

GOING THE SECOND MILE

My heart is filled with thanksgiving that you have invited me to come and be with you this Thanksgiving weekend and missionary-emphasis Sunday. It is just great to see all of you once again. Congratulations for the beautiful way that you've remodeled this lovely sanctuary. As far as I'm concerned this is one of the most beautiful church buildings I've seen in the whole world and it is even more beautiful than I had remembered because of all that you have done. These stained-glass windows are just out of this world.

This morning for the missionary message, I've chosen to speak from Matthew, 5th chapter, 41st verse - just that one verse. As you're turning to that verse in the Bible I just want to say that Hickory Valley Church has the best music ministry of any church that I know of in the whole world. I'm just so thrilled to hear the choir sing again today and to join with you in praising God in all of this wonderful singing.

Matthew 5:41. Jesus said whosoever compels thee to go a mile, go with him twain. That's the way it reads in the King James. In the more modern English, New American - if someone forces you to go a mile, go with him two miles. There is enough power in that one little verse to change the entire world. I'm convinced that if we follow Jesus' teaching in that one verse that this missionary weekend will accomplish all that the missionary committee wants it to accomplish for Hickory Valley Christian Church and the cause of worldwide evangelism.

This is a very, very, very important verse, and I'm sorry that we have neglected it for so long. I'm sorry that during the almost eight years that I served as your minister, I never preached on that verse one time. That's a disgrace. I'm even sorrier as I think back over my life, I never remember any other preacher preaching on this verse. It's a marvelous verse. It only takes 15 seconds to memorize it. Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain; but it takes a lifetime to live up to it.

A Sunday School teacher was teaching her class of little boys and girls this verse of scripture. And like most Sunday School teachers do, she insisted that they memorize it. After she had repeated it several times: "Whosoever compels thee to go a mile, go with him twain." She said, "Now, who is ready to say it by memory?" A little boy shot up his hand and said, "I can do it, teacher." She said, "say it for me - say it loudly." He said "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go by train." I think that's the way most of us feel about Jesus' teaching on that verse, don't we? The second mile - oh, that's the hard mile. We might go the first mile because duty demands it, but my goodness, if you want me to go the second mile, I'm going to have to ride by train. But listen, my friends, it is my duty this morning in this message to try to convince you that the extra mile is the easy mile. The first mile is the law mile, while the second mile is the love mile. The first mile is the "got to" mile and the second mile is the "get to" mile. When I'm looking forward to the "get to" I can't wait to get through the "got to". The law mile is nothing because the "love mile" will make you smile.

Now a little background about this verse of scripture. It is my understanding that when the Roman government sent an army out to conquer a village, a city, or a province, or a nation, that once the conquest was complete they would set up the Roman yoke. If it was a village they had conquered they would force the entire populous to walk under the Roman yoke. If it was a large city, or perhaps a province or a nation, they would allow some of the dignitaries to walk under the yoke to represent the entire populous. When they walked under the Roman yoke it symbolized the fact that they promised to obey all of the laws of Rome, including lots of little rules like this one. If a Roman official came along, or a Roman soldier, and they needed help in carrying their pack, it was the law that you had to carry it one mile. The Jews hated that law very much. The

Jews despised that Roman law to the extent, I'm told, that every man measured the distance to the front door of his house exactly 5,280 feet and then he drove a peg by the side of the road, and you could not get any Jew to carry your pack any more than one mile.

With this background in your mind, imagine Jesus preaching the Sermon on the Mount just outside the city of Capernaum, there on that bright sun-lit hillside, overlooking the beautiful Sea of Galilee. Can't you imagine the multitudes seated on the hillside listening to Jesus preach this marvelous sermon? Wouldn't you have loved to be there? I would. Do you think that you would have nodded? Would you have dozed and gotten sleepy while Jesus preached this long sermon? Oh no. I think you would have hung upon every word just as the crowd did. Can't you just hear that man saying, "Never did a man speak like this man, Jesus." And another said, "Listen to him, why he speaks with authority, not like the Scribes and the Pharisees." But I am convinced that as Jesus progressed through this sermon and he came to Matthew 5:41, that the expressions on the faces of the crowd began to change from smiles to frowns. As Jesus said, "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain," I can hear people begin to murmur and someone says, "What! Did you hear what he said? Why, I'm not going to do it! I don't even like to go one mile, and I'm certainly not going to go two miles."

