

DATE: May 18, 1969

SUBJECT: "WEATHER VANES THAT DEFY THE WINDS"

Give me your imagination for just a moment and let me mold it into a ridiculous scene. Two hamered, iron weather cocks perched across a weather vane, were there talking to one another. And the one said to the other "I'm fed up with the wind always turning me around and pointing me in different directions. And I'm going to put a stop to it." And with that he rusted himself to the weather vane and never moved again. The other weather cock answered, "But this is what I was made to do." And with that, encompassed with a sense of pride in fulfilling his life, he moved about as the wind played upon him. And as passerbyers moved below him and looked up at the weather cock, he spoke to everyone who looked and he said, 'the wind is blowing in this direction.' The one was fulfilling the purpose for which he was made, the other was living a lie.

Not let us root that imaginary situation and subject it into our own lives here. Many of us are willing for the will of God to manuver our lives, while other of us defy the will of God and purpose to do it our own way. And all of humanity are divided into one of these two camps. A willingness to let the will and the purpose of God manuver his life so that it shall perform the deeds and fulfill the purposes for which it came into being. While the other lives a lie, trying to establish his own principles and purposes for life.

George \_\_\_\_\_ likes to tell the story about a chelloist who played constantly the same note over and over again, never changing that note. And while he sat with his fellow chelloists they were moving their fingers up and down the strings, first over one string and then another. And he explained, you see they are all searching for the right note, but I've already found it. I know some people like that. They know the answers, they have the way and if anybody else approaches from a different angle, entertains another viewpoint, has a different attitude; he's all wrong and he'll always be wrong until he comes into the rutt where I am, and follows me as I run around in circles.

That is one of the things that depresses me about Christianity. Quite frankly Christianity did not appeal to me as a child because I was restricted to take a null understanding of what a religious life really was. It was much later that I discovered an open world, where one searches and find and plucks and clashes and really creates a Christian life. It's not one string to be played over and over again but it's many strings that creates the beautiful harmony. I do not believe that a Christian has to say to another person, "I'm a Christian." And I'm always a just a little weary of that person who has to bring God into his conversation no matter to whom he is talking. He said I'm making a Christian witness. But I discovered a long time ago in many different circumstances and incidents that it doesn't matter so much what a person says from his lips, he can prove it or disprove it in the next moment with the kind of life that he lives. I love my wife very dearly, but I haven't told her so in a long time. But if she doesn't know it by the way that I treat her and the relationship that exists between us, she's not going to be convinced by nearly saying to words. Too much is said about Christianity while too little is being done about Christianity. The life is a many splended

things, strings to be played upon from many angles, playing different hymns from time to time. I'd hate to sing hymns every day of my life, I'd get so tired of them I'd never want to sing another. Occasionally, I want to hear some good rock and roll. Occasionally, I want to hear Marshall music. There are times when even hillbilly music is a change of pace. I love music in every form and somehow I feel that that is an expression of my love of God more than just a singing of a hymn because it carries the title hymn. And here's an area of exploration in which we have not fully ventured in finding a full and meaningful life. But at the same time we must cautiously approach those things which are in conflict with our religious faith.

One of these we are reminded of more than anything else and that is our obsession with material things. I mentioned this one primarily because I'm firmly convinced, as was Christ, that nothing stands more solidly between man and God than his lust for material things. Jesus even went so far as to say that it is harder for a rich man to get into heaven than it is for a camel to get through the eye of a needle. And we have experienced in our own lives how a desire to accumulate things so often crowd out the appetite for the more meaningful things that are not materialistic. That's where the danger of material things come in. It's a matter of priority. We all desire things that make life comfortable and meaningful for us. We ought to do it. I would never want to return to the good old days when we did everything in the primitive way. I'm glad we have scientists coming up with new things everyday to make living easier and more pleasant. But we dare not let that have first place, it must be a matter of priority. When a desire for material things crowd out our ~~sensitivity~~ sensitivity to spiritual things then it becomes a great handicap, a great burden that we are forced to carry.

Occasionally my children will come home with a box of cracker jacks. The design of this box hasn't changed since I was a little boy. Here is a little lad in his sailor suit, cramming corn into his mouth and underneath are the words, 'the more you eat, the more you want.' More recently, there's a commercial advertising potato chips saying 'I dare you to eat just one.' You see there's never a plateau of satisfaction when we are simply working for material things. No matter how far we rise on that ladder of attainment, there is that much farther to go. Somebody is always ahead of us. And we forget the humble beginnings where we came and we think only in terms of where we are at the moment and out here where we want to get. So it becomes a vicious circle, spending our things on the things that do not last, nor bring real happiness.

