

"ROOM AT THE BOTTOM"

TEXT: "You know the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whosoever would be great among you must be your servant".

(Matthew 20: 24-25)

INTRODUCTION

One of the sleaziest and most repulsive characters ever to force his oily way through the pages of a book is Sammy Glick, the central subject in Budd Schulberg's novel, What Makes Sammy Run. His aim is to reach the top in the movie industry. To this aim he subordinates and manipulates everything else in life. Up, up, up he climbs because - as a friend put it - "He has a genius for looking out for Number One". Sammy runs and runs without let-up because he is filled and pulled by corrosive ambition.

And I suspect the disgust we feel for Sammy Glick grows out of the fact that he portrays the worst in our grubbing, clutching, acquisitive society. Sammy goes openly after what we inwardly pursue.

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Jesus found some of this among His disciples. Unfortunately He discovered it just after the solemn announcement that death awaited Him in Jerusalem. In Matthew's account the incident was triggered by the mother of James and John who pressed in upon Jesus seeking a favor for her boys. As the record has it,

"The mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to Him with her sons and kneeling before Him, she asked Him for something". What she was asking was this, "Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left hand, in your Kingdom..."

The other disciples were somewhat indignant when they heard this. In fact, this little maneuver of James and John touched off a major flap among the twelve. The ten were angry not because they themselves were clean and pure, but because they had been "one-upped"... "out-foxed". Jesus put an end to their agitation and settled the issue quickly and decisively with words that we need to hear from time to time. Yes, He said...

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In the world, the goal is domination. In the Kingdom of God, it is service, service alone that counts!

DEVELOPMENT

In the light of these words of Jesus, the Sammy Glick in all of us stands condemned. In our society it's the cut-throat scramble for maximum self-advancement that both ruins and rules life. If it's money, we want the most. If it's title, we want the best. If it's power, we want the broadest. We want to measure a person in our culture by the service he commands, by the people he controls, by the wealth he acquires. We keep driving for the top, turning our friends and fellow-men into competitors enroute.

And Jesus stands there within our ulcer-ridden madness telling us that there is room at the bottom for the full unfolding of our humanity in the role of servant.

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SERVANT CONCEPT This phrase "servant of the Lord" comes to us out of the Old Testament where we find it had different meanings. Sometimes it referred to an individual, sometimes to a remnant, and sometimes to the whole people of Israel.

But whatever the particular application in a given instance, it is clear that when God calls a people He calls them not to the enjoyment of privilege or position, but to the exercise of the role of servant in His name.

And St. Paul understood this, for in his Second Letter to the Corinthians, he said,

"For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for the sake of Jesus"

Periodically, we would do well to remember this word when we consider our own individual ministry within the larger framework of the body of Christ. There's hardly a limit to what can happen in this or in any congregation if we have a sufficient number of persons who are totally indifferent to title, to position, to praise, to credit. A lot of "kingdom-building" can get done if you don't have to worry about who's going to get all the credit. Stroking bruised and fragile egos takes time and energy in any Church. And tragic, indeed, is the number of worthy concerns that have floundered on the rocks because people could not subordinate their personal desire to have control, to have power, to rule and regulate and dominate...and to receive praise in the interest of the larger good. Praise the Lord that it's not a problem in this Church!

When we consider the role or mission of the Church in the world it's well for us to remember the "servant" concept here, too. The Church is not here to exact tribute from the world - whether the tribute of obedience, or respect, or money, or legal favors - but to be a servant of the world. It would not be inappropriate for us to affix a sign over the central doorway of the Church that bore the words, "Servant's Entrance" - for basically this is what we are called to be when we are called as the people of God.

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He gave us the term "direct human service". His life's faith surfaces in a book of his sermons called Reverence for Life. In it, he says:

"Let the good you do - in gratitude - match the benefits you have received. Balance the books inside of you, and see if you are paying in full the amount you owe to unknown men and to fate itself.

