some use in the world. If a person comes to that point in life where he just feels that he is of no use to anyone then I can see how we might feel that life's not worth living. But in my experiences I've never know a person who could not be of some use to somebody if he really wanted to be. A person may need help in learning how to be of use to people, but he is seldom justified in saying that he is of no use to anyone. A chance to be of use. This is the second thing that helps to make life worth living.

HOPE OF BEING APPRECIATED. The third thing is this: it is the hope of being appreciated. I think that all of us want and need the appreciation of those that we really care about. It's not praise that people need, but rather that kind, sympathetic silent appreciation. For instance, what orchestra can play its best music if it does not feel the audience responding and appreciating its music. For instance, what teacher can do his best in a class room unless he feels that the class is responding to what he's trying to teach. All of this has wide

implications. Perhaps one of the reasons why so many husbands and wives make a poor showing is that they're not greatly appreciated by the other member of the team. Certainly it's true that a person needs the appreciation of those around him if he is to be at his very best.

One senses this spirit of appreciation in the personality of Jesus. It is evident in the parable of the talents which I read this morning for the scripture lesson. You recall the words spoken to the person who handled his talent well:

"Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of your master...."

Well done....that is..what you've done is greatly appreciated. And how the disciples grew and developed under his appreciation.

"I have not called you servants, but friends"

He drew them closer and closer to himself by the warmth of his appreciation. One thing that makes life worth living is the knowledge that the people you love and care about, care about you. A person can go through anything...hardship, pain, loneliness....as long he knows that there are people who care about him, ~~and appreciate him for what he is.~~ I've often thought that if only we took more time in our daily relationships with those about us to be more appreciative, then we'd have less people in our mental institutions today. A silent, kind spirit of appreciation lights the pathway for many a lonely person.

There are times when a person gets to the point where he thinks that nobody cares about him. When this happens life isn't worth living. But when you get to that point...think twice! It may be beyond your comprehension, but it's true that God does care. God made you. God loves you. God has given you the opportunity for a great and glorious life. And what you do and what you are is of great concern to him.

These are the three things that seem to me to make life worthwhile:

- A certain amount of physical pleasure.
- A chance to be of use to someone.
- The hope of the appreciation of those you care about.

If you have only the first, life eventually will have little meaning for you. But if you have the second and the third, you can make amazing adjustments to any lack of the first.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

In closing, just let me add on or two other thoughts in the way of practical advice. If you ever come to the point in your own life when you ask this question: IS LIFE WORTH LIVING, then don't be frightened. Some people when they first penetrate the darkness of this mood, immediately become filled with panic and conclude that they're going to pieces mentally. The chances are that in the normal course of things they are not. When you begin to feel yourself being pushed farther and farther into a long dark tunnel, just remember that many others have passed through that tunnel and have come safely to the light at the other end.

Remember this too, that some good may come out of it. More and more I'm convinced that nothing happens to a person in life from which some good cannot be extracted. Sometimes I feel that the deeper you go into the dark recesses of life, the greater the possibility of climbing to its finest things. The people who never ask questions about life are not the ones who soar the highest. The people who do not know what depression is are likely never to know what ecstasy is.

But on the other hand, do not be too easy on yourself. Don't be frightened by this mood, but don't continue to cultivate it. Don't nurse yourself, don't feel sorry for yourself, and don't expect others to feel sorry for you. My suggestion would be this: when you're on the fringe of asking this question, IS LIFE WORTH LIVING, the answer may very well be for you at that moment...NO! No...life for you isn't worth living. Your life as it now stands is dull, unattractive, and listless. There's nothing in it that would inspire any person. But you as a person have the power to make it worth living. (If you remember nothing else about this sermon, remember this) You have the power to make life worth living. This is the important thing. God has not handed life to any person ready to use, full blown, ready to be enjoyed. God gives a person the raw materials, and it's up to each person to do something with them. It as if God were saying:

"See here.....enough of this....get to work... stop feeling sorry for yourself. Do something with yourself."

It just may be that we need to sharpen our senses. It may be that we need to forget ourselves and try to be of use to someone else. It may be that we've lacked that quiet spirit of appreciation.

But now, if you do come to the final stage and say, "Well my life just isn't worth living. Nobody cares for me. Nobody appreciates me....." ----then the chances are that you have never gone out of your way to appreciate anyone else. Most of the people I know who feel that nobody cares for them are the people who have never cared for anybody else. I would suggest that the simplest formula to make life worth living is to make somebody else's life worth living.

Learn to increase somebody else's enjoyment.
Give someone else a chance to be of use to you..
Let somebody else know that no matter what happens to them, you for one do care!

What a wonderful Christmas present this could make. I can promise you this, that as you attempt to make life worth living for someone else, that you yourself will never come to the point of asking yourself the question: IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?

PRAYER: Our Father and our God....thou hast given us this gift of life. Sometimes we bungle it. Sometimes we do not know how to find our way. When we begin to think about ourselves, and the uselessness of our lives, help us to think of others....and give us the strength and courage to go to them,....to make their lives more enjoyable, useful, and help us to appreciate them.....Amen.

"IS LIFE WORTH LIVING?"

I. Introduction:

- A. One evening, several weeks ago, a young man....
- B. Now I imagine most of you are so busy living life...
- C. I think that it is good for us right now....
- D. Now in order to answer this question, I think that we will...
"What makes life worth living?"

II. Physical Pleasure:

- A. The first thing is a certain amount of physical pleasure.
- B. Sometimes Christians are likely to be a little.....
- C. THE ENJOYMENT OF THE PHYSICAL WORLD....one of the things that helps to make life worth living. Not the only thing to be sure, and by itself not enough, but nevertheless one of the important things that makes life worth living!

III. A Chance to be of use:

- A. The second thing. A person is not only made...
- B. It's true that some people have a greater capacity....
 - 1. Said of mother of Moses:

"Looking upon the new child, she saw that he was a proper child, and she hid him in the rushes from the dangers of the government that would destroy him, and thus gave him a chance to grow to manhood."

- C. It's also true that none of us serve the same purpose....

IV. Hope of Being Appreciated:

- A. The third thing is this: it is the hope.....
- B. One senses this spirit of appreciation.....
- C. There are times when a person gets to the point where he thinks that.....
- D. There then are the three things that seem to me to....
If you only have the first, life.....

V. PRACTICAL ADVICE:

- A. In closing, just let me add this.....
- B. Remember this too that some good may come out of it...
- C. But on the other hand, don't be too easy on yourself...
- D. But now, if you come to the final stage and say....