

Sunday Morning, July 16, 1967

Sermon Subject: "WHAT'S PRINTED ON YOUR BUTTON?"

Some say they had their origin in Greenwich Village, but wherever they began, they've spread like wild fire, and it's become quite a fad today...this wearing of oversize buttons with printed slogans. I've enjoyed quite a few that I've seen in the shops here in Gatlinburg... humorous ones such as "You're reading my button." Another one, "Ban buttons." But by-and-large they convey messages. Some of them approach the risqué; some are quite prophetic. There's one that says, "Kill a Commie for Christ." Another, "Make love, not war." One which says, "God is not dead. He's really well and alive in Mexico City." Demonstrators wear them upon their coats as they picket the White House. They've become quite symbolic of the day in which we live...that is, "Speak your mind, say what you believe, be frank." And when you look at a button upon a person's coat, you're really looking into that person's mind.

There's a game I play every Sunday as our hundreds of guests greet me after the service. I glance at the lapel buttons on their coats before I look into their faces. It tells me an awful lot about the person I'm about to meet. Sometimes it's a Rotary pin, a Kiwanis button, or it may be the symbol of a Shriner. One of my favorites is a little beaver, for it means that here's a man who loves boys and is willing to share of his strength and his experience in the building of young men.

But you know, I've never worn a button in my lapel. I've belonged to service clubs for many years. I'll slip it on my belt so that if they check on me I can pull back my coat and show my loyalty, but I've never worn a button in my lapel, and the reason that I haven't is because I feel that here is a projection of one's true personality. "What are you living for?" Well, here's the symbol of what I'm living for, and I have felt so strongly that I want to live for something symbolic, that when something goes in my buttonhole, I want it to be truly representative of my life. A few years ago I ~~had~~ had an honor conferred on me by a group of college students at one of our nearby colleges making me an honorary member of their group. The symbol of their group was a little tiny gold yoke, and I was so proud of it, and I put it on my lapel and I wore it for a few times, and then I began to feel guilty wearing that pin. I didn't really deserve to wear it, for you see, they had ideals for their organization which they met every day, and I wasn't disciplined to their aims and objectives, and therefore I had no right to wear the symbol of their group. And I took it off my coat, and I put it away.

And then a few weeks ago I came upon a symbol that suddenly filled that space. Hanging in my study now, my coat bears a little primitive fish on the lapel. It says to anyone who looks at my lapel simply this, "I'm a follower of the way." You see, this was the first identity that the Christians ever used in identifying themselves to one another. Members of the early church were fearful for their safety. They tried to keep their identity away from those who would harm them, and when they met a friend, one who loved Christ, they wanted to share that kinship and establish that identity, and so they would mark out the outline of a fish, and that was an identity that he was a follower of Christ.

We're well past the time when we as Christians ought to be proud who we are. No doubt ought ever exist in the mind of another as to whom our loyalty is given. We ought to be proud to be followers of Christ, to manifest that kinship and that relationship in a world that is far beyond merely the wearing of a badge but that is integrated into our behaviour...into our attitudes... into our aims and objectives.

I read a humorous story the other day. Two men, who were riding on a train in England, became aware of a third companion in the coach, and one whispered to the other, "I'll bet you half

a crown that that's the Archbishop of Canterbury." And the second one looked, and then he said, "I'll take up that bet. I'll bet half a crown it isn't." And so he got up and approached the man sitting over there reading his book, and he said, "Pardon me, sir, but my friend and I have a little bet on. Are you the Archbishop of Canterbury?" And with that, the man raised his eyes from the book, and obviously peeved by the interruption let off a string of profanity and then said, "Get the blazes out of here and leave me alone." So the fellow went back to his companion and said, "I'm sorry, the bet's off. We still don't know whether he's the Archbishop of Canterbury."