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"Has a person helped you by giving you the right teaching to achieve something worthwhile? Look around and see if there isn't someone in equal need of you. Have you been given without charge something for which you usually have to pay? Give something for which you would normally expect payment. Has someone taken time for you which he could hardly afford to give? This obligates you to take time for another, even if you are overworked. This is what you must do all of your life, in things both great and small. Don't talk about it. It is an item in a ledger only you can or should see - and it's nobody else's business. Only be sure that the balance sheet is correct."

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"Language has created the word loneliness to express the pain of being alone....and the word solitude to express the glory of being alone".

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CLOSING

There are many people who are hurting with whom we come in touch with each day. Perhaps you're one of them. "Non-ministrari sed ministrare" is the way it was put in Latin. Not to be ministered unto, but to minister. The world - points upward and says, "There's room at the top - come, sieze it." Jesus stands in the midst of that world and quietly reminds us, "There's room at the bottom - come, serve" - in my name. For "whosoever would be great among you must be your servant".

"The Kingdoms of the earth go by
In purple and in gold;
They rise, they flourish, and they die,
And all their tale is told.

One Kingdom only is Divine,
One banner triumphs still,
Its King a servant, and its sign -
A gibbet on a hill".

PRAYER O God and Master of us all, help us to put into practice in our daily lives these things that we believe in our better moments and think so sincerely and so seriously. And as we now prepare to leave and go our separate ways, help us so to live that we may be more nearly measured by the character of our Lord and Master, Jesus, who came among us not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Amen

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
July 24, 1983

ORDER OF WORSHIP
11 A. M.

ORGAN "Choral in E Major" Franck

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 297 "The Church's One Foundation"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (seated)

Help us, O Lord, who claim to be Christians.
Teach us our responsibilities to You and to others
in this world. Save us from loving religion in-
stead of You. Take fire and burn away our hypocrisy.
Take water and wash away the blood that we cause to
shed. Take sunlight and dry the tears of those we
have hurt. Take love and plant it in our hearts,
that peace and joy may be made real for all people
everywhere. For we ask these things in the name
and spirit of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

SILENT MEDITATION - WORDS OF ASSURANCE - LORD'S PRAYER

PSALTER "The Lord Is My Light" No. 563

GLORIA PATRI No. 558

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH No. 740

SOLO "Sweet Little Jesus Boy!" McGemsey

SCRIPTURE Mark 10: 35 - 45 Page 878

PASTORAL PRAYER

PARISH CONCERNS

SOLO "I Will Sing New Songs of Gladness" Dvorak

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 224 "Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine"

SERMON "Room At the Bottom" Mr. Clarke

HYMN NO. 233 "Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Salvation Now Is Come to Earth" Bach

*** Interval for Ushering

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar today are given in love
and gratitude for life's many blessings by Alice
W. Bud Brown of Atlanta, Georgia.

TODAY'S MUSIC

We welcome Michael D. Reed to the organ console
today in the absence of Lyndon Woodside. We also
welcome Bobbie Heron, a member of our church and
choir, as the soloist for today's service.

USHERS

The ushers today are Richard Stanford, Wayne
Atwell, Russell Flagg, Rod Hoover, Frank High,
David Kilbride, Alan Register and Mark Wyrick.

AN INVITATION

Punch and cookies will be served in the Russe
Room following the service. All are invited to s
in these moments of warmth made possible for us t
by Peggy Carey, Norma D'Ambrosio and Lynda Kenny.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

The Adult Bible Class meets on Sunday morning
9:30 in Fellowship Hall. Coffee is available and
friends are always most welcome to join the class

CHURCH SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

During July and August, sessions of Church S
are available for younger children as well as Nur
care for infants and toddlers. These informal se
are held on the fourth floor of the church buildi

