

From The Pulpit

by Rev. Donald M. Clark

NEW LIFE!

Scripture Lesson (Luke 15:11-32).

The three parables of Luke 15 were directed by the Master to the three groups who made up His congregation. The parable of the Lost Sheep was directed to the disciples and was a message of FAITH to the lost sheep of Israel. The parable of the Lost Coin was for the publicans and sinners in the crowd, and was a message of HOPE, portend of the rejoicing in heaven over the salvation of one sinner. The parable of the Lost Son, the topic of our Scripture lesson, was slanted to the Pharisees and was a message of CHARITY.

In this well-known story of the Prodigal Son, I would like to lift out four important aspects of divine truth, which I believe will prove a blessing both to the mature Christian and to the honest seeker after God.

In the first place, I want to point that the new life in Christ indicates that THE OLD LIFE DOES NOT SATISFY.

"I perish with hunger" is the first vocal outburst of an inner realization that included more than mere physical hunger. Every sinner is a prodigal. Few of us have to go to a far country before recognizing our need. There are hog-pens and husks right in our own back yard but we seldom like to mention them in polite circles! If selfishness is the main trait of a hog, then we have already pinpointed the main characteristic of all prodigals! He who lives on a diet of self-indulgence will sooner or later discover just how rotten the old life can become. When a man says in desperation "I perish" -- he needs more than good resolutions to take him back to the father's house.



REV. D. M. CLARK

IN THE SECOND place may I emphasize the fact that the new life in Christ DEMANDS AN ACT OF THE WILL. Note the three implied 'I will's' of verse 18. I will arise! I will go! I will say!

"I will arise!" When new life comes it involves an act of the will, a 'getting up'. "I will go!" New life means a getting UP and a getting OUT! "I will say!" The prodigal planned his speech ahead of time! He might have said: "The world owes me a living. Let society take care of me." He could have hedged with the proverbial statement, "The church is full of hypocrites anyhow. All they want is my money!" Instead, he came right to the point and said "I have sinned." If recognition of one's need is the first step toward new life, then surely confession is the second.

But to obtain this new life in Christ also requires a CHANGE IN ATTITUDE. "I am not worthy to be called thy son." Here is a classic statement that every Christian remembers as being a part of his humble approach to God just prior to his conversion.

Notice that the new attitude of humility had taken the place of a braggadocio spirit. Remorse, contrition, repentance require expression. In the hogpen he confessed to himself. NOW he plans to confess to his father! PERSONAL confession of Christ must be followed by PUBLIC confession of Christ. It is worthy of note that the prodigal made no mention of the peace of mind or the material blessings that would be his on returning to the father. FORGIVENESS was his major concern. The approach to the new life always works this way. Reconciliation with the Father is an important aspect of the plan of salvation.

BUT THERE IS a fourth phase of the story worthy of mention. The new life must have the TOUCH OF THE SUPERNATURAL. Verse 20 brings this fact into focus. "When he was yet a great way off his father saw him and had compassion on him and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." Here is one of the most touching

COULD NAZIS TAKE OVER AMERICA?

YOU'D BETTER CHECK!

CHICAGO--(NPI)--Nazis come into power in America?

Ridiculous, it has been pointed out by civic and government officials. The number of Nazis in the whole country is said to amount to only a handful. Most of them are lower-class white derelicts. And Nazism could hardly become powerful in a country that went to war some 25 years ago to wipe it out, it has been noted.

But there were disquieting signs that Nazism could turn out to be a force to be reckoned with in this country, thanks to a "white backlash" resulting from recent civil rights marches. In the Gage Park area, Nazis led a rally which 2,000 residents of the lily-white neighborhood

attended. The rally was said to be the largest Nazi-led meeting in the city since 1941, when the German-American bund was spewing out its hate.

The Nazi organization, meanwhile, was planning marches through Negro areas of the city--likely the Southside--in protest against civil rights marches into white areas. The Nazis would not have stood a chance of surviving such a march until recently, when the city's police went all out to protect civil rights marches. Now, Nazi marches in Negro neighborhoods were sure to receive police protection, as well.

At the same time, Albert A. Raby, convenor of the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations, expressed fear that all-white areas of the city where marchers have demonstrated "could become breeding grounds for the fascists."

Evidence that the Nazis were a force to be reckoned with was found in Police Supt. O. W. Wilson's denial of a Nazi charge that police discriminated against whites in protecting civil rights marchers.

Wilson dignified the Nazis' charge by answering it and affirming that the Chicago Police department does not discriminate.

At the same time, the Nazis got themselves an articulate spokesman, Ericka Himmler, who is 6 feet 2 inches tall and weighs 240 pounds. Miss Himmler, unlike many other Nazi leaders in this country, is soft spoken and sounds intelligent.

She denies that Nazi hates anyone and represents her group as a respectable organization protecting the interests of white people just as civil rights organizations protect Negroes.

The Nazis were capitalizing on the "white backlash" in this city by organizing a "white guard" in all-white areas of the city. Nazi marches and rallies in those areas have been planned, Miss Himmler said.

Nazis were gaining popularity in those all-white areas as a result of widespread hatred of Negroes there. Many of the residents of the lily-white areas are Central European immigrants or their children who are only one step above the Negro economically. Coming from countries without much democratic tradition, these residents could be ripe for Nazi demagogues who capitalize on their fears of "Negro intrusion."

Members of the John Birch society are also active in the all-white areas into which civil rights workers are marching. One such leader is David Sheehan, president, Chicago Lawn Civic Organization. Sheehan, who chaired a meeting at which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was lustily booed, openly admits that he belongs to the Birch society.

Could Nazis take over America? Impossible? Adolph Hitler's rise to power began, it has been pointed out, during a beer hall brawl in 1923--some 10 years before he was elected into office in a "highly civilized" country. At the time of the brawl, Hitler had only seven followers, all of them derelicts.

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verses in the New Testament. God's concern for man when sinful man has no concern for God, must be a constant source of amazement to the heavenly hosts. "When he was a great way off" is a phrase that describes one of the Divine attributes--love in anticipation. I imagine the prodigal's father spent more time looking out of the window, standing on the porch, looking down the road, than he did going about his daily duties as a farmer.

Very soon 'love in anticipation' became 'love in action'--"he had compassion on him and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." Here the PROCESS leading up to the new life now reached the CRISIS for which both had longed. A comparison of verses 18 and 21 shows that the penitent kept his word and said just what he had planned to say. Such a welcome might well have swept him off his feet, but he refused to allow it to smooth over or excuse him from confessing his sins.

And here is a point of danger that needs to be highlighted time and again. We just cannot "stand up for Jesus" as new converts until we have knelt before Him in confession. The reason for luke-warm Christianity so much in evidence these days, is because too many prodigals have failed to humble themselves and confess their sins and drink the cup of repentance to its last bitter dregs. In fundamental, evangelical parlance they have failed to "pray through".

The PRESENCE, the ATTITUDE and the TOUCH of the father made it easy for the prodigal to make his public confession. We, too, will do well to remember that our heavenly Father is far more concerned about our present and eternal welfare than any earthly parent. "This my son was DEAD and is ALIVE again, was lost and is found!" The touch of the Supernatural is the final requisite for the new life in Christ. Without this fourth phase the other three are meaningless. It was after the embrace--the touch of the father--that the DEAD SON WAS MADE ALIVE. "In Christ shall all be made alive."

May I reiterate that this new life demands a recognition that the old life does not satisfy, necessitates an act of the will, requires a change of attitude and needs a touch of the Divine.

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