

“THE HEALTHY HEART”

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 9:23-27; Proverbs 8:32-36

During the blitz days in London, physicians said that the number of hypochondriacs (those with imagined illness) dropped to practically nothing. In fact, even people with very real trouble, frequently put off their own treatment until dangerously late. Why was this so?

Such catastrophe as war, flood, fire or similar hardships will take people’s minds off themselves immediately. We find men with serious injuries totally unaware of them in an effort to save someone else. Women forget their own ailments when one they love is in need.

Hypochondria is a disease of the uninvolved, or the bored person — the man or woman who has found nothing to challenge him, nothing more important than self. You never find this condition in people who are happy in what they are doing, who are caught up in challenging endeavors, who are fully motivated.

And the truth is *we were never meant to revolve around ourselves*. The human spirit, made in the image of God, is an out-reaching, out-going one. It needs an object toward which to move, demands an outlet for its love. If this is denied, the spirit becomes stunted, frustrated, and the spiritual pain soon manifests itself as physical ailment.

Christ knew that to be healthy spiritually, man must move outside of himself; therefore he said, “Whoever would be my disciple must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.”

Prayer: Lord, I know the cross is a symbol of my willingness to sacrifice my own selfish desires so that I may be free to serve you better. Teach me that when I serve you, I know health and true happiness, that in laying down my life in service, I pick it up again sanctified. AMEN

“WHEN IT ALL SEEMS FUTILE”

SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 37:1-9; Proverbs 3:5-8; II Timothy 4:6-8

Every soldier in battle, every workman on the job, each person alive has at some time felt the futility of what he is doing, wondered if there is any use to it, been tempted to quit.

Yet each battle has its supreme commander, its master plan of strategy and each skirmish and every soldier has his specific part in that eventual plan.

All of history and the days that make it up are authored by God. Eons before we were born, he mapped out the plan for the entire world of men. We might think, then, of Jesus Christ as the liaison between God and us — the field commander, the one who interprets our individual actions as they fit into the overall plan.

Perhaps you view your work as so insignificant that you have lost all enthusiasm for it. It no longer has your full attention, your imagination, that extra ounce of initiative. Yet if you have committed your life to Christ, every task you are given is strategic.

The single welder on an airplane wing has a comparatively “small” job — but if that “menial” task is faulty, an entire plane can be lost and lives with it.

Christians who came in contact with Lenin, Marx, and Trotsky never dreamed of the impact those lives would have on the world one day. Neither can we possibly trace the intricate links God has ordained between someone you know and a great event in the future.

Open your eyes each day with the knowledge that you serve God in all you do. Stop evaluating your place. Learn to trust God’s wisdom in spite of your limited conception of today.

Prayer: Lord, I know I shall never comprehend your whole plan, but help me to be faithful in my task, whatever it is. AMEN

The thought begins in the Bible verse;
please take the time to read it first.

MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 2023*“THE STING OF DEATH”*

Scripture: I Corinthians 15:51-58; Isaiah 25:8, 9
Hebrews 2:14, 15 (Supplementary Entire Chapter 15)

When God gave physical covering for the body, it was also to be the *symbol* of the absence of his Spirit now within us. No longer indwelt by his power and life, our spirit (unknown to us) would die — as surely as the body dies if the heart and brain be removed. (Gen 3:20)

There are some diseases which are so virulent, so deadly that no one has natural immunity to them; for these we all need to be vaccinated or immunized. One attack will kill.

Sin is the fatal spiritual disease. Christ said that no man has a natural immunity to sin. *Any* soul, once infected, begins to die unless that man receives Christ in his heart. (Romans 6:23)

Because our spirit is unseen and its dying so subtly concealed in the early stages, we do not fear that death. It is only as we begin to lose meaning to life, the will to go on, the vitality and joy, that we begin to sense this death of the spirit and its chilling consequences.

Now why can the blood — the transferred immunity of Christ — make us immune to sin? We are told that he received the sting of sin in his own body: the mystic immunization was formed there — and just as we receive immunization from the serum or blood of a body which has formed antibodies, so Christ grants us the same saving miracle, spiritually.

