

"LESSONS FROM A MOUNTAIN TOP"

A Sermon By

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Park Avenue United Methodist Church
106 East 86th Street
New York, New York 10028
November 1st, 1987

"LESSONS FROM A MOUNTAIN TOP"

INTRODUCTION

Near the southern tip of the Sinai peninsula there is a small chain of mountains known in ancient times as Mt. Horeb. It is a rough and desolate country with arid valleys and rocky mountainsides.

One day long ago a man came to those mountains. He was nervous, despondent and afraid. He had been running for days, hiding out in the caves of that deserted country. A few weeks before he had been involved in a disagreement with a powerful queen. The queen threatened his life. And believing himself completely without friends or defenders, the man fled for his life. For more than a hundred miles he roamed those rugged hills.

Finally, completely exhausted, he sat down to rest. That day something happened to this man. We do not know exactly what. He may have had a dream or a supernatural vision. In any event, he heard a voice asking, "Why are you so despondent?" The man replied, "My life has been threatened and I have no one on my side".

The voice spoke to him again,

"Get up and return to your home. There are many things you can do. There are 7,000 people in your hometown who will be on your side".

Now, thus far, I haven't told you the name of this man or the queen who was after him. I've given you a few clues and if you listened carefully to the Scri lesson earlier in the service, you can tell me the name of this man. Raise a hand if you think you know who it is or of whom we speak. Yes, it's Elijah and there are three lessons in this story worth our remembering.

SURRENDER TOO EASILY

One of these lessons is this: it is possible in the face of hardship to surrender a cause too easily. This ancient man thought there was nothing more he could do, so he gave up.

That is a common circumstance among us. It happens every day to hosts of people. They surrender at the slightest resistance. If these folks would only remember that nothing worthwhile is accomplished without the risk of hardship. Remember the Beat Generation? Someone has suggested that the current crop is the Beaten Generation. That's likely an exaggeration, but it is not far-fetched. There are many people who want success but do not want to pay the price for it. Figuratively speaking, a lot of us wander about in the desert, driven there because life in the real world seems too hard.

NO CIRCUMSTANCE IS HOPELESS

There is a second idea in our story. No circumstance is hopeless. There is always a handle we can work with if we look for it. We are not bound in hopeless determinism. There is a way out of every situation if we look for the door.

Sometimes our personal problems are so great that a solution seems impossible. One of America's best-known ministers made an observation recently. He said that gray is not a basic color. Gray comes from mixing white and black. If, in other words, we take gray paint and look at it under magnification, we would see particles of black and white. The point this minister was making is this,

"We can break our larger problems into smaller ones and find handles that will allow us to do something about the total circumstance".

Frankly, I like that approach. There is a timeless proverb that suggests an interesting thought;

"Things turn out best for those who make the best of the way things turn out".

No problem is so large we can't do something about it. Sometimes we need to break our larger problem into its smaller components. When we do, handles begin to appear. The interesting thing is that as we work with one handle, other handles become visible.

There are no hopeless people and no hopeless circumstances. People who manage life successfully do so not because they live in an ideal world. Rather, they take a less-than-ideal world and transform it into what it can become. No one need spend a lifetime on Mount Horeb.

OTHER HANDS WORK WITH US

There is one more thing in the story of the ancient man. As we work at our problems, other hands work with us.

Anyone who has worked with carpentry tools knows that it is far more difficult to drive a nail in a ceiling than in a floor. The reason is simple. When we drive a nail overhead the forces of gravity are against us. If we drive a nail into the floor, then these gravitational forces work with us. All of life is like that. These are forces in the world that support us if we give these forces an opportunity. Honesty, truthfulness and integrity finally prevail. Dishonestly, selfishness and wrong doing eventually defeat themselves. If we take the right road and stay with it long enough we eventually come out at the right place.

The lessons in this ancient story of Elijah are worth our remembering. As we struggle with our problems, we need to be reminded not to surrender too soon. Every worthwhile achievement has a price that must be paid. We need to remember, too, that there is always at least one handle with which we may grasp our problem if we look for it.

Finally, if we seek worthy goals there are forces in the universe that work with us. No one needs to live on Mount Horeb in despair. There is hope for every person in every circumstance.

