

"THE GIFT OF A DAY"

A Sermon By

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106 East 86th Street
New York, New York 10028
May 1, 1983

"THE GIFT OF A DAY"

TEXT: "This is the day which the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it."
(Psalm 118: 24)

INTRODUCTION You may not agree, but you do have something to do with the kind of day it's going to be! If you start out saying, this is going to be a good day, the chances are it will be. On the other hand, if you say it's going to be a bad day, a terrible day, it will probably be all of that for you.

All of us know people who never seem to enjoy anything. They always manage to find something that's going to ruin the day for them. There are some people I hesitate to ask, "How's your day been?" because I know they're going to say, "terrible...lousy" and provide me with a list of all of their grievances. They always seem to be in misery, and I wonder if the events of their lives cause their misery, or if the misery inside of them has shaped the way they see events.

A STORY ABOUT A BARBER There's a story about a barber who was very negative about everything and everyone.

A man sat down in his chair and happened to mention to the barber that he was going on a long trip to Europe. The barber asked, "Where are you going?" The man replied, "Well, first we're going to London". The barber interrupted him and said, "Why London? You're not going to enjoy it...it's a terrible city, wet, dirty, expensive, big. You won't enjoy London!" "Where else are you going?" The man said, "Well, we thought we've head over to Paris for a few days after a week in London." "Paris? Why go there. Better watch out, they'll take your wallet. People are unfriendly. It's over-rated. You're not going to enjoy Paris." "Where else are you going?" The man was hesitant to say much more, but he continued, "Well, we thought we'd finish off our trip with a week in Rome." The barber said, "Rome's worst of all. The food is terrible. The people are rude and you can't get around without getting run over. Don't waste your time going to the Vatican. The audiences are always too large and you'll never get to see the Pope. Besides, he doesn't speak English". And so it continued.

The man could hardly wait to get out of the chair. Several weeks later, after his trip, he needed another haircut so he went back to that same barber-shop. The barber recognized him and told him to sit in his chair. He then asked him how his trip was. The man said, "London was just wonderful. What a beautiful city - historic, great weather. We loved it. And Paris. Why Paris was even better. Such a lovely city. The food was excellent and the people went out of their way to make us feel at home. And Rome was outstanding - the highpoint of our trip. A wonderful climax for a wonderful trip. Accomodations were the best and the audience with the Pope...we'll never forget it. Let me tell you about it. The crowd wasn't large. We all got in and the Pope spoke to each of us, personally...in English. In fact", he said, "When it was my turn he placed his hand on my head and blessed me. Then he leaned close to my ear and said in perfect English, 'You've got a lousy haircut, my son. Get a new barber!'"

FOLLOW-UP Have you ever known anybody like that barber? Everything is always wrong, nothing is ever right. And you wonder if maybe the events in their life cause them their misery, or does the misery in their lives shape the events.

It's an old philosophical argument. Do we see the world as it really is out there, or is the world out there shaped by the way that we see it? We know that we have limited perception compared to other living things. We can't see as well as the hawk, or hear as well as the hunting dog. If we had keener eyesight, or sharper hearing, if we had more sensitive smell or touch, would the world "out there" look different to us? I think so...for the world "out there" is shaped by the way our senses perceive it.

It's also shaped by our knowledge and our values. There are people who can look at something and feel nothing. There are other people who can look at the same thing and weep. There are people who can go to a concert to hear the greatest music in the world and fall asleep, and there are others who go to that concert and are moved, and stand up when it's over and cheer. It's got to be that what's inside has shaped the event.

That's why Jesus said, "Let those who have eyes to see, see." He's saying it depends on what is inside if you are going to see what is outside. A man was traveling through Yellowstone Park and the Grand Tetons. At every stop he would make a disparaging remark about the place. He was apparently bored with the whole trip. And the bus driver, fed up with this man's lack of sensitivity and lack of appreciation for one of America's most beautiful parks, said to him finally out of impatience, "Mister, if you haven't got it on the inside, you can't see it on the outside".

Is the world "out there" shaped by the way we see? I think it is. And that means that you've got something to do with the kind of day it's going to be. Yes, if you haven't got it on the inside, then you're not going to be able to see it on the outside. "This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it". I think we would do well to use this phrase as an affirmation, as a creed, as a way of preparing ourselves to live the day before us. Would it make a difference. Would it shape the kind of day it's going to be? I believe it would.

IF GOD MADE THIS DAY Let's look at it. The first thing it says, if we accept it as an affirmation or a creed, is this. If God made this day then you don't have to. You're not completely in charge of this day. It's not all up to you. God's in charge. Something other than your own efforts is going to determine whether this is going to be a good day or a bad day for you. Remember that. "This is the day the Lord has made." Not you.

