

"THE NEED TO BE NEEDED"

TEXT: "Do not leave us, I pray you, for you know how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us". (Numbers 10: 31)

INTRODUCTION More than once in recent years the Sinai Peninsula has made the front page of the world's newspapers. And this same Sinai Peninsula figured prominently in the Old Testament Lesson read earlier in the service. The children of Israel were still a fugitive band of nomads, at least in the eyes of the world. They had settled in the wilderness of Sinai after their deliverance from Egypt. And now, some eleven months later, they were to strike their tents and make tracks for the Promised Land.

At this point, Moses needed help. He did not know the desert sufficiently well. True, he had cared for the sheep of his father-in-law in that same desert. But that was long ago. Much had changed, and much had been forgotten.

So Moses turned to a relative of his by the name of Hobab. There is some uncertainty as to the relationship - whether Hobab was father-in-law or brother-in-law to Moses. We don't know for certain. But we do know that this man, Hobab, was a member of the Kenites, an Arab tribe that lived in the region of Midian. Moses needed his help. Hobab knew the desert.

A MATTER OF MOTIVATION But how does one motivate another human being for such a mission? Moses tried two tactics. One failed. The other worked. Listen carefully to them. He first tried what we might call "the old prosperity theme". "We're setting out for the place of which the Lord said, 'I will give it to you'...come with us, Hobab, and we will do you good; for the Lord has promised good to Israel". (Numbers 10:29) In effect, he was saying to this relative, "We're going to strike it rich. Come, join us and we'll cut you in on it. We'll give you a good share". To this Hobab replied, "Thanks, but no thanks. I'd rather go home to my people".

Then Moses tried a different tack: "Do not leave us, I pray you, for you know how we are to encamp in this wilderness and you will serve as eyes for us." And Hobab, hearing this pitch, agreed to go! This was not "made work" that Moses was creating for a relative. This was not some honorary position to which he was being summoned. The role Hobab was being called to fill was real. It was necessary.

Moses would need to know in his wilderness experience where to stop and when to start, which water was safe and which was not; which herbs were edible and which were poisonous; which tribes were likely to be hostile and which friendly. Moses was offering Hobab an opportunity to do something valid and significant for a cause that really mattered. He was needed! And - he responded!

It's rather unfortunate that the text ends abruptly after Moses presents his plea. Hobab does not answer directly. However, there's solid evidence to suggest that Hobab responded to this call to come and serve, for in the first chapter of the Book of Judges we read:

"And the descendants of Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, went up with the people of Judah from the city of palms into the wilderness of Judah, which lies in the Negeb near Arad; and they went and settled with the people"

(Judges 1: 16)

THE NEED TO BE NEEDED

We all have the need to be needed. That's the message. We all have the need to be needed. Moses stumbled upon some very excellent psychology. Somewhere along the line he had learned that men and women are more apt to identify with a cause that they can help than a cause that can help them.

Ah, but the wisdom of "the street" would have it otherwise. In lots of little ways we are constantly being urged to consider the advantages of disengagement. I can still hear Stan Holloway's husky voice in "My Fair Lady" belting out those words that speak the sentiments of many:

"The Lord above made man to help his neighbor;
No matter where - on land or sea or foam.
The Lord above made man to help his neighbor;
But with a little bit o' luck, a little bit o' luck,
When he comes around you won't be home."

It is the wisdom of "the street" that a wise disengagement from life is a component major part of happiness. The ideal life, we would be given to believe, consists of a little cottage perched in a lush green valley, with all material wants well supplied, free of any claims whatsoever - human or divine. Right?

But further reflection will bring us to a different conclusion. Like yourself, I look forward to my vacations. When I get away I am so glad not to hear a phone ring or the buzzer of this Church buzz or get letters asking me to do something, that for a while I really enjoy some seclusion - for about a week, that is. But after that time the juices begin to flow again. I find myself getting edgy. After a week or so I find myself asking, "Isn't there someone around here who might need a minister, who might need me?"

We're indebted to George Steinbrenner for keeping baseball in the news in Nov. in this present George and Dick hassle. Very frequently in the world of professional sports, coaches or managers are summarily fired even though they may have one or two years left on their contract, as does Dick Howser. Once cut, they're guaranteed their salary for the duration of the agreement. But more times than not, the man who is fired will find another job. And not because he needs the money, but because he has the need to be needed. We all have this need.

~~Those who age attractively in life are without exception, I think, the people who remain involved with life.~~ There's a retirement village in this area that advertises itself as "a place to start living when you stop working". I have trouble with that on both ends. I don't think we have to save all of our living for the end. And I don't think the kind of living we do at the end should be free of some work - if by work we mean the filling of significant needs. Unrelieved pleasure can be a bore. Life has a strange way of damning those who do not give a damn!

