

November 10, 1968

Sermon Subject: "Into a Bag of Holes"

Here is a vivid picture. A man starts out on a journey to a prescribed destination. He understands that the way is not easy that there will be bridges to be crossed, cliffs to be scaled, hurdles to be cleared. He sees clearly all of the difficulties and the epitements that lie out ahead. But he has prepared himself for them. On his back he carries a pack. He has provided for himself with food to eat and water and wine to drink. Clothes to keep him warm, money to provide for himself the necessities of life. Everything that he could imagine that he would need, he has prepared himself for as he set out on this journey. And so as he has moved along, he has gained momentum and confidence in himself. After a while he comes to a place of rest, he looks into his sack and to his dismay, he discovers that the sack is full of holes. And all of his provisions have been scattered along the way. Now coming to the point of need, he discovers that he is pitifully unfit to meet the need. Now it was the ~~the~~ prophet Haggai in the 6th century before Christ who drew that picture. Speaking with God's words, he made this observation about the world in which he was living and to which he was trying to communicate the mind of God. Listen to his words: "Thus said the Lord, "Consider your way, you sow, but you bring little in. You eat, but you are not filled. You drink plentifully, but you remain thirsty. You wear warm clothing and yet you are chilled on the inside. You earn good wages, but you put your wages in a bag filled with holes. Consider your ways." said the Lord." Roy McClain, writing a book, "This Way Please." makes this observation about the temporary way of life in America. He said, "We have come to believe that happiness can be procured from a prescription from a physician, filled by a pharmacist. We have come to believe that we can buy eternal life, that we can drink our ways to pleasure, that we can filibuster our case before God. And here he has identified the same problems and the same issues that the prophet Haggai discovered as an innate part of man, 6 centuries before the birth of Christ and it is to this that we address ourselves this morning because it is uncomfortably prevalent to our lives today. Consider for example the fact that we sow, plentifully. But we bring so little in. Has there been an age of man that we have had more with which to work to usher in a new day, to create a new climate, to structure a new society. Of course there hasn't been a day that is equal to today. Our nation has spent billions of dollars all around the world and have concentrated it in areas of our own land here. And the purpose of this is to rid the world of the ills. We have stockpiled weapons here in America as a warning to our enemy nations around the world that if you were to attack us we are in a position to destroy you. We have poured millions into backward countries, trying to gain their support, trying to win their ~~w~~ loyalty to the way that we proclaim to the rest of the world. We have sought out places here in America where poverty is prevalent and we have poured millions of dollars into that area to ease this great sore on the beautiful landscape of America. But where has it taken us? Just recently we orbited a spacecraft and we saw moonbeams in our eyes as we projected our thoughts ~~w~~ to next month when we would be the first to circumnavigate the moon. Visions of glory as to what the great wealth of America can establish for us. But what have we reaped from all this sowing? For one thing, an unstable dollar, for another the ~~of those nations around the~~ and the hatred of those millions around the world that we purportedly tried to help. And we have been fighting to bring about peace. We have drained ourselves of much but we have so little produced to verify its worth. We have sowed seeds of violence in America. This morning's newspaper carried a column on the front page where a group in conspiracy against the president-elect of our nation had been arrested. The weapons were there. The plans had been made, they were going to assassinate our new president. But isn't this the likely way ~~w~~ to go, we have said, if you don't like someone, then rid society of them. We did that with the negro population in the south for many years, we kept him down where he was out of sight, we rid our consciousness of the pride of the black man. And this very idea of ridding ourselves, visually, of that which we do not like has in our generation