Could anything make more sense? Could there be a simpler remedy? Why do we refuse spiritually that for which we reach out so eagerly in daily life . . . ?

Prayer: O Lord, how lightly we take the life you offer us. Only you could have taken the poison of sin and so purified it that we now can reach out and have life. AMEN

TUESDAY

“WHEN THEY REFUSE YOUR HAND”

SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 73:21-26; John 14:12-14; Revelation 3:20;
Psalm 27

Have you known the experience of reaching out to a friend and having him refuse your help? What do you do? Give up in frustration, leave in righteous indignation? Paul said, “Pray for him.”

So often we think of ourselves as the actual power which lifts people — as the sole source of help. But are we?

Frequently a friend feels the need of more than human comfort; in refusing aid, he is perhaps unconsciously holding out for direct help from God. Perhaps he feels he knows all the answers we can give: he has used them himself. Perhaps he feels we are not qualified to help because we have not suffered in the same way.

At times like this, God’s assurance and presence are necessary — and it is for this we must pray. It is so easy as friends to stand in the light and instead of bringing warmth, cast a shadow; instead of letting Christ’s love revive and comfort, we only bring more separation from him.

Prayer is not the last resort: it should be the first and continuing effort we make. Ask God to touch your friend, to make his presence felt. He has promised that he will come if we only ask. This is the ministry we can bring.

Prayer: Lord, may I never cast a shadow through my feeling of importance, but help me rather to be a channel through which your love can flow freely toward others. We thank you for the power and warmth of this marvelous love. AMEN

WEDNESDAY

“TEMPTATION IS A MASKED INTRUDER”

SCRIPTURE:

Acts 4:32-5:11

Temptation comes in so many disguises that we fail to recognize it as temptation half of the time. Why?

Think back over your temptations . . . how many of them repelled you from the start? Very few. This is the first thing to remember: we are seldom repelled by our temptations; we are attracted to them, tempted by them.

Secondly, we immediately find a number of “good reasons” why we could succumb to the temptation once we finally suspect we are being tempted.

Thirdly, the greatest temptation is the desire to entertain it or “tease” it for a time — think about it, see ourselves in the situation until the shock or distaste has worn off or been dulled.

The moment you suspect you are being tempted (and there will be that ragged, restless, furtive feeling that causes us to secretly drag our temptation back into seclusion for fear someone will try to wrest it from us) immediately “Call Christ” — what would he do? How would he react? Then let him do it through you.

The most important thing is the quick and immediate rejection of it. Read in Matthew 4:1-11 the swift, uncompromising response of Jesus Christ to one of the most subtle temptations in history. Not a moment’s consideration, not a faltering word. We must be so accustomed to pleasing the Father, that anything else is alien and repellent to us.

Prayer: Lord, I know that Satan tests me in my areas of desire or frustration. But Lord, help me to continually turn these needs, these frustrations over to you so that I will not be seeking help from other hands. AMEN

THURSDAY

“NO GROUND IS STERILE”

SCRIPTURE:

Philippians 4:11-13

“I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content —” And if we read Paul’s life, we know he went one step further, “therein to be productive!”

This is the secret of a healthy spirit, a non-stagnant life.

Several years ago, a young woman lay dying of cancer in a Catholic hospital. The priest made frequent visits to her bedside, and each time was surprised to find one or two nuns sitting with her — not speaking to her, but listening.

When she died, one of the nuns said, “I have never learned so much about the Savior as I did by her bed. Her life was worth ten years of instruction. I shall never forget it”

We hear over and over of the strength and courage people receive from others in pain, of the hope from people worse off than we.

Paul was in prison — yet as far as he was concerned, nothing had changed in his opportunity to preach. Wardens and jailers were people; and so he spoke to them.

No circumstance is sterile to a dedicated Christian. The message Christ gave us can be shared as well from an office desk as from a pulpit — sometimes even more effectively.

Are you one who excuses your unproductiveness on the basis of where you are or what you do? You have no excuse. Christ comes to people at any time, in any place and by any means.

Prayer: Lord, give me new eyes for the tasks at hand. Give me your perception, the sensitivity of your Son and a love so encompassing that no situation, no person may seem insignificant, but rather an opportunity to serve both them and you. AMEN