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Sermon Subject: "Stars At Your Fingertips"

In just hours from now, man will be walking on the moon. What a reach! In one sense, this is the most significant event since man invented the wheel. Stretching through the vacuum of space to reach out and touch the distant stars. That reach began a long time ago. On Easter day, in the year 1900 some sponge fisherman on the Mediterranean, dredging below pulled up an object that was unlike anything that was ~~like~~ unlike anything that they had ever seen before. They examined it closely. It resembled nothing that they had ever had access to. And so they took it back into the fishing village and cast it from hand to hand as one after another tried to decide what it was that they had lifted up from the depths of the sea. They took it to experts, no one knew. Finally it was placed in a prominent place in the Greek National Museum. No label attached to identify it. Only an object of mystery that had been brought up from the depths of the Mediterranean. It sat there for decades only until five years ago, a professor from one of our great American Universities visited the museum, saw this strange object lying there unlabeled, asked for permission to examine it, and being granted that permission, noticed that there was a little handle that was attached to a complex array of gears and wheels. And as he began turning that little spoke that protruded from this strange object, suddenly, he realized that this was a model of our solar system. And as he turned the handle, he noticed that the stars moved in relationship as they actually do to one another. One editorial writer, commenting on this find said, "It's like finding a jet in King Tut's tomb." A dream of the stars. A mystery that man has tried to unfold for centuries. In one sense the stars are the beginning of any journey that we attempt to make. When primitive man began to search for some ultimate reality beyond himself that would give meaning to his life, he looked up to the stars. They became his objects of worship and the most primitive worship of man was worship of the stars. When the mind of man was quickened in a scientific way, he looked to the stars. Modern science had its beginning in an attempt to read the meaning of the stars. It was early discovered, here was something stable in a world that was constantly changing ~~xxxxxxx~~ and influx. The ancient pyramids of Egypt, standing as great ~~xxxxxxx~~ architectural pieces of centuries, were designed and able to withstand the elements, simply because someone lined them up with the stars. The stability of these great monuments rested upon the stability of the stars themselves. And in England, a tiny community that has baffled archeologists for centuries is known popularly as "Stonehenge". Where massive boulders have been lifted up into _____ Even the best of modern equipment would be needed to be lifted into the position that they are now placed, yet this was two thousand years before the life of Jesus. It has given rise to the superstitions that at one time this nation was populated by giants who were able to lift such stones as these. But even beyond the fact of their being lifted they had to be transported 300 miles to the place where they were made into temples. A recent acquisition to my library was entitled, StoneHenge Decoded and in it there's a psychological and scientific approach as to why it was built. It was built simply by the juxtaposition of the moon to the sun. Apparently having some meaning in the lives of those who built it. From a psychological standpoint, ~~it~~ it was an effort to build some temple to honor the unknown, out there by which it was able to be built in fashion. Man has lived a long time among the stars and now the breach is being closed, finally, about to touch the distant stars. All of this gives background for a profound statement made by Emerson. Advising his young students, "Hitch your wagon to a star." Some years ago a Polish peasant girl enrolled in one of Warsaw's great universities. The world was to know her later as Madame Curie. She remembered all her life, the words of one of her professors, when he said in the classroom, "Some of you have the stars at your fingertips."

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My soul! What a thought! Stars at your fingertips. Yet with such a challenge. We are confronted with a mass of humanity, not reaching for the stars, but plucking at the will-o-the-wisp, the fleeting lights, the ~~z~~ temporary things that for a moment give some pleasure but cannot last, while the stars hang unreached for and perhaps others of us who feel lost out here in the stars, as in the words of Allen Payton, "Lost out here in the stars, ~~know~~ big stars, little stars, blowing through the night, we're lost out here in the stars." But it need not be. Man is at home with the stars, the breach needs to be lessened, the vacuum needs to be drained, that's God's greatest gift to an inquiring mind. That separation between man and the stars at his fingertips is primarily the emptiness of his life. Scientists tell us ~~h~~ that all nature abhors a vacuum. But real men abhor vacuums as well. The empty mind. I shall not put on a pedestal a mind of superior intelligence. This is the thing that all of us should reach ~~z~~ for. Superior intelligence is a gift that is imparted to some and denied others, but it does not lift him to a higher level, it simply makes a greater demand upon him. The empty mind as opposed to a mind that is filled is the real secret of our relationship to God. Some minds are so empty that they feed only upon the latest edition to the newspaper and the latest comedy on television. Without any awareness at all of the great miracle of life. It's flourishing all about us. This is the point of beginning above all else, it's to become aware, to know, to feel to see. And to let it flood into one's life until he is ~~awar~~ throbbing with the vitality of the world that is all about him. This is the continuing creation of God. And Thornton Wilder's beautiful play ~~oz~~ "Our Town". There's one incident in the graveyard, where permission is granted for a young woman who died ~~when she was 26~~ giving birth to her little child. Granted the privilege of going back for one day. She was 26 when she died. She thought for a long time before she chose the day that she would relive, finally she remembered her 12th birthday and what a happy occasion it was. It marked her blooming into young womanhood and it was a day that was filled with so many of the exciting things that were disappearing into her childhood. So she quickly answered, "I want to relive my 12th birthday." So it was granted. She stood there reliving this day. The entire day was spent with a pleading voice, "Look at me, look at what's about you, why are you ignoring all of these beautiful things, why are you resting on petty thoughts, why are you flitting about when there's so many important things to be done and here." She looked up into her mother's face and said, "Look at me ~~z~~ here I am." "Know that I'm here." She came exhausted at the close of her day, realizing that it could not be recaptured, because people refuse to be aware. An awareness, not intellectual superiority, awareness closes the gap between a man and his star. Another vacuum is the empty heart. Those of us who think of that which is rational ~~oz~~ ignoring that which is emotional have separated ourselves from life's deepest spring of meaning. It's vitally important what ~~any~~ man thinks about any issue. Valid decisions can only be ~~wrought~~ wrought by an intellectual apprehension of the facts, but it has no meaning until the heart can flood into it, and answer the question, "why." Thomas Wolfe writing in You Can't Go Home Again said, "I was awakened to man's inhumanity to man and I suddenly realized that we're so caught up in trying ~~z~~ to satisfy ourselves and so totally unaware of the crying needs of the world about us. That ~~is~~ if we are ever really to discover ourselves, it must be at the giving of ourselves." Objectivism is good in the laboratory, it's necessary in the classroom, that ability to stand over and apart from any happening and evaluate it from the facts that are apparent, looking at both sides with equal detachment and then coming to a valid conclusion, that's valid in the laboratory, but it has no place in life, for it is the thrust of one's emotions into a problem and into an opportunity that gives it meaning and enables it to be resolved purposefully. An empty

