

"SOME ADVICE FROM ST. PAUL"

TEXT: "And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart."

(Galatians 6: 9)

INTRODUCTION

In the small dressing room off-stage there was a large sign next to the door which read as follows:

"Don't cut your act! The people in this audience have paid good money to see your show, and the management expects you to give them the best you've got."

Upon reading those words, I wondered why the manager had printed that sign and had it placed there near the stage, and my curiosity set me off on an imaginary excursion with a theatrical company. It went something like this.

The members of the troupe, I surmised, had been glad to join the organization. They had studied their parts well. They had rehearsed faithfully for days on end. The time arrived when they were to take the show "on the road". Every evening they performed with greater ease...picking up their cues better and better...with the result that the show got better and better. Finally, opening night. Good reviews. A hit. In the weeks that followed, capacity crowds filled the theater.

But then after a couple of months, it got to be something of an old story. Oh, it began to drag. For one thing, the actors knew their parts so well that they could carry on without much in the way of effort. Rehearsals were virtually abandoned. Slowly, but surely a kind of blight settled over what had been only a few months earlier a very spirited, moving moment in the theater. Members of the audience were seen making for the exit before the performance was over and some were heard to say as they walked out on to the sidewalk, "What a waste of time...over-rated...dull, boring...what happened in there?"

Now all of this was just imaginary in my mind. This need not be the case and in most instances is not, but it can happen. You know this as well as I do.

DEVELOPMENT

What we're talking about here can happen - not only in the theater, but in most areas of life. It's the sort of thing that can happen in our own lives, in our jobs, in churches if we aren't careful - as well as in theaters.

I think it begins to happen when people allow what they do to become routine and monotonous. And there is that sense in which a theater serves as a miniature model of the human scene. Said Shakespeare, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players". Enthusiasm is always greater at the beginning and tends to diminish the longer we stay at something.

It's true in the ministry. It's true in medicine. I imagine that teachers find it to be true, although teachers are often protected against those subtle penalties of getting tired and bored with their jobs because they're closely "checked" on by their principals. Doctors and lawyers and ministers usually don't have principals and headmasters going around and "checking up" on them.

For the majority of workers in the world - whether in a business or a profession - there are not periodic check-ups and examinations once they're safely launched. They go on their own gait, after the period of training is over. And, if they slump along the way, they do this gradually that they hardly realize this themselves, until failure or dismissal or rebuke stirs them to the awareness that they've slumped!

WHAT'S NEEDED

Now, I feel that if this problem of slumping is to be solved, it will have to be taken under consideration by persons whose enthusiasm is still keen, whose inquisitiveness about the world is still fresh, and whose inner life is saturated with the belief that what they're doing is important.

And this is not a matter of age. I know of some people in their seventies and eighties who are in less danger of slipping than many in their twenties and thirties. One of my heroes is a woman who saw eighty a few years back and who continues to walk through life with zest and enthusiasm, lifting the level of life wherever she goes. She continues to lead a challenging, productive life, helping others around difficult corners. Her mind is active and her spirit is positive. She shared something with me some time back that happened to her here in the neighborhood which I love and it's worth sharing with you.

My friend was on the York Avenue bus, sitting up front behind the driver. It seems another elderly person got on and looked over in the direction of my friend and with a rather snappish voice, said, "Don't you know these seats are reserved for Senior Citizens." And with that, my friend who's in her eighties, got up and moved to another part of the bus.

We need to be alert for the arrival of that time when if you're a typist, for instance, you just don't go to the bother of erasing that accidental "N" that you struck when you meant to strike an "M", but content yourself with going back and whacking an "M" vigorously on top of the "N"...thinking to yourself, "Aw... what the heck...nobody's going to notice it."

It's certainly not a major crime. You're not going to have a meter maid come along and put a ticket on you, but - mind you - it's a sign, a tiny sign. It's a sign that maybe you're slipping into bad habits...no longer caring, having demonstrated those early symptoms of carelessness, fatigue and indifference.

You may be saying to yourself, "Oops...I'm still in my twenties or my thirties and I'm already doing this." Yes, you can start your toboggan ride to nowhere in your twenties and if you aren't careful, you can arrive there by payday. So, part of the message today is to say to you - whoever you are - be on the alert for the arrival of that time when you no longer care, when you're on the verge of slumping. Let this bit of advice from St. Paul nourish your thought and brace you for a better time ahead.

