

"THINGS THAT GIVE LIFE MEANING"

TEXT: "Meanwhile the disciples besought Him, saying, 'Rabbi, eat.' But He said to them, 'I have food to eat of which you do not know.'" (John 4: 31)

BACKGROUND The disciples were preoccupied - as we all are - with the material necessities of life. Not having eaten for some time, they had gone off to get some food and were surprised to discover upon their return that Jesus didn't touch it.

They urged Him to eat - for they were unaware that He had drawn on sustenance of another kind. He had been in conversation with a Samaritan woman about deeper cravings than those satisfied by food and drink. His own weariness, fatigue and hunger had been forgotten in those moments of conversation. And He went on to tell His disciples about the spiritual nourishment by which He had been sustained. He put it to them in these words: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work".

DEVELOPMENT Suppose we consider what this incident from John's Gospel has to say to us. It suggests that we are made so that we are never fully satisfied even though all of our material necessities are provided for, that there is in each of us a hunger - if you will - for the things that feed the spirit...that vitamins for the spirit are every bit as necessary as vitamins for the body.

Rollo May, the psychiatrist says that one of the problems of people today is inner emptiness. Well-fed, well-clothed, well-paid and living in well-built houses, they nevertheless feel that they're missing something, that their lives should be happier and counting for more than they do. Perhaps you've had that feeling. Boredom and triviality plague many.

What are the things that by feeding the spirit give life some real meaning? Let me touch on three things.

ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR WORK To begin with, I would single out our attitude toward our daily work. Just as important as the nature of the work we do is the manner in which we do it. Whatever it is - operating a machine, standing behind a counter, sitting behind a desk, answering the telephone, interviewing clients - we should try to put our highest self in to it. And when we do this - when we put our highest and best self into our work, we're putting something of God in to it. It is through our work that we express ourselves and fulfill ourselves. I'd like to suggest that all of us get into the habit of starting each day by offering this simple prayer: "God helping me, today I will do my best with what I am, where I am."

And certainly the advice offered by Charles Kingsley to a young man is well-worth remembering:

"Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day that must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work and forced to do your best, will breed in you temperance and self-control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and content, and a hundred virtues which the idle will never know!"

This advice is certainly in line with what the Church of Christ has always said to men and women about the task in which they are engaged for the greater part of their waking hours. Hear it again:

"You have been set in the world to be partners of God in His continuing work of creation, and in what you are doing, you are so far as the work is creative, productive and useful - cooperators with God."

It is a concern of the Christian Church that work - in so far as it is possible - should be so organized and so directed that people can respect themselves while taking part in it and can do it "to the glory of God". It used to be said that the difference between trades and professions is that the first are organized for profit and the second for service, but the distinction can no longer be drawn quite so sharply. While there still are men in business and industry for whom money-making is the sole motive, the service concept is nowadays playing a far greater role.

The service concept can be a motivating factor even when the work is repetitious and monotonous. A mechanic on an automobile assembly line told how he had two incentives - (1) the quality of cars being turned out, and (2) his part in maintaining good relationships with the other workmen on the job.

Linger for a moment with that second incentive. Most of us work together in groups - large and small. It is not only our attitude to our work that affects our attitude to life as a whole; it is our attitude toward those with whom we work. So much depends on our temper and temperament. If we are cooperative and courteous, good-natured and approachable, friendly and helpful...if we cultivate those sterling qualities in ourselves, though the work itself may be tiring and taxing, life will not be empty and meaningless. To get caught up in petty rivalries, bickering and office disputes is a sad thing. On the other hand, to work with a team in a happy and harmonious relationship is a stimulating, satisfying experience.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

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Caring for people - being concerned about them, projecting ourselves imaginatively into their lives, befriending them and helping them - this is what He was putting so much emphasis upon. And when we care, really care, then changes begin to take place in us: changes of mind, of spirit, of character. If we have been hard, the hardness begins to soften. Instead of criticizing and condemning, we begin to appreciate and encourage. We grow in understanding and sympathy. And when - as is sure to happen - loving and caring deeply - we meet love in return, life takes on new meaning.

Love is the greatest thing that life can hold, the thing that surely unites us to God and men - the ultimate secret of meaningful existence. Shakespeare knew this and put this cry on the lips of Othello:

"But I do love thee; and when I love thee not - chaos is come again."