Dear brothers and sisters I'm convinced that our Lord Jesus Christ chose a very, very obnoxious Roman rule in order to teach a very valuable principle of Christian living. What do you think Jesus would give as a title for the Sermon on the Mount? Now I'm sure that he wouldn't have called it "The Sermon on the Mount." You know we preachers do love to give fancy titles to our sermons.

No long ago, I was preaching in LA - that's "lower Alabama" in case you don't know - and as I was preaching in this little church in LA, I mentioned about preachers loving to give their sermons fancy titles and I told about a preacher that I'd heard about who had preached on the subject, "Giving the Pig a Permanent Wave." The congregation began to laugh and got so tickled that they laughed uproariously. I didn't think it was that funny and I wondered what had provoked such laughter. After the service some of them came up and whispered to me and said, "our preacher preached on that subject last week," - giving the pig a permanent wave. Now what it was, of course, was the prodigal son and how he said goodbye to the pigs and went back home to his father. Well, we preachers do like to come up with fancy titles, and I wonder what kind of a title Jesus would have given to this Sermon on the Mount. Do you suppose he would have called it, "Abundant Living?" After all, Jesus did teach, I am come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly. And if we put into the practice the principles of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, we truly will live more abundantly. Or I wonder if he might have called it, "The Secret of Happiness?" After all, much of the Sermon on the Mount was devoted to happiness in our everyday life. Eight times in the sermon he spoke about being happy.

I don't know what title Jesus gave for this sermon anymore than you know. But I do know the topic of the Sermon on the Mount. The topic of the sermon is this: Always give a little more than anyone has a right to expect. I want to repeat that: Always give a little more than anyone has a right to expect.

I decided to preach this message for Missionary Sunday because I'm convinced that Matthew 5:41 is the answer for the cause of world missions. I'm sure that the practice of the teaching in this verse will meet every need of world missions. But beyond that I am convinced that putting into practice Matthew 5:41, that is going the second mile, will help every wife to be a perfect wife and every husband to be a perfect husband, and every son or daughter to be a perfect child. I am convinced that all students who put this verse into practice will make straight A's in school. And I am sure that all businessmen who will practice this verse can become millionaires.

How many of you would be interested in becoming a millionaire? Ah, that interests you, huh? Well, let me tell you about this fellow - 38 years old - a multi-millionaire. He was getting ready to retire and smell the roses. The citizens of the town were having a big party to congratulate him

upon his great success in life and his early retirement at the age of 38. And everyone had the same question to ask him: What is the secret of your success? How have you been able to become a multi-millionaire at the age of 38 and retire so early in life? He always answered each person in the same way: I will tell you the secret at the banquet. So the night of the banquet came and after all of the accolades had been given, he was called upon to speak. As he stood up to face the audience of his friends - the people of the community where he had grown up and who had known him all of his life - he said, "All of you have asked the same question - what is the secret of my success? - and I'm ready to reveal it now. The secret of my success can be summed up in three words ... 'and then some'." Everybody was bitterly disappointed and they sat there looking at one another spellbound and puzzled, "What does he mean, 'and then some'?" And so the multi-millionaire said, "Let me explain. When I started grade school, I made up my mind that I was going to do everything that the teachers asked me to do, and then some. Consequently, I graduated from high school valedictorian of my class and headed off for college. Well, the first year in college the professors all told us 'you will read this book, you will read that book, you will write this theme, you will make this report,' and I made up my mind right then that I would do everything that my college professors asked me to do - and then some. Consequently, I graduated summa cum laude from my class." Now you know some people graduate cum laude; some people graduate magna cum laude, and some people graduate summa cum laude. I graduated "Praise de Laude." I was glad that I squeaked through!

This multi-millionaire graduated at the head of his class and he said, "I made up my mind that I would review all of the business opportunities that were offered to me and I would pick what appeared what appeared to be the best one." So I did, and I went to work and the manager told me you will come each morning at eight o'clock and work until five. So, I came at seven and worked until six. He told me that I would have two weeks vacation each year, so I took one. He told me that I would work five days each week and have two days off, so I worked six with just one off. Consequently, in just a few short years, I had risen right to the top of the company and became president of the company. But then I realized that in order to really succeed, I would have to have my own company; so I organized my own company. I decided in the very beginning that I would give my customers everything that they had a right to expect - and then some.

Consequently, after a little while my first company was such a fabulous success that I organized the second company; then a third company and a fourth. Now, I've sold my companies and I'm retiring as a multi-millionaire because of those three little words - AND THEN SOME.

