

II.

CHRISTIAN LIVING

I do not believe that ministers should assume the role of pop psychologists either in the pulpit or in the counseling room. Yet if it is true that Christian faith should be made relevant to all the great social issues of our time, so it is true that in order to be effective that faith needs to be related to all the significant personal issues. It is the sermons dealing with personal problems that usually produce the most requests for mimeographed copies.

"Great Expectations" is an Easter sermon. It tries to carry through an idea that I have worked over in the past; namely, that there is a kind of divine faith that is the basis of our human faith. It also expresses the conviction that one of the fundamental ways in which God reaches through to us in Jesus Christ is by making demands of us. About ten weeks later I preached another version of this same sermon at the centennial celebration of a former parish of mine.

Two years ago I shared some thoughts on grief in a Christian perspective with a church study group on death. The sermon "The Courage of Our Grief" grew out of the request that I share those thoughts more widely. It was preached on the Sunday before Memorial Day.

"Rebirth" is the fourth in a series of sermons on "The Five R's" or "Five Dimensions of Christian Living." The other "R's" were reckoning, repentance, reinforcement and responsibility.

We are all aware that these have been troubled years in the realm of marital relationships, but for a time the trouble in parent-child relationships may have been more widespread and more acute. There is a particular group of people, now ranging from the early twenties up to thirty or so, who a few years ago experienced severe alienation from society in general and from parents in particular. For many that estrangement continues. Pilgrim Church contains many parents with offspring belonging to that "problem generation" and, at least on paper, many such offspring as well. The special pain of many of us is the pain of David and Absalom.

But the challenge posed by "Both Sides, Now" is not confined to people of a particular age or generation. I preached this sermon on the Sunday before Christmas because I knew that not only would homing college students be in the congregation, but itinerant mothers-in-law as well.

Afterwards several fathers told me they wanted copies of the sermon to send to their children. No sons or daughters asked for copies to be sent to their parents. This leads me to believe that another sermon is needed which gives more attention to the child's perspective. I am working on that.