

"HOW DOES ONE FIND INNER QUIETNESS?"

INTRODUCTION

The sermons on the Sunday mornings in Lent this year are attempting to answer some of the questions that serious minded people are asking. Today we come to the third in this series of sermons all of which have been cast in the same form. Our problem this morning can be focussed in this question: How Does One Find Inner Quietness?

The subject of this sermon reminds me of a story that I heard some time ago about a six year old boy who visited the sea shore for the first time. The first day out on the beach he received a blistering sunburn. A few days later, after the sting had left the burn, the boy discovered to his amazement that his skin was beginning to peel. This was all very new to him. He had never been to the seashore before; he had never been sunburn before; he had never had the experience of having his skin peel. He stood in the bathroom before the mirror and remarked to himself: Only six years old and going all to pieces.

His words serve to remind us of the feelings of frustration that occasionally come over us. The experiences of life can jar us and shake us until we feel like saying along with this six year old boy that we too are going all to pieces. I think you know what I mean. Family problems may be pressing in on some people. Feelings of uncertainty and insecurity may be troubling others. The ills and the accidents of life can upset our plans and destroy our composure. And while we're up against some of these problems, this great enemy fear takes hold. It comes, as you know, into our lives in the form of worry. And all of us know what a destructive thing worry can be. It ruins digestion and causes stomach ulcers. It interferes with sound sleep and causes us to face another day unrested and irritable. Worry and fear bring on heart disease, high blood pressure and nervous disorders.

We live in a noisy world. The pace of life, the tempo of life is far too rapid. I don't know how you feel about it, but it seems to me that this need for inner quietness is certainly one of the basic needs of most people today. The question is: one does one find it?

INNER QUIETNESS IS AN INSIDE JOB.....

To begin with, we need to be reminded of this fact that inner quietness is something of an inside job. This is to say that so much of our INWARD UNREST comes because we have linked our peace of mind to the attainment of outward desires. We've allowed ourselves to become strongly attached to certain plans, programs and people. Our own inner well being is so dependent upon outward circumstances. And when these things begin to fail and fall apart, our lives begin to fail and fall apart. And so let me say this right at the beginning of this meditation that if our peace of mind hinges upon the size of our bank account, or upon what the next door neighbor thinks, or the health of Uncle Harry, or whether our child gets into a certain school, or the political party in power, then we're letting ourselves in for a certain amount of disillusionment. Some people can have everything come their way but still be dissatisfied inside.

The Apostle Paul had the right idea when he said: "To be

spiritually minded is life and peace". But so many people fail to recognize this. They run around in circles or move off in all different directions looking for some magic cure for their distress of spirit and never find it. Money is not always the answer to our problems. Happiness pills are not the solution. All of this reminds me of an ad that appeared in the SPECTATOR magazine in London in the year 1712:

"Famous drops on sale for the hypocondriack and the melancholic. Cure immediately...comforting the brain and nerves, composing the hurried thoughts and introducing bright, lively ideas and pleasant briskness instead of dismal apprehension and dark incumbrance of the soul. Price 3s 6d. Instructions given with each bottle. Sold only at Mr. Bells at the Cross Keys and Bible Shop in Cornhill near the Royal Exchange."

That was 1712. Inner quietness can't be purchased at the corner drug store. It doesn't come in a bottle; one can't find it on the medicine shelf.

Nor does it come from a perfect environment. Take the case, for instance of Mr. Danielson, one of the six men who sailed across the Pacific Ocean on a raft. He later wrote about his experiences in the book *Kontiki*. While on the trip, he found a beautiful, baaamy peaceful Pacific Island. After he returned to the United States, he found he couldn't take the tension and turmoil of life, and so taking his wife along with him, he returned to his island paradise in the Pacific. He had plenty of money from his book. The natives were kind; the coconuts were sweet. Nothing to worry about. The weather was perfect. No taxes, no newspapers, no TV, no telephone, no job, no competition. Mr. and Mrs. Danielson managed to live their for a year and then headed back home. They found very little peace in their island paradise. It simply points up the fact that escape from struggle is not the same as peace of mind found in the midst of struggle.