I wonder where he got that idea? Do you suppose he attended one of those famous seminars with Zig Ziegler? No, I think that he got it right from the words of Jesus; Matthew 5:41 - Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. I have three observations based upon this verse of scripture to offer you this morning.

I.

If you will determine to put into practice this second mile principle taught by our Lord Jesus Christ, it will leave a deposit of happiness in your life. We have already observed that Jesus spoke about being happy eight times in the Sermon on the Mount. The King James translation uses the word "blessed" - Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven - blessed are those who mourn, etc., but the word "blessed" is better translated into our modern-day English as "happy." So Jesus was talking about happiness. As we learn to go the second mile, we will be happy, and it will leave a deposit of happiness in our lives.

Now let's look at a fellow who was in the audience there on that hillside as Jesus was preaching this sermon. He was a one-miler, and as Jesus proclaimed this teaching, he said, "I'm not going to do it; I don't even want to go the one mile. Why, that guy is ridiculous to preach something like that." So the next morning this one-miler goes to work out in his field, hoeing the weeds out of his garden. As he is working, hoeing, a big Roman soldier comes along the road and looks over in the field and sees this Jew at work, and the Roman soldier says, "Hey, you Jew, get over here and carry my pack a mile." Oh, this Jew was so angry. He took his hoe and he threw it down on

the ground and he went stomping across the field just boiling with rage because he hated having to carry that Roman soldier's pack one mile. He crawled across the fence, taking all the time in the world. He got over to the Roman soldier and without even looking at him, without greeting him, without speaking a word, he picked up his pack and half-dragged it the 5,280 feet that the law demanded. When he reached the peg in the road, he threw the pack down and he glared in the face of that Roman soldier and said, "I hate your guts; I hate Rome; I hate paying your taxes; I wish you would get out of our country and leave our people alone. I hate you. I hate you. I hate you." And he whirled and walked off.

Have you ever felt that way? I hope not, because it will give you hypertension. It will give you a heart attack. It will make you sick. It will kill you. This Jew got back to the field where he was hoeing; picked up his hoe and started hoeing again but he was so filled with anger. Have you ever tried to work when you were angry? You can't do it, can you? He couldn't even hoe weeds. He was chopping the wheat right along with the weeds, so he threw the hoe down and went home early. And the children saw him coming and so they rushed to meet him and jumped up in his arms. They said, "Oh Daddy, Daddy, Daddy, we're so glad to see you home." But he slapped them aside and says, "Get down, get off me; quit clawing at me; you're always climbing on me; I'm tired." And the poor children went off to cry because Daddy was home. He went in the house where his sweet little wife was cooking supper for him. As he entered the kitchen she looked up and said, "Oh, you're home early" and he snapped, "Well, what's it to you?" "I can do whatever I please; I work hard and if I want to come home early, it's my business. Wouldn't it be awful to be married to a one-miler? Looks like some of you are, by the expression on your face.

Well, let's look at another fellow who was there on that sun-lit hillside, listening to Jesus preach. And Jesus said, "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." This fellow said, "Sounds crazy; I've never heard anything like that before, but Jesus is the master teacher, so I'm going to try it. Well the next morning this fellow is out in the field hoeing. The great big Roman soldier comes along and says, "Hey you Jew, come here and carry my pack a mile." This Jew quietly and gently laid his hoe down and started whistling. He walked over to where the Roman soldier stood, smiled and said, "Good morning, sir; it's a beautiful day." The Roman soldier looked at him; no one had ever greeted him like that before. And the Jew picked up his pack and they started walking along the road and the Jew said, "Listen to the birds singing; aren't they beautiful this morning? Oh, smell those roses! Smell those lilies; that's the Lily of the Valley; it's the Rose of Sharon. Our prophets told us that this is the land of milk and honey. It's the home that God has given us. Don't we have a beautiful land?" The Roman soldier didn't know what to think. They walked on a little bit further and the Jew said, "Sir, would you tell me about Rome? I've always been interested in Rome. I would like to go there and visit someday and see what it's like." Well, you know how we all like to talk about our hometown. So the Roman soldier began to tell him all about the roads that lead to home and about the arts and the music and the coliseum, and all of the other things. And they passed the peg in the road. The Jew was so interested in listening to the Roman soldier tell him about Rome that he didn't see the peg in the road. And they kept on walking and the Roman soldier chuckled to himself, and said I'll just let him carry my pack further. So he talked on about Rome, but as they walked and walked, pretty soon they had gone at least two miles and the Roman soldier began to feel guilty. He said, "You know, I don't have the heart to make you carry this pack any further. We passed the peg in the road way back there. In fact I know we have gone more than two miles. You've got work to do; you have a family to support. Let me have the pack and you go back to your work. The young Jewish lad said, "I don't mind, sir; I'm glad to carry your pack. I've enjoyed it. It has been a pleasure to meet you and to hear about Rome. And with that the Roman soldier took off his big glove and he shook hands with the Jew, and he said, "you've changed my mind about your people today; I always thought about the Jewish people being a stubborn, stiff-necked prideful people. I couldn't stand you. But you've changed my mind. I like you." And he said, "I hope you get your freedom, and I hope someday you can come to Rome, and if you do," and with that he wrote his address on a piece of paper, and he said, "When you come to Rome, here's my address; you look me up and you'll be my guest. I'm going to take you around and show you everything." You see, dear

