

No man walks alone

John 15:1, 5

Trinity Albany

## NO MAN WALKS ALONE

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser...  
...I am the vine, you are the branches." John 15:1,5

- I. Suppose you were God! Suppose you wanted to help mankind. What would you do?
- A. To answer that question we need only to read about the thousands of schemes which good people have thought up to help others.
- B. I once lived in a town where a very wealthy man, after he retired, took up farming as a diversion. He said he wanted to help "the farmer" and improve agriculture in that state.
1. First he bought a mountain
  2. Then he built a million dollar house
    - a. \$50,000 organ
    - b. \$35,000 chandelier in his front hall
  3. Brought expertly trained men to care for his thousands of chickens, his blooded stock, and all the other departments of his farm.
  4. In 1925 it was costing him \$30,000 a month to run this farm.
  5. They experimented -- they had conferences -- they employed perhaps 150 men
  6. But after all it was not a farm it was a plaything
    - a. The men who worked there knew that
    - b. They knew that the hills would be paid whether they succeeded or failed.
- C. The New Testament is the story of what God did to help mankind
1. In the Gospel according to John Jesus is represented as describing his mission
  2. During these Lenten Sundays we are looking at some of the things he said. Last week we talked about the saying, "I am the light of the world."
- II. Today we hear him say: "I am the vine, you are the branches."
- A. In the Old Testament the vine is frequently used as a type of Israel, but it is always used of "degenerate" Israel
1. The comparison always intrudes a lament over Israel or a prophecy of her speedy destruction
  2. Nevertheless the vine was a national emblem and Israel was represented as a vine on the coins of the Maccabees.

- B. Once again Jesus is taking something that is familiar to the people and using it to teach his message or gospel
1. As the individual Israelite had found life through the NATION Israel now the individual finds life thru CHRIST.
  2. We should notice that the "vine" is NOT the church - but represents Him who is the source of the church's life.

- III. First, then Jesus and his disciples together form one whole - neither is complete without the other.
- A. This idea of the interdependence of Christ and his disciples is sometimes missed. We usually talk about the first part of this -- as we should -- but we miss the second.
- B. There is an idea of man today that is a long way from this teaching
1. We think of man as completely helpless
  2. This is a result of the cynicism of the past 25 years.
  3. Incidentally this is nothing new
    - a. "THIS MAJESTY THE KING OF BROBINGHAM HAD BEEN TALKING TO GULLIVER ABOUT HIS COUNTRY. GULLIVER HAD TOLD HIM HOW THE KING FINISHED THE CONVERSATION WITH THESE WORDS: I CANNOT BUT CONCLUDE THE BULK OF YOUR NATIVES TO BE THE MOST FEROCIOUS RACE OF LITTLE GREY VERMIN THAT NATURE EVER SUFFERED TO CRAWL UPON THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH."
    - b. Two centuries after Johnathan Swift wrote this passage James Branch Cabell described man as -- "BUT A PARASITE ON THE EPIDERMIS OF A MIDGEY FLAUTE; AN APE WHO CHATTERS TO HIMSELF OF KINSHIP WITH THE ARCHANGELS WHILE FILTHILY HE DIGS FOR GRUND-NUTS."
  4. There are people today who think it is smart to devalue mankind.
    - a. It is easy to see only the cussedness and depravity of human nature
    - b. Goodness knows we are bad enough
    - c. I have heard tired teachers tell their pupils how stupid they were, I have heard disgruntled churchmen rail at the depravity of people

5. Yet we spend billions of dollars to educate people - we spend no one knows how many dollars to keep people well and to heal them when they are sick

## C. The New Testament looks at us realistically

1. We are "lost"
  - a. We are sinners
  - b. We are perished
  - c. We are frightened
  - d. We are helpless
2. But we are of value in the sight of God - of so much value that Christ was sent for our sakes
3. Martha's Kitchen
 

"Shine in, O sun, on this dull place!  
Teach me your ways, lend me your grace,  
Lest I grow trivial, being bound  
To move within a daily round.