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heart. And there's the empty life. Jesus addressed himself to this problem during the course of his ministry, when he told the story of a man who was possessed by a demon and then by some chance he was able to be rid of that demon and it left his life with all of the open chambers that the demon had occupied and so Jesus said that he went in and he cleaned it out, dusted, swept it beautifully, left it shining and clean and then stood back and admired, his life-- void now of the terrible thing that ~~w~~ once possessed him. But he refused to fill it up with something positive to take it's place. And so it was only a matter of time until seven demons, each one more vile than the one that had left looking upon those empty spaces immediately come in and took possession until the man was possessed now by seven instead of the one. We cannot have empty lives, if they are empty of the worthwhile things, they will soon be filled with the worthless things. I think many ~~lives~~ ^{lives} can be seen to correspond to such a limited scope in meaning. I once saw a little box that was sitting upon someones desk. It had no decoration, a simple box tthat just had a switch at the side, one reached out and flipped the switch on. Suddenly the box began to shiver and shake with a groaning sound and then very ominously, the lid began to lift out of it came a hand, the hand dropped down to the switch, clicked it off, dropped back into the box, the lid fell and the box was silent. I wonder how many of our lives are spent in such uselessness, meaningless experiences as that. We're all apprehensive of poverty that has been brought to our attention so forcibly to our land as well as around the world. We cringe at the thought of empty stomachs and dying children of starvation and we are willing to give in order to feed those who are hungry, but there is a void in the lives of those who are poverty stricken that is far greater than the hunger pangs and that is a need for a meaning, it is the using of one's energies ^{& abilities} to achieve something, that's man's greatest need is to know in what direction he's moving and move forcibly there. The feeding of one's appetite is satisfaction for just a moment, but the real empty spaces remain greater ~~is~~ than before. How true this is in our marriage relationships. If there is one experience in life that ought to bring out the very best in ~~us~~, demand of the very best of us, it's in our marriage relationships with husband and wife and the rearling of children. And yet families break up, when one or both of those who make up the married couple realize that ~~th~~ here ~~are~~ the vast chambers that are unfilled. For in marriage there is the possibility ~~th~~ of finding everything that will satisfy our emotion and our spiritual need. But when it's not being satisfied and it is built upon artificial factors, it's only a matter of time until it's exposed as the empty thing that it is. Empty spaces that God is eager to fill. Then there's empty ~~is~~ religion. And I'll quickly grant you that a lot of people that are religious in their attitudes are extremely unhappy in what religion affords them. It's caricatured in so many ways that those outside of religion are reluctant to move in because they have seen the evidence of such classical forms of religion that immediately turn them off. Quite frankly there have been periods in our church when religion has been more of an impediment than a projectile. When it is restricted rather than given fruit to grow. H.L. Meinken had this to say about puritanism, he said, "Puritanism is dedicated to the art of making people ~~is~~ sad and unhappy." One woman questioned about the ten commandments said, "I don't like them, they remind me of all the things that you can do." Religion isn't that, religion is not a set of rules that restrict personalities & constrict activities. The ~~rules~~ that are set down to give us behavioral patterns simply enable us to avoid going around in circles, they're signposts that keep us moving in the direction that we ought to be going. Once the signposts become the means of life and become the most responsible parts of religion than God is shutout and we are trying to live upon the framework of our own making. But the beauty and the peace and the joy ^{that} comes in religion can be had by our reaching out and taking it. It's an empty religion/

