

The Threat of the Ordinary

Living Bible Colossians 3:5 reads like this: “away then with sinful earthly things. Deaden the evil desires lurking within you, have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust and sinful desires. Don’t worship the good things of life for that is idolatry.” How would you describe spiritual conditions in the days of Noah? The Bible says in the book of Genesis that the people were morally depraved. The imagination of their hearts was only evil continually. Now again I ask how would you describe the situation in Sodom and Gomorrah? Moses in the book of Genesis describes cities of iniquity whose inhabitants were moral degenerates. In fact, he tells us there were not 10 righteous people in the entire city of Sodom. In both cases society was corrupt. People were of the lowest kind. So wicked that our Holy God could no longer allow them to live.

Now by way of contrast notice how Jesus described conditions in Noah’s day and life in the city of Sodom. Luke 17:27, “they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.” And then life in the city of Sodom was described like this in verse 28, “they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded.” I

submit to you that these things are not sinful things. They are the good things of life. They are the things that every generation has engaged in from the beginning of time. Eating, drinking, planting, buying, selling, building, getting married. Every generation has always been engaged in these things "the good things of life."

Does that mean that Moses contradicted Jesus or that Moses told a lie when he wrote in Genesis and said that the people in Noah's days were morally depraved and that the very imagination of their hearts was only evil continually and did Moses tell a lie again when he described the people in the days of Lot and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as being cities of iniquity filled with moral degenerates. No, Moses did not lie and Jesus did not contradict Moses. The thing we must recognize is that these two passages of scripture complement each other. We must recognize that these good things of life had so consumed their life that they had no time left for God. The good things of life had crowded out the heavenly. The good things of life had crowded out the spiritual and when God is crowded out, Satan takes over.

I am quoting from "Today's Child" re-printing television ratings from 17 years ago. A summary by the National Association for Better Radio and TV and here are the startling results of this summary. Programs rated objectionable for children: Abbott and Costello, Bat Masterson, Astro Boy, Brave Stallion, Candid Camera, Casey Jones, Colt 45, Daniel Boone, Dennis the Menace, Flipper, Have Gun, Greatest Show, Hop-A-Long Cassidy, Kit Carson, Laramie, Lone Ranger, Marshall Dillon, Maverick, Popeye, Porky Pig, Rawhide, Rin-Tin-Tin, Riverboat, Robin Hood, Roy Rogers, Sea Hunt, Red Skelton, Three Stooges, Wagon Trail, Wild Bill Hickock, Wyatt Earp, Yancy Derranger and Zane Gray Theatre. 17 years ago these programs that are now being played at Sunday school picnics were rated objectionable for children. Considered highly objectionable: Cheyenne, Hawaiian Eye, Man from Uncle, Ramar the Jungle,

Superman, Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, Wanted Dead or Alive and Shenanigans. The National Association for Better Radio and TV objected to Robin Hood because that program justified unlawful behaviour. Maverick implied that gambling was an acceptable profession. In Popeye physical power settles all problems. Red Skelton's off colored jokes were obviously not for children or for adults. What would the National Association for Better Radio and TV say about Dallas or Soap or Three's Company or the Dating Game or Bosom Buddies or Dynasty or some of the adulterous soap operas that are shown every afternoon? Beware, for television is certainly one of the "good things of life."

We in this assembly this morning are probably not too greatly bothered or tempted by the gross sins of the devil. I sincerely doubt that murder, armed robbery, immoral actions bother most of us. What does bother us? What threatens us? It is the good things of life. The eating, drinking, buying, selling, marrying, planting and building.

I. The good things are the things that threaten us as individuals. Think just a minute how little time that we devote to spiritual things and how much time we devote to physical and material things. What is the result? Bible reading and prayer are neglected. We cry, "We don't have time to pray," and why don't we? Because we are busy worshipping the good things of life. Think how much time we spend to take care of our bodies and how much money we spend on food and clothing and shelter and how little of our money we spend on spiritual matters. Think about our talents. We have talents to use at the school, at our favorite club, and at our favorite lodge, and then we say, "We have nothing to use in the church," and why friends? We are so busy worshipping the good things of the world, eating and drinking and getting married and buying and selling and planting and building. Isn't it amazing how our automobiles generally want to take us someplace on the Lord's Day. Isn't that worshipping the good things of life? Our motor

boats, motor homes, all of the great sports events, hanggliding contests, and the fishing expedition are held on the Lord's Day.

II. Collectively, the church is constantly being threatened by the good things of life. We talk about church attendance. The members of the church who constantly pull the attendance down are not engaging in drinking and wicked deeds, they are worshipping the good things of life. It is recreation, business appointments, and family get togethers. These good things have crowded in on the Lord's Day so the Lord is crowded out by the eating and drinking and the buying and the planting and the building and the selling. We talk about church work, singing in the choir, teaching in the Sunday School class, working with the young people, committees functioning as they should, the sick in the church and the unsaved being visited. You know as well as I do that all these go begging not because church members are engaged in wicked practices but because church members are engaged with the good things of life. We talk about church finances. Church members are not limited because they have spent so much on evil things but because we have spent so much on the good things of life.

