

one resented being just a number to be computerized and demanded to be recognized as a person at least capable of confounding a computer.

Which may provide a clue as to why the world is not yet finished with the Supreme Rebel who wandered around Palestine saying to some unlikely prospects, "You're the light of the world", and still says it to people today. And if you don't believe that there is strength and affirmation in that claim, think in retrospect of the difference that some people have made on teams when they have been claimed by that sense of significance. Maybe we didn't think about it while they were around; we took them for granted - in a home, a school, an office, a church. And now, when they're no longer there, we know what they did mean.

It may be true that no person is indispensable, but it is also true that a person can be invaluable, which according to the dictionary is "valuable beyond estimation, priceless". Said Phillips Brooks,

"No person of the humblest sort can really be good and honest and gentle and pure without the world being better for it....without some one being helped by the very existence of that goodness".

YOU But the word and the way of Jesus does not afford us the luxury of simply looking on. It keeps involving us - present tense, present company, today's date - your name, my name. "You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth". You and you and you. Oh, we'll try to dodge it if we can; we'll try to avoid His claim on our lives - our time and our possessions. We're no different from Andrew, or Peter, or Thomas - looking in another direction when His eye focuses on us. "Me, Lord - with all of my limitations....with the way I get things messed up...with my doubts and questions".

And then comes the answer - the steady gaze, the confident word, "Yes - you...you are one more hope that God has for the world".

Stand long enough at the foot of the cross and near the center of the Gospel and you begin to comprehend that it is precisely your life that he is addressing - your life, your tasks, your circumstances, your relationships - still conveying that amazing confidence in the meaning of your life.

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see... and give glory to your Father who in heaven".

~~The team and the person - equally important.~~

PRAYER Confirm within each of us, O God, the feelings of these moments. Send us forth reassured of the importance of our witness, our individual worth in a time when we sometimes question and wonder whether our life really counts. And then, tie us together with others on a team...in a fellowship - a fellowship of nurture and support and influence. Amen

be struggling toward those words. We have come to the point in history when anyone who is only a Japanese or only an American, only an Oriental or only a Westerner is but half human; the other half of his being which beats with the pulse of all mankind has yet to be born. Certainly what Vince Lombardi said about football, the New Testament insists is true with regard to all of life, "Life is a team game...we are members one of another".

PERSON But there's more to Lombardi's insight than that which emphasizes the team. He went on to say, "...sometimes the addition of one man can make all the difference in a team".

It happens in sports, the addition of one man can make it jell, come together. And just so the New Testament in a way goes on to remind us of the importance of one person. Was it not, after all, this sense of personal significance that Jesus was continually communicating to people until a man or a woman stood tall and strong in the conviction that his life meant something, that God had invested something of his love and hope in that person?

Picture that day when Jesus gathered his rag-tag followers around Him and proceeded to say to them, "You are the light of the world...the salt of the earth". I wonder...did He look over in the direction of Andrew when He spoke, Andrew with his meager talents and perhaps meager self-confidence, and did Andrew almost instinctively look over his shoulder to see if it wasn't someone else Jesus was speaking to?

Or, I wonder if He looked in the direction of Simon Peter, who had some sizeable problems with temper and profanity and fickleness? Did Peter look away in guilty embarrassment that the Master of life should trust Him that much? And there was Thomas, too, with all of his doubts and hesitations...never quite sure. What did it mean to those men to be told, "You, Andrew....Peter....Thomas... you are the light of this world...the salt of this earth".

And this has always been the genius of the Christian message. It confronts a person with the simple claim that he or she is a unique person, made in the image of God, entrusted with certain gifts and talents, that though there may be blots and blemishes on his record, he can still lift up his head because through God "in Christ" he is called to be a person of significance. This was the incredible claim that the Christians started spreading across the world. "You are the light....the salt..." People would laugh and scoff on occasion, but sometimes they would listen and reach, accept and find that life was something far more than they had thought it to be...because of that Word from JC.