And Aldous Huxley knew that. Listen to his words:

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Love is the greatest thing that life can hold, the thing that most surely unites us to God and men, and out of chaos - brings meaning. As we engage in tasks and efforts to save life - this is human nature at its highest and best - caring, giving of itself spontaneously, instinctively, regardless of the cost, the danger, the inconvenience.

A CAUSE TO SERVE Moving on to the third thought, I have found in my ministry that one seldom complains of meaninglessness of life and existence if one has found a cause in which or she believes and to which he or she can wholeheartedly give himself.

If I am convinced that something worthwhile is going on, and that I have a part in advancing it, it simply does not occur to me to maintain that life is without meaning. Life takes on significance when it is devoted to an ideal, and an ideal that embodies a cause.

The point is this: to have something to live for and work for - something bigger than yourself, better than yourself, outlasting yourself is the remedy for futility and boredom.

One of the best ways to rid yourself of inner emptiness is to choose your cause and then go to work for it with some real zest and effort. Opportunities are all around us for involvement that will provide inner satisfaction. Remember this: you have not risen to the heights of your God-given origin, nature and destiny if you are pursuing disconnected ends...if you are taken up all of the time with material concerns, money-making - what to eat wear and so on.

And, friends, this is what Christ is offering us - an ideal, the Kingdom of God...embodied in a cause. A cause - mind you - not a social club...a cause in which we are enlisted under orders and to whose service we are dedicated, our discipleship not a matter of formal profession, but a life-long vocation. Our role is not that of sideline spectators, but rather of active participants. There is work to do for God and man, work in which we deeply believe and into which we can put head, heart and hand. (Hard work, yes, but it is deeply satisfying.)

Let me bring it all together and summarize briefly. What are the things then that by feeding the spirit give life meaning?

First: our attitude to work - our work - to those with whom we work. Second: the essential meaning of life is found in our relationships with one another and to brothers and sisters around the world. Third: life takes on ~~even~~ greater meaning when it is devoted to an ideal, an ideal embodying a cause.

"Meanwhile, the disciples besought Him, saying, 'rabbi, eat.' But He said to them, 'I have food to eat of which you do not know.'"

PRAYER Lord, as we direct our thoughts to those things that deepen life and add to its meaning for us, help us to think clearly and then lead us out of ourselves toward Him who is the purpose of all life, that we may show forth in our lives something of His life, His love for all human beings, that we may reflect something of the way he served others - all of this that our world may be reconciled to You. In the spirit of Jesus, our Lord. Amen

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They urged Him to eat - for they were unaware that He had drawn on sustenance of another kind. He had been in conversation with a Samaritan woman about deeper cravings than those satisfied by food and drink. His own weariness, fatigue and hunger had been forgotten in those moments of conversation. And He went on to tell His disciples about the spiritual nourishment by which He had been sustained. He put it to them in these words: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to accomplish His work".

DEVELOPMENT Suppose we consider what this incident from John's Gospel has to say to us. It suggests that we are made so that we are never fully satisfied even though all of our material necessities are provided for, that there is in each of us a hunger - if you will - for the things that feed the spirit...that vitamins for the spirit are every bit as necessary as vitamins for the body.

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It is a concern of the Christian Church that work - in so far as it is possible - should be so organized and so directed that people can respect themselves while taking part in it and can do it "to the glory of God". It used to be said that the difference between trades and professions is that the first are organized for profit and the second for service, but the distinction can no longer be drawn quite so sharply. While there still are men in business and industry for whom money-making is the sole motive, the service concept is now-a-days playing a far greater role.

The service concept can be a motivating factor even when the work is repetitious and monotonous. A mechanic on an automobile assembly line told how he had two incentives - (1) the quality of cars being turned out, and (2) his part in maintaining good relationships with the other workmen on the job.

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One of the best ways to rid yourself of inner emptiness is to choose your cause and then go to work for it with some real zest and effort. Opportunities are all around us for involvement that will provide inner satisfaction. Remember this: you have not risen to the heights of your God-given origin, nature and destiny if you are pursuing disconnected ends...if you are taken up all of the time with material concerns, money-making - what to eat, wear and so on.

And, friends, this is what Christ is offering us - an ideal, the Kingdom of God...embodied in a cause. A cause - mind you - not a social club...a cause in which we are enlisted under orders and to whose service we are dedicated, our discipleship not a matter of formal profession, but a life-long vocation. Our role is not that of sideline spectators, but rather of active participants. There is work to do for God and man, work in which we deeply believe and into which we can put head, heart and hand. (Hard work, yes, but it is deeply satisfying.)