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

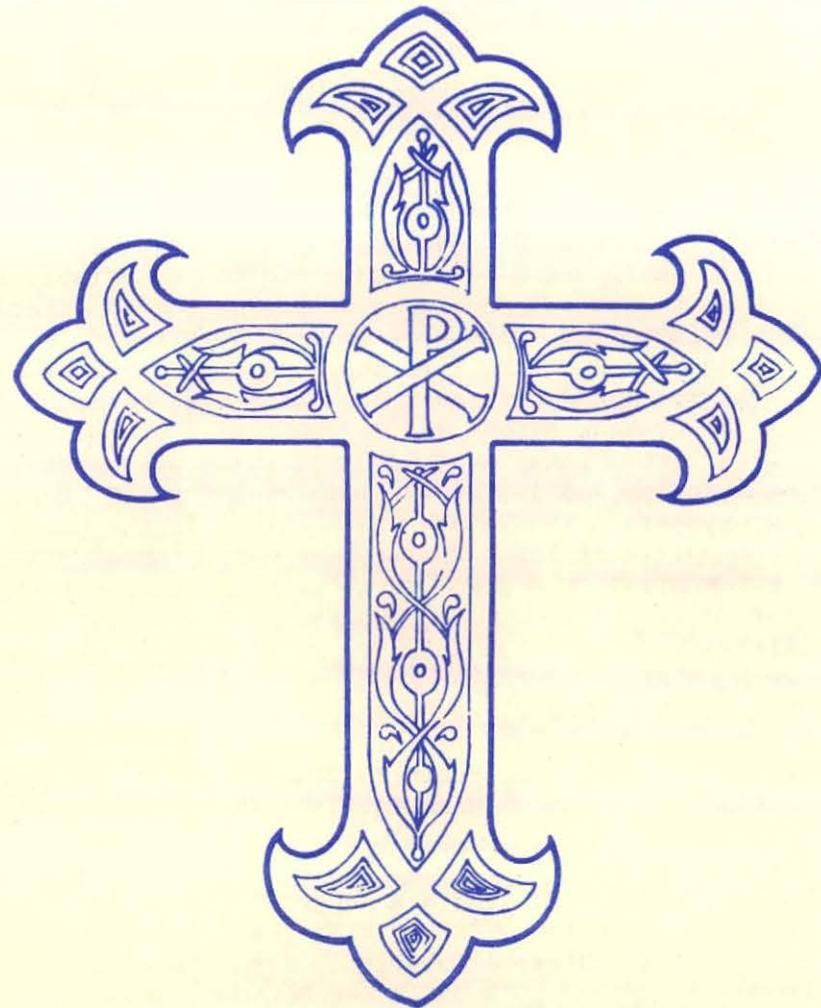
106 East 86th Street
New York, N.Y. 10028
AT 9-6997

CHURCH DIRECTORY

Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke Minister
Mr. Lyndon Woodside Organist-Choir Director
Mr. Jack Schmidt Business Manager
Mrs. Lynn B. Cohen Secretary
Miss Anna-Liisa Rintala Secretary
Mrs. Judith Keisman Day School Director
Mr. Abdo Alnaham Custodian

GENERAL OFFICERS

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Mrs. Joyce Gartrell
President, Board of Trustees Miss Elody Hoelscher
President, United Methodist Women Mrs. John J. Risley
Chairman, Administrative Board Mr. Lee Myers
Chairman, Council on Ministries Mrs. Joyce Gartrell
Chairman, Education Committee Mr. William Bell
Chairman, Finance Committee Mr. Edward J. Brown
Chairman, Church Property Committee.. Mr. Doug Heimbigner
Co-Chairmen, Membership Committee Mr. Frank High
Ms. Beverly Limestall
Co-Chairmen, Day School Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Hughes
Chairman, Ushers Mr. Larry Morales
Coordinators, Adult Fellowship Miss Cathy Syble
Mr. David Kilbride
Superintendent, Sunday School Miss Janet Ernst



PARK AVENUE
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