There is much that militates against the credibility of that word in our day. Everything is so big, so impersonal. One person can feel utterly insignificant. Exploration into the vast recesses of space....the size of giant corporations....universities....hospitals....the automation of so much of life. It's tough to believe in the importance of the individual.

I was reading an item about a person who rebelled against the instructions on one of those perforated, computerized billing forms - the instruction which says, "Do not fold, staple, or mutilate in any way". And this person proceeded to "fold, staple and mutilate" in some minor ways and then returned the form with his check. And, of course, when the form was fed into an automatic device, the machine groaned and ground to a halt. When at last the card was dis-entangled, it was found to contain a scribbled message, to the effect that some-

"loner". He never called others to an isolated existence. He asked His disciples to leave a great deal behind, but He called them into a fellowship in which they gave each other mutual support and strength. He taught His followers to say "Our Father" and the kind of community that the word "our" encompassed was much greater than anything people had glimpsed before. It included children as well as oldsters, the rejected of society as well as the respected, Samaritans as well as Jews. You're part of a team, insisted Jesus - members of God's family and therefore intimately related to one another.

Paul, the Apostle, got the message and went on to repeat it in ways that have not lost their meaning. "We are members one of another" he wrote. And with some clear insights into physiology, he referred to the body as a unity with a variety of parts, and all of them in various ways serving one another.

"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'....so you also are the body of Christ, and individually members of it..."

Which is another way of saying what John Donne wrote, "No man is an island unto himself..." An old Latin proverb put it, "One man is no man at all".

The late Carson McCullers wrote a novel which later became a play on Broadway entitled, "Member of the Wedding". In that play, an adolescent girl revealed some amazingly mature insights, which - after all - were probably the insights of the author herself. At one point, the girl is talking to the neighborhood boy who is her friend, and she says,

"Just now I realized something...the trouble with me is that for a long time I have been just an 'I' person. All other people can say 'we'...when Berniece (the cook) says 'we', she means her lodge and her church. Soldiers can say 'we' and mean the army. All people belong to a 'we' except me...."

One should never be satisfied with being just a "me" person...the "me" must evolve into the "we" of community - in a home, in a marriage, in work, in church, in the world.

And what was a clear Gospel truth back there in the First Century carries a new urgency today. Whether we like it or not, the world has become a neighborhood. It's a world in which we're only hours away from our most remote neighbors. Lands across the planet have been neighbors. China across the street; Egypt at our doorstep. We hear on all sides that East and West are meeting, but it is an understatement. They are being flung at one another - hurled with the force of atoms, the speed of jets, the restlessness of minds impatient to learn of ways that differ from their own.

Once Daniel Boone, so the story goes, saw new settlers passing near his isolated cabin, and he asked the travelers where they were living. When the word came back that they were based about 70 miles away, Boone turned to his wife and said, "Old woman...we must move...they're crowding us". But there is no place for that kind of escape into isolation today. Twenty-five hundred years ago it took an exceptional man like Socrates to say on his death-bed, "I am not an Athenian or a Greek - but a citizen of the world". Today, we must all

"THE TEAM AND THE PERSON"

TEXT: "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'.....so you also are the body of Christ, and individually members of it..."
(I Corinthians 12: 20, 21)

INTRODUCTION

Once again, the nation draws still to celebrate Super Bowl Sunday. Plans and preparations have been made for an afternoon of football and fun with friends in front of TV. Once again men will become as little boys as "we" don our football helmets and settle down to marvel at the work of men whose responses to one another are so skillful and sensitive as to produce some brilliant team performances.

