

"WHEN YOUR HEART IS BREAKING"

A Sermon By

Rev. Philip A. C. Clarke

Park Avenue United Methodist Church  
106 East 86th Street  
New York, New York 10028  
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## "WHEN YOUR HEART IS BREAKING"

### INTRODUCTION

Theodore Parker Ferris once said that he thought he knew a certain man very well. He knew this other man as one who drove a hard bargain. But one day Dr. Ferris met this man's son, who had likewise become successful. One evening Dr. Ferris had dinner with the son and listened to him speak about his father. Recalling the time when he got in- to serious trouble, the son said,

"I was drafted by the army, and when I had been in the service for more than a year I made a mistake. It was a serious mistake. I did something my father told me never to do. I was given a dishonorable discharge. I knew that what I had done would disgrace the family, and I thought that my father would be outraged, but I let him know at once what had happened.

He sent me a wire in which there were three sentences, and these were the lines: 'I will stand by you no matter what happens. Will be there in the morning. Remember who you are!'"

Those are the words of a father whose heart was breaking. They are profound words...reassuring words. They are words spoken with compassionate wisdom.

How do you handle heartbreak? What becomes of you? How do you respond? What do you say? How do you work through the hurt? Let's take a closer look at today's story.

### TODAY'S STORY

Two men were leaving Jerusalem and walking to their home village called Emmaus. Their names are not given. All that is known about them is the fact that they were in a state of bewilderment. Jesus had been killed. They had hoped "He was the one to redeem Israel". But now, things looked impossible. And to make matters worse, these two men had received a report that some women had gone to Jesus' tomb only to find it empty. There was the news that angels were seen near the tomb, but no Jesus.

As these two men were discussing these events, Jesus shows up along the road and begins to walk with them. They tell him the heart-wrenching news. Jesus responds. Beginning with Moses and all the prophets, He interprets to the men the Scriptures. But this short course in historical-messianic-theology is of no comfort to the men. Their hearts remain broken.

The men invite Jesus to eat with them once they arrive home. He agrees to stay for the meal. While there an amazing thing occurs. Jesus took their bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them.

"And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished out of their sight."

What happened next was no surprise. The two men whose hearts had been broken returned to Jerusalem. They found the disciples and told them this wonderful

story. Their hurt was gone, replaced by joy and a new burning conviction that "the Lord has risen indeed!" In the time that we have set aside for today's meditation I have three things to share briefly with you.

FACTS HELP BUT WON'T HEAL

When our hearts are breaking, having knowledge of certain facts might help us, but it won't heal us. Jesus retraced the scriptural story of the Messiah who was to come. There He stood right before these men, face to face, the Messiah Himself in living color, and the men did not hear His words. They were confused, bewildered, they were hurt and heart-broken. The facts of prophecy did not mend their heartache.

Things are no different with us. At those moments in our lives when we suffer the disappointment of losing a job, or the rejection of being overlooked for a promotion, or the grieving loss of a loved one, or the torture of loving someone who does not love us in return, or the helplessness of not being able to help someone else who is hurting, or the humiliating regression of a diseased body, or the panic of not knowing how to cope with emotional stress much less the ability to share it with someone else - at such moments in our lives certain facts and pieces of logic just don't heal our pain.

There is a time for facts and figures and logic and reason. There is a time when a friend needs to tell us that we are confusing the truth. There is a time when certain reality statements will help us. BUT there are other times when reason is too premature to help us. We need at those difficult moments something more...something that cuts deeper.

BEING TOLD TO HAVE MORE FAITH DOES NOT HELP

The next thing I would like to say is that when our hearts are breaking, being told that we need more faith is of little help.

The two men in today's story were men of faith. They were men of long held faith; they had longed for a Messiah who would come to save Israel. These were not faithless men, but rather men of expectant faith.

We ministers are all too quick to tell people to have more faith. Faith is not a quantitative item that can be increased upon demand. That's not how faith works. Instead, we grow in faith only by using what faith we already have.