All of this is simply leading up to this thought, and I've tried to say it before in different ways from this pulpit. Inner quietness is something of an inside job. We will find peace NO place unless we find it first in our own hearts, and this we may find no matter how hard the situation or how unlikely the circumstances. I think it's good for us and healthy for us to just stand back occasionally from the things of life and look at them objectively. Few things matter as much as we think they do. We can get along without many of the things if not most of the things that we think our happiness depends upon. Our inner lives are the key to balanced, effective and creative personalities. And this inner quietness comes when we detach ourselves from so many of those things in the material world and attach our minds and our spirits to the things of the spiritual world.

INNER QUIETNESS CAN BE DEVELOPED THROUGH TRUSTFUL PRAYER....

Recognizing then that this inner quietness is something of an inside job, how then does one go

about developing it? It's cultivated and developed through trustful prayer and meditation. Sometimes I can't help but feel that our prayers are longrange dreams that seldom touch our lives. And this too, we allow the minor irritations of life to upset us and get the

best of us. Not always, but often. We're like the Denver housewife who asked to be excused from jury duty. This is what she said:

"Three children - 12, 6, and 1. Dirty diapers, dirty dishes, dirty clothing, dirty faces. School, ironing, cleaning, cooking, washing and also consulting the best book on psychology to know more about why they behave like demons, and how to understand my husband."

Needless to say, she was excused. I was leading up to say this that I recognize that it's not as easy for us to be excused from the worries and the anxieties of life that come along and destroy our composure and upset our plans. As Fred Allen pointed out to us: "This insance modern civilization is too much for the Moses Model human body. Here we have an organism that was designed for Biblical times, and yet we expect it to cope with artificial lighting, executive board meetings, the din of automobile horns and television, carbon monoxide, cigar smoke and bubble gum. No wonder we've all got ulcers and high blood pressure." We need some kind of inner protection, and it's this habit of continuous and trustful prayer that offers us this inward immunity that we're looking for. Isaiah suggested this very thing centuries ago when he said: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee". The fact is simply this that when our minds are stayed on Him, nothing can really hurt us.

Bennett Cerf tells an interesting story about Dean Godolpin of Princeton University. It seems that the home in which the Dean lived stood on the site of where the new Firestone Memorial Library was to be constructed. This meant of course that the house in which the Dean lived would have to be moved to another part of the campus. The house was moved one day while the Dean was inside reading a book. He was completely unaware of all the commotion that was taking place outside in connection with the moving of the house. On the evening of that same day, the Dean put his book down to go outside for his usual evening stroll around the campus, and his only comment to his wife was "Isn't our house facing in another direction?"

It's a parable of life and trustful prayer. When we live close to God - day in and day out - we too become unaware of the commotion around us. When we live trustful lives in His spirit, we do not notice the shifting movements of life half so much. Sometimes we need to get ourselves out of the way and in a sense let God take over. It's not in huffing and puffing and feeling sorry for ourselves that we grow strong inside, but in quietness and in trustful prayer. It comes from God. It comes from an understanding and an acceptance by the mind of the reality, the presence and the laws of God. When we live against these laws, we're inwardly confused. When we live with these laws that govern life, we shall find that measure of inner quietness which is so essential for balacned, creative and effective lives.

LET US PRAY:

"FINDING INNER QUIETNESS"

INTRODUCTION

Finding inner quietness is the theme of the meditation this morning, and it brings to mind a story that I hear some time ago (and a story that some of you have heard) about a six year old boy who was visiting the sea-shore for the first time. The first day out on the beach he received a blistering sunburn. A few days later, after the sting had left the burn, the boy discovered to his amazement that his skin was beginning to peel. This was all new to him. He had never been to the sea shore before; he had never been sunburn before; he had never had the experience of having his skin peel. He stood in the bathroom before the mirror and remarked to himself: "Only six years old and going all to pieces".

Perhaps there have been times when you, too, have felt that you were going all to pieces. Life's experiences have a way of jarring us and shaking us up until we feel we're falling all apart. Family problems may be pressing in on us. Feelings of uncertainty and insecurity may be troubling others. The ills and accidents of life can upset our plans and destroy our composure.

