Settle down for a nap.
Awakened by a slap.
You Mr. Malone?
Wanted on telephone.

Sorry to stand you up, old pal.
Ran into a former gal.
Tomorrow, same place, same time?

Don't need to finish this rhyme
About waiting time without end
For my negligent (ex) friend.

With something of the same impatience Sarah decided it was time for the efficient hand of a woman to take over. Since she was past the normal time of child bearing, and her husband certainly wasn't getting any younger, it was time for positive action. She had a maid servant whom she had brought from Egypt, whose name was Hagar. Sarah gave her to Abraham as a concubine.

Fully within her rights by the customs of the time.

But by the law and the will of God, it was another matter.

I. TEMPTATION TO TRY TO DO GOD'S WILL OUR WAY.

God not only has a will but a way.

It is important to find both.

It is God's will that we bring people into the church, but it is not his way to bring them in at sword point as in middle ages.

It is God's will that churches be supported financially, but it is not his way to get that money through gambling.

It is God's will that churches should call pastor, but it is not God's way for pastors to politic to get certain churches.

It is possible to do the right thing in the wrong way.

It was right that Abraham should have a child but not his way that the child should be born unto a slave woman.

Sarah was conscientious -- but sometimes our zeal can make us run ahead of God.

II. THE RESULTS ARE ALWAYS UNHAPPY.

Sarah no doubt thought that Hagar would remain the same docile, obedient, and humble slave. When she was with child by the Lord of the house, it gave her a new perspective of her situation.

She now found an avenue to express the pent up resentment which every slave must feel toward the master. She began to treat her mistress with contempt, not so much by what she said but by the expression of her face, the hesitancy with which she obeyed instructions.

There is no ire like a woman's once aroused against another woman.

Now we see the unfairness of Sarah's attitude toward Abraham. "See what you've done. You've made me the object of ridicule by my own maid."

Abraham's shoulders were broad. "She is yours. Do what you will with her."

Only one thing Sarah wanted--to get Hagar out of sight. Sent her away.

A pastor was once called by my home church. The man was very eager to get the call. The fact is, he just more or less forced himself on the church. Three months later he told me, "I've made a mistake. I should never have come here." His was the unhappiest pastorate our church ever had.

Unhappiness always attends our way when we try to do God's work our way.

III. GOD DOES ALL HE CAN TO CORRECT OUR MISTAKES.

The deed was done. It was not God's way, but it had to be reckoned with. It was not God's way for this unfortunate girl to be driven away.

God tried to help the situation.

Sent Hagar back home.

God will do the best He can with our mistakes.

Some things cannot be completely undone.

Ismael was born -- God had outlined the destiny of the child:

> "He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." (v. 12)

The wild Bedouin have more than fulfilled this prophecy. To this very day, one of the most stubborn opponents of Christianity.

It would have been wonderful if Sarah could have snapped her fingers and undone her mistake. The disasters of snap judgments are not corrected by snap wishes.

Our errors will come back to us -- Rise up to haunt us.

Sarah's heart ached every time she laid eyes on Hagar and Ishmael.

God is an understanding and ever present helper. No less to Sarah than he was to Hagar.

In the Puritan homes the statement of Hagar

often hung upon the wall: "Thou God seest me."

The thought is tender and reflective of the truth that God is always nigh -- aware of our adversities.

God does not wholly deliver us or the world from the unhappy results of our mistakes.

He's always at hand to strengthen us, and eventually to bring order out of the chaos, happiness out of the misery.

GENESIS, CHAPTER 17

"The Token of a Christian"

Life began at 100 for Abraham.

When he reached the century mark, God gave him ...

A new name,

A new sign of the covenant.

a new Promise

I. A NEW NAME. ~~A new promise of a son.~~

It's a pretty late date to change name when you get to be 100 years old. Abram and Sarai suddenly found themselves called Abraham and Sarah by divine command. Very noble names.

Abraham - Father of a great multitude.

Sarah - Princess.

Sarah should have been very proud. Other name probably meant "contentious."

If change in name meant change in character, Abraham should have been glad. He had lived a mighty long time with a contentious wife.

Names today have meaning ...

Samuel - "His name is God."
David - Beloved.
Eugene - Well born.
George - Husbandman
Herbert - Glory of the army.
Eunice - Happy victory.
Blanche - White.
Dorothy - Gift of God.
Margaret - Pearl.

If the Lord were naming us according to our individual characteristics,

would He call us ... Envy,
Jealousy,
Sloth,
Avarice?

The disciples acquired a new name---"Christian."

If only our lives could match what that name implies!

II. A NEW SIGN OF THE COVENANT.

Five chapters back--and many years--God has established a covenant.

"I will bless you, make of you a great nation which shall inherit a land of promise and in turn bless the world."

A new sign -- Circumcision.

A token -- a symbol of the unique relationship. Marked for God.

God has always marked his people.

What is it that marks the Christian?

Baptism? -- a symbol, but not the sure sign.

"By their fruits ye shall know them" -- the sign -- Circumcision of the heart.

Life cut off from sin and the world of evil.

III. A NEW PROMISE.

The promise of an heir.

Abraham laughed.

Not in mockery -- too reverent for that --

but at his own weakness.

God was expecting the impossible of him and his wife.

Abraham was soon to learn that what is impossible with man is possible with God.

I don't know of a single servant whom God has called that has not been tempted to laugh at God ... laugh from a sense of their own impotency.

Moses --

In my instance -- It seemed so ridiculous to think that I could preach.

When God calls you to teach, to tithe, to do the seemingly impossible -- don't fall on your face and laugh but follow through with God in obedience. He knows best.

> "And Abraham took Ishmael his son, and all that were born in his house, and all that were bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham's house; and circumcised the flesh of their fore-skin in the selfsame day, as God had said unto him." v. 23.

The selfsame day -- Abraham obeyed the instruction of God.

At 99 he was willing to trust God.

GENESIS, CHAPTER 18

"WHEN GOD COMES CALLING"

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unaware." -- Hebrews 13:2

Why is it that unexpected company always arrives when the house in in its greatest disarray?

When there is not a thing in the house to eat?

When you have just settled down for a snooze or are watching your favorite TV program?

I sometimes wonder how welcome I am when I go calling. I ring the door bell, then the house begins to vibrate. There is the rustling of papers, scraping of chairs, muffled commands. Genesis 18 only tells us the man of the house's reaction to unexpected company.

When the three men suddenly appeared in front of Abraham's tent, he happily went to greet them, insisted they stay for lunch.

In all probability Sarah had already served Abraham his sandwiches and was now just getting the dishes cleaned up. Her heart sank within her as she saw Abraham bringing three hungry looking guests to the tent.

