

DATE: September 28, 1969

SUBJECT: A LUMP OF LEAVEN IS MIGHTIER THAN GIBRALTAR

Yesterday, Auburn and The University of Tennessee met on Shields Watkins Field. When autumn rolls around with its deep blue skies and its patchwork quilt of colors, the winey smell of ripening fruit, it perills the coming of football. And I live every moment of the season. And every Saturday afternoon for about four hours my family moves quietly around the house. You've seen the commercial of the fellow who has a sore throat and he turns into a bear; well when the whistle blows for the kickoff, I become a full-fledged smokey mountain bear. Yesterday I growled. It was a brilliant game, magnificent. Some of the plays were so spectacular; 56 yard field goals, pass interceptions, brilliant running. It would be hard to look at this scope of the ballgame and say this was the most critical point in the game. But something happened during the half-time and Auburn came back with new blood. And we all began to have pulpitating hearts for awhile. Especially those of you who

But yet you know in two magnificent plays, Auburn covered the length of the field and got a touchdown. There was a fire raging on that field that wasn't there before. And then Tennessee got the ball and they began to sputter and the crystal ball began to show ominous things. Tennessee couldn't move the ball. It was fourth down and about one-half yard to go and they weren't even yet to mid field. So they came out of the huddle and it was at this point that the sports caster made the prediction, if Tennessee should kick the ball and give-up possession or if they should try to run and gain the first down--this could very well be the most important play of the game. Out of all the beautiful plays, here was one fourth down and a half yard to go and yet it loomed-up momentarily as the most important play of the game.

It's difficult for us to realize that this so obviously portrays the reality of life itself, the true nature of living. We have days, when everything we seek to accomplish materializes with little effort on our part. The impressions that we try to make are easily made and the objectives toward which we reach are found within our grasp. It is those high moments, those momentous experiences which form the crest on which we rise in moments of disallusionment and discouragement. But when it comes to the nitty-gritty of living, it is not the spectacular achievements nor the blaring trumpets nor the banner flying in the breeze that really marks the quality of living or the stamina of life. But its when it is fourth down and a half yard to go. That's what really

We tend to be overwhelmed by big , we are arrested by loud noises. In fact the music that is being played today is so loud that there is some concern in the medical profession. Young people growing-up today will have impaired hearing because of the of music that they are hearing. Somehow it has to be blasted out in order for us to hear, it has to be looming in order for us to . And in a society that puts such a premium on size and loudness. Jesus Christ slashes in with precision and calmness to make one dramatic statement. The Kingdom of God is like . The Kingdom of God is like a love of leaven. Obviously Jesus Christ didn't get his training on Madison Avenue. These are not elegant terms or are they arresting descriptions of a new power that is to be ~~un~~leased among humanity.

There's something disallusing about a new concept of thinking and a new concept of living that is embracing two descriptive words so apparently powerless and insignificant a lump of , a lump of leaven. We are accustomed to the , massive, overpowering, tremendous, unchanging. Can we not equate the coming of the kingdom of God to the erection of Gibraltar? And yet, Jesus portrayed here in his simple way what the true essence of life really is; the small and the apparent insignificant as opposed to the overwhelming and the minds arresting of .

I read sometime ago of the opening of a Pharo's tombs in Egypt that a packet of seeds were discovered that had been lain beside the body of the Pharo. Had laid there dormant for centuries in the darkness of that tomb. They had opened the tomb, they took the seed and they dropped them in soil and they burst into life. A plant came out of the soil from where the seed fallen. Here was the , the power of something within that was small and tiny, but suddently burst into something large and growing . This is that attribute of life that rises above prominence, security and stedfastness. Its a matter of a growing age, a reaching out and filling a void that lies beyond. A seed has that characteristic, a mighty bolder takes its place and stands there unchanging as the winds beat upon it and as the rains falls upon it. It stands there without life, without . The power of growth is the most magnificent ability in all of creation.

We stand back and look in awe at the great universe stretching before ^{us} our eyes. That only the word of the scientist can tell us they exist. What an awesome thing to behold and our imagination rises and ballons with the concepts of creation all about us. And yet of all of the universes in space, not all of them combined can match one human spirit because it lacks the essence of life. Glowing, thundering, bursting forth from the bows of , but not life. Not the ability to conceive a thought and structure it into a .

