

## "GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS"

INTRODUCTION A cartoon in Look magazine a while back caught my attention. It showed two monks talking together in a monastery cloister. A third monk, Brother Valentine, passed by. As he moved away from them, one monk said to the other in a low voice: "I think my love for Brother Valentine is less than my love for anyone else in the entire world!"

His remark points up a problem that many of us, I suspect, encounter from time to time - for most of us have those dark days of the soul when we're tempted to say with the monk in the monastery, "I think my love for Brother So and So is less than my love for anyone else in the entire world". It's the old problem of human relations. People have been getting into each other's hair since the days of the cave man. And now-a-days, not only is there more hair to get in to, but there are more people and things are more crowded than they use to be. The problem is more intense, more acute than ever before. In a sermon shortly before he was killed, Martin Luther King said: "We must all learn to live together as brothers. Or we will all perish together as fools. We are tied together in the single garment of destiny". Both home and abroad, we face this concern - getting along with others. Someone pointed out recently: "Two thousand years of Paul's epistles, and about all we have are guided missiles".

DEVELOPMENT Now, as far as you and I are concerned, the problem surfaces in our everyday treatment of our fellow man - the bus driver, the door man, the person behind the counter who waits on us, the person next to us in the office. We all have our Brother Valentines with whom we find it difficult to get along. For some it's easier to love all of humanity as a whole than it is to respond in affection and kindness to one's next door neighbor. It's as Petrashevsky, a Russian landowner of one hundred years ago, discovered:

"Finding nothing worthy of my attachment either among men or women, I have vowed myself to the service of mankind."

How are we going to get along with those whom - if we love at all - we love less than anyone else in the entire world?

The Bible, of course, especially the New Testament, sheds light on the concern. It was Jesus who declared that the love of God and the love of our fellow man - our neighbor - are the two greatest commandments. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself".

There's no getting around it. It takes a great deal of doing in order for us to fulfill this second commandment. The discipline of love is not easy. It is not easy to always get along in harmony with others. In order to do this, we have to equip ourselves like the preachers described by Edgar Dewitt Jones who once said:

"The preacher for this day must have the heart of a lion, the skin of a hippopotamus, the agility of a greyhound, the patience of a donkey, the wisdom of an elephant, the industry of an ant, and as many lives as a cat."

Getting along with others - let me suggest several thoughts in an attempt to throw some light on this concern of human relations, a concern that may be a real problem in the life of some present today.

### WE MUST LEARN TO GET ALONG WITH OURSELVES

To begin with, before we can ever hope to get along with others, we must

develop some skill in getting along with ourselves.

Several years ago there was an article in the magazine section of the New York Times entitled, "Thoughts on the Brotherhood of Man". Published one Sunday in the month of February, it was there in connection with the celebration of Brotherhood Week. Several lines in it tie in with this point:

"The capacity" the author said, "for getting along with our neighbor depends to a large extent on the capacity for getting along with ourselves. The self-respecting individual will try to be as tolerant of his neighbor's shortcomings as he is of his own. Self-righteousness is a manifestation of self-contempt. When we are conscious of our worthlessness, we naturally expect others to be finer and better than we are. We demand more of them than we do of ourselves. Rudeness luxuriates in the absence of self-respect."

Reading between the lines, one had the feeling that the author was suggesting that most people have plenty of room for self-improvement. And it's true, isn't it, that it's always easier to talk about the short-comings of others than it is to recognize our own. Many of us are like the members of the family from the back hills of Kentucky who returned to their mountain home after visiting their son, John, in the army camp. Remember how proud they were of their son and how they bragged about him to their friends, saying:

"And while we were there they held a big parade, and of the thousands of soldiers in the parade, our son, Johnny, was the only one in step".

Everyone else is out of step. That's the way we sometimes feel. We can be so blind at times. We're always so anxious to place the blame for our troubles on the other person - our enemies, our wives, our husbands, our boss - all come in for a share of the blame. We place it on our environment.

Remember that story about the farmer from the hills of New Hampshire. He was having trouble driving his old wagon along the road. He called out to the man by the side of the road who happened along - "Mister", he said, "How much longer does this hill last?" "Hill" exclaimed the man by the side of the road, quickly looking at the road and then the wagon. "There's no hill - your trouble is your hind wheels have come off". More often than not, if we look at things carefully - the trouble is not with the road we're travelling - not with our friends, our environment, but the trouble rests with ourselves. In order to get along effectively and harmoniously with others, we must learn the art of getting along with ourselves. Self-acceptance. A self we can live with. As Cassius once said, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves". And so often, it's true.

