

"THE BUNDLE OF LIFE"

TEXT: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

"And let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not lose heart. So then, as we have opportunity...let us do good to all men..."

(Galatians 6: 2, 9 and 10)

INTRODUCTION Through the celebration of the Lord's Supper, our lives this day are linked up with the lives of many others around the world. We share in a network of relationships; we are in this network, this "bundle" - if you will - at all times through our lives. World Communion Sunday bring us closer together. It should unite us to love the world of people and serve it even as God loves it and gave His Son for it.

And this does involve each of us in some creative "risk-taking" for the sake people. There are a lot of people hurting these days, a lot of people who are trying to tell us that they need help badly. Some we see and pass by; others are more remote and invisible to us.

DEVELOPMENT The other evening my wife and I were watching the Merv Griffin Show and two of his guests that night were Neil Simon and his wife, Marsha Mason. The three of them talked about some of the plays that he's written and the movies based on them. Reference was made to one of his early plays, "Sweet Charity".

To me, one of the unforgettable scenes in Neil Simon's "Sweet Charity" was the opening action. Charity is walking by a lake with her boy friend...telling him how much she loves him. It's obvious that he is not the least bit interested in reciprocating her feelings. In fact, he suddenly grabs her punse, shoves her into the lake and runs off. As she is there floundering in the water a number of people go by.

First, a couple walks up and the woman says, "Look, Walter, there's a girl down there...drowning". And he says, "Don't look, dear". "But Walter...." "Don't look, I tell you. Don't get involved....it's none of our business". A football player comes by, "Hey...there's a girl in there. I think she's drowning". Along about this time an ice cream vendor appears. "What's going on". The woman says, "That attractive young girl is drowning!"

Another man comes upon the scene. "What did she say?" The football player answers, "See....she's gone down two, three times already". By now, the ice cream vendor is shouting, "Ice cream....get your ice cream". And he has a customer. The football player, now getting excited says, "Jeez, I don't think she can even swim". And a woman says, "Sure doesn't look like it". She then yells, "You should've taken swimming lessons. Now it's too late". A baseball player comes up now and says, "Hey, I'll get my kid brother. He's never seen a drowning". And the ice cream vendor continues to hawk his wares. "Soda! Ice cold soda!" And he has another customer.

A man comes up now with a dog on a leash. He asks, "What's going on? What's happened?" A man answers, "There's a girl in the lake. Looks like she's

have said that the strong must bear the burdens of the weak, that in the words of the UN song,

"You're in the same boat brother, if you tip one end you're gonna tip the other".

WHAT IS IT WE WANT FOR OURSELVES

What is it we most want for ourselves?
To be treated as human beings. What is it then that is demanded - that we give others the same treatment. And this, it seems to me, is the MINIMUM DEMAND of a people whose God has said He has made all men - all people - his children. As John 3:16 reminds us:

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son."

The world. Not the Church. Not just those who bear His name. God so loved the world.

"As we have opportunity" said Paul, "let us do good to all men". "Let us not grow weary in well-doing"...here in this Church. I believe our track record in responding to human need has been quite good, but we can do even better. And now is the time for us to take hold once again...becoming involved..."bearing one another's burdens....fulfilling the law of Christ". We have suggestions of programs and concerns for you...perhaps helping with UMPA, if you enjoy teenagers, or helping as a hospital volunteer, or lending time to working with the elderly of our community through Search and Care. I could go on. People are being pushed down and some of us are too busy "walking our dogs" to even notice that we're needed.

CLOSING

One of the oldest stories in the preacher's barrel of illustrations is the one about the contest that was held one time to find the shortest possible poem. The contest was nearly won by an entry which was entitled Fleas which simply said:

"Adam,
Had 'em"

But the winning poem was not only shorter, but it touched more deeply into one of the basic questions about the bundle of life, for it simply said:

"I,
Why?"

Friend, each of us has to answer that question for himself...or herself. But as you try to answer it, remember that "we're in it together"...sharing the bundle of life" - with all of its hopes and dreams, its pains and pleasures, it troubles with our brothers and sisters around the world. It's a world that begins at the doorstep of this church. As we ~~take the~~ break the bread and take the cup, let us remember all those for whom Christ died: the homeless, the hungry, the hurting. Let us also remember that word in the Bible "to whom much is given...much also is expected".

drowning". The man with the dog cries out, "Drowning? There's a girl drowning and you all are just standing around? My God, why doesn't someone do something?" And a woman indignantly says to him, "Why don't you?" And he answers haughtily, "I can't. I'm walking my dog".

In our times there are a lot of us walking our dogs as people are drowning and the world and this city in which you and I live has in it more and more things which are pushing people down....and we're indifferent to the cries for help. "Why don't you do something?" "I can't. I'm busy...walking my dog".

WHAT CAN WE DO

We find ourselves asking the question, "What can we do?"

One thing we can do here this morning on World Communion Sunday is to affirm in our minds that human values are more important than institutional values and more important than all the false divisions by which people are separated from one another. I think we tend to lose sight of this in our busy and demanding lives. Human values are more important than institutional values.

I can't help but feel that our dear friend and member, Betty Brooks, whom we lost this week believed that. Assistant Director of Nursing at NY Hospital, it was said here Friday that although in administration, she never lost that human touch as a nurse...she had a firm grasp on a value system that put persons first. The demands of the institution are great and we often find our lives and schedules in conflict and tension and how important it is to remember - whether it be church or hospital - that we're here to serve others.

I heard a story recently from a friend of a Jew by the name of Saul Steinberg whose wife and three children were put to death in a gas chamber when the Nazis invaded Poland. Steinberg escaped to Russia where he eventually married a Christian girl. After the war they went back to Poland. But anti-Semitism was still strong there, and so at last, with two small sons of their own, they migrated to Israel.

Then their five year old boy died. They went to the local rabbi about a funeral for the lad, but he refused to bury the boy because, as the son of a non-Jewish mother, he was technically not a Jew. So they went to a Catholic priest, but he refused to bury him because they boy and not been baptized. At long last, after days of pleading with the authorities, they got permission to lay that little body to rest in a Jewish cemetery on the condition that no prayers would be said and that a special fence would be erected to separate the grave from the rest of the cemetery. As the dirt was being shoveled on that small coffin, the mother sobbed,

"In Poland they discriminated against us as Jews;
in Israel, they discriminate against us as
Christians."

There is a time to build up and a time to break down. We are in an era when part of our purpose as a church is to eliminate every kind of false division that separates and isolates people from each other. We need to affirm our unity with the whole of humanity, to really believe that it is one "bundle of life" and to say "one world" and mean it. This is what the Church has tried to say, but has not always meant what it said. It has said we are children of One Father, that God has made of one blood all the peoples of this earth. We

PRAYER Make us sensitive to Your spirit at work in our hearts in these moments, Our Father. Help us to get out of ourselves....to be open to others - their needs.

Make us even more sensitive to human need....to the cries of your children, whether it be in this city or in other cities of the world.

May the bread and wine open our eyes to the presence of Christ among us. Bind us more blesely to each other and to Him and lift ~~xxxxx~~ up our hearts and minds to You, that we may go forth renewed in body and soul, in purporose and perspective, all in the spirit of Christ, our Lord. Amen