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come to the surface where we simply say, "eradicate, destroy that which we do not like" and violence has become the means of reconciliation. We were all stirred when John F. Kennedy was slain in Dallas but we had had slain presidents before, perhaps this was a one-time thing, but then it wasn't long before we saw the thing repeated in Memphis against Martin Luther King, Jr., and then we went westward to see it happen to Robert F. Kennedy then the time came when we had to put guards around men who were promising to give leadership to our nation, each one regardless of his position and stance and now the time has come and we must face up to the fact that someone is always ready to destroy the leadership that the American people choose for themselves, because he differs in ideology from ourselves. I'm not too concerned about the kind of crimes by which a person robs a bank, or steals an automobile or gains the property of someone else in order to enhance himself, it's a terrible trend, but match that against the trend of violence today, where one can set himself upon another in the streets, bodily harm even to the point of assassination of the leaders of our world this is what we are reaping in all of the sowing of our land. And brother hood is not being felt and peace is not being met and we are struggling to get something concrete on which to hold and we are seeing revolutionary forces rising up in various pockets of America each one declaring that "I'm going to be the leader in the new world in the new way." Only yesterday a ^{senate} subcommittee revealed the findings of a study of internal security. Now hear what they said: "The college campuses of America would exhibit more revolutionary demonstrations this year than in any previous year," those self-appointed leaders of the youth of our nation calling themselves the new left, to organize themselves into such a body of strength and influence that they brought Columbia University to a halt. Promises that it will be duplicated at least six times on the major campuses of America this year. A brochure distributed among the members of one group outlined three set-ups that they were to follow 1. We will harass the educational institutions until we nullify their influence. 2. We will weaken the economic structure of America until she is no longer a strong nation. 3. We will destroy the government itself. This is a mein-comph, written out legibly and we have seen that their promises in the past have materialized, what they have said they would do, they have done. J. Edgar Hoover said that this was going to be one of the worst years of student militancy that America has seen. Someone said in my hearing, the good student doesn't demonstrate, the proper student does not get out and take positions, he accepts things the way they are and he supports it. And he makes up the majority of the student body of America, why should we be concerned with the few who demonstrate and make their demands. I won't accept that as a possibility. The good students dare not be silent, the proper students dare not accept the status quo. He must demonstrate, he must take his position, he must be the creative leaven in the academic community of America, for it is upon him that the academic stature must be built, he holds in his hands the heart of our educational structure. It is the complacency of the masses all over our land that has brought us to this perilous hour whether it is in the economic or political structure of our nation, ~~he~~ and we dare not commend those who remain silent in the face of those who become violent. Quite frankly, we do need a revolution today and it must be brought about by those who are confident in the basic ideals of our democracy. Those who have morale attributes by which they can strengthen our society. And the abuse that has been projected to the American people at large through obscenities and profanity under the guise of gaining freedom and strength. You sow much, but what are you reaping? And then, you eat much but you remain hungry. Most of us will be leaving here today and partaking of a bountiful meal, it at least will be as much as we want and in all probability it will be by our choosing whatever we want. It's hard to think that any of us might be

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hungry. Last evening I was sitting in the living when our little daughter came out of her bed and quietly came over to her mother and I heard her whisper, "I can't sleep." and when her mother asked, "Why can't you sleep?" She said, "When I look out of my bedroom window, I see all the snow, and I think about all the little children in the world who have no house in which to sleep and who are hungry tonight." ~~look them~~ And then I learned later that she had been thumbing through the Methodist Woman and there she had come upon a picture of a little boy and his sister. This boy was about three years old and the sister was about six and the little boy was crouched on the ground with his head lying heavily upon the dirt and the little sister was sitting beside him ~~x~~ helpless, even to lift up the weight of his body, both dying of starvation. And there were the prominent features of their faces edged out against the background simply by a sagging ~~x~~ yellow skin. Large empty eyes looked uncomprehendingly. In one small province of Africa, where this picture was made, the statement said more than six thousand died everyday in the month of August. And we have not heard their cry for help. We talk about fighting the sores of humanity, build great stock piles, great arsenals of destruction, we say that we are saving the south Viet Nam people against those of North Viet Nam and yet they are in kinship with one another they're one of a greater group, perhaps we ought to be there fighting, but can we reconcile our conscious when little children are dying all over the globe. And we today will leave scraps in great heaps upon our plates. We eat, but we are not filled. Our stomachs are filled, our bodies are made strong, but there is a hunger within living this kind of isolated life ~~aga~~ away from the needs of the world we are hungry mentally for we are seeking to comprehend this kind of life, somehow we've got to see some reason in all of this madness and we hunger for some mental interpretation that will make us dignified human beings, living in community together. We are emotionally hungry, we have spared our love and our concern for one another, perhaps today the greatest social dread of all is the sense of loneliness ^{the hangs} so heavily upon so many. And I'm not speaking of an isolation where we have no one with which to talk or share I'm talking about living in community and yet isolated from one another, communication-cut-off. We've made so much of the communication gap between generations, but there's a communication gap between those of the same generation as well. We hunger for a sense of community and oneness in a world that is divided on many issues, many factors, but most of all we hunger for a spiritual break. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone." But of that spiritual leaven that comes out of heaven. Man in America today is looking for some spiritual effect to give meaning to his life. ~~zBecause~~ Tragically they are moving away from the Christian Church in order to get hold of it. Tragically we think too often we can structure by ourselves a spiritual force ~~x~~ to ~~x~~ fill the vacuum of our life. ~~zBecause~~ Because we have not been able to identify and utilize the teachings of Christ in our world today, we have a spiritual emptiness that many are trying to fill from many springs, not the one that Christ brought from which we might drink. And then the prophet Haggai said, "You drink, but you continue to thirst." This is Temperance Sunday in the Methodist Church and I quit preaching Temperance Sermons a long time ago. I have discovered that there are too many who have prided themselves on being abstainers who go out and commit far greater sins. For many times that person who drinks is committing a great sin against himself and his family, but he who goes out with an evil tongue, he who goes out to destroy the reputation of his fellow man, these insidious ^{little} ways in which those who pride themselves on not drinking go out and commit even greater sins, I'm not going to contribute to that one fault of humanity overlooking the others, but I at the same time never overlook an opportunity to try to alert ~~xx~~ people to the great evils that are implicit in