ALL SAINTS DAY MESSAGE

Today the Christian Church pauses to celebrate All Saints Day, the day we remember the A students of the faith. I'm sure that they knew these lessons from a mountain top quite well and that's why they achieved as they did. "The saints are sinners who keep on trying"

Many years ago a gentleman in our parish by the name of William Logan sent me a little card in response to a sermon I had preached on All Saints Day. Entitled, "Why Were the Saints, Saints?", he picked it up at St. Patrick's where his wife had attended while he attended up here. I've always been fond of its message and for years the card has been on my bulletin board across from my desk where I spend so much of my time. Let me share the message with you.

"Why were the saints, saints? Because, they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful, patient when it was difficult to be patient; and because they pushed on when they wanted to stand still, and kept silent when they wanted to talk, and were agreeable when they wanted to be disagreeable. That was all. It was quite simple and always will be!"

CLOSING PRAYER

As has been my custom across the years on this particular Sunday, I close with that beautiful prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. Let us pray:

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is despair; hope;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled, as to console;
To be understood, as to understand;
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive. It is pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to Ternal Life."

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Sunday, November 1, 1987

I. HOLY COMMUNION

- A. It has long been the custom of this Church to celebrate the Sacrament on the first Sunday of the month. I like to announce for the benefit of visiting friends that the Table of our Lord is open....
- B. A word regarding the procedure. The elements will be served to you in the pews by the ushers. Upon receiving them, please hold them until all have been served...

II. PICK UP

- A. Be sure to pick up the November issue of our monthly news sheet. It's there in the narthex by the door as well as...
- B. The news sheet lists the important things taking place during this busy month of November.

III. PARISH CONCERNS

- A. Parish concerns are high-lighted in the Sunday bulletin. Please review them on your own before you depart, remembering...
- B. The needs of the November 21st Church Fair, the "Conversations in Membership" for those interested in strengthening a tie with the Church. November 30th.
- C. And also, the Adult Fellowship November 14th Square Dance.

IV. GREETING TO VISITORS

- A. We greet the visitors in the congregation today...pleased to have you here with us....hope that we shall have opportunity to greet you in a more personal way...at the door or time permitting, at the coffee hour.
- B. Come and worship with us again. Fill out a visitor card. Work with us in the programs of service that we are involved in here in the city.
- C. Church has been around for some time...150 years. I've been the pastor here for 1/5th of that time...over 31 years...we minister to a parade of people...in the name of Christ.

V. ALTAR FLOWERS

- A. In honor of Ethel Rose, celebrating her 92nd birthday today. Join us downstairs for a bit of birthday cake and in the singing of a happy birthday to this grand lady...oldest living member.

VI. FINANCIAL CANVASS

- A. Our 1988 Financial Canvass is well underway...and here to bring us a brief report of our progress today is Bob Lewis.

- B. A word about Bob before he steps forward here to the lectern.
A native of Culpepper, Virginia, a graduate of Davidson,
A graduate degree from Duke Univ. , Bob is married to Germany
Anette, father of two sons - Daniel and William - and is a
banker withalso a member of our Finance
Committee, Day School Committee and was elected a trustee of
our Church at the October 20th Charge Conference. I present
him to you and ask that you listen carefully to our canvass
concerns.

OFFERING: "It is more blessed to give than to receive".

FRIENDS FROM FORMER DAYS:

- A. With us today: Michelle Arnold Sullivan / Texas...Houston...
Bob and Michelle, married here in the Spring of 1986...
- B. Susan Lynn Brown: Price Wzterhouse Firm. Brussells, Geneva and
Paris.
- C. Both quite active and loved by all of us...

ANTHEM: "Ave Verum Corpus"

"Hail, O hail, true body, spotless virgin's virgin birth; thou who truly hang-
edst weary upon the cross for sons of
earth. Thou whose sacred side was riven,
whence did flow the blood of Him, crucified.
O may'st Thou, dear Lord, be given at
death's hour to be my food. O tender, O lov-
ing, O Holy Jesu, Son of Mary, show on me Thy
mercy. Amen."