This morning as I prepared for coming to church, I turned on the electric stove and in just a few moments I had hot boiling coffee. I pushed down the handle of a toaster and in just a moment popped out a crisp, brown piece of bread. I opened the refrigerator and poured a glass of cold milk. All the while I was listening to the radio. I remembered that when I came in yesterday, my wife had a carpet sweeper, sweeping the floor making it clean. My daughter was washing window and she had a pressurized can and she just pressed the nozzle and the spray covered the window and then she just wiped it off. And I turned on the water faucet and there was all the water I wanted. But not one time did it occur to me what was happening. I had taken it all forgotten. Had the flow of the water lessened because someone turned on a faucet elsewhere, I would have become impatient. But I failed to realize that my grandparents walked down to the bottom of a hill and dropped a pail into a water hole and pulled up a bucket of water and carried it back up to the kitchen door. And if they built a fire, in order to cook the meal

then it took a long time in order for it to get just to the right temperature. And they had to go down to the spring house, for it would spoil if it were kept at room temperature. I'll turn on my air conditioning this summer just like I turned on my heat this winter. But I remember my grandparents who froze on one side while they roasted on the other before an open fire. Do you see what I'm saying. No matter how far up the ladder of material possession you get you always come to a level where you take what you've got for granted. And you're always trying to get more. When that happens there's no place for the real meaningful things in life. The things that bring real joy and happiness. They are crowded out because we are trying to gain material things.

A few years ago Time magazine had an interview with a few self-made millionaires. And this one thing was discovered in each of these and that was that there was an obsession to be a millionaire and they had gained it but they had taken very little else on the journey that led them there. Children grew up and they didn't even know who their father was. One of the fathers said, "Every year on my son's birthday I give him an afternoon." An involvement with others, an interplay and interchange of ideas and emotions - that's what life is about. Not silver dollars that clink in a copper, that's the most meaningless possession that any one of us can have. Because its going to be gone sometime. That obsession to have material possessions blinds us to the real purposes of life. And he who is following the trail that leads only to that one satisfaction within his life, will early come upon the realization that his has become a stagnant life. That there is very little worthwhile for him to live for.

I read about a woman who died leaving an estate, part of which was a closet or many closets filled with a thousand dresses. There's very little else to be said about her except that. But immediately I remembered a man by the name of William Booth who had one suit of clothing. He was an Englishman. One day was at Wesleyan Chapel in \_\_\_\_\_ where he was converted to Jesus Christ. He wanted to become a minister, but he didn't have the educational requirements to become a minister in the Methodist Church. But that didn't deter him, he got a uniform and he went down into the slums of the city and he started helping people and he called it the Salvation Army. And the Salvation Army has become one of the greatest organizations in the world. Founded firmly upon the concepts that Christ taught by a man who owned one suit of clothes, pathetically bare and worn.

One day a guard standing inside the chapel was approached by a humble negro dressed in a Salvation Army uniform. And almost apologetically he came up to the guard and said I understand there is a marble tablet here that marks the place where William Booth was converted. And the guard pointed over to a particular spot and said "Yes, it's over there." So the negro man said, "Is it alright if I go over there." And the guard said, "Of course." And with that with slow steps he stumbled over to the place where the marble tablet lay in the floor. And hesitating for just a moment he dropped down to his knees, he crossed his hands and he dropped his face upon it and the guard heard him mutter over and over again, "Oh, Lord, do it again." "Oh, Lord, do it again." Well when we are thinking about material things God just can't break through to do it.

Jesus said, "Life is not the abundance of the things that we possess." Now we evaluate people quite liberally simply by enumerating their possessions, the kind of house that he lives in, the kind of clothes that he wears, the clubs to which he belongs, all of the things that mark prosperity. And we're so intent upon this aspect of their lives that we are willing to accept this as the face value of the person. But that's not the person at all, you can take a beggar up out of the streets who doesn't even know how to write his name, you can give him a clean shave and put on him an expensive suit and put him in an expensive car and he'll look just like anyone of the thousands of others who have this as their one objective in life. When somebody has got it on the inside, beggars clothes are rich, uniforms cannot change the nature of that man .