"That man! For eighty years it's been the same story. Invites every Tom, Dick and Harry to eat with us."

Of course Sarah had no idea, and neither did Abraham, that this Tom, Dick and Harry were angels traveling incognito.

Abraham always became very officious at a time like this. "Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth." As though she didn't know how to cook!

Be like a modern husband running into the kitchen and saying to his wife - "Honey, we've got company--

Stir up 2 cups of flour with
$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
3 teaspoons baking powder
3 tablespoons shortening
3/4 cup milk
Knead gently
Bake biscuits in the oven at 450° for 12 minutes.

What housewife wouldn't get a little peeved?

Sarah, living in a day when wives were not supposed to know much, obediently prepared the cakes, broiled some steaks, together with curds and milk.

A real nice lunch Abraham spread before the strangers.

Notice the question asked by one of the strangers.

"Where is Sarah thy wife?"

Two or three interesting things--

From female viewpoint -- it seems that Sarah had been wholely excluded from the hospitable scene. She was to cook and not be seen or heard.

This in keeping with present customs among the Arab Bedouins.

This man knew her name!

May have been first inkling that these were unusual guests.

The angel, of course, knew where Sarah was and knew that she would be listening through the tent to their conversation.

"Sarah thy wife shall have a son ..."

"We are entertaining fools," thought Sarah. Abraham was now 100 and she was in her 90's. They were mocking her. She laughed scornfully within herself.

Now a sure indication that his guests were heaven sent.

"Why did Sarah laugh?" ... "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"

Sarah called out, "I did not laugh." For she, too, was suddenly struck with fear by the presence of these unusual guests.

Sarah's behavior has been very poor. She had "Spied, laughed and lied," but Abraham's hospitality more than made up for her impropriety.

The lesson I gain is not that we shall take in every stranger and give them a steak dinner. Certainly the Christian will be hospitable -- but the question I receive --

Baskets of Silver - p60 -

"Am I ready for a visitation from God?"

"In what condition will He find my soul?"

"In what spirit would I receive Him?"

God does come knocking at our heart's door. Will He find you in hiding, peeping around corners, maybe even laughing at Him--certainly disbelieving?

God never goes where He is not welcome.

He won't invade your life unless He is invited.

When we are ready to kill the fatted calf of pride,

selfishness, sin--then God will sit down and sup with us.

In St. Paul's I saw Holman Hunt's "Light of the World."

When God knocks, let's forget about scampering around stuffing newspapers under pillows, putting dust under the rug. God knows all about us ... just as He knew about Sarah.

The important thing is to throw open wide the door and make Him wlecome.

Baskets & Silver p 60 Tramps

BT Feb 22 61

"THE SALT OF THE EARTH"

GENESIS 18:17-19:38

Sodom and Gomorrah were located at the lowest point geographically on the face of the earth ... 1300' below sea level.

They were also located at the lowest point of moral and spiritual degradation.

The stench of these two cities arose even to heaven.

God sent an investigating committee.

Came to Abraham disguised as men. He extended them every hospitality.

They decided because of his unique relation to God to reveal their mission.

They had come to see if things were as bad in Sodom and Gomorrah as the rumors indicated.

Abraham had kinfolks in Sodom — his nephew Lot. He knew that things were about as rotten as they could get.

It broke his heart to think about Lot living in that moral cesspool.

Abraham knew there was a chance for the survival of Sodom and Gomorrah.

He became greatly concerned about Lot. Began to plead for his safety.

Abraham, the father of the Jews, was good at bargaining.

Extracted a promise that if ten righteous were found the city would be spared.

Only two entered Sodom.

Lot greeted them just as courteously as Abraham. They did not so readily accept his hospitality. It didn't take them long to discover the loathesome condition of the city.

Sensuality and lust ruled over Sodom.

> "And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: for we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." vv. 12-13.

"Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." They thought he was joking.

Angels led them almost by force out of the city.

LESSONS:

1. The saving influence of Christians.

God doesn't need to send a committee to test the moral tone of our times.

The lewdness, the evil of our world is known in its every detail.

The only reason that God does not destroy the world is because of the prayers and good lives of Christians.

"Ye are the salt of the earth." (Matt. 5:13)

Christians are the saving salt of this world.

2. Compromise Destroys Our Witness.

Salt has lost its savor — adulterated.

Lot has made his home in a wicked environment and shared the life of the city.

His words of appeal fell on deaf ears.

A Christian who compromises and participates in the evils or questionable activities can never be a soul winner.

His witnessing will be taken as a big joke.

3. <u>There is No Turning Back.</u>

"Remember Lot's wife." (Luke 17:32).

Very reluctant to give up her home in Sodom. Her worldly friends.

"Any man, having put his hands to the plow, and looking back, is not fit for the Kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62).

The Lord expects a complete break with Sodom.

Faces forward and upward.

"A GREAT MAN STOOPS"

Genesis, Chapter 20

Occasionally I read a biography that is all eulogy. The author tells only the good and noble things about his subject.

I never quite trust such a biography.
The author has written with a bias.
His biography is not complete.

No matter how noble a man may be, he still has his faults, his shortcomings, his limitations.

I do not mean that I expect an author to expose all the flaws and dig out all the dirt possible out of them.

You have not really known a person unless you are aware of both his virtues and failures.

Abraham was no doubt one of the truly great men in the dawn of civilization.

The Bible reflects his greatness in its full glory. In his day, he stood like a giant redwood in a forest of pine scrub. woods –

The Bible also does not spare Abraham in its exposure of human frailties. No single Biblical author can be charged with presenting only the bright side of a man's character.

The flaws in Moses, David, Peter, Paul are shown up by the Bible like an artist who paints a likeness and includes the warts, facial furrows, and double chins.

The 20th chapter of Genesis shows an ugly ~~work~~ wart in Abraham's life.

Never forget that Abraham was living in a strange land. Wherever he went he met with people that often were hostile. He never knew what kind of a reception he would receive.

The occasion of this incident was his move from Hebron to a place in the extreme southern part of Palestine called Gerar. The local ruler was a man by the name of Abimelech. These ancient rulers were always on the lookout for a beauty to add to their harem. Sometimes whey would destroy anyone who stood between them and the woman who had attracted their attention.

Abraham had a long-standing agreement with Sarah his wife that if any such incident aroes, she would profess to be his sister.

Twenty years before in Egypt, this was the ruse they had pulled.

Now once again the same old thing crops up. Sin once and it is not nearly so hard the next time.

Sure enough, Abimelech claimed Sarah, the supposed sister of Abraham. Sarah was by this time 90 years old. What would you give for her beauty secret?