#### LOOK FOR THE GOOD IN OTHERS

Then, too, I have the feeling that we would all do better in getting along with others, if we only went to the trouble of looking out for the good in others. We all have our strengths and we all have our weaknesses. We're quick to pick up what's wrong about another, and so slow to see what's good and right.

I remember reading somewhere a number of years ago about a woman down in our nation's capitol who compiled a book called, "The Social List of Washington". This same woman kept a private card file of all the persons in the book. All the names

were coded with initials to describe their social acceptability. The letters OSC, for instance, stood for obvious social climber. The letters PIN stood for "pain in the neck". No doubt all of us know a few OSC's and a few PIN's - not to mention other varieties of human nature. But the point is this: behind the labels we so easily pin on others are real human beings, people with some valuable qualities of mind, of spirit, of character. Look for the good in others.

Associated with this is the tendency to size up people quickly and make some snap judgments. We do this sometimes without knowing it. And if we're not careful, our snap judgements of others make snap back and make us look foolish. The classic story of Sir James Barrie walking along Princes Street in Edinburgh as an undergraduate comes to mind. He saw a tall, animated scarecrow of a man walking towards him. He couldn't help but stare. He felt he was one of the ugliest men he had ever scene. The tall homely man noticed the stare and said to James Barrie: "God made me, too, you know". Barrie replied rather flippantly, "Well if he did, the Almighty's getting rather careless". Later on Barrie discovered that the tall man he had met was none other than Robert Louis Stevenson. One of the marks of adult maturity is to keep from writing off people on first acquaintance.

Back to the New Testament for a moment. As you know, it takes us to task rather sharply for harsh judgments and criticisms we make of others, often without knowing the circumstances. It reminds us that all of us are human, that all of us are prone to make mistakes, that all of us stand in need of mercy and compassion. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye". And remember, too, when the self-righteous religious people brought a poor woman of the street to Jesus for condemnation, he turned to them and said: "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone". No wonder her accusers slipped away in embarrassment and shame.

In the little town upstate where I was reared, there was an automobile repair shop where the mechanic in charge identified the cars brought in for repair by the name of the owner - linking the name of the owner with the necessary repair. On a busy day you might hear him calling to another of the repair men: "Mrs. Ellis' won't start." "Something wrong with old man Pitt's wiring". "Mr. Burk's battery is in need of a re-charge". "Something wrong with old man Pitt's wiring". "The Smith's left rear is flat". Yes - all of us know of people who appear in need of a little repair, but we can save ourselves some headaches and heartaches by learning to accept people as they are - where they are, with all of their funny fixiations, frustrations and faults, accepting them in the spirit of Christian love, understanding and acceptance. "Slow to criticize, and swift to sympathize" is a rule we all would do well to follow. "Slow to criticize, swift to sympathize".

WE GET BACK WHAT WE GIVE Finally, it's generally true in life that we get back from other people the kind of treatment that we give them. Long ago Paul put it this way: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap".

Louis B. Mayer, the movie man, once told a story of his boyhood days that proved to be a benediction to his life. I've heard the story in fable form, but here it is in real life. Apparently, as a youngster he got into a fight at school. He came out second best and was angry and upset. That evening at home he went about muttering some hateful, bitter words. His mother, who was a devout and wise woman, said nothing to him at the time. The next day the Mayer family

went out on a picnic into the country. It was in New Brunswick, Canada. The picnic spot was in a beautiful valley with some towering, rugged mountains on all sides.

Louis' mother called him over to a little clearing that faced a mountain wall. She told him to say what he had said at home the night before. Like any thirteen year old boy, he was embarrassed and reluctant and denied having said anything. His mother gently reminded him that he had said "Damm you". She told him to say it. He muttered it under his breath. She told him to shout it out - loud and clear - "Damm you". "Right back it came....like thunder," he said...."like a voice from heaven it denounced me". "Now" said his mother, "try it another way. Say bless you". And back came the words, "Bless you....bless you....bless you". Strong and clear....echoing back and forth. "Which do you prefer" said his mother. "It's up to you.....that's the way life is.....it always returns to us what we say to it. As long as you live you will have that choice. Life echoes back to you what you say to it".