We've heard talk in recent months about stress and burnout. The studies show that those who suffer such symptoms are generally people who take upon themselves heavy responsibilities. They tend to think it's all up to them. They are carrying heavy loads, perhaps too heavy. And people who think it's all up to them have a distorted view of their existence; they're playing God. That's a terrible burden to carry around. We weren't meant to carry it; we are not creators, we are creatures. If we fail, it isn't the end. God's in charge. If we fail, all is not lost. "This is the day God has made!"

Process theology reminds us that the world is in process and that God is always creating. It's not over yet. The world is still taking shape. God takes the stuff of yesterday and uses it to create the possibilities of today. That's why good can come out of evil, new life out of tragedy and why you can't say this is going to be a terrible day, the worst day of my life - because God isn't finished with it yet. If you believe in God, then you believe He's at work,

always creating, that He makes the day - not you - and that means that there are always possibilities that you didn't create, never dreamed of and the only way you discover them is that you stumble over them, like a treasure in a field. "This is the day the Lord has made".

As you know I like baseball - share a box seat . . .

~~Baseball has started~~ again. Have you ever noticed the difference between a veteran player and a rookie player? A rookie is always uptight, uncertain, unsure about himself, filled with anxiety...thinking it's all up to him, that his career is dependent upon his performance in this game. He's afraid he's going to make a mistake and so he probably does.

The veteran, on the other hand, is relaxed, confident, graceful. He's someone to behold and we marvel at his grace, his swing, what he's able to do...coming off the bench in the ninth inning and getting a key hit. He may not be as fast and as talented as the young rookie, not as strong now that he's older. But he's always a better performer, and there's only one reason for it, and that is that the veteran is at home at what he's doing. For three reasons: first, because he knows that if he makes a mistake it's not going to be the end. Secondly, he knows that if he makes a mistake that it may open up a new opportunity. Third, he knows that it's not all up to him. He knows that there is a dimension of success in every endeavor that remains a mystery, and all one can do is one's best and leave the rest - to God.

I think it's something like that that results from knowing, "This is the day that the Lord has made." If God made the day, then I don't have to.

THIS IS THE DAY

That leads us to what could be the second tenet of this affirmation. This is the day. That's all there is. God hasn't made tomorrow yet. And I really don't think that God has started to worry about making tomorrow yet, so why should you? And that's the point of Jesus' parable of the Rich Fool, which was read earlier in the service. He was a fool because he spent all his todays planning for tomorrow. You know what happened? Tomorrow never came. There never was a tomorrow. Tomorrow is not God's creation. Tomorrow is a fiction. God doesn't create tomorrows. Have you ever seen a tomorrow? You can imagine it, but I bet there is nobody who has ever seen a tomorrow. The only thing that you have ever seen, and the only thing you will ever see, is today. That's all God creates. "This is the day."

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus links the parable of the Rich Fool with His teaching about the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. He wants us to see the contrast. The Rich Man is a fool because he lives for tomorrow. Jesus wants us to live for today, so He says, "Consider the birds of the air. They don't worry about where their food is coming from tomorrow. Consider the flower. They don't worry about what they're going to wear tomorrow. Why, Solomon, in all of his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. So why do you worry about tomorrow? This is the day."

There's an old Hasidic tale about a pious man who died after a lifetime of self-denial. He was always postponing pleasure because he was preparing for eternity. Two days after he got to heaven, they kicked him out. He couldn't enjoy anything that was going on there. This is the day - and it's a gift - and we should enjoy it in such a way that it become timeless.

But let's move on.

LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT

And that brings us to the final affirmation of our creed. "Let us rejoice and be glad in it"....which is a wonderful way of approaching life and approaching each day. The text implies we have a choice. It says: "Let us rejoice" - that is, you can live out each day as you choose. You can live mournfully, bitterly, anxiously, nervously, gratefully. And Christians should always be choosing to live the days out gratefully, rejoicing that we have been given sufficient light and love for every step of the way. Life is a gift; we are not in complete control of it, somebody else is doing the navigating and we should "let go and let God" far more than we do.

Things happen to mar that; that is true. Life is fragile and tragedies happen and people disappoint us and are hurt. So we have a choice. Every day we will have a choice. We can say, will these events shape the way I see the world, or will the way I see the world shape these events.

Pablo Casals, the great humanitarian and genius, musician and student of Bach, lived to be 93 years old and his life is an example of the fact that what's inside is going to determine the quality of what is outside. Let me close with some beautiful lines from his autobiography.

"For the past 80 years I have started each day in the same manner. It is not a mechanical routine but something essential in my life. I go to the piano and I play two preludes and fugues of Bach. I cannot think of doing otherwise. It's a benediction on the house.