We live in a noisy world. The pace of life, the tempo of life is far too rapid. I don't know how you feel about it, but it seems to me that this need for inner quietness is certainly one of the basic needs of most people today. The question is: how does one find it?

INNER QUIETNESS IS AN INSIDE JOB.....

To begin with, we need to be reminded time and again of the fact that inner quietness is something of an inside job. That is to say that so much of our unrest comes because we have linked our peace of mind to the attainment of outward desires. We have allowed ourselves to become strongly attached to certain plans, programs and people. Our own inner well being is so dependent upon outward circumstances. And when these things begin to fail and fall apart, our lives, in turn, begin to fall apart. And so let me remind you here at the onset that if our peace of mind hinges upon the size of our bank account, or upon what the next door neighbor thinks, or ~~the health of Uncle Harry or Aunt Minnie~~, or whether our child gets into a certain school, ~~or the political party in power~~, then we're letting ourselves in for a certain amount of disillusionment. Some people, as you know, can have everything come their way but still be dissatisfied inside.

The Apostle Paul had the right idea when he said: "To be spiritually minded is life and peace". But we fail to recognize this. So often we run around in circles or move off in all different directions looking for some magic cure for our problems and never find it. Money is not always the answer to our problems. Happiness pills are not the solution. Here is an ad that appeared in the SPECTATOR magazine in London in the year 1712:

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~~All of this is leading up to this thought, and I've tried to say it before in different ways from this pulpit.~~ Inner quietness is something of an inside job. We will find no peace unless we find it first in our own hearts, and this we may find no matter how hard the situation or how unlikely the circumstances. It is good for us to stand back occasionally from the things of life and look at them as objectively as we can. Few things matter as much as we think they do. We can get along without many of the things that we think our lives depend upon. Our inner lives are the key to balanced, effective and creative personalities. And this inner quietness comes when we detach ourselves from so many of those things in the material world and attach our minds and spirits to the things of the spiritual world.

AND HOW IS IT DEVELOPED? Recognizing then that this inner quietness is something of an inside job, how then does one go about developing it. It is cultivated through the development of spiritual habits - through trustful prayer, through weekly worship, and prayerful meditation. We need some kind of inner protection, and it is this habit of continuous and trustful prayer and weekly worship that offers us this inward immunity that we all need. Isaiah, centuries ago, said: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee; because he trusteth in Thee". The fact is simply this: when our minds are stayed on Him, nothing can really hurt us.

Fred Allen once pointed out to us: "This insance modern civilization is too much for the Moses Model human body. Here we have an organism that was designed for Biblical times, and yet we expect

it to cope with artificial lighting, executive board meetings, the din of automobile horns and television, carbon monoxide, cigar smoke and bubble gum. No wonder we've all got ulcers and high blood pressure." Yes, we need some kind of inner protection from all this.

Bennett Cerf tells an interesting story about Dean Godolpin of Princeton University. It seems that the house in which the Dean lived stood on the site of where the new Firestone Memorial Library was to be constructed. This meant of course that the house in which the Dean lived would have to be moved to another part of the campus. The house was moved one day while the Dean was inside reading a book. He was completely unaware of all the commotion that was taking place outside in connection with the moving of the house. On the evening of that same day, the Dean put down his book to go outside for his usual evening stroll around the campus, and his only comment to his wife was "Isn't our house facing in another direction?"

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LET US PRAY

LET US PRAY:

Teach us, Our Father, to know that worry has no place
in our lives:

We know that it accomplishes nothing.
We know too that most of the things we worry
about never happen.
We know that by worrying we cannot add one cubit
unto our stature.

Therefore, do for us in these moments those things that
we cannot always do for ourselves.....

Give us a calm and confident trust in Thee.
Lift the burdens of life from our troubled minds.
Make us willing to live just one day at a time.

Teach us the secret of living without strain. And
check our impulse to spread ourselves so thin that
we are exposed to fear and doubt...

This we ask in thy name and for thy sake. Amen

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