

DATE: June 28, 1970

SUBJECT: "WHO NEEDS ANOTHER MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB"

Lord, we don't need another mountain; there are mountain and hillsides enough to climb. Those words are sung in the popular song, "What the World Needs Now is Love, Sweet Love." But they packed an impact, they strike at a place that we desperately need to examine as we desperately try to find significance and meaning for our lives. We have used the imagery of climbing mountains to indicate those moments when our minds soar beyond our bodies, when we exert ourselves sufficiently where they can rise to heights where things are different. Who has not stood on a mountain top and felt almost an awe about his world. The crisp cool clear <sup>air</sup> about him. The stillness that sweeps up out of the valley to encompass him. It's moving out of the commonplace, out of the ordinary, and experiencing the fringe that is eternal, of the best that life can give. Yet we are not mountain climbers. When have you climbed a mountain last?

Robert Frost wrote a poem entitled, "The Mountain". He told about making a trip and staying overnight in a strange village. It had grown dark when he arrived in the village, so he went to the inn and got a room for the night. While he was lying in bed he looked out the window and he noticed that there were no stars overhead. He wondered about it because upon his arrival it was a clear night. He slept through and the next morning he arose and stepped out doors; immediately he understood why he had not seen stars in the west. Illuming over the village, overshadowing it was a high mountain. He saw a challenge to walk to that mountain before breakfast, so he set out. He describes the beautiful fields and the streams that run through the fields. He progressed to the base of the mountain. And when he reached it he discovered a farmer and an ox cart and he stopped him, fell into conversation with him. Then he began to talk about the mountain, "tell me about the mountain." Well the farmer said, "There's a trail about five miles from here that will lead you up to the top of the mountain and there are a lot of people who climb it." "But what about from here, can't one climb the mountain from here." Not really, there is a trail but it is too precarious, not too many people try that trail. "I've hunted and fished for trout many times on that mountain side, but tell me what's it's like beyond the timber, what's it like on top." "Well they say there's a spring on top of that mountain, a spring that runs cool in the summer time and warm in the winter time. A strange thing." A stream that runs down the mountain and then becomes a large stream by the time it gets to the bottom. I've enjoyed it many times. "But tell me about the spring that is on top." "Well, a fellow was here one day who was going to climb the mountain and I said to him when you get to the top, I want you to see that spring and then when you come back tell me if it is what everyone says it is." You mean, you haven't climbed the mountain. "No, I've never climbed the mountain. I've worked all of my life at the foot of this mountain, why should I climb the mountain at whose foot I've always worked." Robert Frost saw in that a deputed energy of man. Surrounded as he is by challenges, opportunities. Because of their nearness and because of their commonplace, we're projecting our eyes always to something beyond. Something more exciting, something more unique. Because it is here it doesn't fascinate us, but we are always searching for that had alluded us heretofore. ~~None~~

No more contemporary thoughts could be brought forth as men today are struggling for some kind of identity in life. To find some new interest, some new area of understanding, that will somehow bring life out of the humdrum and put it on the level of significance. Much energy is being disipated today for that which is not to be found. Something that is out there.

James Mitchner said that the journey of America is to discover itself. And if he fails to find himself, then anything else he might find is of no use. Victor Franker said that man's primary motivational factor is to have an understanding of himself. One ought first of all to discover his own nature, to know what his life is all about, to discover the potentialities of life. To project those abilities out into the world where they can come into contact with needs, with opportunities. So that we can become involved in living, not simply an observer to what other are doing, not simply an observer to life. We have lived on plains of superficiality in so many places, in so many times. We have drawn to ourselves those magnetic forces that really do not have much to offer, but which speak of success and pleasure and achievement. We have dressed up that which is useless and we have put a premium on that, while we have troden upon that which is devine. The true nature of man is discover from within and not simply enhance that which is on the outside. There's a search for that these days among those who are more serious minded, who are oriented to the real values of living. It's is encouraging. I love to hear the rising generation as those who have stripped away the veneer off life and have discovered the realities. An attempt to disassociate oneself from the materialistic levels of living and become spiritually enthused to the universe and to other people as well as oneself. And when one steps out into the mainstream of life, avoids the crowd to be one to stand independently. A non-conformist is an exciting thing. It's a striving and a searching for that which is unique, individually one's own.

