

LIVING A DAY AT A TIME

INTRODUCTION

The meditation this morning goes back to the sermon of last Sunday morning. Those of you who were here will recall that it had to do with the principle of withdrawal and return, and that it ended with a strong and serious plea on my part for you to consider practicing this principle in your own daily living. I suppose you might say that the meditation this morning is something of a footnote to the sermon of last week. It's intended primarily for those of you who are busy people, and who are continually confronted with the pressure of unfinished tasks. In other words, it's intended for all of you.

I'd like to introduce what I have to say by sharing with you a rather humorous story that Grace Sloan Overton tells about a large, heavy, fat man. This man wanted to weigh himself on a pair of scales. The scales that he used were somewhat different from the type that we're accustomed to using in this respect, that instead of registering by number the weight of a person, a voice would sound out giving the weight. This rather large and heavy man watched several people weigh themselves before venturing forth himself. One person, a rather small woman, stepped on and back came the voice "110 pounds, thank you". Another person got on and back came the voice "165 pounds, thank you". A third person stepped on and back came the voice "210 pounds thanks you". At this point, our friend stepped forward and weighed himself, and back came the voice "One at a time, please. One at a time, please Thank you".

I'd like to use those words as the underlying theme of this meditation. I think they suggest to us another principle that we would do well to weave into our philosophy of life. It's the idea of living a day at a time. John Henry Newman in his great hymn "Lead Kindly Light" puts it this way:

"Keep thou my feet;
I do not ask to see the distant scene -
One step enough for me."

Most of us are so busy that we find it difficult to squeeze into one day all that needs to be done. We feel the pressure of unfinished tasks, and find that the accumulation of tomorrow's duties added to those of today are often too much for us. I think that this is what the psalmist was driving at when he said:

"This is the day which the Lord hath made.
We will rejoice and be glad in it"

In other words: a day at a time. It's all we have. It's all we can manage. It's all that we need.

A DAY AT A TIME

I'd venture to say that some of you who are here this morning instead of being attentive upon those things that are taking place here in this place, instead of soaking up some of the spiritual strength that you may be in need of, will be thinking about those tasks and those responsibilities that you'll be facing this week. All of us tend to worry about the future, but when you get right down to brass tacks, it's quite foolish. We ought to be concerned with today, and not tomorrow. It's as Thomas Carlyle once said:

"Our main business is not to see what lies dimly in the distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand"

All of this reminds me of that wonderful parable about the philosophical clock. This philosophical clock was very worried about the future. It was constantly thinking about all that was before it. Its job, of course, was to tick, twice every second. This would be 120 times every minute, which would be 7,200 times every hour. And with twenty four hours in the day, this would add up to 172,000 ticks a day. The clock thought to itself - this would mean 63 million ticks a year, and if I stay on the job for ten years, that would be 630 million ticks. At this point, its reported the philosophical clock collapsed from nervous exhaustion. But later on when it came to realize how foolish it was to anticipate all that was ahead, and when it came to the realization that it had only to tick twice every second, it went back to work, and it was reported that the clock was going strong after twenty five years on the job.

It goes without saying that it's God's plan for us to tick just one day at a time. This is what Jesus was driving at in the Sermon on the Mount when he said "Don't be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself. Let's the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day". Jesus wasn't suggesting that we forget completely the demands of tomorrow, and not make any plans for the future. But rather he was suggesting to us that we take things as they come, for he knew what someone has pointed out to us that:

"The load of tomorrow, added to that of yesterday, carried today, can make even the strongest person falter."

CLOSING

A passenger on a Mississippi steamboat back in the old days is reported to have said to the captain, "Captain, I suppose you know where every sandbank is located in this river." And the captain replied, "Why no, I don't. That would be a waste of time." "A waste of time" replied the passenger. "Why if you don't know where the sandbanks are located, how can you pilot your boat". To which the captain replied "Why should I go about kicking among the sandbanks. I know where the deep waters are"

A whole philosophy of life was expressed in his reply. Now I realize that none of us run steamboats, but all of us are attempting to pilot our lives through the different currents of life. And what I would like to say to you, and to have you think about as you come to the Lord's table this morning is this: Superficial living.... surface living does not really satisfy. We need to dig deep. We need to dwell deep, if we are not to be caught up in the shallow currents of modern day living. And if we hope to learn how to live a day at a time....effectively, we must first detach ourselves from the surface aspects of life, and attach ourselves to those things that are abiding, eternal and of great value. If we learn how to live with God, we shall find in him and in our own lives, all that we need in order to live one day at a time.

"Keep thou my feet
I do not ask to see the distant scene
One step enough for me"