

one's position. The person with powerful vision has a broad horizon. The person in an elevated position has a deep horizon. To underscore this point we just need to examine a lookout on a ship. The lookout is usually in an elevated position. With powerful lenses and from an elevated position, sailors scan the far off horizon seeing much more than the naked eye could ever see from a lower position. And so our first point is this - Horizons are moveable. Horizons can be pushed back.

RELATION TO LIFE? So much for all this talk on horizons. How does it affect us? Can we relate it to life?

We're all aware of the differences that exist between individuals. In a sense this difference between individuals is connected with this matter of horizons.

One person's horizon may be very close to him. He can reach out and touch it with an outstretched finger. He lives within a small circle. His interests are few; his friends are few. Perhaps he limits his friends to those who think as he does, or who have the same colored skin as he has. Such a person is all wrapped up in himself and what a small package he makes. Such people have poor vision; they dwell in the lush and fertile valley of ease and contentment. They possess no concern for their fellow man. I'm always reminded of the words of Dr. Halford Luccock who said in connection with the mission of the church, "We need to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." So much for afflicting the comfortable.....

And then on the other hand, we have the person whose horizon is unlimited. There are individuals who stand on the mountain tops of human experience and look down into the valley and see their fellow man stumbling and falling in the darkness. Such people have powerful vision. Their vision extends as far as human life itself. It transcends national boundaries. Such a person is Bishop Booth who labors in the

mission field of Africa. Such are the people who support his efforts with financial gifts.

Let us never become selfish at the point of our own religion. Let us never assume that Christianity is just for us; let us never forget the multitudes of people in the world who have not food or shelter. Once again I refer to the experience that I had in the middle east. I saw scenes of poverty and sickness that shall haunt me for a lifetime. I shall never forget the children in some of these countries.....

The horizons of Jesus were as wide as humanity itself. It mattered not to Jesus whether it was a Samaritan or a Roman soldier. It didn't matter whether it was a sinning woman, a diseased leper, or a rich young ruler. All were children of God and of infinite value in his sight. And that is how it should be with us. It should make little difference to us whether the person is a Jew, a negro, or even a Chinese peasant. The horizons of Jesus were as wide as humanity itself. And so our second point can be summed up in two words - unlimited horizons. We need to establish unlimited horizons.

HORIZONS LIMITED. Now perhaps some of you are thinking in terms such as this. "Sure it is all well and good to stand up there and preach such a wonderful thought.....but I'm just not able to respond. I find it difficult to hold a distant horizon in my view. The horizon is pushing in on me. My life is bounded by a physical handicap, or perhaps by an economic or financial consideration, or an environmental condition."

Yes - we all feel that way at times. Life brings its dark moments as well as its joyous ones.

In a sense we're reminded of the geography lesson of England. Bounded on the west by the Irish Sea; on the south by the English Channel; on the east by the North Sea; on the north by Scotland. Life gets that way at times; it does become bounded by physical considerations, or by economic conditions, or environmental limitations. The horizon

becomes limited. Life pushed in and we can't seem to push back that horizon even though we want to.

It is not always easy to lift one's eyes to the horizon. The moments spent in a doctor's office or on a hospital bed can soon dash the hopes of the most cheerful person. And yet we recall that Paul wrote his most famous letters from prison. John Bunyan the travelling tinsmith, was a prisoner in Bedford Jail for many years. And yet his thoughts eluded bolts and bars and he gave the world the immortal classic, "Pilgrim's Progress." He seems to symbolize those lines of poetry, "Two men behind bars; one sees mud, and the other stars." Robert Louis Stevenson gave great literature to the world, but we forget that he was a sick man when he wrote. There's no smell of the medicine bottle in any of his books.

PUSHING BACK
THE HORIZON.

How can we push back our horizons? What can we do when things press in on us? I would just like to suggest a few of the ministering spirits which are provided for us.

Great literature helps to push back the horizon; it can do much for the spirit of man. Emily Dickinson sums it up well in the following lines:

"He ate and drank the precious words, his spirit grew robust.
He knew no more that he was poor, nor that his frame was dust.
He danced along the dinghy days and his bequest of wings was
but a book."

What is true of great literature is also true of great music. It helps to bring our finite lives within the shadow of the infinite.