ORGAN POSTLUDE

The organ postlude - a final offering
of our praise to God - is played after the
Benediction. Time permitting, we invite you
to share in the beauty of it.

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audi-
tion to sing in the Choir. Rehearsals are
held on Wednesday evenings at 6:15 pm in
the downstairs Choir Room.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Christmas cards are available again
this year. Take a look at the all new
selection during coffee hour in the rear
of the Russell Room. Remember there's
no sales tax and one-half of the cost is
tax deductible. Proceeds go to the All-
Church Christmas Fair Fund. Place your
order for cards today.

"HOUNDS OF HEAVEN"

The "Hounds of Heaven" study group meets
Tuesday evening at 6:30 in the Fellowship
Hall lounge area. George Leopold serves as
leader. Scott Peck's book, The Road Less
Travelled, is being read and discussed.
All are welcome and now's a good time to
join as a new book is being read.

FINANCIAL CANVASS

The 1988 Financial Canvass got off to a
spirited start October 25th with the lunch
meeting of Team Captains and Canvassers. Mem-
bers and friends will be contacted between
now and November 14th. On November 15th, we
will dedicate all pledges received toward our
goals of \$110,000 and 230 pledges.

As of October 29th, 27 pledges totalling
\$27,727 have been gratefully received. We are
thankful for these expressions of financial
support for the coming year. However, much
work remains. Prayerful and thankful considera-
tion of God's blessings in our lives will re-
sult in joyful giving. Let us renew our ef-
forts in support of God's work through our
Church.

NEW MEMBERS TO JOIN

New members will be received into the
Church on December 6th. Persons interested in
strengthening a tie with the Church this Fall
are invited to be in touch with Mr. Clarke
in the coming weeks of November.

NOVEMBER DATES

- November 10: Administrative Council
November 11: Membership Committee
November 12: Education Committee
November 14: Adult Fellowship Square
Dance, 7 pm. \$5.00
November 15: Dedication Sunday
Celebration of Lyndon
Woodside's 20th year with
the Church
November 16: Ushers' Supper Meeting
November 17: Day School Committee
November 18: Church Fair Set-Up
November 19: Finance Committee
Church Fair Set-Up
November 20: Church Fair Set-Up
November 21: Church Fair, 10 - 5 pm
November 22: Thanksgiving Sunday
Children in Church
November 26: Thanksgiving Day
November 29: First Sunday of Advent
Children in Church
November 30: "Conversations in Member-
ship" for new friends

PICK UP YOUR COPY

Be sure to pick up your copy of the November issue of our monthly news sheet, "A Word in Edgeways", as well as the special mid-October issue highlighting Church Fair needs. They're on a table in the narthex by the door as well as on the table in the Russell Room. Take one with you. We don't mail them out unless requested.

NOVEMBER 7 PICK-UP DAY

The Christmas Fair is now only three weeks away. We are still in need of more white elephants, baked goods, old books, large bags and Christmas crafts.

See Mary Lou McGanney to put your apartment on the route to pick up your white elephants and old books. Mary Lou's number is 877-2901.

Sign up to help with the Fair if you haven't already done so. Anne Davenport is Chairperson and will be glad to receive your "Fair-Share" of time, talent or a cash gift.