friends, it will leave a deposit of happiness in your life if you learn to go the second mile.

II.

And then I would like to make this observation: It will lighten your burdens. Oh yes, it will lighten your burdens. Now we all have burdens to bear, but if you learn to put into practice this second mile principle, it will lighten your burdens. Do you have a favorite chair at your house? Of course you do. Everybody knows the favorite chair - why that's Daddy's chair in the den. What happens if one of the children sit on that chair? "Got off my chair - you know that's Daddy's chair." And if strangers come into your home what do you do? "Here, have the best chair in the house - Daddy's chair." Now that's crazy; we give strangers the best chair and snap at the children if they sit in the chair. No wonder the chair is in the den; that's where the old bear growls. Well, let's look in on another one-miler who was there on that hillside, listening to Jesus preach. Now this one-miler gets up in the morning and he comes into the kitchen all dressed and ready to go to work, and he finds his wife arm-deep in soapsuds. She's got curlers all over the top of her hair - big ones - as big as coke cans. She looks like an explosion from a mattress factory. She's got on that old ratty housecoat - ladies you know which one I'm talking about, don't you? No make-up. She hasn't worn any makeup before breakfast in years. She is a fright!

Looks like she's been hit by a Mack truck - two of them! And as he steps in the kitchen, he fastens his coat and the button pops off. "Oh," he growls, "look at that - the button came off my coat. You've got to sew on this button or I'll be late to work." Man, her arms come up out of that sink and she glares daggers at him, and she says, "Yes, your royal highness, apparently you think that all I have to do is stand here and wait on your beck and call." And she storms off to get the needle and thread. She comes in and sews the button on and she throws the jacket in the floor and says, "Not put it on and get out of here." Well he puts the jacket on and goes out the door and slams it, without any breakfast, muttering, "I married the devil's sister." And he did! He goes to work in a foul mood and everything goes wrong. He nearly gets fired and he comes home at the evening all tired and worn out. His wife greets him at the door saying, "overspent the budget twenty dollars - you got twenty dollars?" Oh man, the lid blows. "Twenty dollars - woman do you think I've got a printing press to crank out the money? I go out and work hard like a dog all day long and then find out that you've wasted the money." Now all the time he knows that he's going to give her the twenty dollars, but he's going to make her suffer as much as possible. It's really horrible to live in a one-miler's home.

But now let's look in on a two-miler's home. The husband comes down for breakfast and he sticks his head in the kitchen and there's his wife with her arms down in the soapsuds, but oh my, what a difference. Her hair is combed; she has makeup on; she has the prettiest housecoat on.

By the way, ladies, go to WalMart today and get you a new housecoat - I'm sure your husband will be glad to pay for it. You say, "but the old one is so comfortable." I know - but it looks so horrible. Go get a new one. There she is all prettied up with her arms in the soapsuds and he pops the button from his coat. He says, "Oh darling, sweetheart, I popped the button from my coat. My sweetie, would you mind to sew this button on for your little darling?" Her arms come up out of those soapsuds and she says, "My sweet darling, there's nothing in the whole world that I'd rather do than sew your button on." She starts to get the needle and thread and she comes back, pours him a cup of coffee and says, "Here, you sit and sip while I sew." So he sits there and sips the coffee and reads the paper while she sews the button on, and then she holds the coat and he slips his arms in it and then she wraps her arms around him and hugs him tight and plants a big kiss on his cheek and says, "Go get 'em, tiger." Man, he hits the door and says, "I married an angel." Well, he heads off for work and everything goes wonderful. He gets along well with the other employees, he gets along good with the boss and before the day is over the boss calls him in and says, "Hey, I'm going to promote you; you're doing such a good job, and this promotion is going to carry a big raise with it because we really like you here at our business.

