Seripture: Matthew 23:15

Sermon Topie-Theme: Who wants a Proselyte?

Text: Mt.23:15b (selected words):
"...when he becomes a proselyte, you
make him...a child of hell..."

Proposition: Jesus warned the seribes and Pharisees that people won to their point of view by proselytising were undesirable, narrow, dogmatic, and disturbingly zealous. This prompts us to ask "who wants a proselyte?", and to answer it, "we don't," because such a person rarely is tolerant, loving, forgiving, cooperative, and generally is unpleasant to be around. It points but that as christians we should try hard to exemplify loving, cooperative, and positive attitudes ward toward others, whether or not they agree with us and are of one mind with us.

Dates written: February 1-5, 1971

Dates and places used:

Feb. 7, 1971- OAKLAND FARK, FLA.

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Introduction:

- 1. Somebody has said that "many a small boy is the kind of kid his mother wouldn't want him to play with." (from The Burlington Standard (Wisconsin), in Quotem Jan. 24, 1971).
- 2. Jesus told the scribes and Pharises that much of their work simply produced people that nobody liked, or whom others "don't like to play with" (to put it in small boy terms). He rebuked them for being so very active in seeking proselytes because so often the proselytes then became people whom nobody wanted to be around, who were "children of hell," as he put it. And, really, there are some people who are so disapreeable to be around that it is somewhat like hell must be to have to be around them!
- presents Jesus as talking about proselytes, maybe we ought to know what the word means before we spend time discussing it. By definition, a proselyte s "a new convert, especially to some religions sect, or to some opinion, system or party." However, quite often we have stretched the word to use it to

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Matthew 2):1)

REFER TO somebody from a slightlydifferent branch of ones own religion. Thus, when most ministers speak of winning proselytes, they mean perhaps

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that a Methodist spends his time trying to win people from the Presbyterian,
Baptist or other denominations, rather than to try to convert people to
Christ Who were not previously Christian. Such narrow proselyting has brought the word "proseytle" into dis-

favor in many eireles.

4. The way that Jesus used the word proselyte in our Scripture certainly put the activity of winning proselytes, and the proselyte himself, in an unfavorable light.

I. Jesus warned the scribes and Pharises that people won to their point of view by proselyting were undesirable, narrow, domnatie, and zealous.

1. Three men were discussing tightfisted, penny-pinching persons they had known. One said, "I know a man who writes a very small hand to save ink."

Another said, "Ma friend of mine always stops the clock at night to save

To whom eredainin Jeor medu , audi denting from the sounds of the demonstrate to win vecole iron bie freshvierian. redict concined denominations, retiber ian: Charle marrier recordly bins has -ath-ohir "old requi" byon era diffuord Caver in ment directes. the war that Josus used the word . Herit of cover fred bas sections and borney ages, ... view by pro elyting were undestrable, n eros, commetic, and reclous. 1. Turne mon word discussion timber the Manager they had londer, and a vonder The brack each a minor writes a very small hand to save ink. Another seid, "Ma Triend of wine

wear and tear on it."

Your men are spendthrifts," said the third man. "I know an old man who won' read the paper because, he says, it wears out his glasses."

(from Exchange, in Quote Jan. 24.1971)

2. There are people who overdo almost anything! A trait that normally is quite commendable can be carried out in such a way that it is ridiculouss and objectionable. That is the way Jesus saw the proselyting activities of the scribes and Pharisees. They were very active in seeking converts to their brand of Judaism. At least some of them traversed, or traveled, "sea and land to make a single convert." he

pointed out to them. This is real dedication, and might be thought of as very commendable. We send missionaries to far-away places to win converts to Christ. and feel good when they are

christ, and reel good when successful.

3. But Jesus included this subject as one of the "seven woes," one of the ways these to whom he spoke were bringing sorrow and shame and trouble upon themselves. "Woe to you," he had begun, because you do this. What

to a transfer to the transfer they off man blo os you! It .ass build read athenya per because, he says, it Look Tron trong of a nedex most) I objevo or a free on oreal . A of Campon hadd then a least to a team is dutte commendable can be dannied ou in such a very first to the day of the care and as the care and as the care and a constant and the care and a constant and a c Josus say the droselytime schivities o the serious and there sees. They were very unlive in seeking converte to of them traversed, or traveled, "sea and land to make a single convert," he

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3. Not desus idelided this subject as one of the "seven wees," one of the ways thouse in social work of the scolar work of the second throught and a to won, " he had been been a country as it of the won, " he had been been a country as the second throught and the second throught a to won, " he had been been a country as the second throught.