Use what faith you've already got. That's the message that needs to be proclaimed from the pulpit. Faith is like our muscular bodies. Our muscles grow by exercising them. They won't grow overnight simply because we want more. Instead, they grow through the discipline of use. Likewise, faith that is put to work begets more faith.

There isn't a shortage of faith amongst Christians any more than there is a shortage of Bibles. The truth of the matter is that we neglect to use what we've already got. When your heart is breaking don't ask God for more faith until you have begun to exercise the faith God has already given you.

And this brings me to the final point.

LOOK FOR THE PRESENCE OF GOD

When your heart is breaking, look for the presence of God. The miracle in today's story is not just the fact that in the breaking of bread the men saw Jesus. The miracle is that Jesus found these two men. He came to them. They were not left alone.

I encourage us to look for the presence of God because of one reason: God is a God who comes to us. The biblical God is portrayed as one who comes to the people. Do you remember the story of the father and son whom Theodore Parker Ferris wrote about at the beginning of my sermon. I recall the father's message that was wired to the son, "I will stand by you no matter what happens. Will be there in the morning. Remember who you are." Whether we have broken the will of God and have sinned or for some other reason find ourselves falling with a broken heart, our God is a God who will stand with us - our God is one who is coming, who "will be there in the morning."

William Hinson, pastor at First United Methodist Church in Houston, tells the story of a man who hired a taxi each evening for several consecutive nights. The cabbie was instructed to drive to a particular spot or part of the city, then sit with the meter running for about twenty minutes, and then take the fare to his home again. This pattern continued night after night.

Finally, the cabbie began to look around at the location he had been asked to park. He noticed a small drug store and a corner grocery store across the street. He began to wonder if his customer was really staking out one of those small businesses for a robbery later on. That night, the cabbie excused himself on the pretense of getting a pack of cigarettes, and called the police.

Hearing the cabbie's story, the police came driving up with sirens blaring in an instant. They questioned the man, and were shocked and embarrassed at his story. The men pointed to the beautiful stained glass window on the United Methodist Church on the corner. It was back-lighted and gorgeous to look at. The man explained,

"I never had much religion or went to church much. I don't even know how to pray. My wife is very sick and they tell me she's real bad. But then I found this window. Something about its light gives me strength and peace and hope, and somehow, looking at it, I have the words to pray".

When your heart is breaking, look for the presence of God. Those who gather about the Lord's table this hour and receive the bread and wine expecting to find the presence of God will find the presence of God. Those who come to simply tag along with the crowd probably won't find God's presence. This bread and wine is God's way of reassuring us that,

"I will stand by you no matter what happens. Will be there in the morning. Remember who you are!"

CLOSING

I close with those lines from T. S. Eliot's "The Wasteland".

"Who is the one who walks always beside you?  
When I count, there are only you and I together  
But when I look ahead up the white road  
There is always another one walking beside you  
Gliding wrapped in a brown mantle, hooded  
I do not know whether a ~~man~~ or a woman  
But who is that on the other side of you?"

PRAYER

May the bread and wine open our eyes, O God, to the presence of  
Christ among us. Bind us more closely to each other and to Him  
and lift up our hearts and minds to Thee, that we may go out from here renewed  
in body and soul - fed - nourished and made new. In the name and spirit of  
Christ in whom we see life's highest hope and its deepest meaning. Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Sunday, June 7, 1987

I. HOLY COMMUNION

- A. It has long been the custom to celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion...we like to announce that Table of our Lord is open...
- B. We invite and encourage all of you to receive....trusting that the time for you may be an occasion....renewal and re-dedication of your life to the will of God...
- C. The elements will be served to you in the pews by the ushers. Upon receiving them, please hold them...

II. GREETING

- A. We greet those of you who are visitors...delighted to have you with us...and hope that we shall have opportunity to greet you in a more personal way...
- B. Be free in the sharing of your name....fill out a visitor card. Sign a guest book. Join us on other Sundays. Work with us in programs of service.
- C. We minister here in the name of Christ and have been doing so since 1837. This year marks the 150th anniversary....it is in the loving spirit of Christ that we bid you welcome.