The beauty of nature also aids in pushing back the horizon. Think for a moment of the green hills, of skies flooded with loveliness, of fields clothes with corn, of the glorious rays of the setting sun, of the seashore where waves come rolling in like silver from the melting pots of God. What healing one can find in nature! What blessings for a troubled mind.

Wordsworth expresses it well:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime...
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things.

Literature, music, and nature....these serve to push back our horizons. But certainly the most enduring and most important way for pushing back the horizons is the way of faith.

Our faith needs to be strengthened. We need to cultivate a vital relationship with God. Too many of us have the "sprinkling" type of religion. We drop into the church to have water "sprinkled" on us at the time of baptism; we have rice "sprinkled" on us at the time of a church wedding; and then dirt "sprinkled" on us at the time of death. Are we guilty of looking to the church only at the time of baptisms, weddings, or funerals?

Man is something more than just a puppet dangling at the end of a string. Man doesn't stand alone in this universe. There is a force greater than himself; there is someone we can turn to for reliance and trust. We can have complete confidence in the power, the purposes, the presence and the promises of God!

Through faith in God our burdens are lifted.....our horizons pushed back revealing the truth, the goodness, and the love which are the foundation stones of our universe.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."

PUSHING BACK OUR HORIZONS

TEXT: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills; from whence cometh
my help?
My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."
Psalm 121: 1,2.

This particular psalm, the 121st, has long been one of my favorites. It's one of the better known psalms and familiar to most of us. I recall a Sunday School teacher that I had as a small child, a very devoted and inspiring teacher, who helped me to learn this psalm. Many years later, passing into the seminary experience, I learned a little of the background behind this psalm.

The 121st Psalm is known as one of the Songs of Ascent. The Songs of Ascent were a collection of Psalms used in connection with the pilgrimages to Jerusalem undertaken by the pious Jews. We should keep the historical situation in mind. The pilgrims have come from afar, and they have had many hard experiences. They have travelled over robber-infested deserts, have been lost on the trackless wastes and buffeted by storms and hunger and thirst. Many have died on the way.

This psalm was sung as the weary pilgrims came in sight of the mountains surrounding the ancient city of Jerusalem. Off in the distance they could see the walls of the city, and towering above the walls they could catch sight of their beloved Temple. It was a glorious sight and their hearts must have throbbed with excitement. Their voices broke forth into song. On the following day they would arrive at the city gates, and with thanksgiving in their hearts they would sing psalm 122.

(Read text...) These lines reflect the trustful confidence that the people had in God. God is their keeper. He sleeps not. He shall preserve them from all evil. The mountains and hills symbolize confidence and security in the ways of Jehovah. The eyes of the pilgrim are forever fastened upon the hills of Zion, on the horizon.

It was a little over a year ago that I had a very vivid experience. I was ^{to the} ^{im} ^{just} ^{then} ^{here} travelling throughout the ^{region} middle east. And I shall never forget that first glimpse of the ~~city~~ walls of the city of Jerusalem. It was thrilling and I stood there, several miles from the city. . . . I reflected upon these words of this passage.

+ + for here it was - the very place where the Incarnation took place - where God reached down to man.

HORIZONS

Allow me some poetic license. I would like to substitute the word horizon for the word hills. "I will lift up mine eyes unto the horizon". I believe that this word "horizon" is not in the Bible. But certainly that which the horizon symbolizes is in the Biblical narrative. Perhaps the phrase "lure of the horizon" has come into your thoughts. The imagination is stirred as we start to think of the Biblical heroes who were lured by the adventures that lay beyond the horizon. We can think of men filled with divine discontent who sought to break away from the dull and misty flats of life.

We think of Moses, that powerful figure of Old Testament days, who led his people from the flats of slavery to the far off horizon of a new and promised land. We think of the Apostle Paul, lifting his eye to the far off horizon. Filled with the burning desire to spread the gospel of love, he travelled into Asia Minor, over into Macedonia, down into Greece, back to Jerusalem, and then once again crossing the seas he finally arrived in Rome. And while in Rome he lifted his eye to the far off horizon of Spain. His eyes were ever on the far off horizon.

WHAT IS THE
HORIZON?