Not long ago in my visiting, I was introduced to a lady whom I supposed to be 45-50. When she left, the family told me she was over 70. She changed doctors recently. When he asked her age, she told him. He said, "No, I must have your real age." He told her she was physically only about 50 years old -- a modern Sarah.

Sarah died at 127 years. The life span then was about twice, or more, what it is today. If she was 90 at this time, comparatively speaking, she possibly had the appearance of someone 40-45 years old. There are many very beautiful women at that age. One of the celebrated beauties of our time is a grandmother about 50 -- Marlene Dietrich.

Whatever the explanation, Abraham permitted his wife to enter the harem of Abimelech under the guise of his sister.

Eve may have got the ball rolling by enticing her husband to sin, but wives have had to pay for it through the years. Hundreds of wives in this city are suffering untold misery because of the sins of their husbands.

Had it not been for the intervention of God, Sarah would have been taken to wife by Abimelech. God made him know the sinfulness of the thing he was about to do. Abimelech professed his own integrity because he had been told she was Abraham's sister.

Abraham's sin not only affected his wife, but put Abimelech in a position to sin. Our sins sometime set up a chain reaction. Because I sin, someone else may be led to sin. The other person may think everything is all right because by word or action I have put my endorsement on such an activity.

If a pastor smokes, a deacon drinks, a Sunday School teacher swears, a Training Union leader dances, it is the natural conclusion upon the lips of others -- "It's all right, so and so does it."

So Abimelech confronted Abraham with his lie. Watch Abraham squirm and try to justify himself. "I did it to save my neck. I thought you would slay me for my wife."

How often do we excuse sin in the same way. "I had to do it to save my business." "I have to in order to feed my children."

Since when had Abraham's neck become more important than his honor?

When our lives become more important than a right relation with God, then we've got nothing to live for.

Notice Abraham still trying to justify himself. He explains that his wife is really his half-sister. So it wasn't such a big fib after all--or was it?

We usually try to console ourselves in spiritual neglect and sin with shady half truths.

Reminds me of two fellows fishing on Sunday.

"I thought you always went to church on Sunday."

"I usually do, but I couldn't go today. My wife is sick."

So Abimelech restored Sarah.

Bestowed gifts upon Abraham.

"I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver."

I can hear the irony and derision ring in that statement.

And Abraham prayed unto God, and God healed Abimelech.

Abraham should have been praying for himself.

It is mighty easy to see other people's sins as railroad ties and ours as toothpicks.

We ought to quit talking about and praying about the sins of others so much and talk to God about our own.

I don't care how virtuous you may be, your life is still full of knotholes.

The fact is, the more virtuous, the more acutely conscious of sin.

Let us come like the Apostle Paul tonight and pray for the chief of sinners--you--and me.

"GOD HAS THE LAST LAUGH"

Genesis 21

Can a person laugh at God and get by with it? When God told Abraham that Sarah would bear him a son, he fell on his face and laughed.

It was incredulous, actually funny, that even God would suggest that a 100 year old man would beget progeny by a 90 year old wife.

A bit later two angelic messengers called at the tent of Abraham and once again reiterated the the divine promise.

They heard a snickering from inside the tent. It was Abraham's eavesdropping wife Sarah, laughing at such a ridiculous idea.

But God always has the last laugh. Did he punish Abraham and Sarah for their laughter? Well, what greater punishment could be inflicted on a tottering man of 100 and a woman of 90 than to suddenly become the parents of a lively little boy. I imagine they really began to feel their years.

What do you think they named the boy? They called him, "Laughter." That is what Isaac literally means. So God had the last laugh on Abraham and Sarah when he placed a bouncing boy on their hands according to his promise.

Remembering how they had laughed at the promise, and in recognition of the laughter that welled up in their hearts as they beheld this miracle baby, they just called him "Laughter."

God always does what he says he is going to do. "The Lord visited Sarah as he had said."

I Peter 3:9 - "God is not slack concerning his promises."

God does not make his promises idly.

They are not campaign promises. Not the idle talk of a visionary.

No matter how incredulous they may seem to us, they are valid commitments from the Almighty.

Take the matter of answered prayer.

May be prone to laugh at the idea of a loving God who hears and answers our prayers.

Many people like Abraham and Sarah can show positive evidence.

God has brought laughter into their lives where there was only disappointment.

A happy outlook is very much dependent upon our confidence in God's faithfulness to his promises.

Paul complimented Abraham in this fashion:

> "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform." Rom. 4:20-21.

Do you stagger at God's promises? It may seem that Abraham did when he grew impatient and tried to take things into his own hands by his affair with Hagar. But notice: "For Sarah conceived, and bare Abraham a son in his old age at the set time of which God had spoken to him."

God works on his schedule and not ours. He has his own time table. We had better wait on God

and not try to run ahead of him.

Look at the result of Abraham's and Sarah's bungling.

When Isaac was weaned at about three, they had the customary feast to celebrate. But Sarah saw Ishmael, the son of Hagar, mocking. She demanded that Ishmael and Hagar be cast out. This was ~~generous of Abraham~~. grievous to Abraham

Mockery and grief are the fruits of our labors when we try to do God's work our way; when we get impatient with God and try to force the issue.

There is another source of rejoicing suggested here.

God takes the messes we create and does what He can with them.

Abraham and Sarah tried to wash their hands of the whole Hagar-Ishmael affair. But God took over and brought a measure of order out of the chaos.

He assured Abraham that while Ishmael would not be the son of promise, He would make a nation of him.

We see God coming to the rescue of Hagar and Ishmael when they would have perished in the wilderness of Beersheba.

Ishmael at this time was about 17 years of age.

In the latter part of the chapter is recounted a typical difficulty between shepherd princes over water rights.

Abraham and Abimelech both had great herds and flocks. Water was a premium in this arid land.

Abimelich's servants had fought off Abraham's men and forcefully taken away a well.

Abimelech graciously restored it.

He and Abraham made a covenant of non-aggression.

Seven ~~live~~ ewe lambs were given to Abimelech as a seal of this friendship pact.

The well was called Beersheba -- "the well of the seven."

Abraham established there a place of worship and called there on the Everlasting God.

The Everlasting God always has the last laugh.

His will shall be done in spite of our bungling.

This is something for which we should be exceedingly grateful. Our failures cannot permanently wreck heaven's plans.

God has the last laugh in the sense that He will always give us more than we expect. His laughter must peal out across heaven as He beholds the happiness of his children in the land of many mansions.

Text: Genesis 1:1-8

Title: "In The Beginning . . ."