It's a simple story with a simple messa ge.....so simple that sometimes we overlook its meaning. Curse life - and it will curse you! Bless life - and life will bless you! When we live in the spirit of genuine Christian understanding and with a deep regard and consideration for others, then it is that we hear ourselves saluted with the benedictions of heaven.

#### CONCLUSION

"I think my love for Brother Valentine is less than my love for anyone else in the entire world" said one monk to the other. "

I wonder how that monk got along with himself.....maybe he needed to do some inner work - on himself. Or, perhaps he was too hard on Brother Valentine, too quick to see his faults, too slow to evaluate his good points. Or, maybe someone needed to remind him that one usually gets back from others the kind of treatment one gives out. Anyway....so much for Brother Valentine....think on these things the next time someone is getting in your hair, the next time you are having difficulty getting along with some one.

#### LET US PRAY

Help us, Our Father, as we move through the daily experiences of life....always to be kind, gentle and considerate of others. Save us from making snap judgments of others, from being "quick to criticize, and slow to sympathize". Give us healing hands, tender hearts, tactful tongues...so that we may live with others as Christ would have us....in love, and understanding. In his name we pray.

## "GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS"

### INTRODUCTION

Several years ago there was a cartoon in the New Yorker magazine that caught my attention. It showed two monks talking to each other in a monastery cloister. A third monk, Brother Valentine, was passing by at some distance. As the first two monks looked toward their brother passing by, one of them said to the other: "I think my love for Brother Valentine is less than my love for anyone else in the entire world".

I suppose you might say it's a rather tactful way of saying that you don't care for someone. But his remark points to a common problem that all of us have for you know as well as I do that there are times when we feel like saying along with the monk in the monastery, "I think my love for Brother So and So or Sister So and So is less than my love for anyone else in the whole world". Even the best of us find it difficult to get along with some people. In our better moments we're sure that people are wonderful creatures, but the trouble with most of us is that we have too many of those dark nights of the soul when we're not quite so sure. This problem of human relations is nothing new. I suppose people have been getting in each other's hair since the days of the wave man.

The Bible, especially the New Testament, has a great deal to say on this subject. Jesus declared that love of God and love of our fellow man are the two greatest commandments. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and" he said, "your neighbor as yourself". There's no getting around it; it takes a great deal of doing in order for us to fulfill this second commandment. The discipline of love is not easy. It's not always easy to get along harmoniously with others. In order to do this, we have to equip ourselves like the preachers described as Edgar DeWitt Jones who once said:

"The preacher for this day must have the heart of a lion, the skin of a hippopotamus, the agility of a greyhound, the patience of a donkey, the wisdom of an elephant, the industry of an ant, and as many lives as a cat."

How can I get along with others? That is the theme of today's effort, and there are three thoughts I would like to put before you in an effort to throw light on a question that may be a real question in your life.

### WE MUST LEARN TO GET ALONG WITH OURSELVES

To begin with, before we can ever hope to get along with others, we must first of all become accomplished in the art of getting along with ourselves. Last February in the New York Times' Magazine Section there was an article entitled, "Thoughts on the Brotherhood of Men". It was written and published in connection with Brotherhood Week. The article was excellent. There were one or two sentences in that article that relate to the first thought of this sermon:

"The capacity for getting along with our neighbor depends to a large extent on the capacity for getting along with ourselves. The self-respecting

individual will try to be as tolerant of his neighbor's shortcomings as he is of his own. Self-righteousness is a manifestation of self-contempt. When we are conscious of our worthlessness, we naturally expect others to be finer and better than we are. We demand more of them than we do of ourselves, and it is as if we wished to be disappointed in them. Rudeness luxuriates in the absence of self-respect.

Now, you may say, "Well, those are high and lofty thoughts....what's he driving at?" Simply this: most of us have plenty of room for self-improvement. It's so much easier for us to talk about the short-comings of others than it is to recognize our own. We're like the family from Kentucky that returned to their mountain home after visiting their son John in the army camp. Remember how proud they were of their son and how they bragged to their friends and said:

"And while we were there, they held a big parade, and of the thousands of soldiers in the parade, our son Johnny was the only one in step."