SERVICE ORIENTED

It's just not true that everyone is "benefits oriented". There are many stirring illustrations of people who are "service oriented"...who are not primarily concerned about their remuneration but want more than anything else to fill a significant need in the world.

A journalist during World War II visited a Roman Catholic hospital in the South Pacific. He was appalled at the smell of putrifying flesh and could hardly stand the sight of badly gangrenous limbs. The lack of appreciation on the part

of the patients depressed him. And in a burst of honesty he turned to the nun in charge and said, "I wouldn't do this for a million dollars!" And she replied, "Neither would I".

There are many people in our society and all around us who are willing to sacrifice themselves in socially important work. Talk sometime to those who have served with Vista or the Peace Corps or to someone like Stanley Moore who has put his life on the line in Chile for many years.

"Do not leave us, I pray you; for you know how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us".

Perhaps it is time the Church relearned this lesson. For a long time we've been telling people how good they can have it in the Church. We've been promising people prosperity and peace of mind and all other good things and temporal emoluments. All the while the caliber of comment has gone down. Dean Kelly's book of recent years, Why The Conservative Churches Are Growing, makes the valid point that the conservative churches, whatever their theological or sociological weaknesses may be, at least have the distinction of making high demands upon their people. "Ah" you say, "but nobody will come if we ask too much". But they do come...that's just it.

When we tell the Hobabs of this world to come and enjoy with us, they will not come. But when we tell the Hobabs of this world to come and serve with us, they will come and they will come in large numbers.

A WORKOUT FOR EARL We gave Earl Howard quite a workout this morning on that New Testament reading. He must have practiced it a long time on Saturday because he read those names so well. (Nice going, Earl) How many of those people did you ever hear of before: Prisca and Aquila, Epaphroditus, Mary, Andronicus and Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, Aristobulus, Herodian, family of Narcissus, Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus, Olympas, and all the saints with them. Timothy, Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus. Who were they? Not many stars in that line-up. They were just ordinary people who somehow learned from Jesus that they were needed and stepped forward to help.

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There is a line in one of the stories told by Jesus that keeps coming back in to my mind. I refer to the story of the man who got up and hired some help early in the morning. And when he found that he didn't have enough men he went out and hired some more. Still short of manpower he went down to the village and saw yet some other men who were apparently malingering. "Why aren't you working" he asked them. This was their answer, "Because no man hath hired us". (Matthew 20: 7) The tragedy of the uncommitted!

We enjoy hearing Jesus say, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." But not everyone enjoys hearing him add: "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me". He does not leave his followers "missionless" or "causeless". There is a yoke to be born, a truth to be learned. There is service to be rendered. We all have the need to be needed.

PARK AVENUE METHODIST NEEDS YOU

And the other point I should like to make is that this Church needs you.

On a Sunday such as this - Dedication Sunday, or Stewardship Sunday - a

can go in two directions. On the one hand, he can do what Moses did and describe some of the advantages that life in this Church offers. How the Gospel, hopefully, is preached here. How the Sacraments are observed. How children are taught the Faith, and adults, too. He can refer you to a good "a la carte" menu of concerns and activities from which you are free to choose any number designed to bless you - all over. But I think we've used that approach before. So, going to school on Moses putt, as it were, I'd like to take his second swing and simply assure you that this Church needs you!

Sometimes it's difficult to make the point that this Church has needs. At least it is for me. We have so much going for us! What can one give to a Church that seems to be covering the bases nicely. But when you get past the building, past the worship service and the coffee hour, the good reputation, the school we operate, the public image in the community - you discover that sure enough, this Church has some pressing needs. I like to think of this wonderful fellowship as a "company of ordinary people trying with ordinary gifts to do some extraordinary things for God!" I believe that. That's precisely who we are.

PEOPLE We need people. We need hearts and minds, hands and feet, eyes and ears, smiles and voices. We need people because at so many points we are ministering to a parade of people; there's so much coming and going, people on the move - in and out. A stable nucleus of concerned and committed Christians must remain at the heart and share in this ministry. The list of those who have moved away since last January first is getting longer all the time and this week brought me news of some more who are moving away.

We need people - workers, that is. We can always use more volunteers whether it's singing in the choir or ushering at the service, or teaching in the Sunday School, or hostessing at the fellowship functions; we need people who are willing to fold and stuff, cook and serve, call and promote, tutor and teach and yes, tidy up after it's all over.

This past week I spent two hours in a meeting of the Board of Managers of the East Manhattan Counselling Service which we helped to found. This Tuesday evening I shall be spending two hours at a meeting of the East Midtown Hospital Chaplaincy, as a Trustee, which we help to support. Two weekends ago I shared and conducted three funeral services in two days for friends of this parish. I do not do these things simply because the adjective "Reverend" precedes my name in the phone book. I do them and am involved because I represent you. When they ring our bell or buzz my number I am answering for you. When I visit someone in the hospital, I represent you. You are there.