Where and When Preached:

Baptist Temple - March 23, 1960 - Prayer Meeting

"IN THE BEGINNING . . ."

Genesis 1:1-8

A mother brought a 13 year old son to my study to talk with me about becoming a Christian. It was evident that the boy had come against his own will. She was concerned about his indifference. Defiance was written in his eyes, as I discussed with him the plan of salvation. Presently he blurted out, "Science denies that." The young man was suffering from a delusion that there is an irreconcilable breach between science and religion and that science has the answer to all the ultimate questions. I sought to explain to him that science and religion deal with two different realms. Science deals with the realm of the visible material world. Religion has to do with the realm of the Spirit. They are not actually in conflict if they are properly understood and some of the greatest scientists are also great Christians.

The Genesis account of creation has been a source of difficulty in the effort to harmonize findings of modern science with Biblical revelation. Some people have taken this as an evidence that the whole Bible is untrustworthy; that religion has no validity. Such persons have not taken into account, however, a fundamental principle of Biblical interpretation, that God has always revealed himself to people on the level in which he finds them.

Dr. Marcus Dods calls this the "Accommodation Theory". For example, if you were seeking to explain a difficult matter to a small child, you would accommodate yourself to his vocabulary and to his present status of learning. As God has sought to reveal himself to mankind, he has most certainly taken into account the ability of man to comprehend divine truth. Let us remember that in the book of Genesis, we have a very primitive account of the Creation because at the time of this revelation,

man himself was primitive.

Some people have sought to rationalize the situation by saying that the Bible is a book of religion and not of science. We cannot expect, therefore, to find accurate scientific information in the Bible. There is some sense in which this is true, but I am of the conviction that the author of Genesis was being as scientific as he knew when he wrote this particular account.

The Genesis account has points in common with other creation stories that were prevalent among ancient men, for example, the Babylonian myth of Creation.

It is not the scientific explanation of the Earth's creation which makes the Genesis account superior to others; it is, instead, the religious note. I am persuaded that if God were making this revelation to modern man, that man would interpret the revelation in terms of modern science. Had God made the revelation to ancient man in terms of modern science, he would have been utterly bewildered. He could not have understood it or begun to grasp it. If he had sought to convey it to others in his own time, they probably would have utterly rejected what he had to say as foolishness. The religious message of the Creation stories is what is basic for us. For the writer of Genesis was not intent upon giving an explicit account of <u>how</u> the world came into existence but <u>who</u> brought it into existence. It was not the <u>process</u> of creation but the <u>purpose</u> of creation with which he was concerned. This was something which science could not tell.

God has given man the ability to interpret the physical phenomena. Man does not need supernatural help to explore the natural world. But God cannot be found in a test tube. God cannot be found by the scientific process. If we are dependent upon

science to convey to us any notion of God, we will be utterly in the dark. Science can only deal with the physical, or at least, the discoverable phenomena of this world. God can never be discovered by man. God must reveal himself to man. This God has been doing through the ages.

In the book of Genesis, we have the voice of an inspired messenger speaking against the background of his own information. He comes to say, "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth." The very first purpose then of the author of Genesis is to say that this world in which we live was "created". That God is back of it all. It did not just simply happen; it has not existed forever, but rather God created it as the theologians say, "ex nihilo", out of nothing. Hebrews 11:3 certainly validates this concept of the Genesis author. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. 11:3).

God created "the heaven and the earth". By this, the author meant the whole universe. His universe was very small when compared to ours. It was comprised of a very small portion of this world plus the heavens above him.

We read in our newspapers this morning that man has been able to project into space a little satellite more than a million, five hundred thousand miles and it is still speeding further out into space. Our universe becomes larger all the while. The word for God is "Elohim". Its basic meaning is power or majesty. It was indeed a great God who brought this world into existence, says the author of Genesis. And our God is becoming greater all the while as our comprehension of the vastness of our universe is enhanced.

In verse 2, he speaks of the orderliness of the universe. "And the earth was without form and void". As the Hebrew says, "it was bohu and tohu", waste and empty. "And darkness was upon the face of the deep". The earth was utterly devoid of any light. "The deep" has reference to the surging mass of creation; this formless, shapeless chaos which God had brought into existence. And the Spirit of God "brooded" as the Hebrew says, upon the face of the waters. The word "brood" in the original means "to flutter lovingly". The Spirit of God, like a mother bird, fluttering lovingly over her nest, brooded over this shapeless mass of creation. By his majesty, he would bring order out of this created mass. God is the author of cosmos and not of chaos.

This is true in our own lives. If we make a mess of our lives, we may be certain that it was not God's doing. God only brings order and peace and harmony.

I would like to call your attention to a theory which is propounded particularly in the Fundamentalist circles. It is called the "gap theory". Feeling pressed upon to account for some of the findings of science, this theory was devised and is endorsed by many Bible students today. How can we account, for example, for the fossils and the many other geological phenomena that apparently would indicate that the world was millennia in forming and not just six days. The advocates of this theory would read the second verse like this: "And the earth became without form and void". The little word "was" in the Hebrew may sometimes be translated "became". On a few occasions in the Old Testament, this is true. Latching then upon this fact, the proponents of this theory say that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and they were perfect. Lucifer was placed in charge of this world. Lucifer became proud and vain and fell and the earth fell

along with him. As a consequence, bohu and tohu (waste and emptiness) took hold of this world. During this period of time, you have the geologic ages. During this period of time, you have all the prehistoric animals, even prehistoric man. Then about 4000 B.C., in six days, God made over the world, restored the world, as we find it today. This is a very big theory to base upon one little three letter word. None of our great Baptist scholars, as far as I have been able to discover, are in agreement with this theory. It is a very strained interpretation which fails to see that the purpose of the author of Genesis is to say that "God created the world in six days".

In verse 3, we see that the first act of orderliness is "light". God illumined this chaotic mass with his own light. Light is a perfect symbol of God's presence and God's working. The same thing is true spiritually. When Jesus came into the world, he was said to be "the light of the world, a light shining in darkness". We are told that in heaven there is perpetual light. There is no night there. In the presence of God there is no darkness.

In verse 4, we are told that "God saw the light, that it was good". After each creative act, God pronounced a benediction upon his creation. God's creation is good. This is in contrast to the views of the gnostics in the New Testament times who philosophized that this material world is evil; God can have no relationship with it. They denied the reality of Christ's reincarnation by saying that God could not take on himself evil flesh; that Christ only appeared to be in the flesh. This was one of the basic heresies which the New Testament Christians had to battle. This is a good world. God has given us everything necessary to sustain life and to make us happy. It is man's misuse of this world which brings the misery.