But that is not its only meaning for me. It's a rediscovery of the world of which I have the joy of being a part. It fills me with the wonder of eternity, with the incredible miracle of God. The music is never the same for me. Each day is something new and fantastic and unbelievable."

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice, and be glad in it. Amen

PRAYER Out of Thine infinite love, O God, minister to us in our several needs. Give us mastery over moodiness and petulance, the ability to smile even on the worst of days, the stamina to persevere when the prize eludes our grasp, the courage to resume life alone when parted from a friend of many years, the faith to believe that a grand design exists even when we cannot see it, the grace to acknowledge guilt and the humility to accept forgiveness.

Make us sensitive this hour to Your presence, your nearness, your love - in the name and spirit of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

COME WORSHIP WITH US

Caroga
Lake
Chapel



(LOCATED ON CHAPEL ROAD OFF ROUTE 10)

WELCOMES YOU TO WORSHIP DURING THE SUMMER OF 1987

JULY 5
JULY 12

DR. ALBERT H. VanDYKE
(Pastor Emeritus of The Old North Church,
Dumont, N. J.)

JULY 19

REV. PAUL WILSON
(Retired Pastor of Presbyterian Church,
Gloversville, N. Y.)

JULY 26

DR. ALBERT H. VanDYKE
(Pastor Emeritus of The Old North Church,
Dumont, N. J.)

AUG. 2
AUG. 9

REV. PHILIP CLARKE
(Pastor, Park Ave. Methodist Church,
New York City)

AUG. 16
AUG. 23

REV. KENNETH E. DINGMAN
(Pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church,
Ft. Plain, N. Y.)

AUG. 30
SEPT. 6

DR. ALBERT H. VanDYKE
(Pastor Emeritus of The Old North Church,
Dumont, N. J.)

SITUATED IN A LOVELY PINE GROVE NEAR THE SOUTH SHORE OF WEST CAROGA LAKE, N.Y., AT THE INTERSECTION OF ROUTE 10 AND CHAPEL ROAD, THE CAROGA LAKE CHAPEL IS OPEN TO ALL DENOMINATIONS EVERY SUNDAY MORNING DURING THE MONTHS OF JULY AND AUGUST (10 SUNDAYS THROUGH LABOR DAY SUNDAY).

SERVICES START AT 10:45 A.M. WITH AN OLD FASHIONED HYMN SING DURING WHICH MEMBERS SELECT AND SING THEIR FAVORITES AS THEY GATHER FOR WORSHIP. AT 11:00 A.M. GENERAL WORSHIP (PROTESTANT) BEGINS, LED BY GUEST MINISTERS OF THE WORD AND MUSIC.

IF YOU'RE SPENDING THE SUMMER AT THE LAKES, OR JUST A WEEKEND OR TWO, OR JUST PASSING THROUGH, WE INVITE YOU TO WORSHIP WITH US AT THE CHAPEL. THERE IS AMPLE PARKING SPACE.

OLD FASHIONED HYMN SING AT 10:45 A.M.
INTERDENOMINATIONAL PROTESTANT WORSHIP
11 A.M. TO 12 NOON

DRESS COMFORTABLY — YOU'RE ON VACATION

PASTORAL PRAYER: July 26, 1987

ETERNAL SPIRIT - WHO...whether we walk through green pastures,
beside still waters,
or through the valley of the shadow of death,
canst be our guide and our helper -

BEHOLD US NOW - here in this sacred place of worship, seeking in
a common prayer, light upon our separate ways,
and strength and illumination within our individual
lives...

SEEK US OUT - one by one - in those special circumstances of personal
need that have drawn us here to this sanctuary on this
July Sunday morning. Help us now to "center down", to
look up and to see life from higher ground. Remind us..

HERE - lift up the unhappy souls into joy and the discouraged souls into
encouragement...the defeated souls into victory - and thus enable us:

"To fight the good fight, to keep the faith,
to finish the course..."

BREATHE into our hearts, O God, goodwill and generosity.

BREAKDOWN our stubborn prejudices.

SAVE US from letting un-Christlike attitudes and actions take hold.

FORGIVE US that at times we can be such a part of the problems of
the world, and such a small fraction of its solutions.

COMFORT US, LORD, where we are hurting.

REMIND US - as we worship YOU - that we cannot fellowship with You
if in our hearts we reject or neglect our brother who
is in need. And so we pray for the hungry, the homeless,
the hurt and helpless of our society. Sensitize our
heart-sight that we may see those in need of help.

HELP THOSE OF US who take Jesus seriously and who try to follow in His
Way always to be -

Agents of His love. Pure in thought,
gracious in speech, courageous in our
actions.

Grant us the serenity to accept the things
we cannot change - the courage to change
the things we can, and the wisdom to know
the difference.

