

SERMON TOPICS

ST. PAUL'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

(By Rev. Frank E. Pulley)

The Lure of the Impossible. Text: "And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Numbers 13:30.

This is the familiar Bible story of the settling of the land of Canaan. The Israelites are encamped nearby, while twelve spies are sent to see what chance they have of taking Canaan. They return in forty days, two bearing between them a large cluster of grapes, as a sample of the vineyards of the new country. Ten spies are against going any further, for they say that although the land is "flowing with milk and honey", the people are so large the Israelites are like grasshoppers in comparison.

Caleb speaks up at this point and says "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." Whatever is impossible possesses an almost irresistible attraction for many men. Most people really prefer the hard task. I have just been reading of a trip made by Father Hubbard, the "Glacier Priest", in Alaska. He and a companion flew an airplane into the great Aniakchak Crater, to explore it. Their fuel gave out and their only chance of escape was through the volcanic air-currents. Fortunately these were forceful enough to lift the plane skyward and to safety, over the crater's mouth. This true story illustrates how man loves to dare the seemingly impossible. Think of any man wanting to explore the inside of a steaming volcano, and in an airplane at that.

The lure of the impossible is found especially strong in children and geniuses. Children love fairy-tales of seven league boots, and the woman whose home was in a shoe. Stephenson was laughed at as an unbalanced dreamer when he said he would run a train at thirty or forty miles an hour. Every train, every continent that has been discovered, every telegraph system, every air machine was once pronounced impossible. Yet posterity may fly to Mars from the week-end.

Jesus uses the lure of the impossible in treating the man with the withered hand, in St. Matthew's Gospel. We can well imagine that a man with such a hand would try hard to stretch it out straight. And if he was married his wife would probably tell him to try it again "today, since you're looking better." And always he failed. Jesus comes up and tells him to "Stretch forth thine hand." Although he knew only too well of his many failures before, when Jesus tells him to do it, enough faith is kindled, and lo, the thing is done. What was impossible yesterday is now perfectly possible.

It is like the verse: "To every man there openeth A Way, and Ways, and the Way. And the High Soul climbs the High Way, And the Low Soul gropes the Low, And in between, on the misty flats, The rest drift to and fro. But to every man there openeth A High Way, and a Low, And every man decideth The Way his soul shall go." And so in our story of the twelve ancient spies. Ten saw the seemingly-impossible and were afraid of it. Two, Caleb and Joshua, were willing to be unpopular and laughed at for their courage. Today in our troubled waters of labor do not we need that ringing message of Caleb's? Let us go up at once and possess this problem, on our knees; for through the Father, we are well able to overcome it. Prayer for all concerned will dissolve the tangle of any problem, personal or national. Which camp shall we join? The ten, who wanted to wait, and be led back into Egypt and slavery; or the two having Caleb for spokesman, who chose the "High Way." "For to every man, There openeth a High Way, and a Low," of doing everything there is in life to do. "Let us go up at once and possess it."

LOUISBURG METHODIST CHURCH

By O. P. Fitzgerald D. D.

"The Freedom of Restraint" "If you want to get into Life, keep the commands." (Moffatt's) Matthew 19:17 was the Scripture for the above sermon.

Life must be lived in an ordered universe. The gospel of the Son of Man is an eternal gospel, God's overture to men. Written in the ink of Jesus' blood, it is "the same yesterday, today, and forever" so said a great good man. This immutable gospel may wear some new time-aspect thru the passing years. Isaiah delivered his pleadings and warnings before a pagan statecraft. Ezekiel labored to rebuild a broken altar. Jesus came preaching a gospel of love to stoops to share the burdens of any age. Truth does not change, it grows. The law of right and wrong antedated father time.

Few men obey willingly the law of Jesus' self-denial. We want no blood-stain rules regulating our lives. That law had little appeal for Jesus in the beginning. He prayed that the "cup" might pass from him. Was he afraid God might prove an immense

nothing dwelling in nowhere? Did he lack the courage to face the stern realities of life? He sought the freedom of restraint and said "Thy will be done." Can we expect this freedom without paying the price? What value the sanctions and sagitties woven from the pains of a thousand years, if we want them changed? What value the hard-won moral verdicts of the ages, if we do not want to keep them? Yet, can we, by worry, add an inch to our stature? Can we by protest change our earthly parentage? Any man is free to leap from a towering sky-scraper, but no man can cancel the law of gravitation. Men may close their eyes permanently against all light, but they cannot escape the atrophy of the optic nerve, blindness will be their end. Men may violate the laws of sane living, but they cannot escape the head-ache or rising blood pressure. If we would live the Christian life, we must keep the rules. No man breaks the law, he tries, but the law breaks him.

Man cannot escape God for long. Something wants us. A fiction of our own creation cannot want us. Something great and good wants us. Religion is not merely whistling in the dark to keep up one's courage. Nor is God just a shadow flung across an unfeeling sky. Both are quite real, we cannot survive without them. We need not argue over who did the swallowing, Jonah or the whale, both no doubt had indigestion after the great ordeal. We cannot continue our sleep-walking for long. Some day every man bumps into the sharp corner of reality, bruised, but awake. There is something going on in this world which demands our allegiance. Jesus is striving to bring the races of men into the family of God. He cannot win without our support. He is laboring to set the bounds of human conduct inside the sacred walls of righteousness. But he will never achieve this fact unless we keep the commands.