Let people know who you are. What is the symbol by which a Christian moves out into the world. We don't need to adopt one for ourselves, for Christ identified us through two symbols. These two symbols surpass anything that we could imagine to be representative of the cause and the way and the discipline of a Christian. He said, "You are the light of the world." He said, "You are the salt of the earth." I don't know two words that carry greater meaning than those two. Light that parts the darkness and reveals what's there. Salt that gives taste to what's experienced in life and preserves that which is good and worth preserving. These are the two identities by which all men ought to look upon a follower of Christ and know that he is one of them. Too many times we have abdicated the privilege that Christ has given to us. . . that of being a part of a great moving mass, one that will reach out and convey its aims and its objectives for all the world, winning it for the higher and noble objectives which were in Christ Jesus. He came and set his Kingdom here and invited us to come. But in order to do so, he has given us orders to move out and to impress upon the world that which he has impressed upon us. And if we remain silent when we need to speak, when we need to stand when we're sitting, we had better follow the commands of our conscience, for with this gift of representation of salt and light, Jesus gave one word of warning, "If that light is put under a bushel. . . If that salt has lost its savor. . . then they're worthless."

The world is in ferment today. Our minds can't grasp what's happening. Negroes in Newark as a mighty black army destroying, pillaging. Arabs and Jews facing one another with fixed bayonets. South Vietnamese, North Vietnamese ring around American soldiers lying bleeding in the dust. Red China growing stronger every day. And America and Russia rattling their sabres. Now who's to give a word of authority as to how we can find direction in the day in which we live? Is it a political scientist, our college and university professors, men in the State Department, the President of the United States, or the United Nations that stood as a great heavy ox, powerless in the Middle East crisis? Or can we look for a word from God?

One of the newspapers in London wrote an article recently commending Billy Graham. Billy Graham doesn't always have a good press. . . He's not the most popular man. But this article praised him, and this is the reason for the praise. For a man who is unwilling to speak out on the Middle East crisis and the war in Vietnam. And the article went on to say, "I'm tired of spiritual leaders trying to tell the world what it ought to do as they though they had some hidden authority to speak." If a man who is sensitive to the will of God has no authority to speak there is no authoritative voice. I was saddened by that article, that praise could be lavished upon a man because he had failed in his deepest responsibility. Now I'm not critical of Billy Graham for not speaking out on these two issues, for as you well know I have not spoken out on them either. I constantly remind you of the dilemma that's before us, but I don't know what's right. If I knew what's right, I'd unhesitatingly tell you what my conviction was. But we must listen to the will of God in this day if we listen to anything;

There are three badges that we Christians wear. We wear one of them. One of these badges carries this slogan: "Let's ride. Let's just simply move along with things the way they are. Accept the status quo. Don't try to make any changes for the better, but just go along with

the way it's being done." I attended the senior high church school class this morning between services. Gene Cash was singing some of the great spirituals of faith that have come out in this generation. One line he sang struck so deeply that I couldn't get it out of my mind: "How many times can a man look away?" How many times will we look in the other direction when men are being exploited, when righteousness is giving way to sinfulness, when we see an emerging new complex declaring that morality is outdated and here is the way men ought to live with a newfound freedom and meaning in life. We who are so concerned about our young people emerging into adulthood are ~~not~~ doing nothing to set back this tide of formidable opinion. Let me assure you of this. Truth cannot be erased. Truth cannot be reversed by the whims of any generation.

Bishop Kennedy said that he was in attendance at a meeting in London and the lecturer to the group was talking about marital difficulties, and he spoke of one of the terrible things that was destroying homes was extramarital sexual relationships and he talked about the sociological overtones of it, and finally one man sitting there took as long as he could, and he stood up and said, "Excuse me, sir, I don't know exactly what you're talking about, but is what you're saying what we mean by adultery and fornication?" Bishop Kennedy said, "I wanted to get up and shout "Hurrah!", because he said, "We're trying so hard to avoid the words that the Bible uses for setting men straight." The path of least resistance...looking in the other direction...Let's just ride along.

