

## "HANDLING OUR DISAPPOINTMENTS"

TEXT: "I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain,  
and to be sped on my journey there by you, once  
I have enjoyed your company for a little".

Romans 15: 24

### INTRODUCTION

Paul, the Apostle, had his heart set on going to Spain. In his dream of Christian outreach, he had plans for reaching out to the outermost rim of the world of his time. But he never got to Spain; instead, he landed in a prison cell in Rome.

His experience has something to say to us. Like Paul, we have our plans, our hopes, our dreams - but something happens along the way and we find ourselves taking a detour, travelling a road we hadn't planned to travel. Disrupted plans, deferred hopes, unrealized dreams bring a measure of disappointment into our lives.

Anyone unprepared for a joust with disappointment is not conditioned for life. For many a person's life is a diary in which he means to write one story but is forced to write another. Many have to settle for something less than what they want in life. How does one take a broken plan, an unrealized dream, a disappointment and make something out of it. Said Paul, "I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain". He never took that trip; instead he journeyed to Rome and there he sits in prison...scribbling on a bit of parchment.

### TRACTION OUT OF TROUBLE

~~How is one to deal with disappointment?~~ Suppose we begin our search for answers on the lowest possible level....at that point where most have learned to some extent how to make disappointment and frustration fruitful by getting traction out of trouble.

Look at it this way. Life makes progress in a resisting medium. A bird needs the resistance of the air to fly. The fish needs the resistance of the water to get traction for its fins, and even the simple business of standing on our feet could not be accomplished without resisting forces pushing against that action. Without struggle and sacrifice, there would be no progress. Without resistance, there would be no traction out of trouble.

There's a story about an old grandfather clock which had stood in the corner of a home for several generations, faithfully ticking off the minutes, the hours and days. Its momentum came from a heavy weight suspended by a double chain. "Too bad" thought the owner, "that such an old clock should have to carry such a great load". And so he released the weight and carefully removed it, and with that the ticking stopped. "Why did you do that" asked the clock. "I wanted to lighten your burden" was the answer of the owner. "Please" said the clock, "put my weight back. The weight is what keeps me going".

I think it's true in terms of the larger matter of living. Whatever we have achieved in terms of personal growth, in terms of self-fulfillment, in terms of character has been achieved through struggle. It hasn't been easy. It has come to us through powers hidden within us, so deep that we didn't know we had them, called into action by the challenge of resistance, opposition and disappointment. How true. The weights of life help to keep us going, keep us growing!

It seems that when God molds a man, He puts weights on him, gives him some burdens to carry, and some hardships to endure. We can't explain it; it's something of a mystery. It's like the child who asked his mother, "Why is it that vitamins are always in spinach...never in ice cream?"

So many of life's sweetest songs come out of our saddest thoughts. One thinks of the haunting beauty of the Negro spirituals born out of the anguish and pain of other days. Arnold Toynbee traced this thought through history in his monumental study. In a chapter entitled, "The Stimulus of Blows" he shows how hardy civilizations had come to birth in response to a challenge. "The greater the challenge, the greater the stimulus". Without weights, even civilizations cannot keep going.

A little boy was leading his sister up a mountain path. "Why" she complained, "It's not a path at all. It's rocky and bumpy". "Sure" he said, "The bumps are what you climb on...."

#### BEAUTY OUT OF BLUNDER

Consider now a second area where frustration can be made fruitful - somewhat by accident, I suppose - that area in which we find the capacity to get beauty out of blunder. Life is full of accidental frustrations. It's as though blind fate were in control of things....spinning the wheel of fortune and calling out our names on the off numbers. "Bad breaks" we call them....these things that happen through no fault of our own. Life is strange, filled with bad breaks, with the unexpected and so often our dreams do not turn out exactly as we had dreamed they would.

And yet it's amazing how fruitful the bad breaks can be with the help of a little resilience and resourcefulness. Where accidents end and providence begins is an open question.

A boy in Illinois was deeply interested in photography. He answered an ad in a magazine and sent in 25¢ for a book that told all about photography. The publishers made a mistake. They sent him the wrong book; they sent him "The Manual on Magic, Mindreading and Ventriloquism". The section on ventriloquism fascinated the young boy and he began practicing the art of throwing his voice. He went on to create a wooden dummy to whom, at one time, more people listened on a Sunday than to all the preachers on this continent. Now, whether the blunder that made Charlie McCarthy can be classified as providential will depend on your point of view, but it does serve to illustrate this element of accident upon which life can so often turn.

