

ADDRESS

BY

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UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

DOLAND, SOUTH DAKOTA

FEBRUARY 4, 1973

Rev Crandall
Homer Kuntz
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IT IS WITH A VERY WARM FEELING THAT I JOIN
YOU THIS MORNING IN CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE FIRST SERVICE HELD IN THIS CHURCH. I FEEL YOU HAVE
DONE ME GREAT HONOR BY THIS INVITATION TO THE HOME OF
MY YOUTH AND THE CHURCH WHICH HAD SUCH A DECISIVE
INFLUENCE UPON THE COURSE OF MY LIFE. MY PARENTS
TREASURED THE MEMORIES OF A DEEPLY ENRICHING AND ACTIVE
LIFE IN THIS CONGREGATION, AND THEY CERTAINLY SAW TO
IT THAT I LEARNED MY LESSONS AND CONTRIBUTED MY PART.
AS I STAND HERE NOW, I AM SURROUNDED BY SO MANY PROFOUND
AND PERSONAL REMEMBRANCES -- THE REVEREND ALBERT HART,
Reverend Vernon
Rev Wilkinson
BY WHOSE WARM EMBRACE OF MAN AND GOD I AM STILL TOUCHED;
THE CHOIR AND YOUTH GROUPS; AND WARM FRIENDSHIPS THAT
HAVE NEVER BEEN FORGOTTEN.

I WAS BROUGHT UP TO BELIEVE THAT RELIGION IS
MORE THAN A SUNDAY EXPERIENCE -- THAT THE TRULY CHRISTIAN
MAN IS ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS THE MEANING OF LOVE, COMPASSION,
AND JUSTICE, AND MAKES THESE STANDARDS THE HEART OF HIS
LIFE.

L IF THERE IS ONE BIBLE VERSE THAT I WOULD FIND
MOST SUITABLE FOR THIS OCCASION -- INDEED, FOR THIS TIME
IN OUR NATION AND ITS COMMUNITIES -- IT IS THAT GREAT
MESSAGE IN THE SIXTH CHAPTER OF THE BOOK OF MICAH, WHICH

READS:

6th chapter - Book of MICAH

"HE HAS SHOWED YOU WHAT IS GOOD!" AND WHAT

DOES THE LORD REQUIRE OF YOU BUT TO DO JUSTICE

AND TO LOVE KINDNESS, AND TO WALK HUMBLY WITH

YOUR GOD."

*Religion
was 76.4*

THE PROPHET MICAH WAS HERE EXPRESSING THE WILL
OF GOD THAT A MAN'S RELIGION SHOULD BE HIS VERY LIFE; ITS
EXISTENCE PROVEN BY HIS ACTIONS.

IT TOOK A STRAIGHT-FORWARD, PLAIN-SPOKEN FARMER
POSSESSING GREAT INNER STRENGTH TO PREACH THIS SERMON TO
AN ANGRY CONGREGATION THAT BELIEVED THEY HAD BEEN VERY
DILIGENT IN PRACTICING THEIR RELIGION. THEIR RESPONSE
WAS EQUALLY BLUNT, "DO NOT PREACH," THEY SAID, "NO EVIL
SHALL COME UPON US."

MICAH CONFRONTED AN ENTIRE NATION OF PEOPLE IN
CONFUSION ABOUT THEIR PURPOSE IN LIFE AND THEIR FUTURE.
THEY HAD FOOLED THEMSELVES INTO BELIEVING THAT GOD WAS
RIGHT AT HAND, TO BE CALLED UPON AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE TO
DO THEIR BIDDING.

ALL THEY HAD TO DO, THEY FELT, WAS

FOLLOW A REGULAR PROGRAM OF RELIGIOUS RITUALS, AND ALL

WOULD COME OUT WELL. "DISGRACE WILL NOT OVERTAKE US,"

THEY SAID. "IS NOT THE LORD IN THE MIDST OF US?"

BUT THEY KNEW IN THEIR HEARTS THAT GOD WAS NOT

THERE, THAT HE HAD TURNED HIS FACE FROM THEM. AND YET

THEY REFUSED TO RECOGNIZE THE REASON FOR THIS: THAT AT

THE SAME TIME THEY WERE PERFORMING THEIR RELIGIOUS DUTIES

IN A ROUTINE MANNER, THEY WERE ALSO PERVERTING JUSTICE

TO STEAL PROPERTY, BEATING AND VIOLATING MEN AND

WOMEN FOR THEIR OWN GAIN, PROSTITUTING RELIGION TO HAVE

IT SERVE THEIR OWN ENDS, AND WORSHIPPING THEMSELVES AND

THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS RATHER THAN GOD FROM WHOM ALL

THE GIFTS OF LIFE COME.

well,

HAVE WE TODAY REALLY ADVANCED SO FAR BEYOND

THIS DESCRIPTION OF EVERYDAY LIFE CENTURIES AGO? FOR

in ancient bible times,
THAT PEOPLE A PROPHECY OF DEATH AND DESTRUCTION WOULD

LITERALLY COME TRUE. BUT IS IT NOT ALSO TRUE THAT IN

A VERY REAL SENSE WE SEE TOO OFTEN A "LIVING DEATH"

IN SOCIETY TODAY?

