

Date written: August 15, 1948

Theme: The urgency of Christianity.

Proposition: Christ's call is one of urgency.

Scripture: Matthew 8:18-22

Text: "Follow me" -- Matthew 8:22

Sources: Revised Standard Version of New Testament

Places preached:

Uniontown, Ark., 8-15-48

Clarks Chapel, Ark. "

Crawford, Wyo. - A.M., June 26, '49

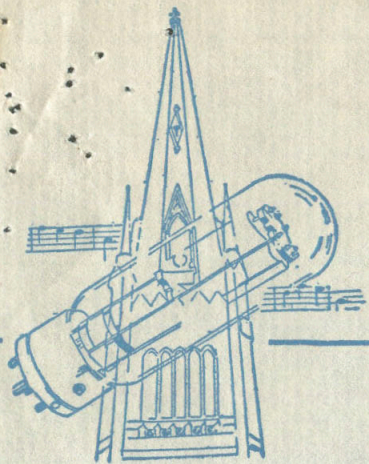
Kammener, Wyo. - P.M., June 26, '49

Ep. Rucker, Ala., Harg. + Stockbridge, 27 July 52

Grace, Clifton, Wyo., June 1, 1958 (11 a.m.)

Stearns, Wyo., April 26, 1959 - 9:30 & 11:00 a.m.

Montrose, Colo., 10-4-62
(Evening Evangelistic Service)



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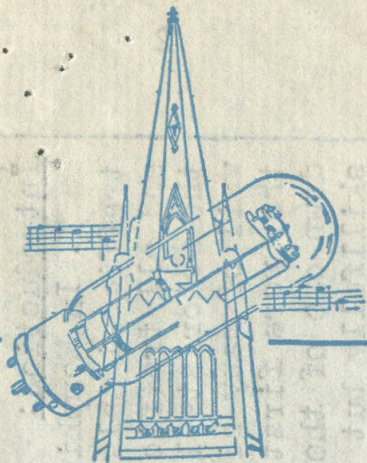
Introduction:

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1. In Memphis, Tenn., one day suddenly all the traffic signals turned red, facing in all directions, and all traffic came to a standstill. Then, as the motorists listened and looked to see why, the wail of many sirens became heard, and shortly after they were first heard, several fire trucks dashed down one of the main business streets, weaving skillfully but speedily in and out of the stalled traffic. The fire engines were in a hurry because they were urgently needed to help save a rearfront building.

2. In Richmond, Virginia, one day a woman was beginning to step from the sidewalk down to the street when her heel caught on the curbstone and she lost balance and fell ~~back~~ forward directly on her face. She was at least momentarily knocked unconscious, and blood began flowing from her nose. ~~Again, xxx in Memphis~~ A crowd quickly gathered about her, and someone, seeing that she was coming to, began to try to help her. A policeman, who happened to be nearby when she fell, first grabbed the police system telephone hanging on the lightpost on that corner & made a hurried call, then went over to the woman and began taking charge. He had the people, with the exception of one or two who helped him, move back, and began making the woman comfortable. About the same time, the traffic lights turned red, facing in all directions, and again the wail of a siren was heard. In just a moment or two from the time of the fall, a city ambulance rushed up, the woman was placed in it, and whisked off to the nearby medical college hospital. It was urgent that she have medical attention, and the city traffic system, police system, and medical system was set up so that such urgent cases as hers could be taken care of at once.

3. Right at the beginning of the war there was a desperate need for ammunition for the armed forces. The government built a huge ordnance plant at



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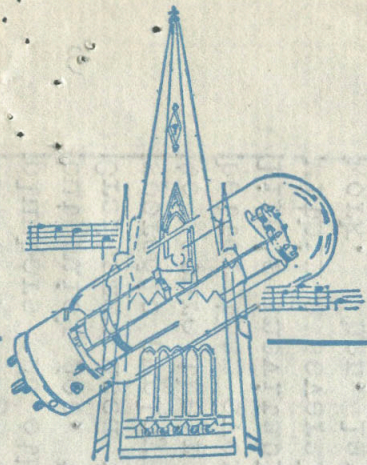
Radford, Virginia. To secure the carpenters, masons, plumbers and other skilled help necessary for a good but quick job, the wages offered were unusually high. Craftsmen used to poor depression time wages and to sporadic employment, saw a chance to earn the money to secure their homes, to care for their families better than ever before, to put aside some savings for life's inevitable rainy day, and came from cities within a several hundred mile radius to take the work. Then, later on, when the plant opened and began work, there was a rush of workers from small town and large in that section of the country to sign on for the unusually good pay. There was urgency in the way all these workers tried to get a job, and to get the best job possible.

4. Albert Schweitzer, a brilliant musician of world acclaim and an outstanding churchman of Europe, felt the need for medical missionaries to the people of a certain section of Africa, and resolved to go. He turned to the study of medicine, against the advice of friends, and did an excellent job of mastering the knowledge a physician must have. Then he went to Africa, and except for infrequent and short visits back to Europe and America, has remained there for years, ministering to the lowly and needy black man as best he could. Schweitzer felt an urgent need, and ~~tried~~ tried to meet the need.

5. Our Scripture story is another strong illustration of the idea of urgency. Dealing with two men who would follow him, Jesus impresses on them the lesson that his way of life, his mission and that of his followers, is so urgent that nothing can precede it if one is committed to it. It is the idea of the urgency of Christianity, of Christ's call, that we want to study today.

I. The decision to follow Christ must be a voluntary one.

1. In our Scripture, the scribe who came up to Jesus saying "Master, I will follow you wherever you go," was volunteering to follow Jesus.