Accidents and failures are not all final. Someone has said,

"Resourceful men never make mistakes;  
their failures are always portals  
of new discoveries".

Remember that and build your life on it.

Biography points up this truth to us time and again - how failures have been turned into fortunes, how troubles have been changed into triumphs. We think of John Wesley and how as a young man he came to Georgia as a missionary planning to convert the Indians. He failed. They almost converted him. He returned to England a defeated man, but out of that failure was born the fervor that changed the life of a nation and out of that there came the Methodist Church.

Dr. A. J. Cronin began as a doctor, broke in health and in bitter frustration turned reluctantly to writing. Whistler, the artist, wanted to be a soldier, but failed in his chemical examination at West Point. He often chuckled over that saying, "If silicon had been a gas, I would have been a major general!" Where does accident end and providence begin? Who knows?

And so if you miss the "Spain" of your life and get a prison instead - however disappointing to you it may seem, remember that it doesn't mean the end of everything. It may be the beginning of something. Remember, too, that many of the immortal words of hope and faith and love that poured forth from Paul's soul were written in a prison cell. Out of the disappointments of his life came some of the greatest contributions!

#### MEANING OF THE CROSS

Now, lest it seem to some that we have been dealing altogether too lightly with this tragic element of life, let us move into the deeper shadows to where there hangs a cross.

To be sure, not all failures and accidents and disappointments turn into good fortune. We know this. Some we have to live with endlessly. To live with a broken body, a broken heart, a broken home, a continuing problem - what then? Then it is that we must go deeper than magazine success stories, deeper than surface philosophies, into the profound and underlying meaning of the Cross.

Tolstoy, writing in his book, "My Confessions" describes four ways in which people face tragedy and disappointment. First, there are those who are so frightened that they go out and get drunk. Second, there are those who give way to complete despair and remove themselves from the problem by suicide. Third, there are those who resent it and stoically steel themselves against it, and harden their hearts to it. And fourth, there are those who irrationally accept it - yet stand up to it bravely and take it when it comes.

All four leave out the one creative and redemptive element which runs through all of the New Testament and which the cross of Jesus is the supreme example. Jesus did not merely endure the cross, he used it. He didn't merely bear the blows life hurled at him; he took them and turned them into weapons to use against evil. The disappointment of the cross he made the salvation of the world. He made of it a force to lift men to the very feet of God.

The creative Christian approach would be not to ask how can I bear this thing, but how can I use it. How can I make it pay dividends - to put richness into life that wasn't there before. While you may never get out of it, you can - if you wish - try to get something out of it to make life better for someone else and so turn seeming tragedy into something positive and helpful to others.

We ought to get something out of sickness, and not just go through it. We ought to get something out of criticism and not just take it. We ought to make every disappointment, every broken hope, every severed relationship, pay a profit. Socrates once advised a young man, (male chauvinist)

"By all means - get married. If you get a good wife, you will be most happy. If you get a bad one, you will become a philosopher."

There's a hunting lodge in the highlands of Scotland that has become something of a famous show place. There's an interesting story about it. Let me share

it with you. One day many years ago a guest was opening a bottle of soda and carelessly spashed the contents of the bottle over a newly decorated wall. The other guests hoped it would dry and disappear, but the ugly mark, the ugly stain didn't. It left a long, unsightly splotch stretching almost from the floor to the ceiling. The guests departed with the feeling that the scolding of their host was justified.

One man remained behind. He studied the blotch on the wall. Then he went to work on it with crayons and charcoal and finally oil paints. With quick bold strokes, he turned the brown stains into brown Highland rocks, with a cataract pouring over them. Where the stain was deepest, he painted a glorious Highland stag, leaping into the torrent pursued by hunters in the background. His name: Sir Edwin Landseer, the artist famous for his paintings of animals. By this thoughtful and considerate action, he brought good out of evil, beauty out of ugliness. Ever since then, every artist passing through the town has stopped to study the Landseer pictures and on the walls of the lodge many have added drawings of their own until it now stands no longer for a lodge for careless guests, but an abiding place of beauty for those who love beauty.