In verse 5, we read that "God divided the darkness from the light" and gave to each a name, Day and Night. Was this the 24-hour day? or were these geologic ages or eons of time? I think we have no reason for believing other that these were the same kind of days we enjoy now. Remember that this is an ancient man who is interpreting God's revelation. I don't believe he was sophisticated enough to think in terms of days extending into ages of time. The Hebrews were not philosophers. They thought in the concrete. I believe He meant by "day" the same kind of day which now exists.

Notice that he says that "the evening and the morning were the first day". Why evening before the morning? The Jews to this very day reckon a day from sunset to sunset. Whatever the explanation, God has established a "rhythm" of life - day and night, light and darkness; a time for action, a time for rest; a time to go, a time to stay.

In verse 6, God said "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters". The firmament is a great expanse over the earth. We would call it the atmosphere. To the ancients, this was a solid covering over the earth. It rested on the mountains which surrounded the flat earth. Above the covering were the waters. Beneath the earth were also waters so the firmament divided the waters which were above from the waters which were below. Through the "windows of heaven" came down the rain. The stars, the planets, were suspended from this lofty covering. Here once again we have primitive thought. This is not accurate science but it is true revelation. The writer of these verses of Genesis is saying to us that back of everything is God. It is this religious message that we must garner out of the midst of the creation stories. After all, the manner of God's creation is not of great importance. The fact that God created the world is of tremendous significance. Our God is a great God who holds the whole world in his hands.

Text: Gen. 1:9-25

Title : "The Good Earth"

Where and When Preached:

Baptist Temple - Wednesday, March 30, 1960 - PM

Prayer Meeting, Wednesday March 30, 1960, Baptist Temple, by Dr. Vernon O. Elmore

"THE GOOD EARTH"

Gen. 1:9-25

John Masefield, once poet-laureate of England, wrote

> "I must down to the seas again
> To the lonely sea and the sky,
> And all I ask is a tall ship
> and a star to steer her by".

John Masefield is giving voice to the sentiments of a sea-loving people. At the time when these words were written, Brittania ruled the seas. The British loved the sea. The sea gave them protection from their enemies and gave them a livelihood for their people. The sea represented for them adventure and security.

I contrast this with a statement of John in the Book of Revelation wherein he envisions the new heaven and new earth, that utopian existence after Christ returned. In Revelation 21:1, he says, "And there was no more sea." The Hebrews were not a sea-loving people nor were they a sea-faring people. Palestine had no real natural harbors. The Hebrews feared the sea; to them it was a symbol of insecurity. John envisions in this new heaven and earth there will be no more sea.

God, however, is wiser than man. In our present world, he has seen fit to include the mighty oceans. Three-fourths of the earth's surface is covered with water. "What a waste!" we might say. But, instead, when their importance is properly understood, we see that the oceans are providential. The seas are the thermostats of this world in which we are living. They help to temper the climate and to make the earth habitable. A good example of what our earth may be like if there were no seas and there were no

moisture-laden atmosphere is seen in the moon. The moon has no atmosphere and is utterly devoid of any water. As a consequence, her days are unbearably and unbelievably hot. Her nights are colder than we can imagine. Days on the moon are 14 of our days in duration and the nights are 14 of our nights. This great extreme between heat and cold makes life unbearable on the moon.

We are told in the book of Genesis, v. 9, "And God said, let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good." This division between land and water was good, and must be looked upon as part of God's providential care to make this world inhabitable by man.

Furthermore, we see the providence of vegetation. In v. 11 God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass" or as the original says, "Let the earth vegetate vegetation".

Elizabeth Barrett Browning once wrote

"Earth is crammed with heaven,
and every common bush afire
with God;
But only he who sees takes off
his shoes,
The rest sit 'round it and pluck
blackberries."

Those who have eyes to see can readily observe in the vegetation of this world God's providential provision. Here is food to sustain life on this earth. Furthermore, we see the miracle of reproduction provided for by God's providence. For there shall be the "herb yielding seed and the fruit tree yielding fruit, whose seed was

in itself." This plant life has the power to reproduce itself and thus to make continued vegetation possible.

Seed catalogs fascinate me. I love to sit down and thumb through them and imagine the beautiful gardens I could plant if I had the time and space. It seems like a miracle to me that I can order from the seed catalog a tiny little seed and plant it in the soil, tend it, and one day, sit down and enjoy a luscious watermelon.

One day God sat down and consulted his seed catalog. He decided to plant in his good earth more than 250 thousand items and every one of them has the power of replacing itself.

I once read that an archeologist found in an Egyptian tomb an ancient lotus seed that was more than 3000 years old. Carefully he filed away the hard husk and planted the seed. In due time it brought forth a beautiful lotus flower. It had borne within itself for 3000 years this magic of life.

There is also the providence of lights. "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven". These lights are luminaries or light bearers. It is no wonder that man has worshipped the lights. Man has seen from his very earliest days how dependent all life was upon light. Light to us is a symbol of God.

When Pizarro conquered Peru, he came to the ancient religious capital of Cuzco. He found in the temple a golden disc representing their God. Light makes life possible in this world. I am always thrilled at the thought of what magic light produces in the process of photosynthesis. By the magic of light, a little leaf is able to take the water and the carbon dioxide in the air

and transform it into sugar to supply its food. In turn, the little leaf gives off oxygen. In other words, by the medium of light, the leaf takes the carbon dioxide which we breathe out of our lungs and makes food from it and replaces it with pure oxygen. If all the plants in this world should suddenly go on strike, all of us would asphyxiate. The plants and the sun combine to make life possible.

There is also the providence of the seasons. We have day and night; winter and summer; heat and cold; rain and sunshine. There is a rhythm in this world between light and darkness; rest and work. Those who have lived in Alaska tell us how intolerable seems the long days and the long nights. For the most part, God has given us a world conducive to our enjoyment and to our usefulness. I think it is no miracle that the most industrious people in the world are usually found in the variable climates. Then, realize also that even the darkness is not absolute, for God has placed a gentle light in the night sky to softly illumine his world. What in the world would the song writers have done without the moon? Think how romance would have been thwarted without the moon. Then listen to this little afterthought. And the writer says, "he made the stars also".