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DEVELOPMENT Suppose we consider what this incident from John's Gospel has to say to us. It suggests that we are made so that we are never fully satisfied even though all of our material necessities are provided for, that there is in each of us a hunger, if you will, for the things that feed the spirit - that vitamins for the spirit are every bit as necessary as vitamins for the body. "Eat, drink, and be merry" is a shallow, superficial philosophy. In the long run, the person who lives by it is plagued by boredom and triviality. The best things in life pass him by; he is without that deep satisfaction that comes from being needed and from contributing something of substance and worth to the common good.

Rollo May, the psychiatrist says that one of the problems of people today is inner emptiness. Well-fed, well-clothed, well-paid and living in well-built houses, they nevertheless feel that perhaps they are missing something, that their lives should be happier and counting for more than they do.

ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR WORK What are the things that by feeding the spirit give life some real meaning? I would cite three things:

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The advice given by Charles Kingsley to a young men is well worth remembering:

"Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day that must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work and forced to do your best, will breed in you temperance and self-control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and content, and a hundred virtues which the idle will never know!"

This advice is certainly in line with what the Church of Christ has always

said to men and women about the task in which they are engaged for the greater part of their waking hours:

"You have been set in the world to be partners of God in his continuing work of creation, and in what you are doing, you are so far as the work is creative, productive and useful - cooperators with God".

But what about those whose work makes no demand upon their creative faculties? Or what about those involved in undertakings so mercenary and competitive that their conscience is troubled and find it difficult to be a real Christian from Monday morning through Friday afternoon? Certainly if a man has a troubled conscience about the work he does he can neither express himself nor fulfill himself as he should. Therefore, it is a concern of Christian people that work, in so far as it is possible, should be so organized and so directed that people can respect themselves while taking part in it and can do it "to the glory of God". That day may be a long way off but we must strive toward it; and progress is being made. It used to be said that the difference between trades and professions is that the first are organized for profit and the second for service, but the distinction can no longer be drawn so sharply. While there still are men in business and industry for whom money-making is the sole motive, the service concept is nowadays playing a far greater role.

The service concept can be a motivating factor even when the work is repetitious and monotonous. A mechanic on an automobile assembly line told how he had two incentives - the quality of the cars being turned out and his part in maintaining good relationships with the other workmen on the job. Linger for a moment with the second incentive.

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Love is the greatest thing that life can hold, the things that most surely unites us to God and men, and out of chaos - brings meaning. I think of a news item carried some time ago by the press about an airliner ditched in the Atlantic and how planes and ships at once converged on it, pilots and crew, bent on saving life. This is human nature at its highest and best - caring - giving of itself spontaneously, instinctively, regardless of the cost, the danger, the inconvenience. I'm sure there have been parallels in other wars to this experience shared by Henry Williamson growing out of World War I:

"In the stupendous roar and light blast of the final barrage that broke the Hindenburg line, I see only one thing which grows radiant before my eyes until it fills all my world: the sight of a German boy half-crushed under a shattered tank, moaning, 'Mutter, mutter, mutter' out of ghastly, gray lips. A British soldier, wounded in the leg and sitting near by, hears the words, and dragging himself to the dying boy, takes his cold hand and says, 'All right, son, it's all right. Mother's here with you'".

Out of chaos and disaster, it is love that brings meaning to life.

THE 3RD FINAL
A CAUSE TO SERVE Moving on to ~~another~~ thought, I have found in my ministry that one seldom complains of meaninglessness of life and of existence if one has found a cause in which he ~~or she~~ believes and to which he can wholeheartedly give himself. If I am convinced that something worthwhile is going on, and that I have a part in advancing it, it simply does not occur to me to maintain that life is without meaning. Life takes on significance when it is devoted to an ideal, an ideal embodying a cause.

The point is: to have something to live for and work for - something bigger than yourself, better than yourself, outlasting yourself is the remedy for futility and boredom.