One act certainly has not established a habit, but if this attitude of apathy should become a fixation, then you might just as well face it: you've gone about as far toward that longed-for promotion as you're likely to go. The rest of the the trip will find you "hanging on" to your job, perhaps in jeopardy of losing it. "Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart."

BACK TO PAUL'S ADVICE

But back to Paul's word, to his advice. Summer is over and we've launched a new season. Anticipation is running high. There's a lot happening. These words of Paul that launched this message are words I've been carrying around with me for several weeks now, wanting to put them before you...ever since Labor Day.

And it's strange how a verse of Scripture gets into your bloodstream, into your thoughts...like a melody that you find yourself humming over again. There were a number of times when I was away from the city in August...walking on the beach or on the golf course...reflecting on our life together here in this Church...wondering what was going on and how it would be when we were all finally back together again.....over and over this word from Paul's letter to the Galatians kept coming back into my mind.

I believe this is the word we need to hear not only in our lives, but also in our church as well. It's as though Paul were saying to us, "Yes...watch out for that critical time when life ceases to stir you...when you really don't care...to care whether you show up or not...to make some new friends...no effort to hold on to the friendships you think you're sure of...no concern in reaching out and helping someone else..."

I believe Paul would say to us in this Church,

"You've done well so far this year...don't grow weary now in your well doing. You can do even better. Get in there and take hold once again. Cling to that vision. Let those memories of past days here stir you. Let those dreams you have for this Church move you to even greater heights of service in the Master's Name."

What a Church. What a congregation. What people. What talent and what gifts there are in this fellowship. And what opportunities have been given to us all in this place and time to declare His way through our deeds and words. The miracle of our worship on a Sunday moves and motivates many. It cuts through and it challenges and changes. Don't think it doesn't...and you make it happen - through your prayers, your presence, and yes - through your gifts and service.

It was on a Sunday morning such as this about five years ago that a young woman came in here, worshipped with us, drew strength and departed. She felt something happening here and wrote a brief note to express it. She said something that I treasure and remember which sums it all up so beautifully. "When I walk out of the Church I feel like I'm a winner." Jesus Christ makes us feel like winners. This is the miracle we help to shape and build, and "let us not grow weary in the well-doing" of it.

Some time back, Dear Abby had some lines entitled, Scenario for A Winner, which I clipped and put in the sermon notebook. Winners and losers...what's the difference. According to these lines, it is:

"A winner says, 'Let's find out'. A loser says, 'nobody knows'.
A winner says, 'I'm good, but not as good as I ought to be.'
A loser says, 'I'm not as bad as a lot of other people.'
A winner listens. A loser just waits until it's his turn to talk.!

A winner respects those who are superior to him and tries to learn from them. A loser resents the superiority of others and tries to find chinks in their armor.

A winner does more than his job. A loser says, 'I only work here.'

A winner says, "I fell". A loser says, "somebody pushed me!"

A winner makes commitments. A loser makes promises".

COMMITMENT TIME

Winners make commitments. To be winners in the work we are engaged in, we need to have commitments made to Jesus Christ. And this is the time, the season for a renewal of commitments made in other places and in other times. Public and private commitments.

Of all the uplifting idealisms that have helped to sustain the courage and enthusiasm of people on this earth, there is none better than the way of the Man from Nazareth. His style of living is an insurance against slumping, against what the Bible calls "weariness in well-doing". For long ago He reminded us that this Universe which is our home is solvent, that it's trustworthy, that it constantly registers on our side. I think you can say that the management of this universe even puts up with our "overdrafts" - for which there is forgiveness and healing.

His evaluation of human existence reminds us that our lives are precious and that there's meaning behind it all. The universe will never let us down. And if you accept it and accept Him as a longterm proposition for your life, backed by a motive dynamic enough to preserve its integrity in all of your dealings, you will not grow weary in well doing. In Him and in His way, you will find that keenness of expectancy that we all need, that joy of enthusiasm that keeps us at it and will inherit what Jesus long ago described to His own followers as "The Abundant Life".

So be it. Praise the Lord. And let us pray together.

"Lord, we remember now the word of Jesus, and how He said long ago, 'I am come that they might have life and have it abundantly.' We know it is ours for the asking, that we only have to receive it, to build on it, to make it ours.

