

The Will of God

September 26

Read Acts 3:1-8 for the setting of this message.

Jesus was dead. The Pharisees and the Scribes had seen to that. They had settled back in peace, but no sooner than the tragedy was over then the air was filled with rumors of His resurrection.

Then came the day of Pentecost. The disciples seemed endowed with unusual powers, and as a result of it the leaders came to know they had not disposed of Jesus. All they had done was to release His marvelous spirit so that the whole world would be permeated with His power.

It was then that this note of a miracle that you just read took place and the news of it spread like wildfire all over Jerusalem. To them and to me it became more than a miracle. It is a story, it is a parable, it's a wonderful sermon.

I want you to look back for a moment. The boy described in the story was born crippled. He had watched other children play and had envied them their activity and fun, but he had been chained to his crippled condition like a dog to a kennel.

At an early age his mother and father realized that they had here a great treasure, for the wistful look on the little boy's face was certain to appeal to the hearts of people. Therefore, they gave him a tin cup and put him out where he could beg and thus help to support the family. They chose a place for him where he might ask for alms. A very unusual place, for it was at the foot of the beautiful Corinthian gates of the Temple.

Man's Masterpiece

These gates are of such note that I feel I should call them to your attention for a moment. They were tremendous in size, Josephus tells us they were 72 feet high and each one of them was 27 feet wide, and it took 20 men to open or close one of these marvelous gates. It's no wonder that they were called "The Gates Beautiful," nor is it any wonder that they were counted as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

And so, here's this boy lying at the gate of the Temple, begging alms from those who would come to worship. Let him tell his story though . . .

He said, "Well, I was at my usual place when I saw two men coming toward me and I knew them because I had seen them in the company of the Nazarene preacher. When they arrived, I was waiting for them to drop a silver or even a gold coin in my cup, for I knew that they pretended to be very religious men. Suddenly, I heard one of them say: 'Look up.' When I looked up he said to me: 'Silver and gold I have none, but such as I have, give I unto thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise and walk.'

"And suddenly I felt strength flowing through my body, I felt these crooked, crippled legs begin surging with power and strength. I knew that in that instant something had happened to me that only God could do. Reaching up and taking hold of the hand of this man Peter I leaped up and I walked for the first time in my life, and then Peter began to preach. Peter began to preach because the people came from every direction to see this wonderful thing that had taken place."

Do you know what will attract a crowd today? Do you know what the world needs more than anything else? It needs the evidence and the power of men whose lives have been changed by coming in contact with Jesus of Nazareth.

Sin's Masterpiece

The whole world is full of crippled people, not physically but crippled spiritually; people whose lives are twisted and bent and warped out of shape, who lie at the foot of the gates of the world begging, seeing themselves in rags when God their Creator intended that they should live from the bounty of His hand. Sin does this to men. It has always been known as that which twists, misshapes, crushes and scars lives. It breaks men's hearts. Sin is the thing that keeps men from being rightly related to their God.

For 1900 years God's Son has walked the dusty paths, the highways, and byways of this old world, looking for cripples that he can touch and make them whole. Every day they are laid at the gates of our churches, and every day they are laid at the gates of your heart and your life; every day the challenge comes as you walk down the street wherever you go.

tarian system. You cannot sin without involving other people. Oh, to think that my indulgence may be producing pain in my brother!

EVEN IN THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA

With one big heave they threw Jonah overboard and the record says he was swallowed by a fish which God had prepared. Imagine the strange surprise to find God in the bottom of the sea. If God is anywhere, then He is everywhere. Neither geography nor time nor space limit His presence. God's searching eyes are forever upon us.

Not that He is acting in the role of a snooper, not a policing providence, but because He loves and cannot take His eyes off of us.

Daniel found him in the lion's den; the Hebrew children found him in the fiery furnace; Bunyan found him in Bedford jail; the soldier found him in Buchenwald. The God of the mountain top is also God of the valley. God of the high noon is also God of the midnight. God of the dry land was also God of the ocean depths. You cannot elude the glance of his searching eyes.

He sees into every dark closet, into every living room with draperies drawn, he watches the backseat of every parked automobile, he traces the lines of every tax return, he views every secret agreement, every dishonest contract, every marriage vow, every signed commitment.

Jonah had to learn it the hard way. He had to learn that no place is secular, that all places are sacred when the life is holy; that all days, not just the seventh, are holy when consecrated to God; that all sexes are holy, not just the male; that all ages, not just the old; that all races, not just the whites;

that all nations, not just America. Once and for all this proud religious bigot had to know that God's saving grace is for everybody! "His eye is on the sparrow and I know he watches me."

GOD'S CONCERN

Then that leaves the question, how about our Ninevehs today? Jonah was preserved for God's mission, expelled from the whale, and did an about-face. But he found that preaching judgment came easier than preaching mercy. He wept because God blessed his message by repentance. Many a religionist finds himself in the same predicament.

Is God equally concerned with the natives of Africa as with those of the western hemisphere? Is the commission to go all out-of-date? Today we are caught in an ugly morass of thought, saying that all people have a certain type of religion, and what right has Christianity to go in and confuse them, presuming that ours is better than theirs.

Then look at the results: watch a heathen mother as she tries to cool the fever of her dying child with mud; look at the shrivelling bodies of the dying babies because of the witchdoctor; observe the millions that kiss the wooden image and pray to a dumb God! Do we need to go to Nineveh? Yes, sir! God had one child and he became a foreign missionary. No people ever received the gospel other than at the hand of a foreigner. This is not just another religion, it is the only faith that can lead this world to God.

I think God is saying to some of you now, "You are my child; I want to give you an inheritance of life eternal." Will you stop running and come to God?

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