Life is an expansion of the spiritual self with limits. And that's what Christianity is all about and in essence that's all that Christ taught. In brief that is Christianity in a nut shell. The expansion of the true self to its fullest extremes. That can be achieved one - by a worthy ambition, a specific goal to which your life is given. A person who has not asked himself, what is my life worth and what am I living for is juvenile in his approach to life he doesn't have any mature concept of what life really means. Howard Luffick said that children are taught early in childhood to say the prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep." And he said I've met people in their 20ties and their 40ties and their 60ties who still have put themselves to sleep and have never awakened. There must be a worthy ambition, something worth giving your life for. Jesus said, "If your not willing to give your life for me then you are not worthy to be my disciple." He wasn't asking a hard price, he was being realistic. Because a man's life must be measured by the willingness of what he will do with his life to attain what he is seeking. And a worthy ambition lies at the heart of any pilgrimage that would lead us to God. What will you do with your life?

Oh, the principle about materialism is expressed here on the streets of Gettlinburg when you see hippies who are announcing by their way of life that they are denouncing everything materialistic, we are looking for the spiritual. But then they are not those productive members of society who are trying to achieve a worthy goal, they are fluctuating between reality and unreality. A rejection of one thing without finding in its place something worth giving its life for. Productive members of society are those members who have found something which will give them a grip which will drive them relentlessly, which will keep them ever in the direction of a worthy goal. that is established firmly in his mind.

Glen Clark told about taking a train ride a few years ago. He found his seat companion to be a very jovial and friendly fellow, so they fell in conversation. And he discovered that Glen Clark was a minister and with that he began to talk about his own spiritual life. He said early in my youth I was determined that I was going to go as far up the economic ladder as any man could go. I wanted to have and I gave myself single-mindedly to that one thing. One day under the stress and the pressures of it all, I had a breakdown and I was put into a hospital. I was walking on the grounds of that ~~sanitarium~~ sanitorium one day and there was a boat moored on the lake and I decided that I would go out and spend some time on the water. And he grew tired as the afternoon grew on and he fell asleep and he drifted way out upon the sea. When he awakened everything was dark about, the stars were shining, but he was lost. There were many miles along the shore and he didn't know in which direction to go. Then in his panic suddenly he remembered the north star and so he searched until he

found it and using that as a guide he found his way back to the shore. And he was safely back in his room. He said, "That impressed me." I said to myself maybe that's what is wrong with my life, I said maybe that's why I'm in this sanitorium because I've been out upon a sea because I've been going around without any goal without any purpose in life. I've gotten confused. And with that he determined that his life would be cast for something that was worth living for. He regained his health, went back into the business that he had been in, became a great industrialist success moved in from every direction. He wasn't even searching for it, it came. And then as he left he handed Glen Clark a card and said, "If you're ever in my city I want you to contact me." He glanced at the card and immediately he recognized the name because he had heard of the industrialist who taught in that city what was reportedly the largest men's Bible class in the world. No place for God. There's no place without God. We must have a worthy ambition. We must have open and growing lives constantly.

There's no need for anybody who has a closed mind. Spare me the time wasted in the company of someone who has stopped growing. We need to grow mentally. It distresses me some of the literature that is on the market today, not because of the low level of the material but because of the energy that the man has wasted upon such trivel when there's so much that's beautiful and dynamic to be subjected into the mind. The same thing can be said of the companions we keep. I made this statement one time previously in a sermon in this church three years ago. At the clost of the service there was a card on the back of it and it said, "This is the most unchristian sermon I've ever listened to." Because I had said, "Be careful with whom you spend your time." "Choose well your companions." This person went on to write, "Jesus spent his time with spensters, prostitutes, others." But you see what that person failed to see was that Jesus had an interest in prostitutes and publicans but they were not his companions. He was in the companionship of those like-minded with whom he could grow and share. There's a difference between being concerned with some person and giving a portion of your time to them and being in constant compansionship with them. The companions who make up your life ought to be those persons with whom there can be an interplay, an interchange of ideas so that both of you will be enriched rather than being in the company of those who dull the edge of your growing mind and your mature experience. You can pretty well depend upon the old adage, that a man can be evaluated by the company he keeps. Whether it's in reading a book or a companion on the highway. There needs to be a stimulation of the highest order. Because time is too precious to be used upon the frivilous. Money can be regained once its lost, but a lost minute can never be recaptured. The hours and the days that are wasted upon trivels are eternally gone.

The third thing is simply this. Commitment to God. I don't know of any minister who could be considered more broad minded than I. And I know its been a matter of concern to many people who see my broadmindedness and wonder how I can take the stance of a minister and yet be so emineable to other things that seem to be inconsistent. I'm not always harping on individual faults that people ought to avoid, the douts of life. I'm not concerned with that I'm concerned with the vital forces that drive a man in the direction that he ought to go! Simply because there's an inscible desire to be there and not a check list of the things that a man ought not - - -