A number of years ago I held a revival meeting at a mid-western town of 500 in population. Everybody in town had their own well in their own yard and the church had a well in the church yard. Then they decided to put in one of the good things of life. They put in the water tower and they laid pipes. In doing so, they had to tax the population to raise the funds to pay for the good things of life. When the tax bill came to the church the trustees called a meeting and they said, "We won't pay it. It's not right to tax the church." They notified city hall. City hall sent back a message to the trustees of the church and said, "Oh yes, you will pay it. All property owners are sharing equally in this because everybody is benefiting from it. You will use the water and so you will pay the taxes." The trustees held another meeting and they said, "Don't pipe the water into the church because we don't want your old water." But they neglected to

tell the ladies of the church and they were getting ready for their mother-daughter banquet. The ladies thought, "Won't it be wonderful, we are going to have running water and so no longer will we have to go out to the church well and pump the water and carry it and heat it on the stove. We will have hot and cold running water and it will be so easy to make the tea and coffee and wash the dishes afterward." The president of the Women's Council was elected to go down to city hall and tell them to hurry and connect the church as quickly as possible.

The mother and daughter banquet was a success and they were all really happy. It was so easy to do the dishes with that hot and cold running water. But at the first of the month a utility bill arrived from city hall. The trustees got the bill and asked, "Who authorized city hall to put that water in the church?" They began their questioning of the church members and it soon came to light that the president of the Women's Council had done it. The trustees held a meeting with the president of the Women's Council and they informed her in no uncertain terms that they had decided that there was to be no water in the church building. The trustees called city hall and said, "Shut off the water."

The ladies had their next meeting and discussed the situation. They decided that the reason the trustees didn't want water was because they didn't want to pay the monthly utility bill. The ladies decided, bless their hearts, we will pay the bill. They called city hall and told them to turn the water back on and, "send the bill to us." That very week the trustees held their annual meeting to inspect the premises. Nobody knows what made them do it but one of them turned the spigot in the kitchen and water came out!!!

They had an emergency meeting at the city hall and told them, "We have told you three times before and we are not telling you again, cut that water off and leave it off!"

Meanwhile, the ladies had their monthly meeting and decided to have a meal together. They went into the kitchen to fix

their lunch and they turned on the spigot and there was not a drop that came out. They were so angry that they stormed up to the preacher's office and they said, "We are quitting the church." The preacher said, "Don't do that! What is the matter?" They said, "There is no water in the kitchen!" The preacher said, "I have some tools in the trunk of my car, I'll turn the water on if you won't quit the church." The ladies were happy again!

But when the trustees found out about it they fired the preacher! The next Sunday morning the Bible School superintendent got up in front of the church and he told what the trustees had done. People got so angry that they fired the trustees and they rehired the preacher! They got into one of the worst church fights imaginable all over a little simple good thing of life like water!!

III. The whole point of Jesus' teaching in Luke 17 is this: Jesus is coming back again. The world is going to come to an end. The sad thing is that when He comes back again everybody is going to be busy worshipping the good things of life and they are not going to be ready for His coming. The disciples had asked Jesus, "When is the end going to occur?" Jesus answered by saying, "The world is going to go on as it is. People are going to continue to be occupied with the same little old things that they have always been occupied with. They will not be concerned with the coming of the Lord and when He comes and catches them unprepared, they will be cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and wailing.

Once I knew a man who was a deacon in our Lord's church. A very consecrated, God fearing, growing, serving, working deacon. He had a lovely family. He helped with the youth program on Sunday evening, attended the prayer meeting on Wednesday evening, and he made evangelistic calls. But, this deacon decided to build a house. There is nothing wrong with building a house. There is nothing wrong with eating and drinking and buying and planting and getting married and all of these

other good things unless you worship them!!

As he started building the house he decided that he would have to do some Sunday work. That kept him from fulfilling his responsibilities with the youth program, it kept him out of evening worship. People went to him and said, "We missed you last Sunday night." He got very angry and said, "I am building a house." As time went on he decided he would have to miss church on Sunday morning as well. Again people were discouraged and worried and concerned and they went to him and they said, "We missed you on Sunday morning." He got very ruffled and said, "I am building a house. When I finish the house then I will come back to church."

Time went on and he began to drink. This deacon had never touched a drop of alcohol in his life. He was ashamed to face anybody. Time went on and he took up with another woman. He lost his wife and his children and in disgrace he left the community.

Some years went by and one day the telephone rang. It was a doctor who said, "Preacher, do you know?", and he named this ex-deacon of the church. The preacher said, "Of course, he used to be a deacon in our church. Where is he?" The doctor said, "In the hospital. He is asking for you." With all haste he made his way to the hospital to see the ex-deacon of the congregation. When he stepped into that hospital room, he did not even recognize the man who had once been such a faithful dedicated Christian servant. The ravages of sin had so changed the ex-deacon that his facial features were different. He looked so hard. The preacher called him by name and immediately the man recognized his preacher. He began to weep uncontrollably. He sobbed out, "Oh preacher, I want you to pray for me. If I die I am going to hell and preacher, I don't want to go to hell. Preacher you know that I love Jesus. You know I had a good family and you know all of the years that I served the Lord in the church. Preacher, I never meant for any of this to happen." But it did happen. Why? Because he began to worship the good

MY FAVORITE REVIVAL SERMONS

things of life. Do not worship the good things of life for that is idolatry.