One way then to rid yourself of inner emptiness is to choose your cause and then go to work for it with zest and vigor. The Peace Corps and Vista have been such causes; Civil rights another; anti-poverty programs and head-start programs of recent years. ~~You have not risen to the heights of your God-given origin, nature and destiny if you are pursuing disconnected ends, if you are taken up all the time with materials concerns and money-making - what to eat, wear.~~

And this is what Christ offers us - an ideal, the Kingdom of God, embodied in a cause. A cause, mind you, not a social club, a cause in which we are enlisted under orders and to whose service we are dedicated, our discipleship not a matter of formal profession, but a life-long vocation - our role not that of sideline spectators but of active participants. There is work to do for God and man, work in which we deeply believe and into which we can put head, heart and hand. It is hard work, but it is deeply satisfying.

CONCLUSION

~~The things that give life meaning. What are the things then that by feeding the spirit give life meaning? Our attitude to our work and to those with whom we work. The essential meaning of life is found in our relationships with one another. Life takes on even greater meaning when it is devoted to an ideal, an ideal embodying a cause. Christ gave us a world to live in and work in; a self one can live with, and a cause one can work for.~~

LET US PRAY

As we direct our thoughts, O God, to the things that give life real meaning, help us to think clearly, and then lead us out of ourselves toward him who is the purpose of all men, that we may show forth in our lives something of his life, his love for all men, and something of the way he served others, that the world through us may be reconciled to Thee. Amen

"Meanwhile the disciples besought Him, saying, 'Rabbi, eat.' But He said to them, 'I have food to eat of which you do not know'".

WAY OF CHRIST

DIVINE WORSHIP at 9:15 and 11:00 a.m.

You are cordially invited to worship with us

9:15 a.m. The Preacher will be the Pastor, Rev. Herbert N. Lovemore

11:00 a.m. The Guest Preachers are as follows:

July 5th: LCDR WILLIAM A. WILL

A graduate of West Virginia Wesleyan and Duke University. Minister of the United Methodist Church, and chaplain recently returned from Viet Nam, and presently member of the Chaplain's Corp. United States Navy, Portsmouth, N. H.

12th: REV. DR. FRANKLIN D. ELMER, JR.

Graduate of Brown University and University of Chicago. Minister of Woodside Interdenominational Church, Flint, Michigan.

19th: REV. FLOYD R. STRADLEY

(9:15) Minister of Christ United Methodist Church, Decatur, Illinois.

19th: MR. HAROLD FARKAS

(11:00) Theological student at Bangor University for United Church of Christ and this year, Director of the "OPEN DOOR" program for young people in Ogunquit.

26th: REV. PHILIP A. C. CLARKE

(9:15) Graduate of Middlebury College and Boston University. Minister of Park Avenue United Methodist Church, New York City.

26th: REV. FLOYD R. STRADLEY

(11:00) Minister of Christ United Methodist Church, Decatur, Illinois.

August 2nd: REV. A. HALE SCHORER

Graduate of Heidelberg College, Union and Eden Theological Seminaries. Minister of United Church of Christ, St. Louis, Missouri.

9th: REV. DR. FRANKLIN D. ELMER, JR.

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30th: REV. ROBERT W. WOOD

Graduate of University of Pennsylvania and Oberlin School of Theology. Minister of Zion United Church of Christ, Newark, New Jersey.

Sept. 6th: REV. ROBERT W. WOOD

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Sunday Evening Programs will be presented in the Sanctuary at 8:00 p.m.

- July 5th: THE TOP TWENTY: A program of colored slides and exhibits of pedigreed cats in the USA, presented by Miss Linda Witherill and the Pastor.
- 10th: HASSIDIC SERVICE for SABBATH EVE by ISADORE FREED.
(Friday) Cantor: Boris Voronovsky.
- 19th: UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS: VISITING IN AUSTRALIA.
A lecture with colored slides by the Rev. Edward A. Milley, Pastor United Methodist Church, Hampton, N. H.
- 20th: Women's Society of Christian Service Fair in Plumer Hall of the Church. (Monday) 10:00 A.M.
- 26th: CONCERT: FOLK SONGS AROUND THE WORLD.
Jacqueline Currey Neuwirth (mezzo-Soprano)
- August 2nd THE WAY OF A DOG SHOW. A movie on dogs in the USA, presented by Gaines Research Center.
- 9th: FELINES: FACTS & FABLES, a lecture with colored slides presented by the Pastor.
- 16th: CONCERT: AN EVENING OF STEPHEN FOSTER.
Jacqueline Currey Neuwirth (mezzo-soprano)
- 23rd: A SOUTH AFRICAN APPRAISAL of the U.S.A. An illustrated lecture presented by the Pastor.
- 30th: INTERPRETATION of the MARC CHAGALL WINDOWS in the SYNAGOGUE, HADASSA HOSPITAL, JERUSALEM by Hugh Coulter, with colored slides.
- Sept. 4th: Blueberry Festival. (Friday)
- 6th: BIBLICAL PLACES IN GREECE AND TURKEY.
A lecture with colored slides by the Rev. Robert W. Wood.