Where do I go with this. In a way my job is that of a "needs' broker". I receive the needs that come our way in this city, and believe me - they are many and they are constant. I do some "sifting and sorting" and then pass some of them on to you for your joyful participation and response. When there is no response then the burden becomes heavier on all of us including myself, and sometimes the needs may not be covered. But we do our very best to respond.

MONEY Along with people, we need money. And I do not blush to broach the subject. I think the needs of this Church have been presented to you all so well these past three weeks by three of our hardest working laymen. Those needs take priority in our lives if we're serious about this Church. Hopefully, you have all listened and hopefully, all have responded by now.

Let me say a bit more to you on this subject.

As you know, the bottom line for us as far as pledging is concerned is \$74,000 - 5 cold digits at the bottom of a sheet of paper, and not quite one-half of what it's going to take to operate this Church in the year ahead. But those digits translate readily into program and program translates readily into people - and that's really... "what it's all about".

Most of the people of this parish are generous in their giving and for this we are grateful. Of course there are a few in the church, in every church, and they're never here to hear this, but they're (and to use the language of baseball) - they're "lifetime rookies"...that is, they're playing the game just about the way they did when they first came up...10, 15, 25 years ago. Some have even slipped below the level of their rookie year performance, and this makes it tough. Some of these "life-time rookies" even confuse the number of times they're asked to give with the number of times they've given. Poor on statistics.

Yes, the pity is that some are "spiritually arrested adolescents" - they haven't matured yet, they're still in that "taking-in" stage and think that's all there is to the Christian life. Now all of us, both the rookies and the veterans still have room to grow in terms of real Christian stature and so I'd like to close with some lines I came across recently that hit me and helped me and I pass them on to you. Take them home with you and think about them and see if they touch you:

"To be young is to study in schools that you did not build.
To be mature is to build schools in which you will not study.

To be young is to swim in pools you did not dig.
To be mature is to dig pools in which you may never swim.

To be young is to sit under trees you did not plant.
To be mature is to plant trees under which you will not sit.

To be young is to dance to music you did not write.
To be mature is to write music to which you will not dance.

To be young is to benefit from a Church you did not make.
To be mature is to help build a church from which you might not benefit."

CLOSING "Do not leave us, I pray you" said Moses to Hobab. "For you know how we are to encamp in this wilderness, and you will serve as eyes for us." Said Jesus, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear". Everyone needs to be needed. And my friend - this Church needs you. How about it?

PRAYER Make us sensitive to your spirit at work in these moments. We feel your presence. We hear your voice saying to us: if not here, where. If not now, when. If not me, who. Confirm within us these feelings, the decisions and resolutions we quietly are making. All this in your name and in the Christ spirit. Amen

We thank you, Lord, not only for the veterans in our midst, but also for the rookies and the potential they represent. Take us all and mold and build us into a strong center of Christian love and hope. In the spirit of Christ

INTRODUCTION The week of toil has ended. The day of rest is at hand. May the rest and the quiet of this hour of worship refresh our inner life. May it renew in all of us a sense of God's holy and abiding Presence.

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

MEDITATION We rest our hearts in the Promise of Jesus who said:

"Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light!"

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction."

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

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary. And they shall walk and not faint."

"For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me. I was naked and you clothed me. As you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it unto me."

"Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will 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, those whom we mention in our prayers this hour:

Helen Breit

Heal each of us at the point of our deepest need.

(over)

.....cherished members and friends of our parish.

Comfort the bereaved and the broken-hearted among us. Abide among us as a healing benediction.

In the name of Jesus Christ, I share with you the Good News:

We are forgiven!

Will you all pray with me for: those held hostage in Iran and for their loved ones, that they may be given faith to live with renewed hope and uncertainty.

Grant them courage and hope.
Make them receptive to the
touch of the Holy Spirit.

Answer the unspoken prayers offered to thee on the altars of our hearts, spoken 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: November 16, 1980

It is GOOD for us to bless Thy name, O Lord - and to remember Thy mercies every morning and Thy loving kindness every night. The world is so much with us that we tend to measure our wealth by the wrong things: the property owned, the money saved, the securities held, the people impressed, the car we drive, the coat we own. And so often we ~~are~~ ^{fall} short of wear knowing just how rich and well-off we really are.

We PRAISE Thee, O God, for life's "intangibles" -
The lift of a loving voice,
The warmth of a child's confidence,
The excitement of a shared purpose,
The strength that comes from an accepted
sorrow.

We PRAISE Thee most for a faith that lights our way.
For everything in us that urges us to call
Thee, Father. Your
For all that points to Thy presence in our
fevered world. Your
For the beauty of nature,
For the gift unspeakable, ~~Thine~~ only Son,
Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Move us, Lord, on this November Sunday to speak the deep thanks that we do feel, and forgive us for our much complaining...grumbling, our griping.

