Matthew 3:13-17 Cover Page.

Communion Meditation

Topic: To Look Within.

Proposition: Earnest and honest self-examination of one's inner self coupled with a comparison to the introspection of John the Baptist and of Jesus is valuable in improving ones character and pointing the way toward God.

Date written: January 6, 1962

Dates & Places Used:; Montrose, Colo., 9:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m., Jan. 7, 1962.

Evergreen Nursing Home, 9/30/57, Alamosa, Colo

Alamosa, Colo (Monday Thurs.) 3-23-67

Blanca, Colo (Tues Fri) 3-24-67

Alcron, Colo. 1/5/68

OAKLAND PARK, FL. 2-3-74

This Scripture begins with an account of John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judea. The gist of his message was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." He would baptise those who did repent and tell them that he indeed baptised with water, but one should follow him who would baptise them with the Holy Spirit.

~~During most of this ministry of John's, Jesus had been in the wilderness, too, undergoing the great temptations which the Bible writer says the devil placed before him. Jesus had successfully resisted these temptations.~~ Feeling the need of strength and purification ~~after his trying ordeal~~, Jesus somehow heard of John's preaching, and came to be baptised by him.

However, John tried to prevent Jesus from being baptised. He said to Jesus, "I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." So John baptised Jesus. Immediately, writes Matthew, the spirit of God came down like a dove, and lighting

on Jesus. A voice said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Immediately after that Jesus was led by the spirit to go into the wilderness for 40 days of self-examination, which Matthew describes as wrestling with the devil.

We are interested in John's reply to Jesus when Jesus asked him to baptise him: "I need to be baptised by you, and do you come to me?" John's question reveals that John constantly examined himself, or practiced introspection, trying to be realistic about the inner man that he really was. He was a successful prophet, attracting crowds, preaching a message which was getting people to turn to God. In spite of this, he was able to keep a balance so that he readily recognized himself as inferior to Jesus. He was an honest man, evidently, who did not put himself on too high a pedestal, partly because he kept constantly aware of his real inner self.

Jesus, too, practiced introspection. This first recorded instance, immediately after his baptism, when he went into the wilderness, is an illustration of it. There he examined the temptations of power, riches,

and adulation. He turned them all down. Among his reasons for rejection of them was, I'm sure, the realization that he would become too self-satisfied, too proud, too egocentric. He realized that he needed to look beyond himself. These words, spoken by him to Satan, indicate his awareness of the need of constant self-examination and recognition of ones inner motives: "You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve."

The difference between Jesus and John, as they practiced introspection and honesty with self, was that John came out recognizing his inferiority and need to be under authority to another earthly being, Jesus; while Jesus recognized only God as being worthy of his complete obedience and respect.

In both examples are suggestions for us. We live day by day in wildernesses of various kinds, in our jobs, in our society, where we are tempted. Often, to be honest, we give in to much of the temptation that besets us. When we turn to introspection to try to determine why we did what we did, we find that undue pride, false confidence,

over-estimating our spiritual, mental, physical abilities, was at fault.

It may be that in our work we have to come to grips with the fact that we are not as independent as we wish we were; that we must take orders from someone else. If we can do this without resentment and bitterness, certainly life is more pleasant, and the probability is that we'll do the job better. Few of us are absolute masters of our own time and efforts. Somewhere along the line most of us are subject to the desires and orders of others. The trick that introspection can help bring about here is to let us realize the necessity and justice in this, so that we react as willing and loving servants; not as slaves driven by whips.

In the introspection of Jesus, which we see expressed in the various prayer periods and period of departure from the crowds, there is the element of seeking to bring ones own personality into more complete harmony with God. Whenever any one of us does this, compares what he is with what he believes God wants him to be, he comes up short, realizing how inadequate

he really is. Jesus did not want to be arrested and tried, and he prayed God that this cup might be spared him. ~~But~~ He also added, "Not my will, but Thine be done." That is the shining example of the value of introspection which we can learn from the life and teachings of Jesus: to try to bring ourselves in every way into harmony with God, regardless of the cost. Harmony with God does not always bring peace and prosperity, not by any means, as Jesus' life illustrated. ~~But~~ To look to God for guidance is THE important THING.

The value of a Communion service is lessened greatly unless we use the quiet periods of this service for honest self-examination, for introspection. As we partake of the Communion we can think of Christ at the last supper, ~~there realizing~~ KNOWING that he might not eat again with these men. ~~he knew~~ We can realize the struggle he must have been going through, all the while wishing he didn't have to do what he must, but determining to do it anyway. We can determine that we, too, will seek God's will.

According to Thy gracious word,
In meek humility,
This will I do, my dying Lord,
I will remember Thee.

Thy body, broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be;
Thy testamental cup I take,
And thus remember Thee,

Remember Thee, and all Thy pains,
And all Thy love to me;
Yea, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember Thee!

And when these failing lips grow
dumb,
And mind and memory flee,
When Thou shalt in Thy kingdom come,
then, Lord, remember me!
Amen.

(No. 410, The Methodist Hymnal,
by James Montgomery, 1771-1856.)

According to Thy gracious word,
In meek humility,
This will I do, my dying Lord,
I will remember Thee.

Thy body, broken for my sake,
My bread from heaven shall be;
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Remember Thee, and all Thy pains,
And all Thy love to me;
Yea, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember Thee!

And when these trembling limbs grow
cold,
And mind and memory flee,
When Jordan's stream my body
shall
Then, Lord, remember me!

(No. 410, The Lutheran Hymnal,
by James Montgomery, 1771-1854.)