PARK AVENUE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

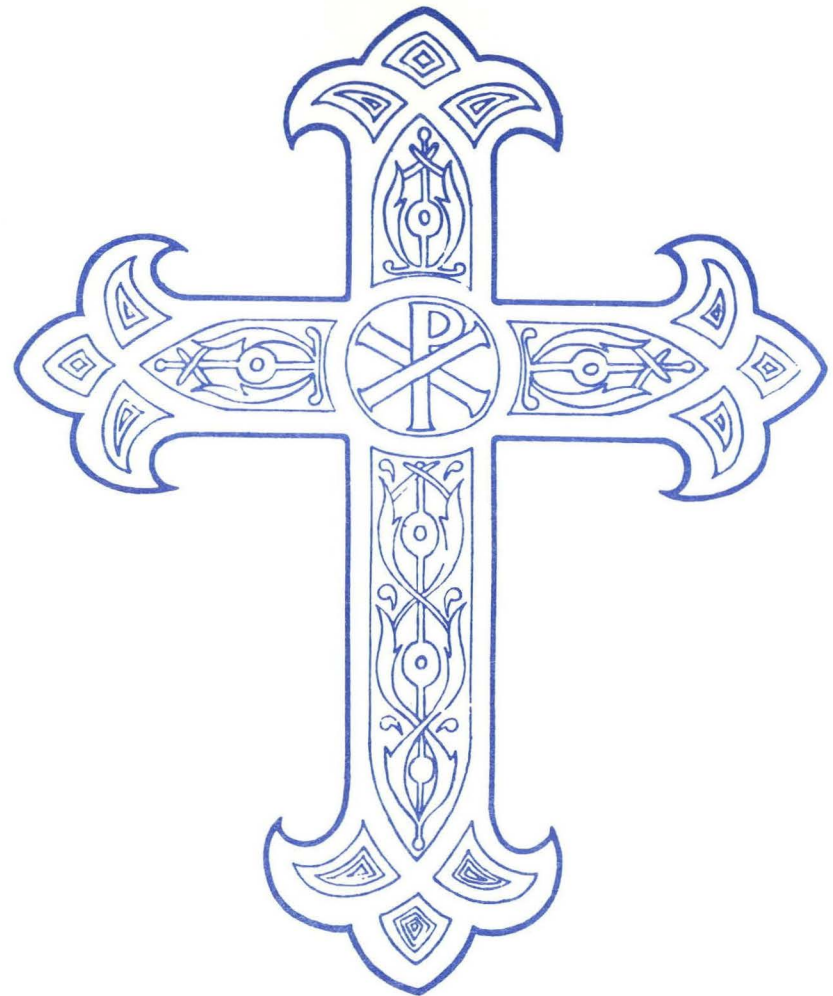
106 East 86th Street
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Superintendent, Sunday School Miss Anne Davenport



PARK AVENUE
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

ALL SAINTS SUNDAY
November 1, 1987

ORDER OF WORSHIP
11 A. M.

ORGAN	"Priere"	Jongen
CALL TO WORSHIP		
HYMN NO. 536 "For All the Saints"		
APOSTLES' CREED		No. 738
GLORIA PATRI		No. 792

SCRIPTURE	I Kings 19: 1 - 18	Page 313
PARISH CONCERNS		
ANTHEM	"Ave Verum Corpus"	Byrd
PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY		
HYMN NO. 53 "How Gentle God's Commands"		
SERMON	"Lessons From a Mountain Top"	Mr. Clarke
PRAYER		

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Kyrie (The Choir)
The Invitation (No. 832)
The General Confession
The Prayer for Pardon
The Prayer of Consecration
The Prayer of Humble Access
The Partaking of the Elements
The Prayer of Resolution
HYMN NO. 231 "Sometimes a Light Surprises"
BENEDICTION
ORGAN "Choral" Jongen

*** Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

We welcome Janet Ernst to the lectern this morning. A native of Brooklyn, educated at the City University of New York, Jan is an Elementary School Teacher in the City school system. Here in the Church, she is Chairperson (Designate) of the Outreach Committee. A member of the Education Committee, Janet is also our representative to the City Society and serves on the Board of Five Points Mission in lower Manhattan.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar today are in honor of Ethel Rose who today celebrates her 92nd birthday.

GREETERS AND USHERS

The greeters today are Lillian Kennedy and Rick Kilbride. The ushers are Len Williams, William Chambers, Robert Lewis, John Lombardo, Kenneth Pew, Charles Wire and Jonathan Wheeler.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

An Adult Bible Class meets on Sunday morning at 9:15 in Fellowship Hall. Anna Delson is serving as the teacher and leading the class in a study of the Book of Genesis. All are welcome and coffee is always available.

CHURCH SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

Sessions of Church School for children are offered Sunday morning from eleven to twelve. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available on the fourth floor.

AN INVITATION

Coffee and tea will be served in the Russell Room following the service. Members and friends are invited to share in these moments of warmth made possible for us today by Jacque Notestine, Norma D'Ambrosio, Dee Downing, Sharon Johnson, Jane Levin and Lynn MacShane.