ALL THIS we ask in the name and spirit of Christ, our Lord, in whom we
see hope for ourselves and hope for our world.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Sunday, July 26, 1987

I. PARISH CONCERNS

- A. Adult Fellowship is sponsoring a ROOFTOP supper...Thursday evening, July 30th. Arrive between 6:30 and 7:15 pm. The cost is five dollars.
- B. Be sure to get your notices, articles and announcements in to Lucy Dinnes today in order to make the August monthly news set. Put them in the POOR BOX downstairs.

II. TODAY'S MUSIC

- A. We welcome Dr. Marsha Long to the organ console again this morning in the absence of Lyndon Woodside. We have been richly blessed to have Marsha with us these past three Sundays. Today is her final Sunday. We thank her very much for presence in our midst. Incidentally, Dr. Long's album "An Organ Recital of French Music" recorded at St. Paul's Chapel here in the city is available. A number of copies are downstairs in the Russell Room. They cost:
- B. Soloist today is Stephanie Weems. A member of our Church and also a gifted musician. We thank her for her lovely gift to us today. Thank you.

III. NEXT SUNDAY / LOOKING AHEAD

- A. Next Sunday - in my absence - Dr. William M. James will be our guest preacher. Friend. Colleague...no stranger to us having preached twice last Summer. With us earlier this week on Tuesday evening as featured speaker for "Hounds of Heaven". Holy Communion will be celebrated.
- B. Looking ahead: Dr. John Carrington. Executive Director of the UM City Society. August 9th. Kenneth Halcott. August 16th. August 23rd is uncertain at this time. August 30th. Rev. Stephen Goldstein, a colleague in ministry and former director of our Summer Church Camp program.
- C. I shall be away from August 1st - August 10th or 11th...in the Adirondacks, preaching two Sundays at the Caroga Lake Evangelical Chapel...and then off to Maine on August 15th 'till Labor Day. I can be reached quite easily in the event of any emergencies.

IV. GREETING TO THE VISITORS

- V. OFFERING: "More blessed to give than to receive"

INTRODUCTION

Let us enter into a time of silent meditation...a time in which we prepare ourselves expectantly...that the Spirit of the Living God may be made real to us in this hour of worship.

In silence, let each now pray as the heart may prompt.

MEDITATION

"For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His steadfast love toward those who fear Him. As far as the East is from the West, so far does He remove our transgressions from us."

"In the name of Jesus Christ, I share with you the Good News: we are forgiven!"

"Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage and He shall strengthen thine heart."

"Ask and it will be given you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it will be opened to you".

"And all things...whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing...you shall receive. And as many as touched Him were made whole."

PRAYERS / LORD'S PRAYER

O Thou, who hearest prayer, hear our prayers for others...as well as for ourselves.

Touch with healing, O God and Father of us all, those whom we mention in our prayers this hour:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| 1. Maybelle White | 3. Ada Kinney |
| 2. Ruth Frame | 4. |

Heal us at the point of our deepest need.

Comfort the bereaved and the broken-hearted in our midst. Abide among us all as a healing benediction.

For we ask all of this in the name and spirit of Jesus who taught us to say when we pray:

"Our Father, who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth
as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our
trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from
evil, for thine is the Kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen."

PASTORAL PRAYER: July 19, 1987

O GOD, OUR FATHER....as we come together once again in this hour set aside for prayer, for meditation, for reflection - fill our hearts and our minds with a greater consciousness of Thy nearness and Thy presence.

IT IS NOT ALTOGETHER habit and custom that have brought us into thy house this morning, but also our own deep sense of need, as well as our desire to learn more of Thy will and thy way for us.

THOU KNOWEST all too well the things on our minds - the concerns that worry us, the temptations with which we daily wrestle, the goals to which we aspire, the anxieties that sap our strength.

AS WE WORSHIP THEE, help us to renew our hold on those secret sources of strength.

Touch our eyes that we may see Thee.
Open our hearts that we may hear thy voice speaking to us.
Flood our hearts with love that we may experience that measure of peace and inner quietness that comes to those whose minds are stayed on Thee.

OUR THOUGHTS REACH OUT TO include all sorts and conditions of mankind.

Strengthen and confirm the faithful.
Visit and relieve the sick.
Restore the penitent and reclaim the lost.
Arouse the careless and comfortable.
Comfort the troubled and the lonely.

Guide and direct those who are working patiently to tear down the barriers that separate men from each other. Undergird the efforts of those who meet in the circles of city, state, federal and world government. May compassion and integrity be among their qualities of character as they lead us.

TAKE US AND USE US, LORD, to carve thy will in that world of the week day where we live and work. And send us out of here today to be good soldiers of Christ, for it is in His name and spirit that we lift our hearts in prayer. Amen