

"LOSING A SENSE OF DIRECTION"

INTRODUCTION I have chosen to undergird today's meditation with two Biblical texts, both of them favorites of mine. The first is from the Gospel of John, chapter 14, verses 5 and 6:

"And Thomas said to Him, 'How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth and the life.'"

And the second text is from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, verse 34:

"Therefore....do not be anxious about tomorrow - for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day".

DEVELOPMENT It's so easy to lose our sense of direction. It's so hard to maintain our perspective. The pressures, the tensions and the stress that we daily live under in this city can tear us apart. It's very easy to feel lost and lonely...that nobody cares. It's hard to know where to go and which way to turn.

We find that many of the old landmarks that use to help us position ourselves have disappeared or are under attack. We feel uncertain and somewhat apprehensive about the future. We fight to keep what measure of faith we have, knowing that hope is related to faith. And when despair outdistances hope then, I believe we're heading into trouble - both personally and in terms of society at large.

I wonder if you're in danger of losing your sense of direction and your perspective because you've locked yourself up in a little room that does have some open doors. And that's the message that we need to hear...there are doors that can lead us out, options available to us, that no situation is without hope.

I would remind you here on the first Sunday of a new year that we are never without resources, never so unworthy that we cannot be forgiven, never incapable of a fresh start, a new beginning. We are persons to whom Christ can bring the fullness of life. We have value and worth - not because of who we are or where we live or what we have achieved. We are of value because we are human beings, children of God, loved by Him.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life". Yes, He also said, "Do not be anxious about tomorrow...for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day". And hear again and take heart from that wonderful word of Paul from his letter to the Romans (12th chapter):

"Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould, but let God re-mould your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the Plan of God for you is good, meets all His demands and moves toward the goal of true maturity".

GOAL OF TRUE MATURITY That's reading from the J. B. Phillips translation of Paul's letter. I like the way he puts - the "goal of true maturity". And in order to recover and regain that sense of direction toward that goal, you must have a self you can live with, a self you can believe in. Who knows? - maybe there are some things in your life that need to be ~~changed~~ - prayed about, thought about, worked over, You know, some of us change only when change is forced upon us.

↳ CHANGED.

There's a monastery in the East where access to the inside is gained only by being brought up the steep and treacherous side of a mountain in a basket fastened to a rope. It's told that a person was descending and one was waiting at the foot of the mountain to go back up to the top in the basket. "How often do you change the rope" asked the man at the bottom as the other man stepped out of the basket. Back came the reply, "Only when it breaks."

Let's not wait until it's too late to ^{→ TO DEVELOP} make those changes that perhaps need to be made. Recovering a sense of direction in our lives, we can begin now - where we are, with what we have and try a self that we can live with, a self we can believe in and be happy with, remembering that spiritual formula that Jesus gave Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, the life - Thomas". Come back to the Master if you are feeling lost and lonely and remember there's light enough and love enough for every step of the way when you walk with Him.

RESOLUTIONS Each year at this time we celebrate the anniversary of the Great American Resolution. The making of resolutions has been the target over the years of some good-natured ridicule. Who was it who said: "They just go in one year and out the other". But hold on...I like the idea of resolutions and taking stock and setting goals. Leaves get turned. Slates are wiped clean. Fresh intent and renewed purpose take hold. All of this is to the good. As we had on the bulletin board outfront this week, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step".

Now, hopefully we have spent some time and given thought in recent days to our goals for 1981 and the steps we're taking to achieve those goals. It's this measure of dissatisfaction with ourselves that gives birth to dreams, higher longings. Think of it as the stirring of God's spirit in us. Yes, it's good to dream, to set goals, but it is the road we travel daily that needs to be watched.

I like the emphasis Jesus put on living each day at a time, not looking too far ahead, not worrying about the future, but concentrating on living each day a day at a time and pouring all we have in to it.

I don't know if you happened to see in Wednesday's POST, Dear Abby's column. I read what she has to say. I seldom disagree with her advice. She gave us a nice New Year's Present in her column. 12 Resolutions. I'm going to read them to you in a moment. After I clipped them I found a place in our home where all members of the family would be sure to read them. Where do you think I put them. I put them on the door of the refrigerator. Her resolutions are good and need to be shared. I don't think she originated them, only paraphrased them. I think they come from Overeaters Anonymous.

Entitled, Resolve to Face One Day At a Time. Here it is:

(See Her Column)

If any of you wish to have a copy of those 12 resolutions mention it to me at the door.....I'll share a copy with you. Put them up on your refrigerator day and read them each day.

I close with those familiar words spoken by the late King George VI of England, New Year's Day, 1940. Remember them...some of you may...

"I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year, 'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.' And he replied, 'Go out into the arkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light and safer than any known way.'

'So I went forth and, finding the hand of God, strode gladly into the night, and He led me towardd the hills and the breaking of dawn in the East.'"

PRAYER As we kneel at Thy table this hour, O God, and receive the bread and take the cup, strengthen us to meet whater may be ahead of us in the days of this New Year. We remember thy love is unfailing. In the name of Christ. And that we can never drift beyond the circle of your care. In the name and spirit of Christ. Amen

Confirm within us, O God, the hopes and the aspirations, the dreams and resolutions of this hour. Make us sensitive to thy presence and thy peace and power.