21st Sunday after Trinity
Bessemer - 1957

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

In Nomine Jesu

St. John 4: 49 The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

COME, LORD JESUS, ERE WE DIE !

Have you ever taken time to look beneath the surface of the world in which we live? Have you ever stopped to listen to the throbbing sobs and crys of fellow human beings heaped in misery, suffering, heart ache? When the camouflage of its sophistication and varied interests has been peeled off we can hear the groan of troubled, distressed souls. Somewhere underneath humanity's crustiness it is sure to be found. Too often we are so intent on the objectives of the moment that we ignore or hurry by the aching hearts, or our many concerns make us insensible to the real needs of those about us. The world may seem a gay whirl of social events and business circles, but underneath it all is an ache that cannot be stilled. Ours is a neon-blinded society. But the ache is heard in the confines of the counsel room as troubled hearts pour out their anxieties. It is seen at the bedside when death has brought life into focus. It is felt as we stand by the grave of a loved one and learn that there is a force more powerful than our own and we are helpless.

It is easy to see the world's agony written on the rubble of cities destroyed by the crafty will of man. It is easy to see in the death toll of thousands who die of starvation because man has not been able to solve the laws of supply and demand. It is easy to see in the history of the passing nations which rise and fall with an ever-increasing tempo. All this means little to us, however, until it affects us personally in some special way. Underneath the world's glamor is a faltering sense of security. Behind the mad rush to gain is man's sense of lack. Sometimes we have to hunt for it. Sometimes it rears up its head and stares us brazenly in the face.

Not very often do we hear the cry which this nobleman brought to the Savior: "Sir, come down e'er my child die." The world is full of remedies for everything, even for this soul agony. These are the drugs that are aimed only at deadening the pain to prevent our pain

at deadening the pain to prevent our paying attention to the real thing. The world is full of reform, but it does not see that the problem to be solved is man himself and not his environment or the circumstances in which he finds himself. Only when man learns his helplessness does Christianity offer him a cure for his ills; only when a man comes to the Savior and implores His help does the Christian faith promise the cure.

It is easier to see the need of others than it is to see our own need. We can be stirred by the needs of the heathen, but we don't see the seeds of death that are sown in our own souls. It is easy to condemn the man who kills, but it is hard to recognize as murder our own hatred, our own neglect of the physical and spiritual well-being of others. It is easy to condemn those who are caught in the mesh of immorality; it is harder to see our own wayward thoughts as evil, or our neglect in promoting a healthy, moral community as being a sin against this command of God. It is easy to censure those who persecute Christianity; it is harder to put our neglect of the Word and Sacraments in the same category. Search yourself and you will find the ills of the world.

Jesus came to give life because "In Him was Life." He is the only source of Life; all other search is vain. He came that the soul which found it was hungry might be fed; He came that the soul that found it was lonely might be comforted. When men were in the depths of despair, He came to give man hope. He didn't come merely to show the world how bad it was. We have a common tendency to decry the errors of our age and proclaim its hopelessness. He came as an answer to the needs, not just as enlightenment on a problem. Can the world be made to live today? Not by the feeble efforts of men, for the dead cannot raise the dead; but only when the source of Life Itself is tapped in the person of Jesus Christ can the world be resurrected to life, and it can be done.

When the nobleman can to Jesus, he was in a state of complete desperation. Undoubtedly he had tried every other remedy for restoring his son's health, but to no avail. And now, "when he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea

into Galilee, he went unto Him, and besought Him that He would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death." From the severity of the Lord's reply: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," we conclude that the nobleman would not have come at all if he were not so compelled. He was driven to Jesus by the strong constraint of an outward need, rather than by the inner necessities and desires of his soul. And yet, the Lord of Life who had come to seek and save the lost would not turn him away empty. He would nourish, strengthen, build up this man's meager faith. Thus, rather than come down as the nobleman requested, Jesus set out to prove his faith, increase his conviction that here was more than "signs and wonders," but Life and Salvation. He bids him: "Go thy way, thy son liveth."

"And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." He went! Jesus invites us to come; and when we have come and heard, He sends us away, saying, "Go, and work in My vineyard!" If I had a friend who was dying, and I knew a certain cure for his disease, what kind of man would I be if I didn't go and tell him; yes, not only tell him but help him; yes, not only help him but constrain him to apply the cure? For all our talk about faith, can it be that we don't believe it enough to put it to work? We spend so much on ourselves, we look out for our own welfare first, we are concerned about such trivial things in life. Can it be that we don't actually believe that Christ can cure our sin-sick world, so we settle for the best we can get out of it.

In a certain place during the last war a bomber crashed, and two of the crew members went back into the burning ship to bring out the badly injured radio man, who later died. They risked their lives to give this man a chance to live. Though we preach ever so forceful sermons, though we give ever so much money, though we practice our Christianity ever so well, we can never force a person to believe; but we can give him a chance to live. We can bring him to the Source of Life, stand him under the cross of the bleeding Redeemer, show him the

unspeakable love of God, that he may have a chance to live and make something out of life, even if it costs us something.

When the nobleman reached his home, he was delighted by the sight of a healthy, happy son. The Word of Jesus had indeed contained the power of life, even as the nobleman had trusted.

How shall it be with you as you return to your homes this day? Will it be simply another Word of Jesus heard and quickly dispensed with? Or will faith and confidence in the Savior's power and ability to help in every need, problem, perplexity accompany you so that when you arrive, your home will be filled with indescribable happiness, the happiness of knowing that your soul is -- sick unto death -- is healthy and alive?

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," says the Savior. The dispairing death-cry of our suffering world can be turned into a cry of joy only when the world has come to the Redeemer begging a word of healing, and when Christians go away believing, convinced that He can perform that which He has promised.

God grant every one of you the certainty of knowing Whom you have believed so that you might at the last enter with joy into your eternal Home.