How can everybody else be out of step, but me? That's the question that we often twist around in our minds, and it almost goes without saying that it's exactly at that point that so many of us become blind. We're all too willing to place the blame for our troubles on our environment. Our enemies, our wives, our husbands, our boss - all come in for a share of the blame. I've always been fond of the story about the farmer from the state of Maine who was having trouble driving his wagon along the road. He called out to the man by the side of the road, "How much longer does this hill last?" "Hill", exclaimed the man, "There's no hill; the trouble is that your hind wheels have come off". Yes....the trouble more often than not is not with the road we're traveling - not with our environment, our friends, but the trouble is with ourselves. The fault finders are only reflecting and projecting their own inner disharmony, and unhappiness. If we want to learn how to get along effectively with others, then we must first of all, learn the art of getting along with ourselves. As Cassius once said, "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, but in ourselves."

#### LOOK FOR THE GOOD IN OTHERS

A second thought that we ought to keep in mind is that we should always be on the look out for the good in others. All of us have strengths, and all of us have weaknesses. And yet how often we overlook the strengths of personality that may be in a person and concentrate on the weakness. And when we concentrate on what's wrong in them or with them, we often overlook what's right in them. As the eminent Scots preacher said: "Be kind to everyone you meet. He may be having a hard time".

Some time ago I was reading about a woman in the nation's capital who compiles a book called "The Social List of Washington". She also keeps a private 3 by 5 card index file of all the persons in the book. These names are coded with initials to describe their social acceptability. The letters OSC stand for "Obvious Social Climber", and the letters PIN stand for "Pain in the Neck". No doubt all of

us know a few OSC's and a few PIN's, not to mention other varieties of human nature. But the point is this - behind these labels are human beings with valuable qualities of character and spirit.

In fact, if we're not careful, our snap judgments of others will betray our good sense and make us look foolish. I've always been fond of that classic story of Sir James Barrie walking along Princes Street in Edinburgh as an undergraduate. He saw a tall, animated scarecrow of a man walking towards him. He couldn't help but keep from staring. The tall homely man noticed the stare and said to James Barrie: "God made me too, you know". Barrie replied rather flippantly, "The Almighty's getting rather careless". Later on Barrie discovered that the tall man he had met was Robert Louis Stevenson. One of the marks of adult maturity is to keep from writing off people on first acquaintance. All of us at times may be guilty of this.

Of course the New Testament takes us sharply to task for the harsh judgments and criticisms we so easily make of others, often without knowing the circumstances. It reminds us that all of us are human and that all of us are prone to make mistakes and all stand in need of mercy and compassion. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye". And remember too when the self-righteous religious people brought a poor woman of the street to Jesus for condemnation, he turned to them and said: "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone". No wonder her accusers slipped away in embarrassment and shame.

There is a automobile repair garage in the town where I grew up where the service man in charge identifies the cars that are brought in for repair by the name of the owner. Mrs. Ellis' won't start. Something wrong with old man Pitt's wiring. Mrs. Vedder's front fender bumped. Mr. Brown's battery needs re-charging. Yes....all of us know of people who appear to be in need of repair, but we can save ourselves many headaches and heartaches by learning to accept people as they are, where they are, with all of their funny fixiations, frustrations and faults, accepting them in the spirit of Christian love and understanding. Look for the good in others. It's there. Look the strengths of personality in friends, not their weaknesses. If you do, I'm sure you'll find it much easier to get along with them.

WE MUST REMEMBER THAT WE USUALLY  
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that we give them. As Paul said:  
shall he also reap".

Finally let me say this, that we usually get back from other people the kind of treatment

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Louis B. Mayer, the movie man, tells a story of his boyhood days that proved to be a benediction to his life. Perhaps you've heard this story in fable form. Here it is in actual life. One day he got into a fight at school. He came out second best and was filled with resentment and bitterness. At home that evening he went about muttering hateful words against his opponent. His

mother, who was a devout and wise woman, said nothing to him at the time. The next day the Mayer family went out on a picnic into the country. It was in New Brunswick, Canada. The picnic spot was in a beautiful valley with towering, rugged mountains on all sides. Louis' mother called him over to a little clearing that faced a mountain wall. She told him to say what he had said at home the night before. The boy was embarrassed at first and denied that he had said anything. His mother gently reminded him that he had said "Damm You". She told him to say it out loud. He muttered it under his breath. She made him shout it out loud - "Damm You". "Right back it came like thunder" he said. "Like a voice from heaven it denounced me". "Now" said his mother, "Try it another way". "Say, Bless you". Back came the words, "Bless you"....strong and clear. "Which do you prefer" asked his mother. "It's up to you". "That's the way life is" "It always returns to us what we say to it. As long as you live you will have that choice. Life echoes back to you what you say to it".