The law of right never changes. Two kinds of people rebel against man-made rules. Some rebel because they are unworthy of the rules, others rebel because the rules are unworthy of them. Antigone, in that drama which time cannot dim, is shown in rebellion against the rules of the state. Her brother had been traitor to his city, and lost his life for his treacherous act. By order of the city's governor his body was left to rot unburied for his baseness. But Antigone resolved to give her brother decent burial, for there is a law deeper than the shame of treachery, and higher than imperial laws of a state. She also was condemned to die for her disobedience, and that by starvation. The governor on seeing her so inflexible asked, "And didst thou dare to disobey these laws?" Antigone answered, "I did not dream thine edict strong enough, that thou, a mortal man, shouldst overpass the unwritten laws that know no change. The unwritten laws that know no change, and yet, these are the holy mandates within which mankind must abide.

Humanity gains her freedom when restrained by these laws that know no change. Fritz Kreisler was free in his music. He had authority to burn a flaming candle high on the scale of harmony. But he was not free from the law of harmony. He had to conform to the octave of eight notes which ruled the music in Abraham's day. Jesus was free. But not free from living in the orbit of the Eternal's will. He was free to wound his own body for a violin and take the cross for a bow to make undying music for the souls of men. He was free to serve mankind, free to suffer for the races of men, free to vote for God against the hazard of the cross.

This unchanging law makes us free because it binds us like unbreakable chains of steel. Jesus did not call the law a "law." He called the law "God." There is a verdict that the wages of sin is death. There is a law that the gift of God is eternal life. Law is life. Chaos is death. In God we live and move, and if we do not move we cannot live. Try to change that law if we can. "If we want to get into Life, we must keep the commands."

HONORED AT SHOWER

Miss Lucille Johnson, Miss Gladys Mae Winstead and Mrs. Robert White were joint hostesses at a shower Saturday afternoon, at the home of Mrs. Robert White, honoring Miss Emma Mae Holmes bride-elect.

There were several contests enjoyed by all. Then followed a shower of attractive gifts to the honoree.

Miss Merla Johnson and Miss Pearl Harris assisted the hostesses in serving a delicious iced course.

After the refreshments Miss Beth Brantley played and sang. Those present were Miss Emma Mae Holmes, bride-elect, Miss Dorothy Knox, Miss Beth Brantley, Misses Fannie and Roxie Underhill, Misses Fannie and Pattie Belle Patterson, Miss Delia Mae Mitchell, Miss Doreas Holmes, Miss Bruce Dodd, Miss Othelle Mullen, Miss Pearl Harris, Miss Merla Johnson, Mrs. J. A. Privette, Mrs. S. T. Holmes and Mrs. J. R. Wright.

FOR FIRST CLASS PRINTING PHONE 283

WILDER REUNION

The family of the late Calvin Wilder met Sept. 2, 1934, at the granddaughter's, Hattie Glasgow's, on the Raleigh road, for an all day visit together. The children and relatives began arriving the day before and continued until noon. Over a hundred were present.

At one o'clock on the beautiful green grassy lawn in the shade of the spreading oaks, a table was set, which fairly groaned under its burden of good things to eat. Here all met; many were the jokes and recitals that were exchanged.

Those present were Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Wilder, Mrs. J. B. Wilder and daughter Vernie Bert, Mr. Glenn Wilder, and Mrs. R. T. Purnell, all of Franklinton; Mr. and Mrs. M. C. Wilder and family, J. J. Wilder and daughter Geraldine, Mr. and Mrs. Johnnie Hedgopeth, Mrs. Frank Dennis, Mr. and Mrs. Oliver Perry and family, Mr. and Mrs. J. E. Nelms and family, Mrs. L. J. Perdue and children, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Southall and children, Mr. and Mrs. Edward Southall and daughter Lucille of Raleigh, Mr. and Mrs. L. R. Southall and family, Mr. and Mrs. R. P. Neal and family, Mr. and Mrs. Clifton Southall, Mr. J. F. Powers and children of Everetts, Mrs. John Mack Lancaster, Mr. and Mrs. M. E. Glasgow and son, Mr. and Mrs. J. A. Leonard of Spring Hope, N. C., Mr. and Mrs. C. G. Kirkland and daughter Dorris of Scotland Neck, Mr. and Mrs. Clinton Nelms, Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Perdue and family, Mr. W. P. Tharrington, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Pleasants and daughter Margie Lee, Mr. F. W. Justice, Misses Alma and Lucille May, Mr. and Mrs. S. W. Marshall and family, Mr. and Mrs. Joe Joyner and family, Misses Jauneta and Louise Cyrus, Miss Lavalette Weaver, Misses Ruth and Rowena Gordon, Ma. Bruce Partin of Henderson, Messrs. Bill Duke, Junior Ed-

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wards, and Herbert Layton.

As the sun was nearing, all too soon, the western horizon, all bid farewell to each other. Hoping to meet next August with another grand-daughter Mrs. Oliver Perry.

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