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in the realm of drinking and drugs in order to prepare oneself for living. I don't like the term mind-expanding drugs, they are mind-bending drugs, they erase man's sensitivity to the real thing. Perhaps one can become hallucinatory in his objective reality in the world. What the world cries for today is an objective humility. The other day I received a telephone call from someone here who is not a member of our church he told me of a call he had had from someone whose ~~k~~ ~~w~~ ~~z~~ wife had just left him and he was at the point of tears and was crying out for help and I said well why did she leave him? and he said, "Well, I don't know, but I'm sure it's a problem that can be reconciled if they had some spiritual help, he doesn't go to any church and I called to see if you would go and talk with him." And so I picked up the telephone right then and I ~~picked~~ ^{called} up the man whom he had named and he had been pacing the floor and he said, "Yes, my wife did leave me just a while ago, I don't know what I'm going to do and I want her back so badly." And I asked, "Well, why did she leave?" And he said, I don't know, but she's left me two or three times before but I want her back so badly, I'd be willing to do anything, more for the sake of our children than anything else." He said, "Would you call her up and beg her to come back" and he told me where she could be found. So I called her up and I talked to her, and she said, "I want to go back, he's a wonderful husband except when he's drinking and then he beats me in front of the children, he curses me before the children and I've taken it just as long as I can, not so much for myself but for the sake of the children, and if you can get a promise from him that he'll not ~~drink~~ drink anymore then I'll come back and I'll come back gladly. No this isn't an isolated incident, it happens so many times. When here within the community of a family circle all seems to be well until one takes a drink of liquor or takes some drugs and alienates himself in love. If there's one thing that I try to teach young people today, preserve your mind, drugs destroy the critical analysis of your mind, never let yourself be put in a position where by the dizziness of your mind you don't know what's going on around you. ~~worse~~ ^{I'm} not fighting the use of alcohol simply as a table beverage, there are other things far ~~greater~~ ^{worse} than that and frankly I can't see where one has done any great evil by taking up a glass of wine, simply as a beverage with his meal unless that triggers a greater appetite and statistically ~~and~~ one out of every 7 first admissions to any hospital is there because of alcoholism. The state director of health made a statement the other day, "Quit talking about alcohol being a sickness, it's not a sickness, it's a weakness." Typically the one who leans upon it, is the one who needs a crutch and this prohibits finding the right crutch. You drink, but you don't find the peace and the pleasure and the happiness that it promises, only heartbreak and alienation. And now today we don't talk so much about drink to our young people as we do about LSD and so on, the other nine dwarfing drugs. Well, this is one of the sore spots, you drink but that which you thirst to satisfy grows more and more. You clothe yourself and you remain cold, we're preparing for a winter now and we've laid in our wood for the fireplace and we have the security of oil and gas and electricity to heat our homes, we don't get cold, our cars are heated. But what about the coldness within. Is there some way to create a warm heart? A compassionate being? You clothe yourselves but you remain cold. And you earn great wages, but you put it in a bag filled with holes. We have resources today by which we can structure the greatest world man has been privileged to live in but let's look back upon the way, strewn with our earnings, what have we wasted it upon? What have we done with the great gifts of prosperity that our nation has been blessed with that we individually have been blessed with. Back in the days before the depression, there was one particular man who had great wealth, he understood that with wealth came a responsibility and he gave gifts to many colleges for the building of many research buildings. And then the depression struck and he lost everything that he had and later on as he was a

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pauper once again, someone said to him, "What have you learned most of all ~~2x~~ about your rise to wealth and your drop back to poverty again?" And he said, "This lesson I've learned above everything ~~else~~, that the only thing I have now is what I gave away, it's how we use to the well-being of the world ~~one~~ in which we live, our fellowmen and ourselves for strengthening and for expansion and not for the selfish purposes that many of us look for wealth that arise." ~~It's~~ It's a distressing thing to see how little is raised in Community Chest Drives, United Fund, to see how small church budgets are in comparison of other organizations and when we match the expenditures for all good causes in America against the selfish expenditures of cigarettes and alcohol and things of that nature we can see readily the holes that are in the bag. Well, Haggai identified these sore of society and then he repeated the statement with which he began, "Consider your ways. Jesus Christ came into the