Yet, while we marvel at team efforts, so too we also applaud the skills of individual players. I'll be watching Fran Tarkenton, No. 10, the son of a Methodist preacher. I've always enjoyed watching Francis and told him so that hot Summer day I bumped into him on Hilton Head Island outside the Peddler Steak House. I was telling someone earlier that this is the hand that shook the hand that will guide the fortunes of the Vikings this afternoon in the Rose Bowl before 70 million people on TV, and pass them on to victory. After all, Fran's from Georgia and this is the Season for men from Georgia. "God's quarterback"

DEVELOPMENT

Therefore, as we in these moments ready ourselves for Super Bowl XI, I am especially receptive to an insight provided by the late Vince Lombardi who coached some of those great Green Bay Packer Teams in the early years of the Super Bowl. He's been credited for saying quite a few things such as "victory isn't everything; it's the only thing". Also, "When the going gets tough; the tough get going". But the insight I have in mind that helps to "kick-off" today's sermon is this,

"Football is a team game. There never has been a one man team. But, sometimes the addition of one man can make all the difference in a team".

There's nothing new or profound about his observation, but I do appreciate the way he "high-lights" the importance of both the team and the person. And what he was saying about football relates well to certain strands in the Gospel. At any rate, I find the New Testament has some important things to say both about the team and the importance of the person on the team. Let's look it from both angles.

COMMUNITY

First-off, the Bible keeps reminding us that we are called to live in community, that is - in fellowship with others on a team.

At first glance in the Gospel narrative, one might get the impression that Jesus was more concerned with breaking down community than in building up community. For instance, there was the time he disturbed his own family; the occasion he angered the people of Nazareth. He upset quite a few of the leaders of the religious establishment of his day. We see him challenging many of the patterns that spelled "community" to the people of His time.

On the other hand, if Jesus disturbed some concepts of community, He went on to establish community in new and exciting dimensions. He himself was not a

"THE TEAM AND THE PERSON"

INTRODUCTION

Mayor Lindsay has proclaimed the coming week as New York Mets Week. At a City Hall news conference on Thursday he told reporters:

"At midseason I was asked by a Chicago newspaper to state for the record my prediction as to who would win the Eastern Division championship, on what day and what hour and under what circumstances. I stated then that the Mets would win on the last day of the season, in Chicago, at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, behind a no-hitter by Tom Seaver and a grand-slam homer by Cleon Jones.....I sincerely regret having underestimated them by so much".

Across these past six weeks, time and again we have marvelled at the co-ordinated team work of these men whose responses to one another have been so sensitive and so skillful as to produce some brilliant team performances. Quite obviously it takes some great team work and some inspiring leadership to win a championship, and the Mayor is not the only New Yorker who underestimated the potential of this team.

And yet while we celebrate the prowess of team efforts, we also applaud the skills of individual players. Right away we think of Tom Seaver and his steady and spectacular pitching performances across the entire season. I remember one game in particular. It was against the Cubs back in July when he came within two outs of a no-hitter. We were in Maine at that time and I rented a television set for the series and I was so pleased I did. Of course my wife thought I was getting it for the moon shot which was only part of the truth. Every team has its component parts in persons, whose names stand for certain shining strengths and skills and with the Mets there are quite a few names: Jones, Kousman, Agee, Harrelson, Swobada, Shamsky, Grote, Boswell, Clendennon.

And so today as we stand on the threshold of New York Mets Week, I am most receptive to an insight offered by Casey Stengel in one of his more lucid moments:

"Baseball is a team game. There never has been a one-man team. But sometimes the addition of one man can make all the difference in a team".

While there is nothing new or profound about this observation, I confess that I like the way he high-lighted the importance of both the team and the person. I cannot help but wonder if what he said is not pretty closely related to certain strands in the Christian Gospel. At any rate, I find that the New Testament has something to say both about the team and also about the person on the team. Suppose we consider it from both angles.

WE LIVE IN COMMUNITY

First of all, the New Testament keeps reminding us that we are called to live in community, that is, in fellowship on a team. At first glance in the Gospels you might get the impression that Jesus was more concerned with breaking down community than in building up community. He disturbed his own family; he angered the people in his home town. He upset the religious community of his day. He challenged so many of the patterns that spelled "community" to the people of his time.