It's a familiar story with a simple message, so simple, in fact that sometimes we overlook its meaning. We want to get from life and from people all that we can. Part of our trouble is that we go about it in the wrong way. We bristle, shout and fight. We grab and get in each other's hair. We beat down the opposition. We promote our own interests. We try to buy happiness with the accumulation of things. Some even postpone the niceties of life until they've arrived. It is only when we live in the spirit of Christian understanding and consideration that we hear ourselves saluted with the benedictions of heaven. Curse life and it curses you. Bless life and it will bless you.

The sermon began with this question: How Can I get Along with Others? To summarize briefly the three thoughts that I would put before you: Getting along with others depends in the first place on our capacity for getting along with ourselves. Second: Look for the best in others. Third: Remember we get back from others the kind of treatment that we give to them.

LET US PRAY: Help us, Our Father, as we move through the daily experiences of life to be kind and gentle. Help us to walk softly with another. Give us tender hearts, tactful ways, and understanding minds so that we may get along effectively and harmoniously with one another. Amen



"HOW CAN I GET ALONG WITH OTHERS?"

Luke 10:  
25-28.

INTRODUCTION The sermons on the Sunday mornings during Lent this year are attempting to answer some of the questions that serious-minded people are asking. These are some of the questions: How Can I Find Inner Quietness? What Do I Need In Order To Get Ahead? What Can One Person Do? Dare I Believe in Life After Death? Those of you who were here last Sunday morning will recall that the sermon attempted to answer the question: Does Prayer Really Make A Difference? The sermon today however moves off in a different direction; together we shall be attempting to throw light on this particular question: How Can I Get Along With Others?

Several weeks ago there was a cartoon in the New Yorker magazine that caught my attention. You may have noticed it. It showed two monks talking in a monastery cloister. A third monk, Brother Valentine, was passing by at some distance. As the first two monks looked toward their brother passing by, one of them said to the other: "I think my love for Brother Valentine is less than my love for anyone else in this world"

This remark simply points to a common problem that all of us have, for you know as well as I do that there are times when we feel like saying along with the monk in the cloistered monastery "I think my love for Brother So and So or Sister So and So is less than my love for anyone else in this world". Even the best of us find it difficult to get along with some people. In our better moments we're sure that people are wonderful creatures, but the trouble with most of us is that we have too many of those dark nights of the soul when we aren't quite so sure. This problem of human relations is nothing new. I suppose people have been getting in each other's hair since the days of the cave man. But it's getting more and more acute because there are more and more of us and we're so dependent upon each other. It's getting to the point where we must learn to live together or else we all shall perish. Yes....we have two thousand years of Paul's Epistles, and about all we have are guided missiles.

I think this problem comes to focus, as far as you and I are concerned, in our everyday treatment of our fellow man. There are so many troublesome Brother Valentines in the world, and this too for some of us it's easier for us to love all of humanity as a whole than it is to love one's next door neighbor. It's as Petrashevsky a Russian landowner of one hundred years ago discovered: "Finding nothing worthy of my attachment either among men or women, I have vowed myself to the service of mankind". It's sometimes easier to love humanity as a whole than it is to love one's next door neighbor. How are we going to get along with those whom, if we love at all, we love less than anyone else?

The Bible, especially the New Testament, has a great deal to say in reference to this subject. Jesus declared that love of God and love of our fellow man are the two greatest commandments. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself". There's no getting around it; it takes a great deal of doing too in order for us to fulfill this second commandment. This discipline of love is not easy. Most of us are like the preachers described by Edgar De Witt Jones:

"The preacher for this day must have the heart of a lion, the skin of a hippopotamus, the agility of a greyhound, the patience of a donkey, the wisdom of an elephant, the industry of an ant, and as many lives as a cat."

The problem, I think, can be expressed specifically in this fashion; many people are entirely too sensitive, get hurt far too easily, and are too harsh with their brother and sisters who do not happen to believe as they believe or do things exactly as they might do them. How Can I Get Along With Others? There are three thoughts I would like to suggest in an effort to throw some light on this question.

