

Sunday, ~~October 11, 1969~~

Sermon Subject "When Everything Comes Busted Loose"

In "Green Pastures" the ^{Lord} ~~king~~ discovers Gabriel peering intently over the walls of heaven. And he calls out to him and he says, "Gabriel, what do you see?" And Gabriel, looking down to earth where the rising water of the flood at the time of Noah has captured his attention, shouts out, "It looks like everything that's nailed down has come busted loose. And that is a feeling that we feel from time to time. When in the quietness and the serenity of our everyday, there comes a moment when it seems that everything that is nailed down has come busted loose. And we become more increasingly aware of why it's happening. And perhaps that's why we become more disturbed when we see it taking place. Let me take a tired and tried expression and resurrect it for just a moment. To say that the age in which we are living is an age of gaps and perhaps the one that we've worn thinnest is the credibility gap. And though there is a reluctance to build upon that which has been worn thin by use at the same time so long as it represents something that is still in evidence, something that remains here, we dare not cast it aside, but keep an awareness ever-alive in our thinking. And surely if ever there has been a time when there has been a credibility gap, surely that time is now. Remember a few years ago when a young, English instructor from Columbia University was on a quiz program, his appearance and his performance on the program took a hold upon the imagination of the American people, everyone tuned in each week to see how he would fare that week. In all the spontaneity, in the chamber where he would think his questions through, we felt something that was alive, something that was throbbing with excitement. And then there was a disgruntled participant on the program that whispered to the press, that this was not spontaneous at all but it was rehearsed before it went on the air. And then an investigation came forth and surely enough we discovered that what we had taken at face value had been a hoax perpetrated upon the American people. Like many of us who are quick to defend ourselves before anyone dares accuse us, television networks rose up as one and said, "We've been taken, we didn't know this was happening on our networks, and we'll take measures to see that it doesn't happen again." They even went so far as to say that whenever a t.v. commercial is projected on the screen if it is a dramatization, we'll flash the words a dramatization. so that no one will feel that he's being taken. And comedy programs depend upon the laughter of the audience and since there's no laughter in the living room, canned laughter was used in order to enhance the story line. And where the program took place away from an audience, canned laughter was used to build up the comedy in the program. And so the television networks said that whenever this is done, we'll have a credit line at the close of the program saying what this is canned laughter. And there for a while we were living on such a plane of integrity, we were unsure of ourselves. But you know what was so strange. Nobody really cared. The multitudes of Americans who had been taken in did not react against those who had taken them in, they laughed it off. They were not concerned that what appeared to be immediate and spontaneous had been rehearsed and was a fraud. Oh! It was only a short time until we were back where we were in the beginning and now everything is played purely from the hip, straight forward, we're led to believe everything is above board, but in our hearts we know that we're being taken in all over again. And this is a sorry state to which we can come. A lack of integrity, a lack of credibility in our communication with one another. But if this were purely in the realm of entertainment, then surely we would be foolish to become disturbed about it. It becomes a serious thing when that which occurs in the realm of entertainment crops out into the realm of serious affairs. This is an election year. We have candidates who are vying for our attention and our support and the way in which it can be done is to destroy the opponent. To tell half truths, to build on that which cannot possibly be realized, promises of hope. And all the time we know it and we don't demand anything

When Everything Comes Busted Loose

better from those who are perpetrating this fraud upon us. The realm of international politics the same record is played over and over again. We know that we're being told ~~that~~ just what those who have the power of telling want us to know, what they do not want us to know is kept from us. I've become so perturbed over the Pueblo incident, are we to be made the laughing stock of ~~the~~ world as a nation? Should we demand that our ship and its crew be returned with the threat of force? or can it be true that we did violate the interests of another nation and therefore, are loathed to take our stand and are ready to be humiliated before the rest of the world? If only we knew we could take a position but we don't know and we can't take a position and we feel weak and futile in the face of it all and this has become the climate of the nation in which we live. We just can't really trust anybody at all. Then there's the humanity gap. Last week racial violence broke out again, all over. In Cleveland. We wonder if these issues will ever be settled. One analyst in News Week Magazine projected to the year 1968 and he said the conditions of separations between the races are greater then, than they are now. With great cities of America being purely negro and minority groups while the lands outside the cities are restricted with white families. If this should be true then the making of a great violence is always before us. But how do we face up to this gap that separates one segment of humanity from another ~~no~~ speaking here simply upon the realm of race because this is the one that is most apparent to us, surely it is the most dramatic in our understanding of the problem, but the same problem exists between all segments of society. Between nations. Chekoslovakia and Russia have now come to the point of misunderstanding and perhaps here will be a cleavage that will never be reestablished just as it was between Red China and Russia. There is a certain cleavage between Republicans and Democrats during election years and at other times as well, as we support some persons ~~and persons~~ in position of responsibility and leaving our support from those who are of a different party. In all of these separations that separate one segment of humanity from one another, we are building upon those aspects that do make us different from one another which do separate us. All the while we are overlooking those great cohesive factors that make us one which we do share in common. The fact that one segment of our population in America is black and another is white is primarily the cause of the great distinction in America. But look at the things we share in common. We're all Americans. We're all citizens of this great land. We all have the same rights for bringing about change where change ought to be brought about. And the guaranteed rights for one is guaranteed for all. And the God of the one is the God of the whole. We'll take the philosophy gap this past week the senate investigating committee has been trying to decide whether to approve Justice Abe Fortis for the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and in an examination of the man and his record and his character that which is risen to the surface is that here is one of the most liberal thinkers that has ever been in the Supreme Court. The problem is his philosophy about the American way of life, the kind of philosophy that is to be placed upon the highest judicial seat in our land. And we're all wondering if the philosophy of America has changed for the better or the worst. Those who are in legal circles tell us that their hands are increasingly being tied in order to keep them from solving crimes to keep crimes from happening in the beginning. Surely America is a nation of great opportunity for everyman who wants to excel and this last decade has seen even greater opportunities coming to the fore. And yet in a speech that crossed my desk this past week, a noted federal judge made this observation that since 1960 the population of America has increased by 10%. In this same period of time crime has increased by 88%. And last we think that all crimes are being solved, he went on to say that 80% of the burglaries that are committed in America go permanently unsolved. And so this has been a time in which we have been weighing and evaluating the philosophy of our land and there is a philosophical ~~gap~~