Thank God for this creative, redemptive element which rests at the heart of life - that can take our blunders, our failures, our tragedies and disappointments and weave them into patterns of beauty and usefulness.

PRAYER Help us, O God, to handle our disappointments with a measure of creativity - to see in them opportunities for growth, to use our failure for doors opening to new discoveries. Finally, always keep of mindful of the mystery of the Cross, and of how through Jesus, you used it to lift men to thy feet. In the name and spirit of Jesus, we pray. Amen

ORDER OF SERVICE

ORGAN PRELUDE

HYMN -

APOSTLE'S CREED

PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

SOLO

RESPONSIVE READING

THE GLORIA

SCRIPTURE READING

HYMN 133

THE SERMON

SOLO

HYMN

BENEDICTION

Libby Rogers  
Eliz Divorc  
Mabel Miller  
Mrs. Emerson

---

ANTHEM: "Draw Us in the Spirit's Tether"

"Draw us in the Spirit's tether; for when humbly, in thy name, two or three are met together, Thou art in the midst of them: Alleluya! Alleluya! Touch we now thy garment's hem.

As the brethren used to gather in the name of Christ to sup, then with thanks to God the Father break the bread and bless the cup: Alleluya! Alleluya! So knit thou our friendship up.

All our meals and all our living make as sacraments of thee, that by caring, helping, giving, we may true disciples be: Alleluya! Alleluya! We will serve Thee faithfully".

ORGAN POSTLUDE

The organ postlude - a final offering of our praise to God - is played after the Benediction. We invite you to remain to share in the beauty of it. If not, a quiet departure will be appreciated by those who do remain.

AT THE ORGAN CONSOLE

In the absence of Mr. Lyndon Woodside, we welcome Mr. Joseph Surace to the organ console.

UMW OFFICERS TO MEET

Officers of the United Methodist Women will meet Sunday afternoon, June 27th, for brunch at Dresner's Restaurant.

PICK UP YOUR COPY

The latest edition of the Park Avenues / A Word in Edgeways is available. Be sure to pick up your copy. Copies are located in the narthex, as well as on the table in the Community Room.

ADMINISTRATIVE BOARD TO MEET

The Spring Meeting of the Administrative Board will be held today at 12:30 pm in the Community Room.

METHODIST CHURCH HOME

Mr. Clarke will be conducting the Sunday afternoon worship service today at the Methodist Church Home of New York City. The Strawberry Festival of the Home is scheduled for Thursday afternoon, June 24th. Those planning to attend are invited to be in touch with Miss Ruth Stadler.

FINANCIAL REMINDER

We come to that time of the year when many of our members are on vacation or away from the city on weekends. If the Church can have the cooperation of all in keeping contributions up to date, we shall avoid a financial crisis during the Summer.

FINANCE COMMITTEE TO MEET

The Finance Committee will meet on Thursday, June 17th, at seven o'clock in the Community Room.

**PARK AVENUE  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

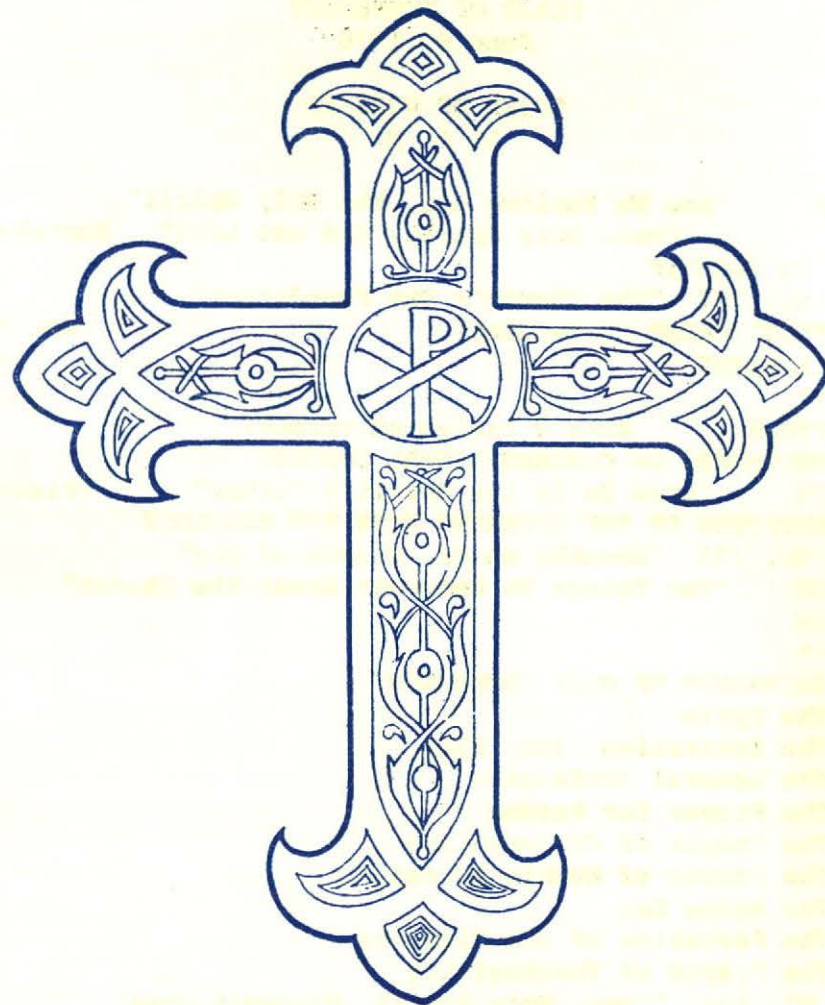
106 East 86th Street  
New York, N. Y. 10028  
AT 9-6997

