

"IN ORDER TO LIVE"

Henry David Thoreau, writing in his great classic, *Walden*, had this to say:

"I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and to see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived".

I think that all of us have a desire to live deliberately. And one does not always have to go to the woods in order to do this. To know how to take the raw stuff of life and shape it into some form of beauty is perhaps the finest of all the arts of life. And yet, I feel, so few of us have really mastered this art. So few people are living deliberately, fronting only the essential facts of life. We're living below our best possible selves with the result that we're often frustrated, unhappy and thwarted.

Jesus came to show us how to live a deliberate and rich life. He had few of the things that we feel are necessary in order to really live. He didn't have any money. He didn't have any social position. He didn't have any education, in our sense of the word. He didn't have a fine home, in fact, after he began his real work, he didn't have any home at all! And yet, I think I'm within the mark when I say that his life was more deliberate, more meaningful, and more wealthy than any other life that has ever lived on the face of this earth! His life is the life that gives meaning to all other lives.

I'm sure that all of us would agree that the richness of a life does not rest in what we have, but rather in what we are. That is to say that the richness of life is not dependent upon the quantity of things we possess, but rather upon the qualities of the spirit that have possessed us. We know that a wealthy man can sometimes be pitifully poor, and that on the other hand a poor person can sometimes be fabulously rich. All this we know, and yet I feel it's important for us to be reminded of this from time to time. We need to ask ourselves what are some of the things that help to make life rich and meaningful. What are some of the things we need in order to really live? I'd like to suggest to you three things.

A FAITH TO LIVE BY.

First, I think that all of us need a faith by which to live. This is essential. More than anything else in life, I think that we need this. Jesus lived his life in the faith that God is love, and that love is the final law of all life. We recognize this to be a very high faith, and we also know that it's a hard faith. But this, I feel, is the only kind of faith that's worth holding on to. We can't live without faith anymore than we can live without oxygen. It's essential. It's the life principle. It's creative. It gives us that plus quality. I think a person can pass through anything in life as long as he has the faith that there is some purpose, some meaning in life.

For instance, take the case of Jack Appleton. Jack Appleton was a newspaper man. He was regarded as something of a saint by his many friends. For seventeen years, Jack Appleton wrestled with an incurable disease, and for seven years of that time, he was flat on his back in a hospital ward. And yet he always held on to his faith. One day one

of his friends asked him, "Jack...what do you do when you can't touch bottom?" "Why then I swim" he replied. "And Jack...what do you do when you can't swim" And he replied, "Why then I float.....and I try to remember that underneath me are the everlasting arms." It's good to remember that around us and beneath us are the everlasting arms of God. Mind you...this is no guarantee against misfortune. But rather it's the simply confidence that regardless of what happens to us, nothing can really harm us! It's not the easy peace of dodging hard decisions, or side stepping life, but rather it's the contentment of facing everything squarely with God's help.

A SELF FIT TO LIVE WITH

In the second place, I think that we need a self that is fit to live with. We have to live with ourselves, day in and day out, the year around. No matter how fast we try to run, or how far we try to go, we can never go quite far enough to get away from ourselves. And so in the second place I would suggest that we need a self that is fit to live with.

You might be interested to know that the great Finnish runner, Paavo Nurmi, always carried a stop watch with him in his races. He always looked at the watch, and not at the other runners in the race, as the race went on. He kept his own tempo, regardless of what the other runners were doing. We're reminded that perhaps we need to live our own lives, and run our own races, regardless of what the other around us are doing. We need perhaps to measure our own lives by the will of God. Once again it's our religion, our faith that gives to us the unity of personality that we need in order to live deliberately and effectively in this modern world. It's the thread which seems to tie everything else together. As E. S. Jones suggests, "Get the center right and the circumference will take care of itself."

A WORK FIT TO LIVE FOR.

In the third place, I would suggest that all of us need a work that is fit to live for. And by work, I'm not suggesting the job by which we make a living. I'm thinking in higher levels than this. Naturally, all of us need to make a living, but I think that we need something that is greater than ourselves, something bigger than ourselves, something that can claim our lives and bring out the very best that is in us. I think there's a great deal more in all of us than which claims our forty hours each week. I don't know how you feel about this, but I feel that only as we give ourselves to some great ideal and lofty cause or concept does life begin to take on a new and exciting dimension. This is what enriches our lives lifting us to a higher level.

These then are three things that help us to live. Let me just review them for you in case you want to write them down and take them home with you:

1. A faith to live by.
2. A self fit to live with.
3. A work fit to live for.

wonder if we have
really lived!

In my mind all three belong together, and each is incomplete without the other two. And I think this too, that if we build our lives on the basis of all three, we'll never come to that point in our own lives where we Let us pray - Our Father, as we come to Thy table this morning, may we come seeking to deepen our own faith, seeking to cleanse our lives from all that dishonors Thee, and may we, in these moments, feel something that will enable us to of our lives. depart with the determination to give Thee a greater portion