IS THERE NOT A LESSON IN THIS DEATH OF THE

LIVING?

-- IN EXTENSIVE DRUG ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM;

-- IN THE HIGH RATE OF CRIMES OF POINTLESS

VIOLENCE;

-- IN 25 MILLION AMERICANS CONDEMNED BY POVERTY

TO LIVES OF FRUSTRATION AND DESPAIR;

L-- IN MORE THAN ONE-TENTH OF OUR POPULATION

STILL DENIED A FULL SENSE OF HUMAN DIGNITY
BY THE DISEASE OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION;

L-- AND IN MILLIONS OF PEOPLE CROWDED IN OUR
CITIES OR ISOLATED IN OUR RURAL AREAS, AND
RESIGNED TO A BELIEF THAT THEY NO LONGER
HAVE ANY REAL CHOICES OR OPPORTUNITIES FOR
A BETTER LIFE.

L-- ~~I BELIEVE~~ Yes, THERE IS A LIVING DEATH IN MILLIONS

OF CHILDREN AND OLD PEOPLE WHO ARE WITHOUT HOPE OR SECURITY

OR LOVE. L-- THERE IS A DESTRUCTION OF LIFE WHERE INCREAS-

ING NUMBERS OF POOR PEOPLE END UP IN SLUMS THAT ARE

characterized
by crime, disease, filth, and
hopelessness.
SURROUNDING SUBURBS.

L AND OUR CONSCIENCES MUST REMAIN DEEPLY
TROUBLED BY THE waste OF LIFE IN THE DESTRUCTION

OF WAR, AND IN THE TREMENDOUS OUTPOURING OF ~~THE~~

MATERIAL, AND ~~SPENDING FOR NATIONAL DEFENSE~~ money for weapons AT THE

EXPENSE OF PROGRAMS TO MEET THE CRITICAL PROBLEMS OF the very

THE PEOPLE BEING DEFENDED

L NOW, WHENEVER WE ~~ARE SATISFIED~~ IGNORE
THESE FACTS OF THE WORLD AROUND US, OR SAY WE ARE NOT
RESPONSIBLE, IT IS PRECISELY THEN THAT FOR EACH OF US,
ALL THAT HAS GOOD MEANING OR HOPE IN LIFE BEGINS TO
CRACK, GETS KNOCKED APART, AND CRUMBLES IN RUINS.

WHERE IS THE ANSWER? I SUGGEST TO YOU THAT
 ONE DECISIVE REPLY IS THAT RELIGION IS THE BINDING
 CEMENT OF LIFE, PREVENTING THIS DESTRUCTION OF PURPOSE
 AND OF HOPE.

LISTEN AGAIN TO THE LORD'S RESPONSE UTTERED
 BY MICAH: "...DO JUSTICE, LOVE KINDNESS, AND WALK HUMBLY
 WITH YOUR GOD."

GOD CALLS UPON US TO MAKE OUR RELIGION A DEEPLY
 COMMITTED LIFE OF ACTION -- TO DO JUSTICE TO OTHERS,
 NOT JUST DECREASE THE CRIME RATE, TO EXPRESS A GENUINE,
 SELF-GIVING LOVE OF KINDNESS, NOT JUST WRITE A CHECK
 TO CHARITY;

Reinhold Niebuhr:

"Man's capacity for justice makes
 democracy possible; but man's
 inclination to injustice makes
 democracy necessary."

AND TO HAVE A CLOSE FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, WHERE SELF-KNOWLEDGE BEGINS ONLY
AS WE COME TO KNOW THE FATHER, IN THE RESPECT AND LOVE
OF SONS.

THE HEART OF GOD'S CASE PROSECUTED BEFORE A
CONGREGATION WHO HAD BROKEN CONTACT WITH HIM, WAS A
CALL FOR A RELIGIOUS LIFE OF ACTION, BECAUSE HE HAD
ALREADY ACTED IN HISTORY IN DELIVERING THEM FROM THE
BONDAGE OF SLAVERY IN EGYPT.

FOR US TODAY HE HAS ALSO ACTED DECISIVELY
IN HISTORY, IN GIVING US HIS OWN SON, OUR SAVIOUR.

WE DARE NOT, THEN, SIT BACK, PLAYING THE ROLE
OF BYSTANDERS, CONTENT ONLY TO GIVE AN HOUR TO GOD ON
SUNDAYS.

Heavenly
L OUR FATHER WANTS US TO LIVE LIFE TO THE

FULLEST, BUT IN THE VISION OF GOD, NOT IN DARKNESS.

L HE WANTS US TO LIVE OUR FAITH, TO HAVE HEART ENOUGH TO

SHARE THE PAIN OF OUR NEIGHBOR, AND TO HELP.

L I BELIEVE GOD IS PROSECUTING HIS CASE AGAIN

BEFORE US TODAY -- INDEED, BEFORE AN ENTIRE NATION THAT

PROCLAIMS FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY.

L WHAT WILL BE OUR ANSWER? CONSIDER IT VERY

CAREFULLY, FOR, TO USE THE WORDS OF A GREAT HYMN, "WE

ARE LIVING ... IN A GRAND AND AWFUL TIME ... IN AN AGE
ON AGES TELLING."

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