O wind, come in and blow away  
The dust and cobwebs from this day  
Let I grow peevish, skirmishing  
With each small unimportant thing!

## D. Jesus considers his disciples not as servants but as friends

- E. To go back to the figure of the vine, the disciples are "the branches" which are necessary to the functioning of the vine.

## F. We find meaning for our existence here.

## IV. Second, we cannot and must not try to stand alone

- A. We must recognize that we are part of a great whole, that we are "branches"
- B. The ~~upper~~ to a low view of man is not a complete individualism
1. This is a mistake of the present decade
  2. As the social structure of our time engulfs the individual he tries to find expression for his "self" in certain individualistic acts
  3. This is highlighted in the desire for freedom from ethical demand in the refusal to accept responsibility.
- C. The Christian view of man sees him as an individual who derives his significance from his relationship to Christ.

## 1. Christianity says NO MAN WALKS ALONE

- a. There is your family with which you must establish a relationship and toward which you have a responsibility
  - b. There is your community in which you live and toward which you have a responsibility
  - c. But both the family and the community sustain you as well
- ~~Express this as our relationship with the world we have this connection with the world~~
2. Trueblood says: "MAN IS SUCH A CREATURE THAT HE NEEDS TO BELONG... man is a creature with a need FOR MEMBERSHIP."
- a. "Few joys are greater than the joy of participation in a dedicated group."
  - b. This membership and dedication may function on a very low level
 

Woman going on and on in North Philadelphia station -- finally got to religion -- a little Episcopalian Church -- perfect gem -- doors on pew -- "the girls" made needlepoint kneeling stools -- left everything just as it was -- retired minister -- just loved it -- stayed till he died. Now everyone like to conduct service there!
  - c. This may, however, function on the upper level of our relationship with Christ

## V. Finally the result of this sort of relationship is two-fold

- A. First -- fruitbearing
1. Ability for Christian service depends on communion with Christ as the source of truth and life.
  2. We go at it all wrong - we think if we can interest people in some of the little chores of church work we can make Christians of them
  3. This is why people refuse to do these chores because they are only chores until you do them for the sake of Christ. The branches bear no fruit unless they are connected with the vine.
- B. Second -- life itself

John 15:2  
932  
1114

Call to Prayer:

The Lord is in the Holy Temple:  
Let all the earth, keep silent before Him.

Prayer:

Almighty and most merciful  
Father, from whom cometh every  
good and perfect gift; we give thee  
praise and thanks for all thy  
mercies. For thy goodness that hath  
created us; thy bounty that hath  
sustained us; thy discipline that  
hath chastened and corrected us;  
thy patience that hath borne  
with us; for thy love that hath  
redeemed us. Grant unto us with  
thy gifts a heart to love thee, and  
enable us to show our thankfulness  
for all thy benefits by giving up  
ourselves to thy service and cheerfully  
submitting to thy will for our lives.

Lighten the smallest duties of  
the coming week that they may  
shine with the beauty of thy  
countenance. Teach us that glory may  
dwell in the commonest task. May  
we not be weary in well doing. Give

us the patience to work although  
the results of our work may be unseen,  
give us the courage to go on when we are  
discouraged, give us the strength  
to carry on when it seems that  
we have failed.

We pray that we may put our  
trust in thee not only for this life  
but also for the life to come so that  
we shall not be without hope when  
our ones are no longer with us.

We pray that all of our people  
may find thee very near in the  
experiences of life this week. May we  
know that Thou art with us and may  
we feel that Thou dost give us strength.  
Sometimes we feel very near to  
Thee as we bow in this Sanctuary  
but it is so hard for us to feel this  
nearness when we leave. May we  
be quieted and sustained by the  
visional presence of the Eternal  
Christ.

We pray for those who are absent  
and far away - may distance  
prove no barrier for our love to

reach those who are dear to us. -3-

Stir us with concern for all  
things that are wrong in our world  
and give us the wisdom and the  
will to deal with these things.  
May we learn the truth is order  
that we may live it and may our  
live this week be a testimony to  
thy saving grace.