- was so wrong with seeking proselytes, or converts?
- 4. It was the way these converts
  were turning out, for the most part.
  That was becoming "twice as much a
  child of hell" as the scribes and Pharisees who won him over. This, in a
  sense, is quite understandable, that
- a person who makes a drastic change, from one religion or philosophy to another, must be very strongly convinced. Once he has announced the change, to justify it he must demonstrate it and proclaim it ever more strongly to others, especially to his former family friends and neighbors, who have not yet switched. If he can't be quite
- dogmatic, convinced and strong, it would indicate that he has doubts. If anybody is going to be obnoxious in presenting the claims of the new religion, it will be the newly-won who
- are having to justify to themselves and others that to which they have changed.
- 5. This may be all right soo, if tolerance of others is practiced, if coorcion is not used, if courtesy and respect for personality are in the basic attitudes. But so often zealous

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converts or proselytes to a religion are rude, intolerant, and condemning of others who don't see it their way.

These, I believe, are the type of proselytes of whom Jesus talked. Such a person is better as he was.

II. This prompts us to ask "who wants a proselyte?", and to anser it "we don't."

1. We anser it this way because, as we've pointed out, such a person, a proselyte, is rarely tolerant, loving, forgiving, cooperative, reasonable, and generally is unpleasant to be around.

2. An old man was sitting on the porch of a little village store when a big shiny ear drove up with two strangers in it. "Hey, Grandpa," one of them called out, "how long has this burg been dead?"

The old man looked over his spectacles before he replied: "Not long, I reckon. You're the first buzzards I've seen." (Quote, Jan. 24, 1971).

The attitude of the men in the ear, that such a place as the small village was dead and undesirable exempliafied a sort of condemning, ridiculing atti-

C.I:ES wondfor . nointies a objectivies of a strayaca To be immediate to the condemnia of rem right ii see lince old stellio Those, I bolieve, are the trpe of propelytos of whos derig tolked, Tyell t permon is helder as he was II. Pris prompts usite sek fune ve own at teams of bus . " edv Desore . t 1. o anser 10 this her because, es give solution out, sien a person, s proselyte, is unclined to a sound; loring, conviving, or conviving, or convertible, or convert edt no smittle est men blo na .S. etrom, era in. " lay, varendon," one interest this cone that the third long has this tacles before he negligh: "Wet long, chrasso Jeril we entuck . acmost 11 to seem. (close) 101. 1 101. The state of the same in the same bothystiamexa aldettacens bus book as a sont of compount, ridiculing attiThis
toward others, which is somewhat like
the religious converts or proselytes has
acts towards other people who don't
share this particular twist of faith:
they are dumb, unreasonable, heathen,

they are dumb, unreasonable, heathen, condemned. And such people are hell to be around. Who wants such a proselyte? I don't.

III. Jesus' teaching here would seem to indicate that as christians we shoul try hard to exemplify loving, cooperative, and positive attitudes toward others, whether or not they agree with us and are of one mind with us.

1. A young lady was having a heartto-heart talk with her grandmother about her school work, her boy friends, and other major interests. "Tell me, Grandma," she said suddenly, "at what age are men the most fun?"

"Men are like record players, honey,' replied the elderly lady. "They play at different speeds according to age, but they are nice to have around at 33, 45, or 78." (Quote, 1-24-71).

2. Christians, or all people, should be nice to have around, shouldn't they What makes them nice to have around?

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- Because they are, as we've suggested, loving, cooperative, non-condemning, positive in their relationships with other people. No matter what a person says about his faith, if he is disputative, condemning, harsh, hard to get along with, domineering, you automatically suspect his sincerity, his degree of christian commitment. It's natural to look at a negative type person that way, even tho we shouldn't condemn.
  - Conelusion:
- 1. By way of summary, let us look at selected words, our text, from the 15th verse of Matthew 23, which say, "when he becomes a proselyte, you make him a child of hell." Who wants a proselyte like that? Obviously, few people. Jesus didn't, and we, his fellowers shouldn't.
  - obvious, that christians need to practice the positive traits about which we've talked, so that those won to the faith through our words and actions are loving, forgiving, tolerant, non-
- loving, forgiving, tolerant, noncondemning, good-to-be-around persons the practice and explaining of their faith.

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