"When Everything Comes Busted Loose"

gap. With the two extremes vying for power and attention. And I wouldn't be honest with you if I didn't pause for just a moment to say that there is a theology gap in America. We pause here not because we delight in it, but because we must. Someone said the greatest missionland is the vestibule of the church and sometimes we are driven to that point of belief. The impotence of the modern church today is reflected in the lack of attendance that it services, this past year in our conference we showed a decisive gain in membership and at the same time we lost a considerable amount in average attendance. It seems to say that somehow the church is not attracting and holding and if that be true then it is the quality of those who make her up. That is keeping her weak. Historically great crimes have been committed in the name of the church. The crusades where great armies went out into the Middle East and massacred and pillaged wherever they went in the name of the Church, under the guise of reclaiming a sacred land. Or take the Spanish Inquisition of the 15th Century. How heretics were driven out of their homes and burned at the stake, one of the greatest massacres that humanity has known was carried on under the arm of the Church. And here even in America, so late in this time, witches were burned by the church. Men and women accused of being possessed of the devil were burned at the stake. Could it be with our own personal relationships with one another and our own relationship with God that the Church today reflects a divisiveness between what he believes and what he does. We profess love and honor and respect and yet it has been my experience when in the presence of church people many times I have heard one of the most harsh condemnations ^{leveled} against others of their acquaintance. And I have seen such hostility expressed against other groups ~~by~~ by churchmen as I have heard outside of the Church. Surely there is a theology gap.

If our lives are to be secure, if our world is to be secure, it's no accident. Something for which we must strive. Jesus said on one occasion that when you build your life in your society and when your world is built, remember this that it is the foundation on which you built that determines whether it will stand or whether it will fall. And he went further to define the foundations upon which one individual life or a society can be built that which is described as being as though it were on a rock, that which is described as though it were upon sand. That foundation upon which our individual lives and society is built is primarily upon two things: the means for which we live and the ends for which we live. Or two put it more simply: how we live and what we're living for. Surely the means of living today is the most advanced that any previous generation of people has known. This past week three astronauts got in a space ship, Apollo 7 and they simulated air flight. Mid-October they'll get in that same space ship and they'll orbit the earth. What a far cry from just a few years ago when man's greatest acceleration was the gasoline engine and before that James Watt invented the steam engine. Was it not your grandfather that walked where he went or rode upon the back of a mule and he carted what he needed to move from one place to another in a wagon ~~is~~ pulled by horses. Just a few weeks ago I took a jet flight and ~~in~~ for more than an hour I was suspended above the earth. I couldn't help but remember that my father sold parlor organs and he moved them about from home to home pulled by a horse. We are living in a time where the means of living has defied even the wildest imagination. But what about the means? That these advanced ways of living project into our lives? Are we living for the means or have we discovered the ends for which these means are worthwhile. We've always put a premium upon the way of life how to enhance what we have and to make it more delightful. But look back at the :Paraclian Age of Greece. Here was Greece's greatest hour when around the Acropolis a handful of minds, who reached out into the infinite into the depths of their own minds and established a culture, established an understanding of truth that we in the 20th century still draw heavily upon.