But once again we find that there is a shallowness to this very attribute in the lives of so many people. Because that which is real is not necessarily base or unclean. And yet that seems to be the appearance of so many things today that we class as realistic, unless it can be obscene or base or baren, then we think it as being dressed up or artificial. I think one's life ought never to be judged by the apparel or the way in which he is groomed, the house in which he lives or the automobile which he drives. And yet at the same time, it speaks of a discovery within itself and not simply to be shoded off because it exists. One who dresses rudely, who pays no attention to his appearance, one who feels free to use extremenlanguage, has not necessarily come face to face with reality. It means that he has lost a sensitivity to the things that are feally beautiful and meaningful in life.

The other evening some friends and I went to a movie in Knoxville. There was a young fellow sitting on the same row as we. A college boy, at least in appearance by age. He was dressed in clothes that quite possibly had not been washed since the time that he had bought them perhaps many months before. His hair was long, nothing wrong with that in itself except from the fact that it looked like it had never been brushed. One who came close immediately was aware of his presence by the odor that he omitted. Someone sitting behnd us reached up and touched my wife and said, "My husband saw a flea on him just a moment ago." We have kept a dog in our house in years past and out of love for that dog we have a least put flea power on him and washed him from time to time. This is not reality, this is not a discovery of self, this is an abuse. This is just pretence. What is on the outside does not speak of truth, of that which is eternal in value and meaning.

Down in the vallies, in the shadows these truths are not to be learned. It is only as we reach upwards, as we move out into other experiences and realms, from hand to hand encounter, eyeball to eyeball contact with the realities of life that make life full and meaningful, lifted from the shallows in which so many of us live.

If we are to look at the life of Christ, we are to see that he climbs many mountains. Looking at three we can see the total breadth of his life, to show how he became the whom is related the fullness and perfection of life itself. First, he climbed a mount of temptation. The mountain of the mind. It was at that point of his life that he was just beginning his ministry. He was not yet quite sure how to approach it. He wasn't quite sure the kind of environment in which he ought move and the things that he ought to do. It wasn't clear from the very beginning, it had to be sought out. And so he went off to himself to a mountain and there he grappled with life. He pitted his mind against those things which needed to be done. He felt the challenge that was before him and he determined ways in which he might be achieved. He considered all the alternatives and there were many alternatives. He could have emerged as one who was mystical. He chose rather to be one like everyone else. Out of whose life and experience there might be a relationship to others, a discovery of how that can be mine as well. If one thing is to be said about Christ from the very beginning, it is this. He understood his mission. He knew what he was about. But do we?

A speaker at a college on the west coast was talking to a group of students informally and turning to one he said, "What do you want to do with your life." And he said, "I want to become a dentist." And he said, "That's fine, that's a good profession but I don't mean what work do you plan to do, I mean what do you plan to do with your life?" And the young man answered, "Well quite frankly, I haven't given any thought to that." That's a reflection of so many of the ideas of so many of us. We think about what we are going to do for a livelihood, but what are we going to do with our lives, that part of our life that is eternal. We haven't given much thought, the consideration to that, we haven't used our minds to measure the depth of our being and the breadth of our existence.

There was a recent advertisement in a church magazine. A two page ad, in fact, advertising small cassettes for cassette recorders. It was prepared every month by educators and leading theologians, playwrights and others. There were readings from magazines, there were comments on the things of the day and things of that nature and it was an appeal to the busy minister who could place this cassette in his recorder and as he was driving from place to place and then he can learn what is going on all about him. The next issue there was a letter from Bishop Jerald Kennedy of California calling attention to that advertisement and he said, "Boy's I've got a better idea." "Forget about your electronic gemicks, don't even turn on your radio, but get in your car and when your driving somewhere, start thinking. Use your mind, and you will discover what new thought and what insights will become your own." What the world needs now is a creative mind. Original thinkers, not a mastication of that which has already been digested by someone else and passed on as truth and because of our inability to observe as depth, we accept it as fact. And that's why today, greater than any other time in our history we are surrounded by extremeists to the left and to the right. Each equally as dangerous as the others. No man who is a creative thinker can live within the finges of an extreme. Because there's too much

evil in everything that's good and there's too much good in everything that is evil to be clearcut, one position apart from all else. This is an imperfect world in which we are living, this is an imperfect society in which we are living, this is a world of imperfect ideas. Only the man who can classify can see to the root meaning of ideas, can select and find a place for himself where he can use all of his energies and his talents to the best ability.