He goes home feeling like a million dollars. When he reaches the house, his wife greets him at the door with a kiss, and she says, "Sweetheart, I'm so sorry, but I overspent the budget by twenty dollars; can you help me?" He looks at her and says, "Sweet darling, you are the best manager in the whole world; I don't know of any woman on earth who stretches a dollar any further than you do. How much did you say that you overspent it?" And she says, "Twenty dollars." and he says, "Here, take fifty." Now that's what it's like to live in a home of two-milers.

You see it will lighten your burdens. It will leave a deposit of happiness in your life. It will bring out the best in others.

III.

And in conclusion - and as the minister spoke those little words, a boy turned to his Daddy and said, "What does the preacher mean when he says, 'in conclusion?' and the Father said, "Nothing, son - absolutely nothing." In conclusion - don't reach for your coat yet - **it will make you more like God.** Our God is a second-miler God. Have you ever thought about it? God created man and woman. He placed them in the beautiful Garden of Eden. Everything there was created for their enjoyment. But what did the man and woman do? They despised God; they despised God's one request - they sinned. They broke God's heart. But what did God do? God went the second mile. He said the seed of the woman will crush head of the seed of the serpent.

So the prophets began to prophesy - Somebody is coming; somebody is coming. And that somebody came - the beautiful Son of God - our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Oh how Jesus blessed this world as He walked upon this sod. He taught His beautiful teachings and preached his wonderful sermons; He told us how to live; how to be happy. And then they crucified Him.

But even from the cross, Jesus prayed, Father forgive them for they know not what they do. Now that's what I call going the second mile. Our God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, went the second mile for each one of us.

There is an old story, not written in the Bible. But it so well illustrates this verse of scripture that I want to use it. It's a story that comes from the passion play. Jesus is walking the Via della Rosa - the way of suffering, carrying his cross. He stumbles and falls. Just at that moment a soldier slaps Jesus in the face and then a great big centurion riding a horse gallops over there and he takes his whip and he cracks that whip right across the back of the Roman soldier, and says, "Don't you hit him again." I fell in love with that centurion at that moment. The centurion then noticed a Jew who came onto the street from the side, joining the crowd - a little, short Jew. So he calls to him, "Hey, you Jew, get over here and help him carry his cross." The Jew began to grumble and complain, "Why me, why me - I have just now arrived; why are you picking on me?" And the centurion then said, "You either help him carry his cross or suffer the consequences." So the Jew knelt down beside Jesus, intending to help him pick up the cross, but when he looked into the eyes of Jesus, he jumped up with a start and he shouted, "Oh no, master, not you! You healed my son." Immediately the Jew went to the Roman centurion and said, "let me carry his cross all by myself; I will gladly carry it all the way to the top of the hill, and if you will permit it, I would like to die in his place, because you see, He healed my son." My friends, that's what happens when you fall in love with Jesus. And when you begin to put into practice the teachings of Jesus and you learn to go the second mile, gladly, with rejoicing. Oh yes, it will help you to be more like God.

Now I realize that I have probably spoken to some of you who have not be practicing the second mile. I know that I have probably spoken to some of you who have never accepted Jesus; never obeyed Him in baptism; you aren't even a member of the church. And perhaps you are wondering, where would I get the strength to live this kind of a life? Come to Jesus and He will give you the strength. And then with the apostle Paul you can say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." The first step is to be saved. So as the invitation is extended this morning, you are invited to come and accept Jesus Christ as your own personal Savior. Obey Him in baptism and he will forgive all of your past sins. And then He will give you the Holy Spirit who will help you put into practice the very principle that Jesus Christ has taught us - Whosoever compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Let us pray:

Father in heaven, how we thank you for loving us and for sending Jesus to die for us. How we thank you for going not only the second mile, but the third, the fourth, the tenth and the hundredth

mile. You have done everything for us. And God we thank you for our precious Savior, Jesus, who even gave his life's blood that we might be saved. We pray for those who are not Christians that they would decide this morning to give their life to Jesus and let Him save them. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

White Fields