And as we do, we shall never grow weary in our well-doing. In His name we pray. Amen

ANTHEM: "Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayers"

"Spirit divine, attend our prayers, and make this house Thy home. Descend with all Thy gracious pow'rs, O come, O come great Spirit, come!

Come as the dove and spread Thy wings, Thy wings of peaceful love; descend with all Thy gracious pow'rs, O come, O come great Spirit, come!"

ANTHEM: "Psalm 23"

The second anthem today is a choral setting of the familiar 23rd Psalm.

ORGAN POSTLUDE

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

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audition to sing in the Choir. Rehearsals are held on Wednesdays at 6:15 pm in the downstairs Choir Room.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

Christmas cards are available again this year through the United Methodist Women. Take a moment to look over the selection during the coffee hour. Remember there's no sales tax and one-half of the cost is tax deductible. Place your order early to avoid rush.

SECOND SUNDAY BRUNCH BUNCH

The Second Sunday Brunch group will meet today at a nearby restaurant following the coffee hour. All are invited and not just those "39 and holding". For further information, be in touch with Lee Myers.

A SATURDAY RUMMAGE SALE

A Rummage Sale is planned for this coming Saturday, October 15th, in the Russell Room. Doors open at ten and close at three. Workers are needed. If you can lend a hand, be in touch with Janet Ernst, Coordinator. Remember that the more workers we have, the more we make and more children get to go to Summer Church Camp. It's for a good cause.

ADULT FELLOWSHIP GATHERING

The Adult Fellowship is sponsoring an Oktoberfest Party at the apartment of Linda Burtch, Saturday evening, October 15th, at 7 pm. A non-refundable deposit of \$3.00 is required by October 12th. For details, contact either Linda Burtch or Cathy Syble.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Education Committee will meet this next Thursday evening, October 13th, at 7:30 pm in the Russell Room.

The Teacher/Parent Workshop for the Sunday School workers is scheduled for Saturday, October 22nd, 10:30 am. Those planning to teach in the Sunday School in the coming months will find this workshop most helpful.

A WEEK FROM TUESDAY NIGHT

Tuesday evening, October 18th, is the date of this year's Charge Conference. It's the big meeting of the Fall for our parish and we look for a good turnout. The meeting begins at 7:30 pm in our third floor Fellowship Hall.

NOW'S THE TIME

Now's the time to sign up for a task in connection with this year's Church Fair. The date is November 19th. There's a job for everyone. We hope you'll give us your "Fair Share" of time and talent. Teddie Corsell, Fair Coordinator, will be glad to chat with you at the coffee hour.

FOR THE CRAFTY

Next Sunday - as every third Sunday of the month - there will be an informal craft workshop in the Russell Room following the coffee hour. Materials, as well as a sandwich lunch, will be provided. All are welcome.

NEW MEMBERS TO JOIN

New members will be received into the Fellowship of the Church in late November. Persons interested in learning more about the Church and the steps that lead to membership in it are invited to speak to Mr. Clarke.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

If you are interested in learning more about the life of Christ and want to bridge the gap between Sunday morning and the week day in New York City, or need to find some peace and quiet in a supportive atmosphere, please join the Adult Bible Class.

The class meets Sundays at 9:30 am in Fellowship Hall. Coffee is available and new members are always welcome. Chapters 14, 15 and 16 in Mark's Gospel are being studied during October.

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

Volunteers are needed from our Church to assist in the distribution of materials in the apartment buildings of our community for the Yorkville Emergency Alliance. Join with friends from neighboring Yorkville churches and synagogues in this major fund-raising appeal in our community. Winter is coming and there's much human suffering in the shadows of our homes.

The work gets done the weekend of October 21st - 23rd. Sign up at the coffee hour this morning and take responsibility for the building where you live. Let us know how many apartments in your building and we'll supply you with a door knob hanger with a flyer - designed by Joe Anna Arnett and Don Preniszni of our church. Through YEA, "neighbors can help neighbors".

