

# From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

THE BEATITUDES (CONTINUED)

## THE MIGHT OF THE MEEK

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," said Jesus. "Of all foolish words," some would say, "this Third Beatitude is just about the worst. Who wants to be described as meek?" But do we really understand the meaning of meekness?

OUR BEST CLUE to its meaning is the Thirty-seventh Psalm. There the meek are those who accept the injustices of life in the conviction that right and not wrong will triumph. They do not fret themselves or criticize the moral government of God because of the momentary power of evil men. They believe God is trustworthy and that His goodness will prevail. Such meekness is profoundly wise, with many facts of contemporary life and history to confirm it.



REV. D. M. CLARK

## "THE QUALITY OF MERCY IS TWICE BLESSED"

Generous forgiveness of those who trespass against us (Matt. 18:21-35); extreme caution in judging the actions of other people (John 8:1-11); unhesitating help of people in distress (Luke 10:30-37)--of at least these things Jesus was thinking when he said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Did Jesus really mean that if we practice mercy toward other people, we in turn will receive merciful treatment? He must have known from Jewish life and history how often the merciful were treated unmercifully. Actually, it was of Divine mercy that Jesus was thinking, as the conclusion to his Parable shows (Matt. 18:35). In this sense, regardless of what happens on the human level, the Fifth Beatitude is true.

NEVERTHELESS, impressive instances are found in which the merciful do obtain mercy from men. "This is Dr. Grant's house. He saves lives; we must spare his life," said a shrill voice from the crowd which had surrounded the home of a medical missionary during rioting in China back in 1925. Less dramatic illustrations can be found in any community, in any organization, since the way people deal with us may reflect the way we deal with them.

Most certainly, the opposite is true--cruelty begets cruelty. "Unfortunate are the unmerciful, for they shall not obtain mercy," this reverse form of the Fifth Beatitude sums up much that has happened in our time. In international relations and in personal relations, the damaging consequences of ill-will can be traced. "The High Cost of Getting Even" is the title of a chapter in Dale Carnegie's book, "How to Stop Worrying and Start Living."

A MERCIFUL spirit is unfailingly beneficial to our inmost character and spirit. This spirit will not always call forth a merciful reaction on the part of unfriendly people. But any exercise of mercy has its immediate consequences in a richer interior life and a sounder basis for fellowship with God. "My spirits were uplifted for days afterward. I realized the warm exultation of God's presence," said a man after doing a particularly fine and generous act.

To be merciful when an act of mercy is costly needs the inspiration of a great faith. "Be merciful," said Jesus, "even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). When Ralston Young, the Grand Central porter who conducts prayer meetings in a railway car, felt the jibes of his fellow porters, he asked God to fill him with love so that resentment would go out of him. It did, and the same kind of prayer will help you greatly, too.

The supreme stimulus for developing a merciful spirit is the knowledge that we are recipients of God's grace. "Be kind to one another," said Paul, "tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." (Eph. 4:32).

# MINISTER CONDEMNS APATHY-RESIGNS

EVANSTON, Ill. -- (NPI)--The Rev. Emory G. Davis, 49, a progressive minded minister and ardent civil rights advocate, and a campaigner for fair housing in this college community, is leaving the ministry and the pulpit of the local Bethel AME church to devote himself fully to work in the field of human relations.

He announced his impending resignation in September after confirming that he and his congregation of 400 were sharply divided over his involvement in civil rights, particularly his work on behalf of fair housing in Evanston, a middle-class community where Northwestern university is located.

He charged that many members of his congregation are not only opposed to his involvement but are "not interested in civil rights." He described them with reflecting the "apathy of middle class and would-be middle class people..." who "are comparatively well-off and satisfied to be where they are." He further charged the church in general has become too institutionalized and not sufficiently interested in social and human relations problems. He said his own congregation hews to "very antiquated views" of religion and feels he should confine his activities to work in the church.

Dr. Davis has been active in several other fields besides religion. A journalist-minister, he is the widely read author of "Altar Call" for Negro Press International. He often uses the column to underscore the need of the church to face up to the civil rights issue of our time.

In the civil rights field, he is vice president, North Suburban Organization for Fair Housing. Last year he was chairman of the North Shore Summer Project, which campaigned for housing integration.

"One officer of the church threatened to quit last fall because of my association with the (summer) project," said Rev. Davis.

Actually, Rev. Davis, who has been at Bethel for two years, is taking a leave of absence from the ministry to work full-time in human relations. And he said he recently notified his presiding bishop that he would not accept re-appointment to the Bethel pastorate. Bishop Joseph Gomez is presiding bishop of the Fourth Episcopal District of the AME church, which includes Evanston.

After September Rev. Davis plans to continue to work for fair housing. He has applied for an executive post as director for fair housing for the North Suburban organization of which he is now vice president. He may also seek a pro-rights human relations post. He will continue his writing for NPI.

Pin-pointing his difficulties with the Bethel

congregation over civil rights, Rev. Davis gave the following reasons for their apathy:

"They reflect the general apathy of middle class and would-be middle class people in Evanston, regardless of race," who are "comparatively well-off and satisfied to be where they are."

--"They're afraid of rocking (the civil rights) boat, (and) of disturbing the status quo which finds them where they are."

--"Many families enjoy middle class life because both husband and wife work and such people don't have time or energy for either church or human relations work."

--"The Negroes in my church have very antiquated views about religion. For example one man told me that if I'd busy myself strictly with religion, God would solve problems such as civil rights."

--"Finally, a very important contributor to the wide-spread apathy is the kind of religion many Evanston Negroes practice." He explained that most of the 21 Negro churches in Evanston are "highly emotional and have untrained leadership."

One member of the opposition, Charles Underwood, secretary, Bethel steward board, denied that the congregation is "disinterested in civil rights." However, he confirmed that "we don't believe demonstrations accomplish very much. Civil rights will be advanced when people's hearts are changed... We believe that we can change people by prayer and love." This is old line to which Rev. Davis referred.

Another steward board member, Wendell Mann, went so far as to say he was "particularly disinterested in protesting housing segregation," adding, "What's the point? I wouldn't have any peace of mind if I did move into the Gage Park area." Gage Park is an area in Chicago where violence broke out recently when whites attacked anti-housing segregation demonstrators led by civil rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A veteran of 23 years in the ministry in churches in Illinois, Michigan, Indiana and Missouri, Rev. Davis said he hopes to start a union to end "the institutional church." He explained that "The religion of Jesus (Christ) was a movement and not an institution. It was a secular way of life, without form and fabricated creeds."

His would be a "secular" church with no dogmas and a "one-word basis-- love."

## BAPTISTS CONVENE IN K.C.

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (NPI)--The 86th annual session of the National Baptist Convention of America will be in session Sept. 7-11, as guest of the Rev. W.S. Hartsfield and Metropolitan Baptist church.

In issuing the call to the constituency of the convention to be present "to help make this session outstanding," Dr. C. D. Pettaway, Little Rock, national president, disclosed that the theme of the conference will be "Reaffirming Our Faith In Times Of Doubt."

Guest speaker on President's Night, will be the Rev. John L. Campbell, president, Missionary Baptist State Convention of Tennessee.

Objectives of the convention are the support of missions and education and "the spreading of the gospel of our Lord Jesus and the saving of the souls of humanity."



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