We're living in a times of slogans and cliché's. Saw one on a bumper, "God bless Spiro X". "America love it or leave it." It's almost a thrust to one's dignity to be subjected to slogans that are suppose to give an easy solution to the real ills of life. Advertisers take advantage of slogans because they can transport great concept on a slogan and a person accepting simply that statement of fact without discovering the truth and reality in it is denied the real access to truth. We need to climb the mountains of the mind. To discover what God has given you that is above everything else, you cannot comprehend God until you can know him in your mind. Your mind is that one place of rationality that takes truth and makes it real. You can feel, but until you know with your mind you are still searching for the way. We find so many easy ways to exist without coming to grips with the nitty - gritty of life.

The late Fred Allen was quite a wit. And he was quite successful as long as there was radio but when television came somehow there was no receptivity to his kind of performance on T.V. and it killed him as a comedian. In his bitterness he said, "People that watch television will have eyes as big as cantalopes and brains the size of peas." And it may be true, when one simply observes and life and never enters into life there's a real denial.

Jesus also climbed the mountain of transfiguration, the mountain of the soul. He did not live simply within the realm of the intellect, but there is also that life of experience which is also most meaningful. It thrills me to see more and more scientists talking about the realm of the spirit. I heard one a short time ago. He said that we have been projecting our eyes to the universes beyond here, but now there's a turnabout and looking at the universes within and he said we are finding them more fascinating than the universes without. One scientist was quoted as saying that if will look at the spiritual attitudes of life that we will accomplish more in one generation than we have been able to accomplish in the previous four. We've been told that the realm of the spirit is the real meeting place, where God and man are in eternal encounter. And we need to ascend that mountain where our spirits can come to the afore. We can so deaden our sensitivity to the things that are material that we never become aware of those great resources within that make life meaningful and worthwhile, the realm of feeling, the realm of love, and acceptance.

"Death of a Salesman " was to me one of the most pungent Broadway production to be acted out on the stage. Willey Lowman was a victim of this kind of materialistic ideology. He gave all of his life to making the sale and it was reflected in the affluence of his life. He taught his sons in growing up how to make the sale and that was all that was necessary, but he deprived them of any spiritual growth at all. And the time came when he saw that everything that he had cherished now was no longer and in his despair he took his own life. The day of his funeral there was the

third son. Days passed, then more days. And the father grew worried lest his son was dead and would not return. Then one day at dusk, looking toward the distance he saw a figure stumbling toward the village. He rushed out to meet him and it was his son. The son fell exhausted at his feet. His hands were cut and bleeding, his feet were scratched and blood was dried over them. His head was matted with perspiration and grim and his clothes were torn. The father nursed him back to his strength and then he said son where have you been. The son said, "Father I climbed the mountain as you told me to do." I went beyond the forrest where the trees grow here as they do in the valley, I went to where they were dwarfed and twisted and knarled and only shrubs. I fell exhausted. I started to break off a twig to bring you back but I looked up and I saw mountains and upon the mountains meadows that were covered with flowers. Gaining new strength I climbed higher until I came to those fields and as I started to pluck a flower to bring you back, suddenly the clouds opened and I looked up and saw the mountains leaping higher with granite shafts reaching out from the mountain side. Nothing grew there, there were no trees, no shrubs, no flowers. But the sight compelled me to climb higher. And I came to that place on the mountain where I had to cling tenaciously with my fingernails to the sheer cliffs of the mountains and I climbed higher and higher until I finally came to the top and there I fell exhausted. And after I rested awhile I stood up and looked out over the vallies and I a world that I never dreamed existed. Mountain ranges fell beyond mountain ranges, rivers ran through the vallies, green fields rose high. And I felt the presence of something about me that I had never known before, in all the stillness and the quietness I felt a spiritual presence and I didn't want to leave and I stayed there for many days, reveling in the presence of the spirit. Now I have come back, but my father I have nothing in my hands to show you how high I have been, all that I have is in my heart. How long since you've climbed a mountain?

And now this. We don't need another mountain to climb. We need to climb that mountain that is outside our window. Who knows it may be covered with burning bushes. Let us pray.