"When Everything Comes Busted Loose"

Yet the means for living ~~at~~ at their time is so primitive that even the most backward place in the world today is far superior. to theirs. Or take the Herodian Age of Palestine. Here was a time when men lived in mud huvals, with one doorway and two open windows to let in whatever air and light could get inside. Many times the occupants of the house would go up to the flat roof and sleep ~~and~~ at night looking up at the stars where it was far more comfortable than anything inside and quite likely on the floor of that house, lying about in straw, would be the animals that they owned. The fastest means of transportation that they had was upon the back of a donkey and most of them lived out their entire lifetimes living not far from their place of birth completely ignorant of what lay out in the rest of the world, but it was a t a time like this that a young carpenter stepped forth from Nazareth speaking with an authority, speaking with a truth that is easily discovered by the way that he lived as well as the way that he talked. He collected together a handful of common men unlearned, untrained. And somehow he impregnated their lives with truth and love for God that they were able to spread it out into the lives of others until it became a great consuming fire that has spread out into every nation of the world. Until very few living today have failed to hear about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. And yet in an age when the means for living were so crude and so primitive. If we are to keep everything nailed down from becoming loose then we must re-establish the spiritual ends of our lives so that we know what we're working for so that we can control those elements of our lives that move us along. If we are to be come secure in an insecure world we must re-establish the Lordship of Jesus Christ. One of the most poignant and ~~and~~ meaningful dramas that I have ever experienced was in reading that account when Jesus was leaving that great city he paused for just a moment on the Mount of Olive there looking down upon the city that lay at his feet cognizant of the great possibilities that lie there and at the same time rejected truth when it had been brought before them. With a catch in his throat and a tear in his eye, said to only those standing neaby to hear, "O! Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I would have brought you together under my arms as a mother hen gathers her flock together, but you would not. I would have brought you truth and ~~light~~ light and peace, but you would not." When Jesus Christ is at the center of a persons life, when Jesus Christ is established at the center of a society things go right. That's why the first act of a communist state must be to eradicate the presence of Jesus Christ. I read about a man who visited ^{Moscow} ~~Russia~~ and he ~~a~~ said that while he was in Russia he went on a tour of ~~a~~ the city. And as the group went on the tour, they came to St. Issiac's Cathedral. This was one of the great Christian cathedrals of the city but now under communism had become a great museum of anti-christianity and as they were led through this great cathedral their eyes focused upon one thing and then another. while the atheistic guide purposely pointed out the ways in which God had been eradicated from the lives of the Russian people. He explained how science has disproved the existence of God. They came upon a coffin that had been place in view with a half-decomposed body lying in full view. This disproves any bebelief in immortality. Finally they came to the end of their tour and they saw a great painting that was haning upon the wall. And as they stood before it he noticed that the painting showed Jesus Christ standing in the center of the picture in the background standing with his arms outstretched and in the foreground the Czarist troupes were slaughtering the pessants in the streets. And the guide said looke at it, look him in the face, see what he is! He's nothing but a capitalist swine. He stands there blessing the troupes of the Czar as they massacre the pessants in the streets. Do you know what is so tragic about that story? In the great councils of the Russian Church ~~and~~ while the pessants were in the flux of rising up against the Czar and the Czar was treating yhe pessants of the land as if they were little better than animals, the Church was debating the colors' of the Liturgical year. And in their great conclaves were thinking more of the ecclesiastical

"When Everything Comes Busted Loose"

dogmas than they were the application of Christian principals. And in a sense that painting reflected a great truth. This man said his heart was heavy as he left this great cathedral. He walked a few steps down the street and he came to the Hermitage, which is the outstanding art gallery of Moscow. He said he walked in there with a group of pilgrims who were on the tour, he said as they moved through this great art gallery this time there was not a guide to show them about and they just paused as group and looked upon one painting and then another and there was no obvious emotion about any of the paintings. Then they came to one that was a picture of the crucifixion of Christ. He said this time there was a hush that fell upon the group. There wasn't a guide to explain it, but there was no movement among those few who stood there looking upon the painting, most of them passants of the city. After a while one of the men who stood there ~~took~~ reached up and took the hat off of his head ~~until the entire group stood and took the hat off of his head~~ and twisted it in his hand as he looked into the face of Christ and said he looked over the entire crowd and saw one after the other reach up and take the hat off his head until the entire group stood in reverent silence with their heads buried before the crucifixion of Christ. Is what the church telling us today that here is a Christ with arms outstretched over the dilemma of man letting it happen? Sometimes working through those who call themselves after him? Or is the Church portraying a man hanging upon the cross in the throes of death, not for a society but for every individual man. If we are to establish a secure world in which to live we must erase these gaps. We're trying, there are many groups today that are trying to change the tenure of American Society, trying to make it better. Many of them ~~eminate~~ emanate from the Church, but many times there's no evidence of Christ in their activity. For there are some who believe that man, himself, can change the world into a secure place to live. But man himself cannot do it. Then there are others of us who do nothing because we believe that is time he will emerge into human affairs and change things the way that they ought to be. They say that the kingdom of God will have come then if we wait for it's coming, but no, it will not come if we wait for Christ to bring it. If there is one thing that is at the root of the teachings of Christ, it is this. It is the skill of man and the power of God that will change the world. A young student was heard making the remark after having heard a lecture by Emerson, "When you hear him speak, you feel that your head has brushed against the stars."