Perhaps before going any further in this discussion, we need to define our terms. What is the horizon? It may well be described as the circular line where the sky and earth appear to meet. The circular line has been there since the beginning of time. Beyond this line is the void where the sun rises and sets. The important thing which I would like to emphasize here is that the horizon is a moveable affair. One's horizon depends on two factors. First of all it depends on the power of one's vision. Secondly it depends on one's position. The person with the greater vision has a broader horizon. On a ship the lookout is usually in an elevated position. With powerful lenses and from this elevated position, sailors scan the distant horizon seeing much more than the naked eye could see from a lower position. Horizons are moveable....they can be pushed back.

RELATION TO
LIFE?

So much for all this talk on horizons. How does all this affect us? Can we relate this ^{idea} ~~idea~~ of horizons to life?

~~I'm sure this word "horizon" can be related to life.~~ We're all aware of the differences that exist between individuals. In a sense this difference between individuals is connected with this matter of horizons.

One person's horizon may be very close to him. He can reach out and touch it with an outstretched finger. He lives within a small circle. His interest are few; his friends are few. Perhaps he limits his friends to those who think as he does, or who have the same colored skin as he has. Such a person is all wrapped up in himself and what a small package he makes. Such people, in a sense, have limited vision; they dwell in the lush and fertile valley of ease and contentment. They possess no concern for their fellow men. I'm always reminded of the words of Dr. Halford Luccock who said in connection with the mission of the church, "We need to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable."

And then on the other hand, we have the ^{people} ~~person~~ whose horizons ^{are} ~~is~~ unlimited. There are individuals who stand on the mountain tops of human experience and look down into the valley and see their brother falling and stumbling in the darkness. Such people have powerful vision. Their vision extends as far as human life itself. It transcends national boundaries. Such a person is ^{Bishop Doth} ~~Albert Schweitzer~~ who has spent his lifetime laboring in the mission fields of darkest Africa.

Many of us become selfish at the point of our own religion. We go on the assumption that Christianity is just for us. We too readily identify the Kingdom of God with the United States and forget the ~~something~~ multitudes of the world. ^{+++ TRAVEL -} The horizon of Jesus was as wide as humanity itself. It mattered not to Jesus whether it was a Samaritan or a Roman soldier. It mattered little to him whether it was a sinning woman, a diseased leper, or a rich young ruler. All these were children of God and of infinite value in the sight of God. And that is how it should

be with us. It should make little difference to us whether the person is a Jew, a negro, a Chinese peasant, ^{OR} ~~or even a poverty stricken family within this very community.~~ The horizons of Jesus were as wide as humanity itself. His last command was: "Go ye into all the world preaching the gospel". Perhaps one of the weaknesses of local churches enters in at this point - the trouble is that they're sometimes too local.

HORIZONS LI ITED. Now perhaps some of you are thinking something like this,

"Sure it is all well and good to preach such a wonderful thought. But gosh, I'm just not able to respond. I find it difficult to hold a distant horizon in my view. The horizon is pushing in on me." Yes... *My life is bounded - I + I + I.* We all get that feeling. Life does bring its dark moments as well as its joyous ones. We do get feeling tired and overwrought. Life does look dark and depressing for many of us.

Interpret carefully

In a sense we're reminded of the geography lesson of England. Bounded on the west by the Irish Sea; on the south by the English Channel; on the east by the North Sea; and the on the north by Scotland. Sure life does set that way; it becomes bounded on all sides by physical considerations, or by economic conditions, or by environmental limitations. The horizon grows dim for many of us. Life pushes in on us, and we can't seem to push back that horizon even though we want to.

One thinks of the prophet Elijah. Following an ordeal on Mount Carmel Elijah fled into the wilderness. He flung himself under a juniper tree and beseeched God that he might die. Listen to his words: "It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am no better than my fathers." We have here a picture of a man in despair; all the fight had gone out of him. He was suffering from physical and nervous reaction.

Yes it is not always easy to lift one's eyes to the horizon. The moments spent in a doctor's office or on a hospital bed can soon dash the hopes of the most cheerful person. And yet we recall that Paul wrote his most famous letters from prison. John Bunyan, the travelling tinsmith,

was a prisoner in Bedford Jail for many years. And yet his thoughts eluded bolts and bars and he gave the world the immortal classic; "Pilgrim's Progress". He seems to symbolize those lines of poetry, "Two men behind prison bars; one sees mud, and the other stars." Robert Louis Stevenson gave great literature to the world, but we forget that he was a sick man when he wrote. There's no smell of the medicine bottle in any of his books.

PUSHING BACK
THE HORIZON.

