17th Sunday after Trinity Rev. Carl F. Thrun
SERIES ON ANXIETY
Bessemer - 1959
W. Henrietta - 1960
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IN NOMINE JESU

Hebrews 12: 1,2 Let us run the race that we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus the Source and the Goal of our faith. For He Himself endured a cross and thought nothing of its shame because of the joy He had in doing His Father's Will. (Phillips translation)

FRUSTRATION!

Frustration comes into our lives in many shapes and sizes. Almost daily we run headlong into it in one form or another. It is always there, always lurking in the shadows. Just when we begin to think all is running smoothly for us, frustration steps in with its constant irritation. It might be compared to a roadblock thrown across the highway of life, compelling us to stop for a while, or forcing us to take a detour, or leaving us no choice but to give up traveling along that way altogether.

There is frustration in simple, ordinary things. A loaf of bread refuses to rise; we get behind a slow moving car when we are in a hurry; it rains when we wanted to have a picnic. It's frustrating, we say.

Frustration reaches into more important matters. A courtship that gave promise of developing into something beautiful and lasting, ends in tears. A fine young lady with all the natural impulses toward marriage and a family doesn't seem to meet the right man...and years go by. A marriage that began in high hopes gradually loses its flavor. A husband would like to provide a better home and more of the good things of life for himself and his family, but in spite of his best efforts can't seem to get ahead. Children of whom we expected great things remain quite ordinary or something considerably less. Dreams that fade, hopes that shrink, aspirations that dissolve, loves that lie buried - all speak of frustration.

Serious frustrations also show up in our spiritual life. We try to break an evil habit. About the time we think we have everything under control, we fall again and have to start all over. We begin the day with the determination to live all day loving God above all things and our neighbor as we love ourselves, but long before the day is over the Golden Rule which we have held up before us is badly tarnished. We tell ourselves that we are not going to worry any more but leave everything in the hands of God, and before we know it, we are way out there

in the future, trying to solve problems that have not even arisen.

There were frustrations even in the life of Christ. You remember how Christ returned to Nazareth, the scene of His childhood and youth, to reveal to His former neighbors the great purpose of His life. Yet when He pointed out to them that He was the long-expected Messiah, they drove Him out of town. It must have been deeply disappointing and frustrating! You remember how Christ tried to prepare His disciples for the great work they were to do, yet even as He was teaching them, their faith was pitifully weak, and their ambition was most selfish. It must have been discouraging and frustrating! You remember how Christ looked out over the city of Jerusalem shortly before His death and when He pondered how hard He had tried to win and save the people of the city and realized how few had actually accepted Him, He cried about it. It must have been sad and frustrating!

The grand thing is that Christ shows us how to deal with frustration. His entire life was dominated by one tremendous and glorious purpose, and of that purpose He never lost sight. Nothing mattered - neither disappointment or discouragement or sadness - in the face of what He had set out to accomplish. The writer to the Hebrews encourages us: Let us run the race that we have to run with patience, our eyes fixed on Jesus the Source and the Goal of our faith. For He Himself endured a cross and thought nothing of its shame because of the joy He had in doing His Father's Will. Christ declared: The Son of Man came...to give His life a ransom for many. Christ told His disciples exactly what was going to happen. Then He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, where He would die on the Cross for the sins of the world. Nothing was able to turn Him aside. When the people wanted to make Him an earthly king, He would have none of it. When the time came for Him to be in Jerusalem - though He knew it meant death - He was there. He steadily moved forward to the goal, ignoring the little frustrations of life.

What about our frustrations? How can we best deal with them? How can we accept life's disappointments and discouragements and not be unduly influenced

by them? In Man, the Unknown Alexis Carrel writes: Men grow when inspired by a high purpose, when contemplating vast horizons. The sacrifice of oneself is not very difficult for one burning with the passion of a great adventure. Life must have a great goal and purpose. Christ gives you such a great goal and purpose! Fix your eyes on Him, and you will find yourself rising above frustration!

In the face of tragedy, some people say: Well, it's the will of God, and I must bear it. There is a time, of course, when something like this can be said, but to start there is entirely wrong. Simply to shrug your shoulders in the face of difficulty, to give up in resignation, take on a martyr-complex, and complain there is nothing for you to do, is not the Will of God. It is definitely presumptuous on our part to claim to know what the will of God is in a given situation But this much of God's Will we do know: we are to run the race that we have to run with patience; we are to fix our eyes on Jesus; we are to give our all and more for the cause of His Kingdom; we are, as St. Paul puts it, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God - and no frustration dare deter us from this goal.

There once was a man by the name of Samuel Schereschewsky. A rabbinical student in Russian Lithuania, Schereschewsky came across a Hebrew translation of the New Testament and began thinking about the possibility that Jesus really was the Messiah. His spiritual quest led him to Germany for study and subsequently to New York City, where he eventually prepared for the ministry. Such was his brilliance that he was offered a place on the faculty; but at that time he was influenced by a missionary to China, and he decided to join him and use his linguistic abilities to translate the Scriptures into Chinese. He thus set sail, learning the Chinese language during the voyage. While in China word reached him that a fine young lady from Brooklyn wanted to join the Mission. He was greatly impressed by her apparent enthusiasm and zeal for the work of Christ and the Cross. She was staying in Shanghai; he was in Pekin - nine hundred miles away. The winter weather made travel by boat impossible except for the last two hundred miles - so

he walked the first seven hundred. Upon departing he told his companion he was going to Shanghai to get married. His engagement was announced two weeks after his arrival. We see here no It's the will of God that I be alone out here!

Schereschewsky felt strongly that the most important thing to be done in the mission field in China was the translation of the Scriptures into the native tongue. Then one day he suffered a sunstroke and became almost totally paralyzed - except for the middle finger on his right hand. Forced to return to America, he immediately set to work to complete his work of translation. Since no Chinese scholar was available to serve as scribe and he was unable to write himself, he poked out on a typewriter with his one finger the English equivalents of the Chinese characters; and so eager was he to push on with the work that when his one active finger would grow tired he would stamp out the letters with a small stick clutched in his fist. He produced two translations - one for the common man, and one for the educated. He set sail again with his manuscript to China, where, with the aid of Chinese assistants, he published the two Bibles in the Chinese language. One week after he brought this work to a close, he died - a fulfillment of his prayer: I am never without pain...when I have done this book I pray the dear Lord to take me to Himself. Schereschewsky thus provided tools which set forward the whole missionary effort in China. And he was grateful to God that he had been enabled to complete the task which he had set out to do. He was able to say: I have sat in this chair for over twenty years. It seemed very hard at first. But God knew best. He kept me for the work for which I am best fitted. It is in this way that one can properly talk about the will of God in connection with difficulty.

The sacred writer encourages us: Keep your eyes fixed on Christ! Christ wants you to have a purpose for living, a goal toward which you are moving. Christ wants you to live a life that glorifies Him and is of help to your fellow men. Christ wants you to look through all the uncertainties of tomorrow to the certain hope of heaven, as a gift of His redeeming love. In a world as unsteady as ours we need to feel the steadying hand of God on our shoulder, encouraging us to hang

on a while longer. We need the help of Christ to keep the ultimate goal in mind, to keep on moving confidently toward it. When a man keeps his eyes fixed on Christ, the change and decay of earthly things does not greatly disturb him. And when he knows the joy and satisfaction of Christian service, he can learn to accept life's inevitable frustrations.

Amen.