Help us, O God, as we pray for New York City - our home; pray for it - not from without - as though it's dust and noise, its pain and pleasure - were beneath us, or beyond us, but from within, as those who know its daily squeeze and its pressure on our lives, and take to heart its hardness as well as to celebrate its hope.

Grant that fences that keep potential friends apart may be fashioned into bridges so that the hurts of any may be the concern of all.

Help us to look for Thee and to find Thee in the life we live and the work we do as we move about this city.

Lo, if we take the IRT and ride to the end of the line,
Thou art there!

If we shuttle our way into the masses of Grand Central Station or Times Square or Wall Street, Thou art there!

If we ride to the uppermost reaches of the World Trade Center, even there shall Thy hand lead us and thy right hand hold us!

(over)

If in the dead of the night we feel alone and depressed,
remind us that the darkness hideth Thee not from us -
for as the Psalmist put it, "the light shineth as the day".

Our prayers are faint, O God, because our faith is weak and timid. Now
strengthen us - each of us - in the same lest our religion be in word and
form alone, and not in power, in peace and purpose.

Give us sight to see our sins; grace to confess them.
The will to forsake them, and the wisdom to
learn from them. In the spirit of Christ, we pray.

That we may grow into the very likeness of Him whom men
call Lord, and in whose spirit our prayer this day is now
offered.

Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS: November 16, 1980

GREETING TO VISITORS

We greet the visitors in the congregation this morning. We're pleased...indeed, we're delighted to have you with us and we do hope that the opportunity will be ours to greet you personally before you depart - either at the door, or perhaps downstairs in the Russell Room where coffee and tea will be served.

You worship in a Church that has been ministering - in the name of Jesus Christ - since the year 1837. We have close to 150 years of service in the Master's Name behind us. It is in the name of Christ that we bid you a very warm welcome. Be free in the sharing of your name with us; sign one of the Guest Books in the narthex, or one of the Visitor cards in the pews.

Join us on other Sundays in our worship and fellowship as we move along toward the celebration of Thanksgiving and Christmas.

CONCERNS

If you have not already done so, be sure to pick up a copy of the November issue of our parish news-sheet in order to be "on top" of the many good things now taking place in our Church.

You'll note that new members are to be received in early December and that a "get-together" is planned for those who are considering strengthening a tie with us through membership on Sunday evening, November 30th - two weeks from tonight. Called "Conversations in Membership" and sponsored by the Membership Committee, it's a fine way to learn more about this Church!

Remember that the Church Fair will be held this coming Saturday, November 22nd. It's hard to believe it's that time of year! Seems like only yesterday that we had over a thousand people in here for the Fair. Doors open at eleven o'clock. Workers are needed on Wednesday night, Thursday night, Friday night - as well as on Saturday. If you can lend a hand speak to Lynn Bruhn. She's here today...and will be glad to see you in the narthex or downstairs.

Many good things happen around here because of our collective efforts at the Church Fair. I told you about my new robe last week. Today, let me tell you about the children that went to Summer Church camp because of the receipts from the Church Fair. I think, too, of our gifts to the Yorkville Common Pantry and Search and Care, Interfaith Neighbors, the East Manhattan Counselling Service. And there's more... Methodist Hospital, Home

Will the ushers please remember that there's a supper on Wednesday evening. Larry Morales is taking reservations for it. Let me know if you can come. Also members of the UMW are reminded of the meeting ~~today~~ today at one.

Next Sunday will be a big Sunday for us. The children will be here. The Junior Choir will sing and we'll be celebrating Thanksgiving. It's one of the "big" services of the Fall.

FINANCIAL CANVASS

Today we celebrate Dedication Sunday. And present this morning to bring you up to date on the Financial Canvass is the General Chairman of the Canvass, Mr. Dom Monge.

He'll tell you where we are and where we hope to be by one o'clock today. Incidentally, this is the sixth canvass Mr. Monge has given leadership to, and each one has been successful. A trustee of the Church, a member of the Adult Class and the Finance Committee, it gives me pleasure to present Mr. Monge to you.

OFFERING

Jesus said: It is more blessed to give than to receive. In this spirit, let us worship God with our morning offering.

SPECIAL WORD

A special word shared with me earlier this morning...our dear friend Wong, from Vietnam is present with his 20 year old brother - Twan who arrived here this past week from Malaysia. Wong had not seen his brother since the fall of Saigon, and he and another Wouk are serving as sponsors for their younger brother. Our Indochinest Committee will be standing by to be of assistance, I'm sure.

THANK YOU, DOM

Thank you, Dom - for all you do for us in so many ways. Especially for the leadership you give to our Church in this Financial Canvass.