

Read The Herald Classified Page

The Neighbor You Know

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TEXT: Matthew 22:39b. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

"The world is so full of a number of things, I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings."

The poet was a real optimist! Yes, the world is full of a number of things, so full that no man could begin to know them all, even in a dozen lifetimes. And happiness? One doesn't acquire many years before realizing that all the things of this world do not bring happiness. In fact, very few do!

This truth so disturbed William Wordsworth that he wrote his poem on a rather dismal note: "The world is too much with us; late and soon,

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers."

All of this suggests the age-old question we all ask, sooner or later. What is the most important, meaningful, essential thing in my life? Is there any one thing I can have which will answer all my needs, fulfill all my desires and bring me happiness?

The answer can be summed up in one word—LOVE! Some seek and find knowledge. Some seek and find power. Some seek and find wealth. Some seek and find

success. But no one finds happiness or security of mind, no one really lives until he finds, and is found of, love! There is no greater truth than that expressed in Paul's letter to the Corinthian Church: "If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing!"

The trouble we have with this answer of love is that it seldom gets a fair chance. We think it has its place, but is a little impractical for the real problems of life. It's considered to be an ideal, a good thought, or that nice feeling between those near and dear to each other. But for the rest of life? You can't learn it in school, as you do algebra. You can't set it in the bank, as you would a piece of furniture. You can't put it in the bank, as you would a sum of money. So, how can love be the essential "stuff" of life, the life I have to face day in and day out?

In spite of our reservations, God's answer was love, an active, practical, down-to-earth, love! God's love was personal love in action, in his own Son, Jesus Christ; Who came in love and to love itself! "For God so loved

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

NIGHT HAWKS
HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO SWALLOW HUMMINGBIRDS WHOLE!
IT IS BELIEVED THAT THE NIGHT HAWK SWALLOWED THE SMALL BIRD FOR QUANT AMTNE.

A SNAIL
AFTER SPENDING FIVE YEARS IN A MUSEUM SHOW CASE, WAS FOUND TO CONTAIN A LIVE SNAIL!

THE WORD ELECTRICITY
CAME FROM THE FACT THAT AMBER, WHEN STRUCK, ATTRACTS SMALL OBJECTS, MUCH AS A MAGNET DOES. "ELEKTRON" WAS THE GREEK NAME FOR AMBER.

the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." That's not just an ideal, good thought or a nice feeling between dear friends. That's God himself, living and giving and fighting and dying that all might have life instead of death, that all might know God and this love, that all might live the life of love as God's children, the only life of worth and value.

If all of this is so, (and it is, for this is heart of the Gospel) how do we live the life of love? It is, above all else, the life of response. It is responding in love because God first loved us. It's not just saying, "I love God," but it's living an doing, in love, the things God wants us to do, for Him.

Yet, when you come down to it, what can you do for God? Robert Young (star of TV's "Father Knows Best"), tells of his daughter's prayer life, how she would follow her formal prayers each evening with special requests for that day. One night after she was supposedly through she paused, and added, "And now God, what can I do for you?" Mr. Young said that the question really jolted him: It made him really wonder. What can she, or I, or anyone, do for God?

Actually we can do very little for Him, really nothing more than the response of praise and thanksgiving as we acknowledge His as Lord and God. Now this limitation is not to belittle the relationship or the response, but it does point us to the other area of life wherein we find the greater opportunity for love. It is that to which our Lord has called us, love for our fellow man or, in biblical terms, love for our neighbor! Yes, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," but, al-

so, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." You cannot have one without the other.

The Apostle Paul emphasized this a number of times. To the Christians at Galatia he wrote, "For the whole law is fulfilled in word, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Is there any necessity in spelling out again the range or scope, the outreach of love, and the neighbor involved? Surely, our Lord made it quite clear in the parable of "The Good Samaritan,"...not only the neighbor identified, but the very personal, probing question, "Whose neighbor am I?"

The neighbor you or I know and the response we make toward him, toward every person God created, is both the opportunity and the judgment of what we really are, before God! Christianity is not a static, standstill quality of existence. It is living the life of love, the selfsame love which gave its life for the world. Unless we can lose ourselves in loving the neighbors of the world we are making a mockery of God, and of what we claim to be—Christians!

Our Lord's words and example as timely as the morning newspaper. They are biting relevant to the crises in our church and community life. What about shirt-sleeve evangelism or witnessing on the job, or at school? How about color-blind ministries and desegregated classrooms? All challenges, in religion and business and race, as in every other area of life, fall quickly into place once we are constrained by the love of Christ to re-enact the neighborliness of the good Samaritan right here on the streets of Kings Mountain.

If men expect to inherit eternal life, that is life in communion with the God of love, then they must obey the only demand God makes of his own. They must freely share with their neighbors that love which God freely showers upon them.

Men, created by God and redeemed by Christ, are equals, and meant to be brothers. Their is neither distinction nor separation on God's part. Dare we do less?

In the days when men sailed wooden ships, an inexperienced youth went to a London hiring hall, seeking a job as seaman. "Have you ever gone around the Horn," asked the agent. He knew that the shipping companies wanted only the experienced men.

The young man had to admit that he had not, that he had never sailed at all. "Then," said the agent, "you'll have to come into the next room." There, in the other room, was nothing but the horn of a steer, lying in the center of the floor. The agent had the perplexed man walk slowly around it, saying, "Now you have been around the horn. You can sign up for a voyage to India."

Some people, in a similar manner, become Christian in name only, never really living the transformed life. The true Christian, like a real mariner, has sailed the heavy seas of life conscientiously. He has helped bear the cross of Christ in every tempest. He has borne his brother's burdens. He is a good neighbor with love for the fallen, the poor, the oppressed. He is a friend to the sick, a comfort to those who mourn, a peace-maker to those in strife, a child of God in loving action.

He never asks the absurd question, "And who is my neighbor?" He only asks of himself, "Am I being the neighbor God desires me to be?" Until he can answer that question in the affirmative, and even when he does, he goes out again and again in love. He strives, with God's help, to do the task God has given him. He does it not because he must, but because he is filled with God's love in his own life. He serves the neighbor he knows in Christian love!

Our world, nation, society and church are caught up in revolutions we can neither avoid nor ignore. Freedom, equality, opportunity, security, happiness and

brotherhood are not fanciful dreams or impossible ideals. Men and women and children are struggling and, yes, dying for human dignity and life, which is their God-given heritage and right. These are for all men.

There is only one way and one answer, the way of Christian love. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." God grant us the strength and the courage to love others, even as God has loved us.
Amen.

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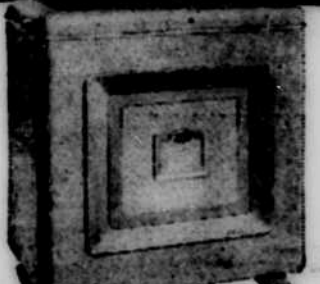
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