**CHURCH DIRECTORY**

Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke.....Minister  
Dr. Harold C. Metzner.....Associate Minister, Emeritus  
Mr. Lyndon Woodside.....Organist-Choir Director  
Mrs. Nancy M. Billings.....Secretary  
Mrs. Judith Keisman.....Day School Director

**GENERAL OFFICERS**

Lay Member, Annual Conference.....Mr. Paul R. Russell  
Lay Leader, The Church.....Dr. George Hull  
President, Board of Trustees.....Dr. George Hull  
President, United Methodist Women.....Miss Janet Frisbee  
Chairman, Administration Board.....Mr. Kenneth Pew  
Chairman, Council on Ministries.....Mr. William Proctor  
Chairman, Education Commission.....Mrs. James Nespole  
Chairman, Finance Commission.....Mr. Edward Brown  
Chairman, Membership Commission.....Mr. William Blanton  
Chairman, Ushers.....Mr. Bradley Taylor



**PARK AVENUE  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**



FEAST OF PENTECOST

June 6, 1976

ORDER OF WORSHIP

11 A. M.

ORGAN "Now We Implore God, the Holy Spirit"  
"Come, Holy Spirit, God and Lord" Buxtehude

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 297 "The Church's One Foundation"

APOSTLES' CREED (standing) No. 738

GLORIA PATRI

\*\*\*

SCRIPTURE Acts 2 (selected verses)

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF CONGREGATIONAL CONCERN

ANTHEM "Draw Us In the Spirit's Tether" Friedell

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 133 "Breathe on Me, Breath of God"

SERMON "Two Things To Remember About the Church"

PRAYER

\*\*\*

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Kyrie

The Invitation (No. 832)

The General Confession

The Prayer for Pardon

The Prayer of Consecration

The Prayer of Humble Access

The Agnus Dei

The Partaking of the Elements

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

HYMN NO. 134 "Come, Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Toccatà on Morecambe" Surace

\*\*\* Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

Today we welcome Mr. Ronald Harris as our Lay Reader. A native of Oregon, schooled at the University of Oregon, Ron is Editor in College Text Books at Macmillan Publishing Company. Father of two girls, Karen and Amy, he sings in the Choir, and serves on the Music Committee, the Education Committee and the Administrative Board.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar today are given in loving memory of the parents and grandparents of Miss Vivian Taylor.

AFTER THE SERVICE

The regular coffee hour will not be held today, but coffee is available along with some informal fellowship downstairs in the Community Room.

AN ADULT CLASS

An adult class meets every Sunday morning from nine-thirty to ten-thirty in the third floor Fellowship Hall. Luke's Gospel is being studied. Mr. William Proctor serves as the teacher. Coffee is available and new members are always welcome.

USHERS

The ushers today are Mr. Monge, Mr. Breien, Mr. Brown, Mr. Davis, Dr. Hull and Mr. Wood.

TRUSTEES TO MEET

The Trustees of the Church are scheduled to meet tonight in the Community Room.