"THE SHADOW OF DEATH"

TEXT: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" Psalm 23: 4

INTRODUCTION

Death is always a shadow - a sobering, saddening thing. When a life has been ended in early youth or in its prime, there is sorrow for the unfulfilled promise. We think of the learning years, of the great potential about to be realized, apparently wasted by the sharp cutting off of the life span.

When a great leader of far-reaching influence is taken away before his work is accomplished, the loss to the world is hard to estimate. This was the situation when all men everywhere sorrowed at the tragic death of our late President whose youthfulness, whose sense of purpose and direction, whose determination and lofty idealism had touched the hearts and lives of countless millions of peoples. What could compensate for such a loss.

DEVELOPMENT OF THEME

But death comes closest to us in the passing of a dearly loved presence from our lives, leaving a vacant place of loneliness which nothing can fill. Where there is no hope of a future life the shadow is indeed very black. In the Christian communion, however, there is this hope to hold to, this faith to build on - that spirit is more vital than flesh and does not perish, that the loved one has gone on to a new environment and a richer experience. It is this conviction that sustains us when in those dark and difficult moments, we walk through "the valley of the shadow of death".

Such a hope, such a faith makes it illogical to grieve for the one who is gone. But grief is not logical, it is too intensely emotional to reason itself away. We know we are grieving for our own loneliness, but the pang is too keen to be allayed. The pattern of our own life is broken and it cannot be mended. Words of comfort and consolation are clutched at eagerly, but they cannot fill the void. The wound gapes and no power on earth can heal its soreness. The heart must make its own adjustment, and sometimes that comes slowly.

Then it is that the Christian cherishes the faith that life does go on, that the spirit of the dear one is alive, somehow still present to those left behind.

At the memorial service held for Bishop Edwin Hughes, Bishop McConnell spoke a few simple but very eloquent words about his dear friend. He spoke out of an inexhaustible affection about Bishop Hughes. "I had hoped" he said, "to see Ed, but he left early and I came late. There was something I had to say to him. But," he added, dropping his hands to his side and stepping down from the platform, "never mind, it will keep".

In the spiritual life, in the deeper life, lived in constant companionship with God, we know we can turn to the strong, warm love of a Father and pour out our sorrow and be understood.

"I heard that you had lost him" so I said,
Thinking, somehow, it was a softer phrase
And trying to avoid by devious ways
The starkness of the blunt word, "He is dead".

"Would you" she answered, "say, if he had crossed
The ocean, I had lost him? This is just
A wider ocean, spanned by love and trust,
He is dead - yes. Thank God, he is not lost"
I think only those who have passed through such an experience can know how know the comfort of being understood. And by the same token, we realize that we have a gift - the gift of understanding - to give to another who world has been torn apart by the great invader death. It is something to able to say to a grief stricken friend:

"I know what you are going through. I understand. I can tell you that, though the scar remains, time will ease the soreness and help to lift the burden".

A man with his heart heavy with impending sorrow stood at the foot bed of his wife whom he was about to lose through death. He thought of 37 years they had been together. He was shaken within himself by the in force of a death that he could not stop. "But" he said, "the doctor sto with me, he put his hand on my arm, saying in a quiet tone, 'You will see again'. That was all he said, but that was enough. It was what I needed.

Yes....enough for us are the great words of our Lord that come to through the Gospel of St. John spoken to his disciples on the last night life on earth -

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me".

"In my Father's House are many mansion; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you...."

LET US PRAY:

We thank Thee, Our Father, that beyond the shadow there shine the light eternal, and that in that light we may feel the living presence of the spirit of our loved ones who have gone on to the life that survives the grave.

Bless every yearning and mourning heart with the comforting sense of thy nearness, and the knowledge of thy love and care.

This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ who brought life and immortality to light. Amen
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY
June 7, 1964

ORDER OF WORSHIP
11 A.M.

ORGAN
"Fantasie" Dubois

SCRIPTURE SENTENCES
HYMN NO. 1 "Holy, holy, holy!"

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP (Standing) Page 523

GLORIA PATRI

PRAYER FOR PURITY (Seated)
Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid, cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love Thee, and worthily magnify Thy Holy Name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

ORD'S RAYER

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFERTORY SOLO
"The Earth is the Lord's" F. Lynes (Miss Margaret Wheeler, mezzo soprano)

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY
HYMN NO. '520 "Hide with me"

MEDITATION "The Shadow of Death" Mr. Clarke

PRAYER

CHORAL AMEN

THE HOLY COMMUNION RITUAL

The Invitation (Standing) Page 528
The General Confession (Seated) Page 529
Prayer and Comforting Words
The Sursum Corda and the Sanctus
Prayers of Humble Access and Consecration
The Agnus Dei (The Choir)
The Partaking of the Elements
The Prayer of Thanksgiving
The Gloria in Excelsis (Standing) Page 531

HYMN NO. 301 "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah"

Benediction Choral Amen

ORGAN
"Marche Triomphale" Dubois

*** Interval for ushering

AN INVITATION

You are invited to Fellowship Hall to have punch and cookies following the service. Hostesses today are Miss Upchurch, Miss Cousins, Miss Jensen, Mrs. Maltby, and Mrs. Moore.

USHERS

The ushers for today's service are Mr. Bowater, Mr. Nerger, Mr. Montaneli, and Mr. Paech.

NURSERY AND KINDERGARTEN AT ELEVEN

The Nursery and Kindergarten sessions meet at eleven o'clock. Participating in today's program are Mrs. Levy, Miss Scott, and Miss Strozier.

MEMBERSHIP AND EVANGELISM COMMISSION TO MEET

This Commission will meet this evening at eight o'clock in the fourth floor lounge of the church.

NEW YORK ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The first reunited session of the New York Annual Conference will be meeting this week at Drew University in Madison, New Jersey. The Conference convenes on Tuesday and adjourns on Sunday, June 14th.

A JUNE FESTIVAL

The Annual June Festival of the Methodist Church Home for the Aged will be held on Thursday, June 18th. A New England supper will be served from five to seven o'clock. Tickets, costing $1.25, may be secured from Miss Boice.

"UPPER ROOM" AVAILABLE

Copies of the May - June "Upper Room" are to be found in the narthex.