Some political analyst say that President Johnson would have been a great President if he could have kept his eyes off the opinion poll. But no desire to enter into politics, at the same time a mans desires need be met by problem and the way in which his mind tackles that problem and not simply how to please everybody; regardless of the position they may take. When one finds himself in the position of trying to please everybody then he so emasculates himself until ultimately the time has come in which he pleases nobody and himself least of all. God . Its an insignificant beginning that most often flourishes into greatest explosions of power.

On the anniversary ~~following~~ of 100 years ~~of the~~ following the birth of Abraham Lincoln a political cartoonist drew a cartoon in which he pictured two frontiersmen standing on standing on the edge of a Kentucky world. It was a cold, wintry day and frost hung upon the branches. One turned to the other and said well whats new. The second one turned and answered , "Well, I don't know anything thats new." "They say a little boy was born over at Tom Lincolns last night but thats about all." "Nothing good ever happens to our community." Little boy born over at Tom Lincoln's last night, a two room cabin, unlettered parents, ugly in frame but Thats the same thing said around Bethlehem when a star shining brightly in the sky awakened the interest of some of the people. And someone said,

"Well what's happening?" And another answered and said, "I hear that a little peasant woman named Mary gave birth to a little boy in a stable last night. But that's all. Nothing really important ever happens to us in Bethlehem."

We have attuned our minds to the ready-made. Ready to move into those movements which have already gained momentum. We are ready to implant our hold upon those ideologies that have already proven themselves. We measure the success of any movement by the size of it and the momentum with which it moves. Take the great revolutionary movements that are happening today. Hardly ever do we try to ascertain what it is that gave it birth or what it's trying to achieve. But most of all we are trying to ascertain the influence that its making upon society. And how many people have been caught -up in that move? Our economy today reflects our giving ourselves primarily to bigness with the great conglomerates now shaping up in our land. And essentially it looks as though the individual person has lost his place to computerization and massive creatures of man's ingenuity. Yet the President of a great corporation when being chastized because his corporation, being so great, was sequestering out some small businesses answered. "Don't you know that even the greatest corporation is dependent upon that one individual who sits quietly to himself, searches for answers to problems, ways in which to . ." That insignificant fellow sitting in a laboratory, the other pouring over reports; here is the genius of . Yet we fail so often to recognize .

Jesus said the kingdom of God was like a seed. Because he wanted to implant that concept in the very beginning. It is a matter of giving life where life does not exist, and permitting growth where everything stands. When he puts it in those words suddenly the Kingdom of God becomes a glowing, beautiful thing, intuitive, grappling in order to take hold upon the precious, the bright, the most original.

Well let's take a look at the leaven. Leaven can be seen only in the form that holds it, but the leavening power itself is completely unseen. Jesus played upon that point. Over and over again he warned us about putting such a premium on the things that are seen and overlooking the things that are unseen. The most powerful experiences that we can have are the experiences that happen on the inside, no one ever sees. Dreams are born within. Visions are nurtured from within, and a few . There's a temptation to surround ourselves with forces, with achievements that reflect what we want to be. To give an appearance of success and maturity, yet that reflects nothing at all except our ability to surround ourselves. It is when we are permitted to look within and to give someone else an opportunity to search within that the true being emerges. Jesus was talking about that . He had no interest at all as to the outward man but it was the man within, that he really . Leaven was something of an influence in the mind of Christ. All of us know that we have come to the stage of life that we have reached to a great extent because of the influences made upon our lives, forces that get inside, that motivate and shape. For some of us it

may be some school teacher during the course of our education. I'm sure all of us have come upon some person such as that who have made great influences in our lives, that have changed the ratio of our beliefs and concepts and our hopes. We come upon such influences particularly in our . But the companionship of our minds plays a particularly strong role in determining the creature that ultimately we become. It is in the reading of the scriptures that we become better acquainted with Jesus Christ, that he has a greater influence upon our lives. And it is coming to grips with the ideas and the concepts of latter-day thinkers, in measuring them one against the other, equating them with reality as we have experienced it that ultimately we can determine what right and what's wrong, what's good and what's bad. And so our minds ultimately determine what we become spiritually.