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

October 9, 1983

ORDER OF WORSHIP

11 A. M.

ORGAN "Prelude and Fugue in E Minor" Bach

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 293 "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken"

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (seated)

O God, our Father, who hast set forth the way of life for us in Thy beloved Son, we confess with shame our slowness to learn of Him, our reluctance to follow Him. Thou hast spoken and called, and we have not given heed; Thy beauty hath shone forth, and we have been blind; Thou hast stretched out Thy hands to us through our fellows, and we have passed by. Forgive us our transgressions; help us to amend our ways and in Thine eternal goodness direct what we shall be, in the name and power of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

SILENT MEDITATION - WORDS OF ASSURANCE - LORD'S PRAYER

PSALTER "The Lord Reigns" No. 582

GLORIA PATRI No. 570

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH No. 740

ANTHEM "Spirit Divine, Attend Our Prayers" Brahms

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PASTORAL PRAYER

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM "Psalm 23" Zimmerman

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 270 "O Love Divine, That Stooped to Share"

SERMON "Advice From St. Paul" Mr. Clarke

HYMN NO. 483 "Rejoice, the Lord Is King"

BENEDICTION

LAY READER

We welcome Pamela Hubby to the Lectern today. A native of Syracuse, New York and a graduate of St. Lawrence University (BS and BA degrees), Pam is a Vice President at The Citizens and Southern National Bank's NY office. Here in the Church she sings in the choir and is a member of the Membership Committee.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar today are in memory of loved ones given by Anna Delson.

USHERS

The ushers today are Kenneth Barclay, Doug Heimbigner, Michael Hayes, Susan Langley, Beverly Limestall, Lee Myers and Ned Vail.

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 Phyllis Balk, Norma D'Ambrosio, Bobbie Heron, Audrey Myers, Becky and Jeff Sprouse.

CHURCH SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

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

PICK UP YOUR COPY

Be sure to pick up your copy of the October issue

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UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

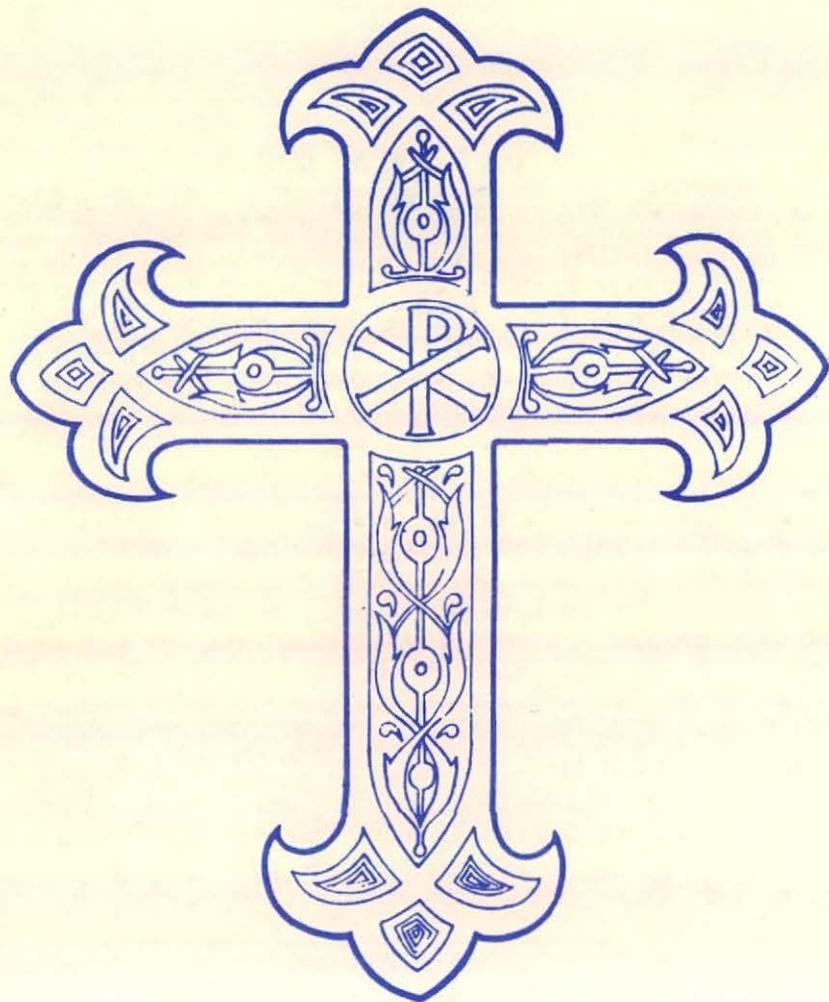
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