But if Jesus disturbed some concepts of community, he went on to establish community in new dimensions. He himself was not a loner, and he never called others

to an isolated existence. He asked his disciples to leave a great deal behind them, but he called them into a fellowship in which they gave each other mutual support and strength. He taught his followers to say "Our Father" and the kind of community that the word "Our" encompassed was so much greater than anything people had glimpsed up to that time. It included children as well as oldsters, rejected persons as well as respected persons, Samaritans as well as Jews. You are on a team, he kept insisting, members of the family of God, and therefore intimately related to one another.

Paul, the great Apostle, got the message and repeated it in ways that have not lost their meaning. "We are members one of another" he wrote. And with some clear insights into physiology, he referred to the body as a unity with a variety of parts, and all of them in various ways serving one another.

"The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you'.....so you also are the body of Christ, and individually members of it"...

Which is another way of saying what John Donne had in mind in the 16th century: "No man is an island unto himself". We are called to live in community.

It was this weekend two years ago that Carson McCullers died. From what we know of her life story it was in itself an epic in achievement in the face of illness and pain. Among her works was a novel which became a play on Broadway, "Member of the Wedding". In that play an adolescent girl revealed some amazingly mature insights, which after all must have been the insights of the author herself. At one point, the girl is talking to the neighbor boy who is her friend, and she says:

"Just now I realize something. The trouble with me is that for a long time I have been just an 'I' person. All other people can say 'we'.....When Bernice (the cook) says 'we', she means her lodge and her church.....soldiers can say 'we' and mean the army. All people belong to a 'we' except 'me'...."

The New Testament underlines the insight that one should never be satisfied with being a 'me' person.....that the 'me' must evolve into the 'we' of community - in the home, in a marriage, in work, in church, in the world.

What was clear gospel truth in the first century carries a new urgency in the 20th century. Whether we like it or not, the world has become a neighborhood. It is a world in which we are only hours away from our most remote neighbors. Once Daniel Boone, so the story goes, saw new settlers passing near his isolated cabin, and he asked the travelers where they were living. When the answer came that they were based about 70 miles away, Boone turned to his wife and said, "Old woman, gather up our things for we must move. They are crowding us".

But there is no place for that kind of isolation today. There are countless forces that crowd us together and our lives are inextricably intertwined. Whether nuclear power is finally used in constructive or destructive fashion depends in part, upon how much this sense of inter-relatedness prevails in the councils of the nations and in the minds of men. Can two ideologies co-exist in one world or will we continue to kill each other. Whether race riots spread or racial harmony grows depends, in part, upon the degree of mutual responsibility that people show. Whether

our individual lives find a measure of meaning and fulfillment depends in part upon our own sense of community, and our relationships to the teams of which we are a part - family, friends, work, church, community. Certainly what Casey Stengel said about baseball being a team game, the New Testament insists is true with regard to all of life:

"Life is a team game.....we are members one of another"

IMPORTANCE OF ONE PERSON But there was more to the Stengel statement than the glorification of the team. He went on to say: "Sometimes the addition of one man can make all the difference in a team". Here Stengel I'm sure was reflecting back on his successful years with the Yankees and of how time and again, year after year, one man would make the difference and have the big season. It might have been Berra, or Mantel, or Ford. And just so the New Testament goes on to remind us of the importance of one person. Was it not this sense of significance that Jesus was continually communicating to persons until a man or a woman stood tall and strong in the conviction that God had invested in them his love and hope and part of his task?

Picture that day when Jesus gathered his followers about him and proceeded to say to them, "You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth". I wonder if he looked in the direction of Andrew when he spoke those words, Andrew with his meager talents and perhaps his meager self-confidence, and did Andrew almost instinctively look over his shoulder to see if it wasn't somebody else that Jesus had in mind? Or I wonder if he looked in the direction of Simon Peter, who had some sizeable problems with temper and profanity and fickleness? Did Peter look away in guilty embarrassment that the Master should trust him that much. And what about Thomas, who had so many questions and doubts that he was never quite sure just where he stood or how far he was going. What did it do to these men to be told, "You - Andrew, you - Peter, you - Thomas....you are the light of the world....the salt of the earth". How improbable it seemed to them or to those who knew them that they would outshine and outlast the Caesars and the Pilates and the Herods.