We cannot separate the spiritual faction of a persons life from his intellectual, or his physical. That's why morality and understanding are tied-up into one bundle with spirituality. We have a responsibility to continually search, take the truths that we have discovered and bring a material . This is the leaven about which Jesus talked. To be open to influence without to change our lives. And to become a force of leaven ourselves, wherever we go and wherever we deposit a part of ourselves, it is for a change and not a perpetuation,

History is in determining that the change of history has always been brought about by minorities and not majorities. A hand-full who are conditioned to change . We who would bring the church to a stalemate at a time when it needs to be most vocal and most aggressive are repeating the same error that was ~~repeated~~ during the lifetime of Jesus when he sought to rekindle a faith and make it dynamic and potent in a world that needed to be changed, only to see it sit and die because of its unwillingness to change.

I heard Dr. this morning on the Protestant Hour. He said something I wish I had thought of. He said, "God said, 'I don't want any old people in the kingdom of God' the little children.'" And if you've already grown old then the only you can get in the kingdom of God to become the other way. "For he who is unwilling to become as a little child shall not enter."

Jesus was not talking about physical maturity; he was talking about the eagerness and the of children. A willingness to change and to remold and to refashion and to search for truth and a deeper understanding and not be content with a false sense of truth. For Jesus said the Kingdom of God is like leaven because its constantly in the of change and movement .

If we were to stop here then we would have, in essence, said that the kingdom of God is found only in the little, the insignificant, the far out places, of thought. But this is the quality of life about which we are speaking and not the facade of life itself. That a lump of leaven is far superior to the rock of Gibraltar is that one contains life and the other contains only . Jesus came to bring life wherein .

T. S. Elliott wrote about Jesus and he used a descriptive phrase that I've never heard used before, I wish that more of us would use it. We talk about gentle Jesus, the compassionate Christ with which we equate an effeminate . T. S. Elliott said, "Christ, the tiger." If ever there was a descriptive phrase to fit ones character surely that's it, for he was a tiger . Men who are willing to take small beginnings but are not willing to plant their feet and stay there. But knowing that in a moment of change no matter at what point on the ladder of progress of which he has climbed that in any moment, at any place, with the right beginning, something can happen. We do not have to sit idely by and wati for the circumstances to acclimate themselves ~~to~~ to our free-reason demands . . . But many of us are content to live as ghosts when we ought to be living as tigers.

There's an old Hindu legend about ^{of} a tiger that was left mother-less as a cub and was adopted by a group of goats. He lived with the goats and he nibbled upon the grass and he made the feeble sounds of a goat, he mimiked what the other goats did and he grew up to be a strong young cub. And it was a pathetic thing to see this strong, muscular cub walking along . One day a King/s tiger came into the midst of the flock and the goats fled into the wilderness, but the tiger cub stood its ground, somehow he wasn't afraid but he didn't know what the other had rushed away in fear, but somehow he was not afraid and he stood there and the King's tiger came up and he said why your a tiger just like I am. The tiger cub said, "no," "see my friends, see my family." And so the King tiger took the cub down to the pond near-by and they leaned over the water and cast their reflection in the water beneath them, and he said, "Look, we look just alike we're brothers; the two of us are the same." The cub shook his and said, "No." And . . . walked back through the field together. And the King tiger grew hungry and he slew an animal, dragged his carcus over to where the tiger cub was sitting, began to tear away at the meat and consume the flesh. And the tiger cub so accurstomed to nibbling on grass suddenly found the smell of blood rising in his nostrils and it kindled something there. He moved over slowly to where the carcus lay, sank his teeth slowly into the flesh, tasted the taste of blood, then with a new viciousness began to tear away at the flesh and he consumed the meat and a new growl rose in . He had become the thing that he had been born.

Jesus said, every society is filled with people who But I did not create you to be a ghost, I created you to be a tiger, at grips with the issues of life, struggling with the things that overcome and overwhelm, distinctive in the form in which you were created, The very nuature of God himself has its beginning at a fourth down and a half ~~yard~~ yard to go.

Now this, Gibraltar is massive and overwhelming but its a Jesus said the kingdom of God is not the stability of his . . . , but it is a tiny seed that will grow into a masterpiece, a lump of leaven that is constantly giving food daily. ~~for just a few moments to gather my thoughts and to restructure my aims and to find direction in the quietness of Gods presence. And then finally in order to have this controlling power within our lives, is to believe that God does have the last word.~~