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SHORE ROAD, OGUNQUIT, MAINE 03907

Summer Worship Program

Rev. Herbert N. Lovemore, *Minister*

88 York Street, York, Maine 03909

(Telephone 363-3513)

Sunday Evening Programs will be presented in the Sanctuary at 8:00 p.m.

- July 5th: THE TOP TWENTY: A program of colored slides and exhibits of pedigreed cats in the USA, presented by Miss Linda Witherill and the Pastor.
- 10th: HASSIDIC SERVICE for SABBATH EVE by ISADORE FREED.
(Friday) Cantor: Boris Voronovsky.
- 19th: UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS: VISITING IN AUSTRALIA.
A lecture with colored slides by the Rev. Edward A. Milley, Pastor United Methodist Church, Hampton, N. H.
- 20th: Women's Society of Christian Service Fair in Plumer Hall of the Church, (Monday) 10:00 A.M.
- 26th: CONCERT: FOLK SONGS AROUND THE WORLD.
Jacqueline Currey Neuwirth (mezzo-Soprano)
- August 2nd THE WAY OF A DOG SHOW. A movie on dogs in the USA, presented by Gaines Research Center.
- 9th: FELINES: FACTS & FABLES, a lecture with colored slides presented by the Pastor.
- 16th: CONCERT: AN EVENING OF STEPHEN FOSTER.
Jacqueline Currey Neuwirth (mezzo-soprano)
- 23rd: A SOUTH AFRICAN APPRAISAL of the U.S.A. An illustrated lecture presented by the Pastor.
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DIVINE WORSHIP at 9:15 and 11:00 a.m.

You are cordially invited to worship with us

9:15 a.m. The Preacher will be the Pastor, Rev. Herbert N. Lovemore

11:00 a.m. The Guest Preachers are as follows:

July 5th: LCDR WILLIAM A. WILL

A graduate of West Virginia Wesleyan and Duke University. Minister of the United Methodist Church, and chaplain recently returned from Viet Nam, and presently member of the Chaplain's Corp. United States Navy, Portsmouth, N. H.

12th: REV. DR. FRANKLIN D. ELMER, JR.

Graduate of Brown University and University of Chicago. Minister of Woodside Interdenominational Church, Flint, Michigan.

19th: REV. FLOYD R. STRADLEY

(9:15) Minister of Christ United Methodist Church, Decatur, Illinois.

19th: MR. HAROLD FARKAS

(11:00) Theological student at Bangor University for United Church of Christ and this year, Director of the "OPEN DOOR" program for young people in Ogunquit.

26th: REV. PHILIP A. C. CLARKE

(9:15) Graduate of Middlebury College and Boston University. Minister of Park Avenue United Methodist Church, New York City.

26th: REV. FLOYD R. STRADLEY

(11:00) Minister of Christ United Methodist Church, Decatur, Illinois.

August 2nd: REV. A. HALE SCHORER

Graduate of Heidelberg College, Union and Eden Theological Seminaries. Minister of United Church of Christ, St. Louis, Missouri.

9th: REV. DR. FRANKLIN D. ELMER, JR.

Graduate of Brown University and University of Chicago. Minister of Woodside Interdenominational Church, Flint, Michigan.

16th: REV. PHILIP A. C. CLARKE

Graduate of Middlebury College and Boston University. Minister of Park Avenue United Methodist Church, New York City.

23rd: REV. PHILIP A. C. CLARKE

Graduate of Middlebury College and Boston University. Minister of Park Avenue United Methodist Church, New York City.

30th: REV. ROBERT W. WOOD

Graduate of University of Pennsylvania and Oberlin School of Theology. Minister of Zion United Church of Christ, Newark, New Jersey.

Sept. 6th: REV. ROBERT W. WOOD

Graduate of University of Pennsylvania and Oberlin School of Theology. Minister of Zion United Church of Christ, Newark, New Jersey.