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2. The disciple of Jesus, one who was already a follower, who came up and asked permission to bury his father before going on the next mission of Jesus, voluntarily followed Jesus. We don't know which disciple this was, but we do know how Jesus chose his disciples. He asked them to follow him, but the decision and the action was theirs to make voluntarily.

3. It is still that way. Schweitzer made his decision voluntarily to follow Jesus, in his mission to Africa. Just so, each of us must decide if we will follow Jesus, in our relations with others, in our dependence on God.

II. Reservations and excuses are natural to make.

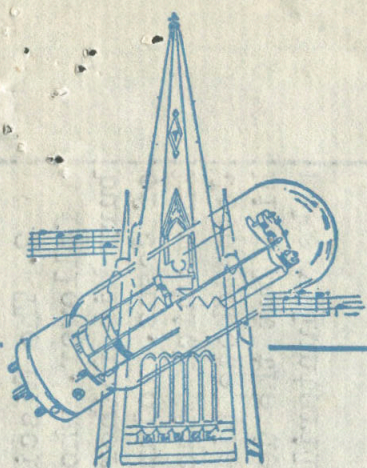
1. The scribe had no spoken reservations in our story, but the implication is that when Jesus told him the price to pay, he had not realized just what his proposed course did involve.

2. The disciple who asked to be allowed to go bury his father had what seemed a very real reason, or reservation. His devotion to his father is of the highest type that we can know. Nevertheless, his father was dead, and there were probably others as close to his father who were as devoted and who could dispose of the bodily shell from which the spirit had gone.

3. We, too, would follow Jesus, but with excuses or reservations to a certain point; with delays.

a. I love to preach and do pastoral work. Yet, I feel an obligation to pay off what debts I owe, and to see that my family is taken care of in at least average security. Consequently, I fail to put myself wholly into the ministry, but with reservations seek a way to bring the extra money it takes to meet these other two objectives. I'm making reservations or excuses in following Christ.

b. A family joins the church, mother, father, and all the children who are still at home and not grown and away. They publicly take the vows



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of the church. Then, within a Sunday or two the grown children come home for a visit, and the family stays home to entertain them, rather than coming to church and bringing the others with them. This is an indication of which comes first the cause of Christ -- and that is what the church stands for -- or the cause of earthly family unity.

c. A church is active, like this one, in its local community work. It has a good Sunday School, takes pretty good care of its preacher, has a very fair parsonage, and has a good community spirit. It is prompt in meeting the financial obligations put on it. BUT it has little sense of responsibility to the outside world. It's mission donations are few. All that it does it tries to run through the regular budget and regular channels of meetings and organizations, rather than plan anything extra. It is following Christ with reservations. It should not hesitate to call on its members to give freely to the various mission causes, and to other extra works, and to expect them to.

III. Nevertheless, the call of Christ to follow Him ~~xxx~~ is a call of urgency, and to be Christian demands response as such.

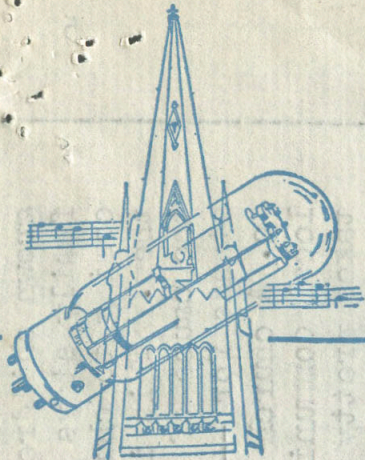
1. In the case of the scribe, Jesus warned him the he, the Son of Man, had nowhere to lay his head, and that his followers might expect the same.

2. In the case of the disciple, the work to be done could not wait even for the final expression of filial love.

3. Today, now, in our lives, the urgency is just as great, even though we may not see it.

a. We are all so much concerned over the threat of war with Russia. We are rushing into preparedness in a military way. It seems urgent to be ready with physical force.

b. Yet we fail to look across the sea at India and observe that the leader who did most to bring about release from the bonds of colonial status was a man who believed thoroughly in peace and refused to use arms, Mahatmas Gandhi.



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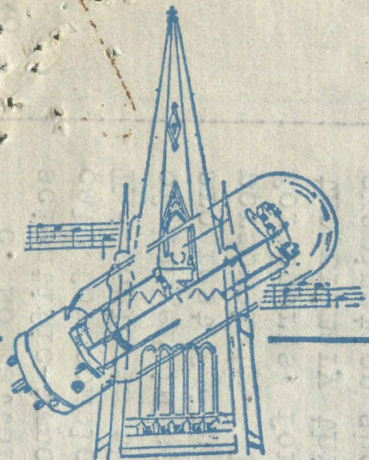
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c. No matter how we look at it, a straightforward, scientific-type examination of Christ's teachings call for complete consecration without reservations. The world is threatened by war. People are dying of hunger in some places. Morality and honesty are fast fading out as popular attributes of personality. Indulgence of our whims for drink, for sports, for comfort, for excitement seem the primary things in our lives. Yet, a careful examination shows that these things carried too far, made primary in life, bring sadness, disillusionment and destruction. There is an urgent need for Christian truth, honesty, morality, service. Without it mankind is rapidly heading downhill toward a purely animal plane.

Conclusion: Christ's call is urgent. It is more urgent than saving a building from burning, than saving a woman from dying (for if she is saved, what is her life to be?).

We who profess belief in Christ must make his way of life, as we understand it, primary.

Christ saw the need for impressing this strongly on those of his day. He did not mean to lessen love of parents in his command to his disciple to let the dead bury the dead, but he did mean to emphasize that the way he leads demands all of a person's best and his highest loyalty. He was emphasizing the urgent; that this way is greater than all else.



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