Little did this writer understand of the stars. They were simply pinpoints in the firmament to him. He did not know what they were. But today, we are well aware of the fact that the stars are mighty evidences of God's creativeness. I read somewhere that if you should board a jet plane going 1000 miles an hour, it would require nine days to get to the moon. In order to arrive at Venus, the nearest planet to earth, 3 years would be consumed at a thousand miles an hour. In order to get to Pluto, the furtherest planet from Earth, 365 years would be required. Now listen: in order to arrive at the nearest star going 1000 miles an hour, it would

take 3 million years. The earth's diameter is approximately 8000 miles, but the diameter of the North Star is 10 million miles. Every time we peek through our mighty telescopes, this great universe enlarges and even so, does our understanding of the majesty of almighty God. It seems that all the vast system of lights in our sky serve no purpose other than to gleam in man's sky and to serve him.

There is also suggested here the providence of animal life. We are told that God made all living creatures all the way from the insects to the elephants. I read somewhere the other day that there are 200,000 kinds of beetles in the world. God made them all. The variety of his creation is almost limitless. We find that the animal life is roughly divided into 3 different classes. There is the cattle or the domesticated animals or herbivora; the creeping things which include the reptiles and insects; and the beasts, the carnivora, the wild beasts. And we see furthermore, even as in the plant life the miracle of reproduction. For God said to all the living creatures that he had created, "Be fruitful, and multiply." The instinct of reproduction is one of the strongest instincts in all of nature. What is more beautiful than a pair of birds busily building a nest in obedience to this instinct which they do not understand, but which God has placed in their little brain, that of reproducing themselves. Every little baby bird that opens its mouth for the mother to fill is a testimony to God's providence.

TREES

Joyce Kilmer

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast.

A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

Text: Genesis 1:26 - 2:3

Title: "It is Finished"

Where and When Preached:

Baptist Temple - Wednesday, April 20, 1960 - Prayer Meeting

"IT IS FINISHED"

Genesis 1:26-2:3

God never kills time. God never works aimlessly. God did not create the world as a pastime. God did not begin doodling on his drawing board one day and the world come forth as a consequence. There is design and purpose in all of God's creation. How do we know this?

A work always speaks eloquently about the workman. Show me a mud pie and I would not suppose that the chef at the Walforf Astoria had made it. Show me the stature of Moses in St. Peter's in the chains in Rome and I would not suppose that it was the accidental result of a child's aimless chiseling.

This world is not a mad jumble nor a chaotic lump. There is design in every particle of it. There is order in every natural process.

For what reason did God take such pains to create a world where everything has purpose?

When a wife begins buying baby clothes and setting up a nursery, we may well suspect that a blessed event is soon to occur.

God, through the ages, prepared this world as a vast nursery for man. God was preparing the place ~~in~~ which would be a favorable environment for his supreme creative act. The creation of man was last because he was first; he was the crown of God's creation. Into man God projected something of himself for the Bible tells us He made man in his own image and after his own likeness. This means two things to me.

I. If you want to know what God is like, take a good look at yourself. If you and I are made in the image of God, there must be something about us that is God-like. What is it about mankind that is distinct from the rest of God's creation?

1. Rationality.

I would say in the first place, man's rationality is a mark of God upon him. Man is not a creature of instinct, but initiative. Man is not subject to nature, but commands nature. Like God, man can plan; he can project himself into the future. He can be creative. This also means that man is responsible for his actions. He has the capacity for knowing right and wrong. He is capable of making value judgments. This means to me that man has been created with the possibility of goodness. In this, he may reflect something of the character of God, for God is good. It is man's rationality; his ability to make moral distinctions that gives him the possibility of goodness. Innocence is not goodness; goodness is the consequence of facing a choice between the right and the wrong and choosing the right.

2. Emotionability.

A second mark of God upon mankind is his emotionability. Man can experience the varieties of joy and sorrow; man is sensitive to his environment; he has been created with the possibility for that supremely divine emotion called love. Man is never more God-like than when he loves, for God is love. Herein, we see the great potential with which God has made man. Man created with the possibility of goodness and love because God has made him both a rational and an emotional being. These are endowments of Deity, the image of God in man.

3. Immortality.

A third mark of Deity in man is immortality.

This man which God created was not strictly an earth creature. "Dust to dust and ashes to ashes" was not spoken of the soul. Man was created with the possibility of Heaven. This sets him apart as superior to all of the rest of God's creation. This marks him especially endowed by Deity with something of Deity's own prerogative, that of eternal life. God created man with the potential of achieving the sublime in character and destiny. In this life, he has the possibility of goodness and love; in the next life the possibility of Heaven.

II. God's Special Care.

The fact that man has been made in the image of God not only means that we may look at man and see God, but that man is an object of God's special care. Because man is like God, God loves him. He is the object of his providential care. It is said that on the seventh day God rested from his creation, but God has never yet rested from his constant watch-care over mankind. Man has disappointed God; rebelled against him; marred the image of God in his own character. It was in a garden that man fell; it was also in a garden that God fell down and dedicated himself to the redemption of fallen man.

On the sixth day, God looked at his creation and said, "It is finished." On the sixth day of the week on the cross, God also cried, "It is finished." His work of redemption was done. The supreme compliment of man to God is the fact that God loved man so much, he was willing to die for him; to die for man who had lost all possibility of goodness and love and heaven.Through the death of Jesus Christ there was provided for man a second chance to achieve his divine potential. The chief marks of a Christian are goodness and love. His destiny is Heaven. Now like God who rested on the seventh day, we turn aside on a day sanctified for that purpose to say "Thank you Lord for all of your grace and goodness bestowed upon mankind. Thank you Lord for

Jesus Christ by whose grace and power I have been restored into thy favor and through who there has been restored to me the divine characteristics." God's greatest delight is the adoration of man through worship. Man's supreme activity is the adoration of God in worship.

Text: Genesis 2:8

Title: Where is Eden?

Where and When Preached: (Prayer Meeting Devotional)
(not recorded among sermons)
Baptist Temple, Wednesday Evening, Apr. 26,

1961

"WHERE IS EDEN?"

Genesis 2:8

There is much speculation among the Biblical scholars as to the whereabouts of Eden. Almost all have concluded that Eden was somewhere in the region of Mesopotamia. At least two of the rivers suggested as flowing out of Eden are the Tigris and the Euphrates.

In our time however, the word Eden means more than a place. It has a reference to a condition of life. Life in its ideal state. There are varying ideas about what would constitute Eden. To some individuals Eden would be a place of idle irresponsibility, where a person could do whatever his heart desired. If he wanted to lounge around a swimming pool or play golf, this would be perfectly satisfactory. He would be under no pressures. It would be wonderful, of course, if everyone had all he needed. Just to do what he wanted, this is the idler's dream. Most of us will have to admit to this sort of wishful thinking, from time to time.

Eden to those who are forty-ish is a land where we will never grow old; a place untouched by the ravages of age; the weaknesses of the flesh; where we retain the vigor and enthusiasm of youth. The cosmetics industry makes a fortune helping us to create the illusion of perpetual youth.

