PILGRIM SERMONS FOR 1976

Once again I have put together a booklet containing the prepared "scripts" of ten sermons I preached at Pilgrim Church in the course of a calendar year. Actually there are eleven because one of them was delivered in two sections. The sermons are listed in chronological order this year rather than by topics. Once again I have tried to include a variety of themes reflecting the special concerns of the year just ended. Since every sermon arises out of a particular context in the life of the preacher, the church and the wider world, I shall describe that context briefly for each one by way of introduction.

Pain at the Gap was a follow-up to a sermon called Both Sides Now that I preached in December 1975. The earlier sermon appealed to children to try and understand their parents. The later sermon was addressed to parents confronted by alienated children.

The Roof Openers deals with a scene in the life of Jesus that I have preached on many times. But both the beginning and the ending of the sermon are new. They reflect some recent traveling.

The New Covenant is a communion sermon and consequently rather short. However, the way I set it up makes it look longer. It was written out this way as a kind of experiment to aid in my delivery. Perhaps I was influenced by the poetic style of Jeremiah. The covenant, of course, is the central idea of the Congregationalist heritage.

Is God a Yankee Fan? was delivered at the bicentennial service. It goes on altogether too long about the old New York Yankees, but the basic idea is not so bad, so I left it in. On the whole, it is more interesting than the one I delivered on the 4th of July.

Manifesto for the New Liberal Church also appeared as an article in The Christian Century issue of October 6. Article and sermon were developed at the same time. I really cannot say which came first, although the sermon was completed before the article. Article and sermon vary a little in style and content. Since special events went on in the services of May 16 and 23, I divided the sermon into two parts.

Gestures speaks to Memorial Day.

Some of the congregation may have thought that I was unusually industrious to have researched so much political data during my August camping trips. The fact is that The Candidate's Religion got its data from earlier sermons of mine. But the application was new.

Curtain was the first of a series on random summer reading, which included Frankenstein and other strange works. It was evidence that my vacation was not long enough. But I find that more people read Agatha Christie than read the Bible - at least in Pilgrim Church.

One of those weeks in August I gave a series of talks to the adults at a Minnesota Conference family camp. These talks, which were called "Perspectives and Pervitives on God", were adapted as a sermon series in

October and November. They attracted quite a bit of attention, especially the first three: Confession of a Fallen Away Atheist, Hallowing, and Humor. These sermons contained a lot of deliberate ad-libbing and they lose a good deal in print. Therefore, I decided not to make them all available by mimeograph. However, the whole series together with the scripture readings and prayers can be heard on tape. Since I thought people might like to have it included, I have written up in somewhat condensed form, the one on humor and included it here. I left out some of the funny stuff about myself since I would prefer that not too many people find out about me. The one called Claim about God "blowing" the conscience can be duplicated on request. I should add that an earlier version of Hallowing was preached in the fall of 1971 and was included in my first booklet of sermons at Pilgrim Church. Copies may still be obtained. The last in the series, called Sacrifice, was mimeographed separately and is also available.

Finally, there is a brief sermon for the late service on Christmas Eve, Why Are We Here? If nothing else it testifies to the fact that even an old, printed sermon can reach someone. Dr. Scherer's effort reached me more than thirty years after he first preached it and at a time when I very much needed it. But then he was a preacher of the sort they don't make any more.

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