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that keeps us unhappy. These are the breaches, but I don't like vacuums, I like bridges. I want to reach out and close that gap, drain that vacuum until I have complete hold upon that which lies at my fingertips. I want to possess those stars. We know deep from within that the major force by which this can be done is to have a star, a goal, something worthy to which we are giving our full strength, our full selves, it's so easy to leave God out of life because we see so many other pleasantries for the moment we want, when God only brings meaning into life, all else will eventually fail. Wordsworth's beautiful poem of the intimations of immortality, speaks about in those moments when may be far inland, away from the sea, ^{that} he could hear the ~~the~~ roaring of the sea and in his imagination he says that many came from some distant shore, waif upon the waves, deposited upon an island for just a short time to be picked up again and carried on to his destination. For those moments, he forgets that he came from the sea. For those moments he forgets that he will return to the sea. He tries to live without those ties that bind him to his origin and his destination. There must be a full apprehension of ~~his~~ meaning in a person's life as to where he's going and why. Perhaps I told you about the two fellows who went fishing one day. It was a hot day and so they took along a supply of beverages to quench their thirst as the day grew on and so they went out upon the sea and so the boat went further and further away from the shore. They didn't have much success in catching fish and the hotter they grew, the more they drank.. Finally they became rather inebriated, they began just simply to float upon the surface of the ~~the~~ water, not giving any concern as to finding their way back home. And then finally dusk began to fall. One retained his faculties enough to say, "Well, if we could find the North Star, just keep paddling in that direction and we'll come back to the shore. And so they looked until they finally found the North Star and the one said to the other "Now you handle the rudder, and I'm going to take a nap." With that he went to sleep. But the one who had his hand on the rudder became tired and he fell asleep too and while he was sleeping, the cloud cover came and covered the stars, Then in a moment he awoke, he looked up and there were no stars and he reached over to where his companion lay sleeping and took him by the shoulder and awakened him, ~~wak~~ and said, "Wake up! the star's burned out, find me another." Now in man's searching for meaning in life, a cloud cover hangs between us so often and the true stars, the gold stars. So we ~~we~~ keep looking for other stars to guide our lives by/ But they're just fireflies that leap from one place to another, they give us no direction. They keep us going around in circles, they tire us physically and mentally, they don't nourish us spiritually, then we wonder what life is all about. G.K. Chesterson said, "We have forgotten who we are." We have forgotten our names. There are times when we become aware of planes upon which we ought to be living, but we disvoer that we're not there. He said, "Times of great intellectual enlightenment help us to forget what we have forgotten. ~~x~~ But those moments of great ecstasy and joy remind us that we have forgotten." We need to cultivate upon those lost planes of life ~~h~~ where dreams are shared, where visions are made clear, wher ~~hearts~~ are searched. We need to live upon those planes of life where we can reach out and take hold upon those things ~~x~~ that are pure and clean and beautiful. We need to open those trunks that have been set aside as "not needed for this voyage." Make use of them so that the voyage will be complete. In such a thought Alfred said that he was getting ready to make a trip to Europe one time and he came down to the dock and he saw that the ship was being loaded and to one side there was a lot of baggage that was being dropped down into the hole and he noticed that on the side of each was a

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prominent sign which read, "Not Wanted On the Voyage." And he said, in many lives are those levels of living that are ~~truly~~ truly meaningful. The only place ~~that~~ ^{where} life takes on meaning that we've brought into the world with us and ultimately will be opened for inspection that we have put them into sealed containers, "Not To Be Opened on This Voyage". He said, "The life of the world and the individual is in wrenching that baggage open and making use of it."

Well, there's the answer, but it's difficult, the next step is to realize that we can't do it by ourselves. We've come a long way. With our universes within that we have not yet touched and that's where God is. What we cannot do, God can do. How important it is for us to remember just that. James Calhoun Walker was born in 1862, a son of slaves. They had just been given their freedom when he was and they were fearful of this vast universe of freedom that they had not known before. He said that his father, many times tossed all night long, fearful of the next day, whether or not he would be equal to it. And he said many times he would be awakened in the morning by hearing his father down on his knees, pleading with God, almost shouting, "Oh God! Please take care o' my chillen, cause I shore cain't." Well, to some it's that. But there's a realization that there are many obstacles, many avenues, many experiences in life that we cannot tackle alone and we must have God to intervene. A star just beyond our fingertips, not yet reached. Sir Walter Scott told about Mary Queen of ~~the~~ Scotts when she was imprisoned in her castle; she didn't know which day they would come and take her and execute her. She would have gone mad said Scott, if not for the fact that there was a tiny window in her cell and standing on her tiptoes and in the line of her vision beyond the water she could look into the room of a house of her friends. And each night all night long the light burned brightly. And she knew in that room her friends were gathered, trying to bring about some means to bring about her escape, her freedom, and it was that that kept her sane. That kept hope in her heart. These are not fireflies. These are stars.

And now, this: There are stars at your fingertips. The greatest effort of your life, the most profound expenditure is to reach out for that star