How can we push back our horizons? What can we do when things press in on us. I'd like to mention a few of the ministering spirits which are provided for us.

One of the agents that man has within his grasp to use is that of literature. Great and noble literature can do much for the mind and spirit of man. Emily Dickinson tell us of what great literature can do:

"He ate and drank the precious words, his spirit grew robust.
He knew no more that he was poor, nor that his frame was dust.
He danced along the dinghy days and his bequest of wings was
but a book".

Great music will serve to push back barriers. It helps to bring our finite lives within the shadow of the infinite.

The beauty of nature also aids in pushing back the horizon. Think for a moment of the green hills, of skies flooded with loveliness, of fields clothed with corn, of the glorious rays of the setting sun, of the seashore where waves come rolling in like silver from the melting pots of God. What healing there is in nature; what blessings for a troubled mind. Wordsworth expresses it well:

And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime...
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things.

Literature, music, and nature.....these serve to push back our horizons. But the most enduring source and most important factor available to us for pushing back our horizons is the way of faith. † †

Man today is lacking in this faith which is so essential. One just needs to scan the list of best seller books and he soon discovers that man is insecure. Man is lacking in faith today. He is searching and looking for something. Why? World events of the past fifteen years has something to do with it. And perhaps the church has failed to give its people adequate spiritual nourishment.

Whatever the reason may be, we do need to recognize that our faith is in need of strengthening. Too many of us have the "sprinkling" type of religion. We drop into the church to have water "sprinkled" on us at the time of baptism; we have rice sprinkled on us at the time of the church wedding; and dirt sprinkled on us at the time of death. Do we look to the church only in time of baptisms, weddings and funerals.

We do need to cultivate a vital relationship with God. His power, his purposes, his presence and promises are there waiting to be tapped.

Complete Confidence in
Man is something more than just a puppet dangling at the end of a string. Man doesn't stand alone in this universe. There is a force greater than himself.....there is someone we can turn to for reliance and trust and guidance. Man needs to recapture the simple faith of the psalmist: *It will appear in 121st Psalm* "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills; from whence cometh my help? My help cometh from the Lord which made heaven and earth".

Through faith in God our burdens are lifted; our horizons pushed back revealing the truth, the goodness and the love which is the foundation stone of our universe.

"He giveth power to the faint; and to them that hath no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."

Thoreau: "Lead lives of quiet desperation"

"LIVING CAN BE FUN"

A little girl was riding a train with her mother. Every so often, the little girl would point to something outside the train, and say excitedly to her mother, "Look mother....some houses". Or "Look mothersome horses". Or "Look mother.....some cows". This continued for some time. The people sitting near them probably became uneasy. The mother became embarrassed, and finally she turned to those sitting around them, and said: "You know she's still young enough to think that everything is wonderful".

How wonderful it would be if we could carry over into the adult years of life the marvelous ability of little children to see so many wonderful things in life. The plain truth is that we get so wrapped up in the business of every day living that we fail to see the simple things in life that do bring joy and happiness. For many people, living is nothing more than a matter of sleeping, eating, and working. We lead good lives, but we lead lives lacking in enthusiasm and sparkle. Perhaps some of us would merit the inscription found on a tombstone of a woman in an old New England cemetery:

"She lived a pious life, but not with
enthusiasm..."

It shouldn't have to be this way. Life can be fun. To be sure there are times when life is serious business. We can't go around like grinning idiots all the time. But we can find greater happiness and joy in life by following two suggestions.....

LIVE GRATEFULLY First, we need to learn to live gratefully. There are many things in our every day environment that should be a source of inspiration to us. The trouble is that we fail to recognize these things. As

"Two men behind prison bars, the one sees
mud, and the other stars....."

Rather than lifting our eyes to the beauty of the stars, we are looking down at the uninspiring mud. No wonder our lives are drab and dull. In the first chapter of Genesis, we find these words, "And God saw that it was good". The writer of these lines was referring to our universe. We need to keep this view of the universe in our minds. We need to remember that no matter what happens, it is God's world, and not such a bad place after all. There's so much beauty around us that we should be ashamed to live and fail to be filled with feelings of gratitude for it all. Elizabeth Barrett Browning reminds us:

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God."

It's a privilege to be alive in our universe. It's God's world, and it's a good world.