Yet, it happened that Jesus was right. Because of what he meant to them and did for them, these disciples became the lights of the world with a meaning and an endurance far greater than the flashing fame names of the day.

This has always been the genius, if you will, of the Christian gospel. It confronts a person with the simple announcement that he is a unique person, made in the image of God, entrusted with certain gifts of time and talent, that though there may be blots and blemishes on his record, he can still lift up his head, because through Christ he is called to be a person of significance. This was the incredible word that Christians started proclaiming across the world. To a slave in Rome and a playboy in Assisi, "You are the light of the world..." To miners in England, to debtors in Georgia, to sinners, to sufferers, to the old and to the young - "YOU - you are the light of the world". Sometimes people would laugh and scoff and ignore, but sometimes people paused to listen and reach and accept, and find that life was something more than they had dared to believe.

I know that there is much that militates against the credibility of that word in our day. The exploration into the vast recesses of space - the destiny of population of our planet - the sheer size of schools and universities and industries and companies - the automation of so much of life. Everything is so big and so impersonal that one person can feel utterly insignificant.

Sometime ago I read an item about a person who rebelled against the instruction on one of those perforated, computerized billing forms, the type that all of us receive once a month from Bloomingdale's, on which one reads the following instructions: "Do not staple, fold, or mutilate in any way". And this rebel proceeded to "staple, fold, and mutilate" in minor ways, and then returned the form with his check. Of course, when the form was fed into the automatic device, the machine groaned and ground to a halt. When at last the card was disentangled, it was found to contain a scribbled message, to the effect that someone resented being just a number to be computerized and demanded to be recognized as a person at least capable of confounding a computer. I have no axe to grind with the computers and I know that society can't operate without them. Yet - there is enough of the rebel in most of us to identify with that person.

Which may provide us with half a hint as to why the world is not yet finished with that Supreme Rebel who wandered around Galilee saying to some unlikely prospects: "Ye are the light of the world....the salt of the earth"....and still says the same thing to us today. And if you don't believe there is strength and substance to that affirmation, stop and think about it in retrospect of the difference that some people have made on teams when they have been claimed by that sense of significance. Maybe we didn't think much about it while they were around. We took them pretty much for granted - in a home, church, school, office. And as for them, they weren't pompous or pretentious, but they were steady and faithful. And now when they no longer walk in our midst - gone, by reason of death, or sickness, or moving - we know what they did mean to the community that is a home, or a neighborhood, or business. It may be true that no person is indispensable, but it is also true that a person can be invaluable, which my dictionary defines as 'valuable beyond estimation, priceless'. So often I go back to reflect upon the observation of Phillips Brooks:

"No person of the humblest sort can really be good and honest and gentle and pure without the world being better for it, without some being helped by the very existence of that goodness".

ADDRESSING YOU

But the Christian Gospel does not afford us the luxury of simply looking on. It keeps involving us - present tense, today's date, your name, my name. "You are the light of the world". We'll dodge it if we can. We'll do our best to avoid his claim on our lives, our time, our calendar, our pocketbook. We're no different from the Andrews, the Peters, and Thomases of his day. "Who me, Lord, with my circumstances and limitations....you want me to play a position on your team...who me, Lord, with the way that I get things all snarled up and messed up....me, Lord, with all I've got to do and with all the doubts and questions I have". And back comes that answer, the steady gaze, the confident words: "Yes, you....you are nonetheless one more hope that God has for this world"

Stay long enough near the center of the Gospel and stand long enough at the foot of the cross, and you must begin to comprehend that it is precisely your life that he is addressing: your tasks, your circumstances, your team relationships, and yet still conveying that amazing confidence in the meaning and mission of your life: "You are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before me that they may see.....and give glory to your Father who is in heaven".