III. PARISH CONCERNS

- A. Be sure to pick up your copy of the June issue of our monthly news sheet. Copies are in the usual places...and our thanks go to Lucy Dinnes for the wonderful work she does for us in bringing this all together.
- B. Members of the Adult Fellowship are sharing in a retreat this weekend out at Shelter Island. Some 25 of our members left here on Friday evening. They are in our thoughts and prayers as we are in theirs.
- C. Be sure to get your Church Picnic Ticket. On sale downstairs at the coffee hour. \$ 5.00. See Doreen Morales for one. Saturday, June 20th.
- D. I shall be away at Conference Thursday, Friday and Saturday of this coming week. Bridgeport, Connecticut. Can be reached in event of any emergency.

E. Note the meetings scheduled for this coming week. Administrative Council / Outreach / Education.

IF. OFFERING

A. "More blessed to give than to receive".

ANTHEM: "At the River"

"Shall we gather by the river, where bright angels have trod, with its crystal tide forever flowing by the throne of God. Yes, we'll gather by the river, the beautiful, the beautiful river, gather with the saints by the river that flows by the throne of God."

ORGAN POSTLUDE

The organ postlude - a final offering of our praise to God - is played after the Benediction. Time permitting, we invite you to share in the beauty of it.

FOR THOSE WHO SING

New members are always welcome to audition to sing in the Choir. During June, rehearsals are held Sunday mornings at 10 am in the chancel.

PICK UP YOUR COPY

Be sure to pick up your copy of the June issue of our monthly news sheet. Copies are by the door in the narthex as well as on the table in the Russell Room.

TICKETS ON SALE FOR JUNE PICNIC

Tickets - costing \$5.00 - are now on sale for our popular All Church Picnic of June 20th. Doreen Morales, Picnic Coordinator, will be glad to sell you a ticket at the coffee hour this morning.

A ROSE ON THE ALTAR

The rose on the altar today is in honor of Laura Williams Kilbride, infant daughter of Kathleen and David Kilbride. Laura was born last Sunday, May 31st at NY Lying In Hospital.

ADULT BIBLE CLASS

An Adult Bible class meets on Sunday mornings at 9:15 in Fellowship Hall. Anna Delson is the teacher this month and the subject is "Prayer". New friends are always welcome and coffee and doughnuts are provided. It's a fine way to start your Sunday!

"HOUND OF HEAVEN"

The "Hounds of Heaven" study group meets Tuesday evenings at 6:30 in Fellowship Hall. George Leopold is leader and new friends are always welcome.

ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL TO MEET

The Administrative Council will meet on Tuesday evening, June 9th, at 7:30 pm.

OUTREACH COMMITTEE TO MEET

The Outreach Committee will meet on Wednesday evening, June 10th, at 6:30 pm.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE TO MEET

The Education Committee will meet on Thursday evening, June 11th, at 7:30 pm.