Eden in a place of plenty to other individuals. A place that would cater to out tastes; where all the sensual delights could be satisfied; where a person could eat all the chocolates he wanted without getting fat; where a man could indulge his appetites to the fullest without any evil consequences.

When I was a little boy I used to go to my neighbor's who had an old Edison phonograph. Among the collection of cylindrical records was one called "The Big Rock Candy Mountain". About all I can

remember of this supposed place of plenty was the lemonade springs, the cigarette trees, and all the cops had wooden legs.

Each person is laboring for his own version of Eden. Each of us is putting out Paradise seed in the hope that one of these days everything is going to be just right. I wonder do we ever get to that point in our lives. Are we ever really satisfied? There was a time when I thought that in my golf game if I could ever consistently break fifty on nine holes I would be satisfied. That day came, then I longed to make a forty-five. Finally I was able to achieve that occasionally. Now, I would like to make an even lower score. So you see we are never satisfied.

The father of our human race was never satisfied. Even though God himself had made an Eden for the first man and woman, Adam and Eve felt limited in Eden for God had said there was one tree of which they could not partake. As long as there is something more to be had it seems that the human being is never satisfied.

Genesis tells us that Eden is not material plenty. Here we see man with everything he needed to make him happy, still he was restless. The obvious conclusion is that if we ever find Eden it will be in our own souls. The social gospelers have failed to realize this. They say, "Let's clean up the slums. Let's make man's living conditions pleasant and he will be a better person. We'll solve the problems of crime and evil in the world." The Communists simply carry out this idea to its furtherest expression. Their philosophy is that we shall find Eutopia through material plenty. "Let's distribute all property among all the people", say the Communists. "We'll provide for man's material wants, and then we'll have an ideal society." A Communist poet recently however, reminded his colleagues that they are never going to satisfy the deepest needs of man by providing him with material comforts. They must somehow satisfy the needs of his spirit.

In the biography of the young pianist, Van Cliburn, there is a startling revelation to one side of the Russian character. We are utterly amazed at their response to music and especially to the playing of young Van Cliburn. They responded with the same enthusiasm that American people reserve for sport spectaculars. I wonder why? Could it be because the people are spiritually hungry and through music there is being released their emotional well-springs?

Let us remember that Eden was a desert until God watered it. The dust of Eden thirsted for water. The garden grew only when God watered the dust. By our own efforts we create at best an Eden that is a dusty desert. Man is more than flesh and blood. He is a living soul. Like dust thirsts for water, the soul pants after God.

The evils of the world are the outflow of those who are trying to make a paradise on their own. Why do people lie and cheat, kill and steal? For the same reason Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, because of the lusts of the flesh.

One day Jesus talked to a woman whose life had been very evil. In her own way she had been seeking security and happiness. She had been trying to create her paradise. Jesus said to her, "You are all wrong." "Drink of the water that I shall give you, and it shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:14)

Is there a taste of dust in your mouth? Do you feel that you are devoting too much attention to material things and not enough to Christ? Is your soul hungry and thirsty? Have you neglected your devotional life because of the busyness of the pursuit of your profession and your pleasures?

During a recent revival I think a woman made a very significant dedication. She was a busy worker in the church - the pianist as well as occupying other places of responsibility. At one

of the services she came forward to say to the pastor, "I want to rededicate my life to be a less complaining Christian." She wanted to perform her Christian services with a less begrudging spirit. I think that in doing so she came a step closer to Eden.

In what direction do you need to step tonight to find Eden?

Text: Gen. 2:18-25

Title: "Companionship"

Where and When Preached:

Baptist Temple, Prayer Meeting, June 14, 1961

"COMPANIONSHIP"

Gen. 2:18-25

George F. Baker, the great banker, was being given a testimonial dinner. Important bankers had come to pay him honor. Finally, he arose to say a few words. "Gentlemen, I appreciate what you have done for me tonight, but it doesn't mean much to me now. My wife died last year, and I have no one to tell it to." (Charles L. Allen, "When The Heart Is Hungry", Felming H. Revell, Co., Westwood, N.J., 1955, p. 42)

"No one to tell it to", how important this is. Can you imagine the lonliness of Eden, before God created Adam a companion? Though he was in the midst of paradise, what difference did it make? There was no one to share it with, no one to tell it to.

Admiral Byrd once chose to spend a winter all alone in a tiny cabin at the South Pole. This was a decision which almost cost him his life. The stove by which he heated his quarters was defective so that the fumes poisioned Admiral Byrd. For weeks and weeks he lingered between life and death, but off from all human associations. He found the strength, as he lay in his sleeping-bag, to record his thoughts in a diary. Here is what he said, "At the end only two things really matter, the affection and understanding of my family." He also added, "Though I am cut off from all human beings, I am not alone."

Adam was not alone in the garden of Eden. God was with him, but yet he was lonely. Everything yearns for companionship with its own kind. This is a basic instinct of all God's creation. "Birds of a feather flock together." God saw that it was not good for man to be alone.

In the book, "Not As A Stranger", a doctor is lost in the woods. While annalysing his own reaction to his lostness, he came to an important conclusion - people who are lost do not always die of exposure, but rather from sheer lonliness. The feeling of being completely cut-off from one's own kind does something disasterous to an individual. They tell us that the most cruel punishment that can be meted out in a penitentiary is the isolation cell.

Man was in paradise but he was not happy. God determined to make him a help-meet. Before he did so, he created the beasts and the fouls of the air and brought them to Adam to name. If a man ever needed any help, Adam did. Remember the struggle in getting a name for your child? But for Adam there was no help-meet in all of God's creation. Eden was complete and creation done, but no - there was a pall of lonliness hanging over Eden like a London fog. There were two things that Eden had never known - joy and contentment. These are experiences that can only be realized through companionship.

God decided to perform surgery upon Adam. He had made man out of the dust of the earth. This perhaps accounts for the fact that man is a earthy creature. Leave man to his own devices and he becomes almost like a beast. When some men go out together on a fishing trip what happens? They let their beards grow, they become dirty, unkempt, so that they are hardly recognizable when they return. There are two things that can lift a man, one is God and the other is a woman.

The Lord caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam. God was not only the surgeon but he acted as his own anesthetist. While Adam slept, God operated. I wonder if the angels were his surgical assistants. He took a rib and closed the wound. From the wounded side of man, right next to his heart, God took woman. God transformed a bit of bone into the most beautiful work of art, a woman.