PRAYER

O God, who hast gathered thy people together in this house of worship and this place of prayer, grant that we may commit ourselves to thee and to thy purpose for us, and that we may go forth from this place, strengthened and renewed in body, mind and spirit, to do thy work and to let thy light shine through us into the world. Amen

"THE TEAM AND THE PERSON"

INTRODUCTION

In recent months, we have been made keenly aware of the prowess of certain smooth-functioning athletic teams. From the Red Sox and the Cardinals in baseball last October, to the Green Bay Packers and the Oakland Raiders in football last Sunday, we marvel at the co-ordinated team work of nine men or eleven men whose responses to one another are so sensitive and so skillful as to produce some brilliant team performances. Quite obviously it takes some great team work to put a team into the World Series of baseball or the Super-bowl of football.

And yet while we celebrate the prowess of teams, we also applaud the skills of individual players. We think of Carl Yastrzemski of the Red Sox and how he electrified America with his individual performance in leading the Red Sox into the World Series. Here's a name that is threatening to outshine the Cabots and the Lodges in the city "of the bean and the cod". We think of Bart Starr, the brilliant quarterback for the Green Bay Packers whose skills were watched by millions last Sunday afternoon. Every team has its component parts in persons, whose names stand for certain shining strengths and skills.

And so today as we rest in the after-glow of the Super Bowl, I am receptive to an insight offered by Vince Lombardi of the Green Bay Packers. The coach of this great team was quoted recently in one of our national magazines as saying:

"Football is a team game. There never has been a one-man team. But sometimes the addition of one man can make all the difference in a team".

Now there is nothing new or profound about this observation of his, but I must confess that I liked the way he high-lighted the importance of both the team and the person. Let me repeat it. I cannot help but wonder if what he said is not pretty closely related to certain strands in the Christian Gospel. At any rate, I find that the New Testament has considerable to say about the team and also about the person on the team. Suppose we consider it from both angles.

WE LIVE IN COMMUNITY

First of all, the New Testament keeps reminding us that we are called to live in community, that is, in fellowship on a team. At first glance in the Gospels you might get the impression that Jesus was more concerned with breaking down community than in building up community. He disturbed his own family; he angered the people in his home town. He upset the religious community of his day. He challenged so many of the patterns that spelled "community" to the people of his time.

But if Jesus disturbed some concepts of community, he went on to establish community in new dimensions. He himself was not a loner, and he never called others to an isolated existence. He asked his disciples to leave a great deal behind them, but he called them into a fellowship in which they gave each other mutual support and strength. He taught his followers to say "Our Father" and the kind of community that the word "Our" encompassed was so much greater than anything people had glimpsed before. It included children as well as oldsters, rejected persons as well as respected persons, Samaritans as well as Jews. You are on a team, he kept insisting, members of the family of God; and therefore intimately related to one another.

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Which is another way of saying that "no man is an island unto himself...." An old Latin proverb had it, "One man is no man at all". We are called to live in community.

And on this particular weekend when various branches of the Christian Church are coming together in ecumenical services of intercession and witness, we need to remember Paul's words that "we are members one of another". We rejoice that already there is a new atmosphere, a new realization of our oneness. We rejoice that Protestants and Roman Catholics are becoming more and more united in a determination to seek together the will of God for the closer unity of all his people in our dangerous and divided world.