WE MUST LEARN TO GET  
ALONG WITH OURSELVES

To begin with, before we can ever hope to get along with others, we must first of all become accomplished in the art of getting along with ourselves. Last Sunday in the New York Times' Magazine Section there was an article entitled "Thoughts on the Brotherhood of Men". It was written and published in connection with the 25th Anniversary of Brotherhood Week which ends today. The entire article was excellent. There were one or two sentences in that article that directly relate to the first thought of this sermon:

"The capacity for getting along with our neighbor depends to a large extent on the capacity for getting along with ourselves. The self-respecting individual will try to be as tolerant of his neighbor's shortcomings as he is of his own. Self-righteousness is a manifestation of self-contempt. When we are conscious of our worthlessness, we naturally expect others to be finer and better than we are. We demand more of them than we do of ourselves, and it is as if we wished to be disappointed in them. Rudeness luxuriates in the absence of self-respect....."

Well, perhaps you're saying to yourself those are some high and lofty thoughts. What's he driving at.† Simply this that most of us have plenty of room for improvement. It's so much easier for us to talk about the short-comings of others than it is to recognize our own. We're like the family from Kentucky that returned to their mountain home after visiting their son John in the army camp. Remember how they bragged to their friends and said: "And while we were there, they held a big parade; and of the thousands of soldiers in the parade, our son Johnny was the only one in step".

How can everybody else be out of step but me? That's the question that we often twist around in our minds, and it almost goes without saying that it's exactly at that point that so many of us become blind. We're all too willing to place the blame for our troubles on our environment. Our enemies, our wives, our husbands and our bosses - all come in for a share of the blame. Some of you I know have heard the story about the Maine farmer who was having a rough time driving his wagon along the road. He called out to a man by the side of the road "how much longer does this hill last" "Hill" exclaimed the man "There's no hill; the trouble is your hind wheels have come off". Yes... the trouble more often than not is not with the road that we're traveling, not with our environment, our friends....but the trouble is usually with ourselves. The chronic complainers and

fault finders are only reflecting and projecting their own inner disharmony, weakness and unhappiness. If we want to learn how to get along effectively with others than we must learn the art of getting along with ourselves. As Cassius once said, "The fault dear Brutus is not in our stars, but in ourselves".

WE MUST LEARN NOT TO  
BE SO HARD ON OTHERS

A second thought that we ought to keep in mind is simply this that we ought not to be so hard on others. As the eminent Scots preacher once said: "Be kind to everyone you meet. He may be having a hard time". Last Sunday morning in the sermon on prayer I said something about praying for others - praying for your friends, your wives, your husbands, your boss. I meant it too. How wonderful it would be if only we began to pray for each other. Of course we need to back up those prayers with an honest effort to look beyond the surface and see the good that lurks in every life. The folks that we often criticize often have more to them than we think. When we concentrate on what's wrong with them, we often overlook what's right in them.

Some time ago I was reading about a woman in the nation's capital who compiles a book called "The Social List of Washington". She also keeps a private 3 by 5 card index file of all the persons in the book. These names are coded with initials to describe their social acceptability. The letters OC stand for "Obvious Climber", and the letters PIN stand for "Pain in the Neck". No doubt all of us know a few OC's and a few PIN's, not to mention other varieties of human nature. But the point is this, behind these labels are human beings with valuable qualities of character and spirit.

In fact, if we're not careful, our snap judgments of others will betray our good sense and make us look foolish. I've always been fond of that classic story of Sir James Barrie walking along Princes Street in Edinburgh as an undergraduate student. He saw a tall, animated scarecrow of a man walking towards him. He couldn't keep from staring. The tall homely man noticed the stare and said to James Barrie: "God made me too, you know". Barrie replied rather flippantly "The Almighty's getting mighty careless". Later on Barrie discovered that the tall man he had met was Robert Louis Stevenson. One of the marks of adult maturity is to keep from writing off people on first acquaintance. We're guilty of this.

Of course the New Testament takes us sharply to task for the harsh judgments and criticisms we so easily make of others, often without knowing the circumstances. It reminds us that all of us are human and that all of us are subject to mistakes and stand in need of mercy. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye". And remember too when the self-righteous religious people brought a poor woman of the street to Jesus for his condemnation, he turned to them and said: "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone". It's no wonder that her accusers slipped away in embarrassment and shame.