How delighted Adam must have been when he awakened from his sleep. There occurred a very tender scene, the marriage of the first man and first woman. It was a marriage with God as the minister. Ceremoniously, Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." The word for man in Hebrew is "Ish", and the word for woman is "Isha". She shall be called Isha because she was taken out of Ish.

I believe that God's part in the ceremony is found in these words, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." This reminds us of the words of Paul, who in the fifth chapter of Ephesians said, "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loveth his wife, loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh." (Eph. 5:28,29)

Unfortunately, this beautiful companionship conceived by God is sometimes broken other than by death. Smiley Blanton, the psychiatrist, gives three reasons why marriages fail:

1. Immaturity - the inability to care for another as much as you care for yourself. A marriage has two strikes against it when one of the partners is selfish. It has no chance of success if both husband and wife put self first.

2. Fixation on parents - God said that the man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife. It is usually best to take leave of parents physically when a man and woman marry. Couples need to go out and establish their own home. It is certainly important to leave father and mother emotionally.

3. The war between men and women.- women resent men because they regard them with condescension. There is a sense, however, in which this is a woman's protection. When the woman insists on being elevated

to equal status with man, no longer does the man feel protective about the woman. There is lost something of the warm tenderness with which he regards his companion. Men are jealous of women and fear them. Biologically, women are not inferior to men. The fact is, according to the doctors, women are biologically superior. This was attested by the fact that women live longer than men. Men like to say that this is because men work harder and carry all the burdens, but the honest truth is, there is a sense in which women are more rugged than men. It seems to me that this quality, however, is intended of God. Woman was made a help-meet of God. It seems to me there is providence in the fact that women outlive men. I have observed that ordinarily women are more capable of coping with the loses of their companion than men. It is providential that more often than not, the strength of the wife permits her to nurse her husband through his last illness and survive him. How helpless is a man under such circumstances when they are reversed.

How can these conflicts between men and women be dissolved? Only when there is a mutual appreciation. Smiley Blanton tells about a man whom he remembers from his childhood, in a small Tennessee community. He was a large, slouching, untidy but kindly man names Thomas. He had a small store which he managed very badly. His wife was a seamstress and between them they could try to make a meager living for themselves and two daughters. Mr. Thomas had been wounded in the Civil War. After the war he tried farming but he couldn't do much with that so he got the store. If you looked at him dispassionately, Mr. Thomas was a cripple and a failure, but his wife and daughters simply adored him. The reason was very clear. Mr. Thomas had the gift of spontaneous appreciation. "Jane", he would say to his wife as he finished his dinner, "that was the best chicken I ever tasted, bar none." "My dears", he would say to the girls, "those certainly are lovely dresses." "If all the dresses around here were made by your mother, they would be a far better looking group, but none would be as pretty as you." In the eyes

of others he was no great "shakes" but in the eyes of his family he was a tremendous success. (Smiley Blanton, "With Arthur Gordon, "Now or Never", The Promise of the Middle Years, Prentiss-Hall, Inc., Inglewood, N.J., 1959, p. 53.)

(Previous reference to Smiley Blanton - reasons why marriages fail - found on pages 32 - 38)

Text: Gen. 3:9

Title: "Where Art Thou?"

Where and When Used:

Baptist Temple, Prayer Meeting, June 21, 1961

"WHERE ART THOU?"

Genesis 3:9

Man has never learned to let well enough alone. Even in Eden he was not content. If man felt frustrated in Eden, surrounded by all of its delights, this suggests that material blessings never satisfy the restless soul. Paul, in a prison cell, bereft of everything that we would consider vital to a happy life, said, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." (phil. 4:11)

Man is a born rebel. Even though there was just one negative in Eden, he had to but his head against it. We still have a tendency to grit our teeth on the "don'ts" rather than sinking our teeth into the "dos" of life. We are impatient at stop lights, we ignore the speed limits, we hate restrictions. The serpent or Eden coiled up in our minds is saying, "Don't let anyone tell you what you can't do. Show the world you are a free man." Sure we are free. God didn't put us in moral chains, but He did give us common sense. Common sense alone should tell us that we can't eat the forbidden fruit without getting a moral tummyache. Some people keep their moral monitors tuned in on satan's frequency. He has brainwashed them into believing that the only consequences of sin is pleasure. The serpent said to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die." He negates the idea of judgment and of hell in the minds of people today.

The woman saw that the tree was good for food, it was pleasant to the eyes and a tree to be desired to make one wise. Here are the three points at which man is most vulnerable today: food, fun and philosophy. Most of our sins are laid to our appetites, pleasures and outlook. The devil had said, "Ye shall be as the gods, knowing good and evil."

When they had eaten, they realized they were naked. They had known they were naked previously, but now they felt guilty about it. What was this wonderful knowledge the serpent had promised them for disobedience to God? Guilt - disobedience always brings guilt.

Do you remember as a child when you disobeyed your mother? You felt naked in her sight. It seemed as though your mother could see right through you. Guilt was written all over you. You just couldn't do anything and get by with it. Adam and Eve now felt abashed and ashamed in the presence of God. God came looking for them. "Where art thou" he called. They were cowering in the bushes.

Multitude of people are cowering in spirit today. Sin always puts distance between the soul and God. Then we hear God's accusing voice, "Who told thee thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree?" The tendency of man is to cover his guilt, just as Adam and Eve sought to cover themselves with fig leaves. Man tries to cover his guilt and make it look respectable. We camouflage our sin. We dress up our sin in sheep's clothing. If that doesn't work we try to put the blame on Mame. Immediately Adam said, "The woman", and men have been accusing women ever since, but it won't work men. God holds us individually accountable. But notice, "The woman thou gavest me." He tries to implicate God in the guilt. We do that too. We try to excuse ourselves by blaming the circumstances, by blaming fortune or fate. The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Each blamed someone else, but no one got off. My guilt is not lessened by corporate sinning. We have a tendency to think because everybody is doing it, it makes everything all right.

"Where art thou?" Where art thou in relation to God and His will? What am I doing that God would not approve? What am I failing to do that would please God? Adam and Eve had plenty to do to keep the garden, but no, they were thinking about apples, when they should have been applying them-

selves to God's work. So God said, "I'll keep these sinners busy." He put Adam to plowing and Eve to raising children and they have been busy at it ever since.

God did not utterly abandon man, however. Notice Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." In this verse there is an intimation of conquest over sin. The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent. Notice John 3:15, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up. Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." On the cross Christ bore the curse, the shame and the guilt of man's sin so that once more man could walk and talk with God. He clothed our nakedness with his righteousness. He washed our sin in his blood. At the cross that which was lost in Eden is rediscovered - eternal life and peace with God.