I think it was in late September that the newspapers carried the word of the death of an author by the name of Carson McCullers. You may recognize her name for she was the author of the novel that was made into a movie which last week was playing across the street at the RKO, "Reflections in a Golden Eye". From what I know of her life story it was in itself an epic in achievement in the face of illness and pain. Among her works was a novel which became a play on Broadway, "Member of the Wedding". In that play an adolescent girl revealed some amazingly mature insights, which after all must have been the insights of the author herself. At one point, the girl is talking to the neighbor boy who is her friend, and she says:

"Just now I realize something. The trouble with me is that for a long time I have been just an 'I' person. All other people can say 'we'.....When Bernice (the cook) says 'we', she means her lodge and her church.....Soldiers can say 'we' and mean the army. All people belong to a 'we' except 'me'...."

The New Testament underlines the insight that one should never be satisfied with being a 'me' person.....that the 'me' must evolve into the 'we' of community - in the home, in a marriage, in work, in church, in the world.

What was clear gospel truth in the first century carries a new urgency in the 20th century. Whether we like it or not, the world has become a neighborhood. It is a world in which we are only hours away from our most remote neighbors. Once Daniel Boone, so the story goes, saw new settlers passing near his isolated cabin, and he asked the travelers where they were living. When the answer came that they were based about 70 miles away, Boone turned to his wife and said: "Old woman, we must move. They are crowding us!"

But there is no place for that kind of escape into isolation today. There are countless forces that crowd us together and our lives are inextricably intertwined. Whether nuclear power is finally used in constructive or destructive fashion depends, in part, upon how much this sense of inter-relatedness prevails in the councils of nations and in the minds of men. Can two ideologies co-exist in one world or will we continue to kill each other. Whether race riots spread or racial harmony grows depends, in part, upon the degree of mutual responsibility that people show. Whether our individuals lives find a measure of meaning and fulfillment depends in part upon our own sense of community, and our relationships to the teams of which we are a part - family, friends, work, church, community. Certainly what Vince Lombardi said about football, the New Testament insists is true with regard to all of life:

"Life is a team game.....we are members one of another"

a computer..... There is enough of the rebel in most of us to identify with that rebel. How I love his spirit!

Which may provide half a hint as to why the world is not yet finished with that Supreme Rebel who wandered about Galilee saying to some unlikely prospects: "You are the light of the world.....the salt of the earth".....and still says it to us today. If you don't believe there is strength and substance to that affirmation, stop and think in retrospect of the difference that some people have made on teams when they have been claimed by that sense of significance. Maybe we didn't think much about it while they were around. We took them pretty much for granted - in a home, in a church, a school, an office. And as for them, they weren't pompous or pretentious, but they were steady and faithful. And now when they are gone, by reason of death or sickness or moving - we know what they did mean to the community that is a home, or a neighborhood, or a business or a church. It may be true that no person is indispensable, but it is also true that a person can be invaluable, which my dictionary defines as 'valuable beyond estimation, priceless'. So Often I go back to think about the words of Phillips Brooks:

"No person of the humblest sort can really be good and honest and gentle and pure without the world being better for it, without someone being helped by the very existence of that goodness".

HE IS ADDRESSING YOU But the Christian Gospel does not afford us the luxury of simply looking on. It keeps involving us - present tense, today's date, your name, my name. "You are the light of the world." We'll dodge it if we can. We'll try to avoid his claim on our lives and our possessions. We're no different from the Andrews and the Peters and Thomases of his day. "Who me, Lord, with my circumstances and limitations". "Who me? with the way that I get things all snarled up and messed up" "Who me, Lord, with all my doubts and questions?" And back comes the answer, the steady gaze, the confident words, "Yes, you.....you are nonetheless one more hope that God has for his world".

Stay long enough near the center of the Gospel and stand long enough at the foot of the cross, and you must begin to comprehend that it is precisely your life that he is addressing - your tasks, your circumstances, your team relationships - and yet still conveying that amazing confidence in the meaning and the mission of your life,

"You are the light of the world.....Let your light so shine before men that they may see.....and give glory to your Father who is in heaven...."

PRAYER O Love that wilt not let us go, keep reminding us of who we are. "Beloved, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called the Sons of God". Help us, in our lives, we beseech Thee, to receive that and then to reveal it to others. Amen