Or...you may wear the button that declares, "Let's run...Let's run away from our problems and difficulties, not face up to them..not challenge them by our own integrity and our own insight but run away from them and let somebody else handle them. An extreme way in which this is done is when the mind completely collapses under the pressures and the tensions that are there, and a person becomes mentally ill! I had a very dear friend who a few years ago his wife called me about 3:00 in the morning, and she said, "Can you come over to our house." And I knew her husband had been disturbed for quite awhile about some things. And when I walked into the living room, I saw him pacing the floor. His mouth was dry, and his eyes were glazed, and he was begging his wife to "Please take me to a hospital. Please take me to a hospital." And she wouldn't give up to do it. He kept trying to persuade her, and finally she said, "Well, if you'll go along and drive and help me take him, I'll take him there." So we drove to Atlanta. By the time we got there, he was crouched on the floor of the car like a wild animal...His mind had completely collapsed. This is a safety mechanism that God has put into us...that we've gone just so far that our minds can't take it any longer, and so we move into a realm of fantasy where we don't have to face up to it. On a lesser scale, it's the development of a psychosomatic illness...headaches, nausea,..One doctor ventured to say that "Fifty percent of my patients have real illnesses, but their origin is purely emotional." We ~~can~~ can run away through illness, or we can run away through romance. "Everything's cheery out there. Look at the world. It's Everybody's good. I don't have any problems. You don't have any problems, and anybody that's crying wolf ought to just keep quiet and quit disturbing us. We don't want to hear those ugly things. Let's enjoy the soothing music of luxury and ease and security like we've got it all about us. And don't any of you tattered people come in here and make me feel guilt-ridden. Don't any of you cry out there for help and expect me to come. I'm too comfortable the way things are." They dream along as though all is well in all the world.

Or we can rationalize. And here is where I lose a lot of my friends. I've been fighting this for a long time now. I've weighed it from every angle. I've tried to be as completely objective about it as I possibly can, so I've come to the point where I have no other course but this

one. There's a licquor referendum to be held in Gatlinburg on the 27th. I have tried to see this issue from the standpoint of every person who proposes the adoption of this referendum. I have discovered that most are fighting for what they believe through logic, but that logic simply does not stand. I pride myself on my logic. If I have one gift, it's the gift of logic. You see I don't preach with notes. It's purely logic in my mind that permits me to preach. And yet, there are some who say to me, "Give us legal licquor, and we've done away with the bootleggers." Now Avis Rent-a-Car says, "We're number 2, but we're fighting to be number 1." The bootleggers are number 1. If you make them number 2, don't think they're going to close up shop. They're going to start fighting to be number 1. And the legitimate purchaser will be going into the legal outlet. Who is left to buy from the bootleggers. Only those who can be created as a buying group...alcoholics who cannot be sold licquor by a legitimate licquor store operator...young people who are too young to buy it. Another bit of logic is this: "Gatlinburg's economy depends on it." Don't try to tell me that. I don't know 6 million people who go to Knoxville on their vacation because they have licquor stores on every corner. But 6 million people did come to the Great Smoky Mountains last year because this is one of the great masterpieces of God's creation. And if a drink of licquor stands in the way of an appreciation of a great majestic encounter with God like this, then I wonder as to the purposes of that person coming here in the first place. No, nobody's going to stay away from Gatlinburg, because in spite of all these hundreds of thousands of acres of primitive beauty, you can't buy a legal drink down on the street corner. That's the beauty of Gatlinburg. All of you who are visiting with us this morning here in Gatlinburg. Most of you came from towns where you go just a few blocks and you've got licquor stores. Did you spend your hundreds of dollars to come to Gatlinburg so you could get some licquor? No, our economy doesn't depend on it. Our economy will be destroyed by it. Because it is antithetical to what Gatlinburg really is. I came into the quietness of this sanctuary last week, and there was a card lying on the pew. I picked it up, and it was from someone passing through town. On the back of the card they had written, "Thank God for this place of peace and quiet in a carnival town." We're no carnival town. We must not be a carnival town. Any town can be a carnival town, but only Gatlinburg can sit at the feet of God's great majestic beauty in all the primitive and wholesome that's here. One motel owner told me this last week that a family staying there from Pittsburgh came up to the desk on departure and said, "I just discovered what it is about Gatlinburg that makes it such a wonderful place. There's not a single licquor store in town." Another man in a barber shop said in my presence, "I love coming to Gatlinburg, because my wife and children can walk down the street at night, and I'm not worried. I can't do that in my town." Logic. "Well, we might as well get the profits as the bootleggers." Well, there is some revenue from alcohol, but let me tell you how you can get even more revenue than that. Tax cancer patients. *tape ran out*