What's true of the world in which we live is also true of people. People can be wonderful. To be sure, we all have moments when we aren't quite so sure. But, by and large, there is that in the human family which causes us to be grateful for the friendships of life.

A fourteen year old Jewish girl living in the Netherlands during World War II somehow managed to cling to her belief in the goodness of people despite the harsh, cruel treatment she and her family received at the hands of the Nazi invaders. We know of her today because of a diary she kept during those years. Her name was Anne Frank. Early in 1945, after hiding successful from the German occupation forces for three years in an attic of a warehouse, she and her family were discovered and taken away to a concentration camp where they were murdered. The last entry Anne Frank made in her Diary was quite significant. It contained the words:

"In spite of everything, I still believe that people are good at heart."

As we grow in our realization and appreciation of this fact, we will find greater joy in living. Life is far more thrilling for us when we cultivate attitudes of appreciation for others rather than firing the poison darts of harsh, unkind criticism.

If we would find greater fun in living, then we first need to live gratefully - grateful for the world in which we live, filled with beauty, wonder, and splendor, and grateful for people in our world, who basically are good, kind and understanding.

LIVE ADVENTUREOUSLY.

Second, we need to learn to live adventurously. Dr. Liston Pople, the Dean of the Yale Divinity School, tells about a certain man who retired from business. When this man was asked one time what he did in his spare time, he said:

"When I get up in the morning, I read the obituary column in the newspaper. If my name isn't there, I go back to bed."

This is true of a good many people long before the time of retirement comes around. We stop growing. We are satisfied to be alive. But life was made for something more than just this. Only as we keep on learning and keep on growing do we find the rewards of happiness and abundant living that God has for us. Only as we live adventurously and creatively does life begin to fill up with purpose and happiness.

NEW WORD.
The Portugese sailors of the time of Columbus asserted that land could be reached by sailing west on the Atlantic. They sailed about one hundred miles, and confirmed their contentions by finding some small islands. But they didn't go quite far enough. Like the sailors of that time many of us don't go far enough in the applications of the faith that we profess in order to find deeper and lasting satisfactions. We stay close to the shores where it is fairly safe. As a result we get bored with life and ourselves. We need to break out into the open where we can live creatively and adventurously.

The American industrial leader Henry J. Kaiser said one time in a lay sermon:

"Your plan for work and happiness should be big, imaginative and daring. Strike out boldly for the things you honestly want more than anything else in the world. The mistake is to put your sights too low, and not raise them too high. The definite, far away goal will super charge your whole body and spirit;

it will awaken your mind and creative imagination, and put meaning into otherwise lowly, step by step tasks you must go through in order to attain your final success."

In other words, it is daring experimentation and expression that will help on to find greater meaning in life. Learn to live adventureously and creatively if you would enjoy life more. And, as one old wise commander said, "Take your work seriously, but never take yourself seriously".

In order to live this way, one must recognize that he has power - power to move, and change, and transform. Life is not fixed. If one wants to find deep satisfaction, then he must throw himself into some great cause or issue and help to boost it toward realization. The more we become absorbed in a worth while task, the most interest life appears to have. Live adventureously by saying "yes" to requests for service in community and church affairs. Interest someone else in something worthwhile - the church, the Boy Scouts, and other service groups. By so doing, new interests take the place of selfish self interests.

The Hayden Planetarium, here in New York, advertised, in the spirit of fun, reservations for a trip to the moon in a new space ship. People were warned that the speed would be hard on blood pressure, and that the moon was a cool and arid place, a place where conversation was impossible and walking very difficult. In spite of all this, they received 18,000 reservations. A psychologist studied the requests, and reported that, aside from the gags such as those who wanted the hot dog concessions, most of them were from people who wanted a chance to escape from the problems of life.

The day hasn't yet come when we can escape from our troubles by making a trip to the moon. It may not come for some time, and so we still have to go on living in the same old world with the same old people. But it can be more fun than we think.

OMIT
If a person insists on escaping, then escape into a larger concern where you may be adventurous and creative. Living can be great fun. Especially when we learn to live gratefully, and adventureously.

LET US PRAY: GRANT, O Lord, that what we have said with our lips, and heard with our ears, we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives.....Amen.

If a person insists on escaping, then let me suggest that you escape from the area of your own self concern, into a larger area where you may live creatively and adventureously. For as Jesus reminds us:

"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it."