**PARK AVENUE  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

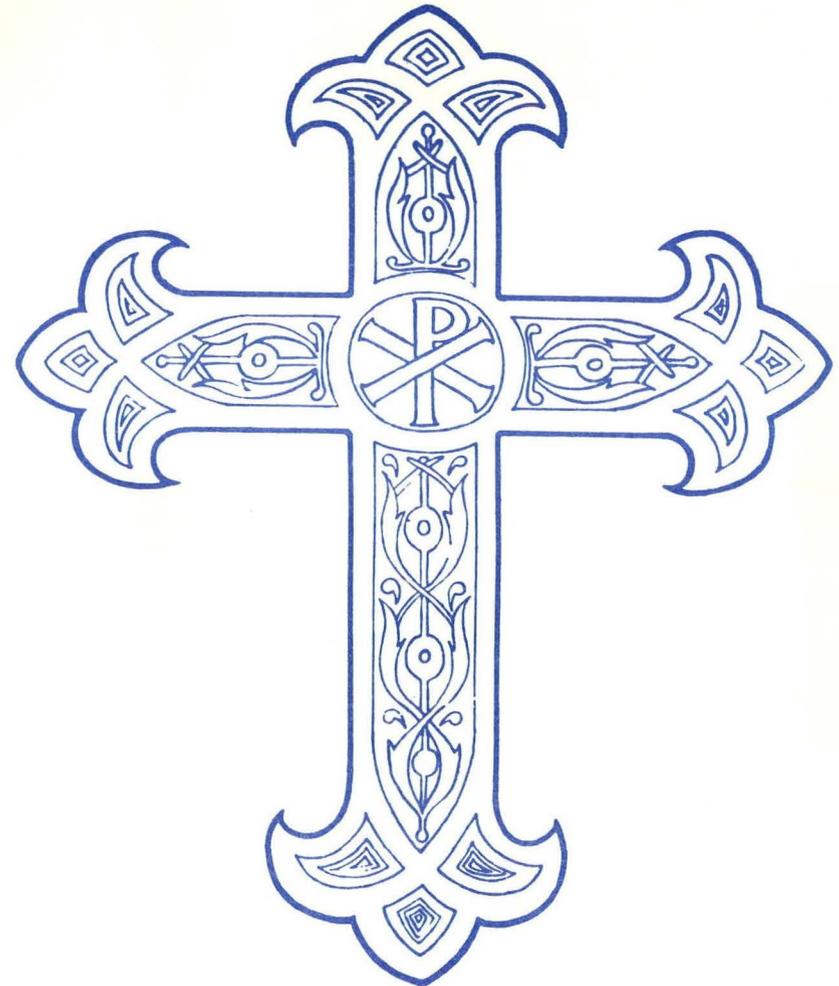
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**PARK AVENUE  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

TRINITY SUNDAY

June 7, 1987

ORDER OF WORSHIP

11 A. M.

ORGAN "Sonata in E Flat" Mozart

CALL TO WORSHIP

HYMN NO. 26 "Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"

APOSTLES' CREED No. 738

GLORIA PATRI No. 792

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SCRIPTURE Luke 24: 13 - 35 Page 920

PARISH CONCERNS

ANTHEM "At the River" Arr. by Copland

PRESENTATION OF THE OFFERING WITH THE DOXOLOGY

HYMN NO. 149 "I Love to Tell the Story"

MEDITATION "When Your Heart Is Breaking" Mr. Clarke

PRAYER

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THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

The Kyrie (The Choir)

The Invitation (No. 832)

The General Confession

The Prayer for Pardon

The Prayer of Consecration

The Prayer of Humble Access

The Agnus Dei

The Partaking of the Elements

The Prayer of Resolution

HYMN NO. 283 "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

BENEDICTION

ORGAN "Psalm 19" Marcello

\*\*\* Interval for Ushering

LAY READER

We welcome John Tucker to the Lectern today. A native of Richmond, Virginia, a graduate of Virginia Tech with a MBA from Pace University, John is Director of Marketing and Finance at the Health Benefits Research Corporation. Here in the Church, John serves as an usher and is a member of the Membership Committee.

ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar today are given in memory of loved ones by Agnes and Olivia Olsson.

GREETERS AND USHERS

The greeters today are Roxanne Snover and Cathy Syble. The ushers are Len Williams, Richard Kilbride, Robert Lewis, John Lombardo, Kenneth Pew, Jonathan Wheeler and Charle Wire.

AN INVITATION

Coffee and tea will be served in the Russell Room following the service. All are invited to share in these moments of warmth made possible for us today by Fran Ellison, Litiana Browne, Joseph Browne, Cathy Syble, Jacqueline Notestine and Pat Tucker.

CHURCH SCHOOL AND NURSERY CARE

Sessions of Church School for children are offered Sunday mornings from eleven to twelve. Nursery care for infants and toddlers is available on the fourth floor.

The Children's Anniversary "Penny Jar" is still receiving contributions. It's in the Russell Room. We hope you'll respond by putting your pennies in the jar.