

"THE INNER LIFE"

TWO LIVES Seldom do we stop to take account of the fact that we live two lives. First, there is the outer life...the life observed by our families, our friends, our business associates. This is the life of coming and going, of doing and talking. It is a very demanding life full of pressure. It presses us with its demands, its hurry, its clamor. Owing to the ease of travel, we cover much distance. Owing to the ease of communication, we admit many voices, many requests.

Then too there is the inner life...the life of thinking...the life of feeling...the life where we are alone with ourselves. This life is likely to be overlooked in the rush and thrust of our outer lives. This inner life is often squeezed into the narrow space between activities, fed on scraps, starved until it becomes thin and withered.

These two lives are essential to each other. I think it takes both of them to make a full experience, a life of growth and maturity. These two lives should intermesh and react upon each other. However, in our present existence, the inner life is the one most likely to be neglected.

We need to discover our own souls. We need to look under the ready made opinions and attitudes gathered from the outer world and discover what we actually think and feel. For this inner life is where we plant our roots as individuals, where we become real people - strong, stable, mature, able to cope effectively with the shifting climates and cross winds of life. This, friends, is the life of the soul, the place where we seek and find God.

SEEKING AND FINDING GOD We talk about seeking and finding God within ourselves. What do we exactly mean. I think it means the recognition that here within we are related to a higher power, related to the infinite creative Power which brought with all creation into being. In every creative act something of the creator gets into the thing created. This is true of the painter, the poet, the composer - into each of his works the artist puts a very real part of himself which has an influence wherever the work of art is appreciated. This is a parable God has given us - a parable of his own creativity. Into each part of his creation, he has put something of his own creative power.

Thus there is some part deep within each one of us of that divine power - God himself astir within. And when we recognize this and faithfully begin to attend to it, our lives are changed, broadened, deepened. God will not urge or compel. He invites us by his presence to a greater understanding of life and a fuller knowledge of ourselves. He would expand our horizons and enlarge our capacities for living.

A NEED TO DEEPEN OUR LIVES I'm sure that you have felt, as I have felt on occasion, a need to deepen life. I feel I am on the right path when I say that I think all of us would like to find and hold fast to something more than the busy round of daily living. We need to find meaning and purpose in

life and a clean sense of values. These are treasures of the inner life. They are gifts of God and are not to be had merely for the wishing. They must be sought. God must be sought. He is the source of the richer, deeper life of which we speak and in a sense he waits within.

This deepening of the inner life takes time - time and earnestness in the search, time to be alone, to be quiet, time to think. Difficult? Of course it is difficult. So often it seems that everything conspires to absorb the time and intrudes upon the quiet. But little by little, with persistence, it can be managed. One can get up a little earlier or go to bed a little later. One can set aside some less essential thing, or use a space of minutes between necessary duties. This is necessary for firm footing in reality. Christ, of course, knew the necessity for deep rooting. He made it a practice to faithfully nourish his inner life daily.

THE FIRST STEP The first step, or let us say, the first test of our desire for deepening the inner life is the ability to find time for God. Life is made up of choices and here begins a lesson in the examination of values. The choice is the first step.

Decide this morning that you will reserve a portion of each day to consider the things of the spirit. Decide here this hour that you will conscientiously save your Sundays for the great things of the soul. A Communion Service offers us the rare opportunity to sit in silence and to give thought to pulling together the scattered forces of our souls. I would close with lines written by Grace Dawson:

"Send my roots deeper, Lord, more deep in life,
Below the pang of failure, brief success,
Below the desperate haste, the unslaked thirst
For hearts that understand and hands that bless.

Send my roots deeper, Lord, more deep in truth,
Below the facile murmurs that applaud,
Surly ill will, indifferent circumstances,
To the eternal treasures of God.

Send my roots deeper, Lord, more deep in love,
Below glib protestations to the springs
Of humble service given joyously,
The largess of the small unnoticed things.

Send my roots deeper, Lord, more deep in Thee,
That I stand steadfast, growing tall and free"

PRAYER: Teach us, O God, how to withdraw from the pressures of life, not in self-interest or self-indulgence, but to find the quietness and the strength that we need in order that we may handle life and handle it well. Help us to remember Jesus, and how in his withdrawing and returning, he fulfilled one of thy laws and made his life great and rich for all others. Amen