You know as well as I do that there are a great many queer people in the world. We recognize that. Everybody's queer, everybody's peculiar. Everybody, of course, except ourselves. We recognize Mr. Bunyan's Mr. Legality, Mr. Pliable, that tall fellow Talkative, Mrs. Diffidence, timid Mr. Fearing, and the proud Worldly Wiseman. And of

course we could add to these Mrs. Busybody, old man Tightwad, and young Mr. Know It All. The list reminds me of the entries made in the daybook of a garage in my hometown where the service man identifies the cars by the names of the owner: Mrs. Ellis' won't start. Something wrong with old man Pitt's wiring. Mrs. Vedder's front fender bumped. Yes...a lot of people appear to be in need of repair, but we can save ourselves many headaches and heartaches by learning to accept people as they are, with all of their funny fixiations, frustrations and faults, accepting them in the spirit of Christian love and understanding. What fault finders we are! Why do we expect people to fit into our pattern. We need to be patient with people. The plain truth is we often say a lot of things that we do not know anything about. When we do not know, we ought to keep still. We must learn not to be so hard on others!

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Finally, let me say this, that  
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people the kind of treatment  
Whatsoever a man soweth, that

Louis B. Mayer, the movie man, tells a story of his boyhood days that proved to be a benediction to his life. We've heard this story before in fable form. Here it is in actual life. One day he got into a fight at school. He came out second best and was filled with resentment and bitterness. At home that evening he went about muttering hateful words against his opponent. His mother, who was a devout and wise woman, said nothing to him at the time. The next day the Mayer family went out on a picnic into the country. It was in New Brunswick, Canada. The picnic spot was in a beautiful valley with towering, rugged mountains on all sides. Louis' mother called him over to a little clearing that faced a mountain wall. She told him to say what he had said at home the night before. The boy was embarrassed at first and denied that he had said anything. His mother gently reminded him that he had said "Damm you". She told him to say it out loud. He muttered it under his breath. She made him shout it out "Damm you". "Right back it came like thunder" he said. "Like a voice from heaven" it denounced me" "Now" said his mother "try it another way" "Say bless you". The boy took a deep breath and yelled "Bless you". Back came the words "Bless you" strong and clear. "Which do you prefer son" asked his mother. "It's entirely up to you. That's the way life is. It always returns to us what we say to it. As long as you live you will have that choice. Life echoes back to you what you say to it."

It's a familiar story with a simple message, so simple in fact that sometimes we overlook its meaning. We want to get from life and from people all that we can. Part of our trouble is that we go about it in the wrong way. We bristle, shout and fight. We grab and get in each other's hair. We beat down the opposition. We promote our own interests. We try to buy happiness with the accumulation of things. Some of us even postpone the niceties of life until we've arrived. It's only when we live in the spirit of Christian understanding and consideration that we hear ourselves saluted with the benedictions of heaven. Curse life, and it curses you. Bless life and it will bless you.

We began this sermon with this question: HOW CAN I GET ALONG WITH OTHERS? To bring it all together then here at the end I would say that our capacity for getting alother with others depends in the first place on our capacity for getting along with ourselves. Second: If we hope to get along with others, we must learn not to be so hard on them. And third: It's well to remember that we usually get back from others the kind of treatment that we give to them.

LET US PRAY:

Help us, Our Father, as we move through the daily experiences of life to be kind and gentle. Help us to walk softly with one another. ~~Give~~ us tender hearts and tactful ways so that we may get along effectively and harmoniously with one another. Amen

In these closing minutes I'm going to say some things that perhaps I ought not to say, things that I wish I didn't have to say. As I move around the parish coming into contact with different groups and personalities, I became painfully aware of this perverse streak on the part of ourselves to gossip, find fault and dwell on the short comings of others. I've often thought that ten years from now in a different church I'll have some wonderful sermon illustrations. Sometimes I find myself listening all too easily and adding my two cents worth to what's being said, and afterwards I have a feeling of uneasiness about it all. What I'd like to say for you to think about is simply this: let's be more patient, more understanding, less critical of each other. Let's try to practice this idea of Christian understanding that we've been thinking about and talking about here this morning, and preface all of our thoughts concerning others with these three questions: Is it true, is it kind, and is it necessary. If we do this, I think that our capacity for getting along with others will be greatly improved.