3rd Sunday after Epiphany
Rolling Meadows - 1965

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. John 6: 37 Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out

NO EXCLUSIONS!

Him who comes to Me I will not cast out - I shall not refuse anyone who comes to Me. Hear this and you hear the voice of the Son of God who came to give His life for the life of the world. This is the way He was, and the way He is. People came to Him, all kinds of people, unlikely people, non-religious people, sinful people, second-rate and trashy people, people not worth bothering about or giving a second thought. None who came sincerely seeking went away without a welcome, an invitation to faith and obedience.

Jesus Christ did not act the way we often do. He did not withhold a welcome, His help or love until He had ascertained beyond the shadow of a reasonable doubt that the recipient would be worthy or appreciative. Purely out of love and compassion for people He gave nothing less than Himself. Love is a spendthrift. It counts no cost. Let me repeat that: LOVE COUNTS NO COST. Not counting the cost, asking nothing in return for His all-embracing, all-inclusive love, Christ gave Himself. It is hard to understand that kind of love, particularly coming from a man. Christ was a man, a real man. When it was necessary to be hard, He was hard as nails. When the situation called for heart, He was like the sweetest butter. There has never been anyone like Him, and there never will be. There is only one way for a man or woman to be genuinely happy in this world of ours: that way is to follow Him in faith and love. Let us face the fact that we would prefer not to follow Him. We prefer to be lavish and generous toward people like ourselves, our friends, our relatives, those solid citizens whom we describe as our own kind - people we may reasonably expect to help us if we ever get in a jam. Neighborliness in our world is all too often a kind of insurance for a rainy day. Not so with Jesus! With Him there were no qualifications, no exceptions, no exclusions: Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.

At the request of Chief Campbell all the clergymen in Rolling Meadows canvassed the neighborhood immediately surrounding the home into which a negroe couple is moving. Some were intensely adamant, most were politely passive, only

a very few were eagerly receptive. Time and again I heard the response: Well, there's nothing we can do about it. We don't like it; but we won't cause any trouble, if that is why you're here. Some were at least appeased by the fact that they were renting, that they had no children, that Lt. Cook had served his country in Korea, that he was stationed at Nikki Air Force Base here in Arlington Heights. But what if none of these things were so? One woman told us bluntly: We've moved three times already to get away from them. I don't know how far we can run.

By contrast, look at the 8th chapter of St. Matthew of which our Gospel lesson was a part: Behold, a leper came to Him and knelt before Him, saying, 'Lord, if you will, You can make me clean.' And He stretched out His hand and touched him saying, 'I will; be clean.' And immediately his leprosy was cleansed .... As He entered Capernaum, a centurion came forward to Him, beseeching Him and saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress.' And He said to him, 'I will come and heal him.' And the centurion answered Him, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; only say the word, and my servant will be healed."... When Jesus heard him, He marveled, and said to those who followed Him, 'Truly I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness where man will weep and gnash their teeth.' And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go; be it done to you as you have believed.' And his servant was healed at that very moment. And when Jesus entered Peter's house He saw his mother-in-law lying sick with a fever; He touched her hand, and the fever left her; and she rose and served Him. That evening they brought to Him many who were posessed with demons, and He cast out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the Prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.' Look at ~~these people~~ these: a leper, a Roman soldier, a slave, a woman otherwise unknown except that she was

Peter's mother-in-law, and a whole raft of demoniacs and sick people - people of every description who reminded Him of sheep, wandering abroad without a shepherd. The sight of them moved Him to compassion.

It was illegal to touch a leper, but when it came to a demonstration o: love legality did not bother Him. It was irregular for a religious teacher to be caught talking to a woman, but a woman sick or in trouble stirred His heart and received His helping hand. Convention and custom simply could not stand in His way. Pride and prejudice were foreign to Him. Regardless of sex, class, station, nation, education, or race - to Him every man was a man and every perso a person - all in need of the grace of God, none more fit to receive that grace than another.

The miracles of Jesus were not theatrical displays of raw power - nor were they merely a demonstration of the fantastic forces He was able to control. Some people take them to be just that, nothing more. Others deny His miracles altogether, simply because they cannot understand. It is not hard to understand Him. He came doing signs and wonders that we might understand. St. Matthew understoo and explained it all quite bluntly: This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.' That we can understand, if we will. As one of my professors at the Seminary put it: Jesus never used His authority and power to assert Himself, to advance Himself, or to protect Himself...His whole life was one great act of ministry, a ministry which claimed Him wholly and consumed Him.

No exclusions - even though it meant giving Himself and being consumed. This is God as He really is! Knowing us as we really are, God still loves. He knows our shortcomings, our rebellions, our doubts, the littleness of our faith, the niggardliness of our gratitude, the anemia of our love. Yet He loves. Out of purely Fatherly divine goodness and mercy, the Mighty God sent His Son to be a man. In Christ the walls come tumbling down, toppling the barriers with which a proud humanity walls itself in. God cares. His love allows for no fences.

When God goes the lowly way of service to fill up the whole need of all men, there are no exceptions - no exclusions here: Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out.

Our stratified, segregated, and prejudiced world had better find out, and soon, what this really means - no exclusions in the heart of God! No man ever finds out what God has in His great heart without being shaken to his foundations. The N. T. says that Jesus Christ is the Foundation. Those who follow Him are living stones built on that Foundation. The Foundation gives shape, stability, and strength to whatever goes on top. In a church near New York City melting ice and snow from one corner of the roof worked their way into the building, causing a drip in one corner of the narthex. A workman remarked: The church is built on a rock and has a solid foundation, but the roof leaks. I am sorry to say that the Church of Jesus Christ very often leaks. People profess faith in Christ, calling Him Savior and Lord, but do not take seriously either Christ Himself or what He has asserted to be true with every fiber of His Being: No exclusions! Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out. The Foundation is solid, but the roof leaks.

Do I have to spell out the modern counterparts of the leper, the Roman soldier, the slave, the sick woman, and the rest of that motley group? There is no maybe, perhaps, or counting the cost when it comes to evangelism - our witnessing for the Savior. If you cannot speak like angels, if you cannot preach like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, you can say He died for all. You are not talking Christ's language, if you do not feel the deep heartache and bone-chilling bitterness people all over the world feel at the failure of Christian people to take our Lord seriously: Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out. If there are exclusions in the Christian Church today, it is not Christ's fault, but the fault of Christ's people - a good Foundation, but the roof leaks.

Faith in Christ makes its demands upon every man, hard as they may be. St. Paul put it bluntly and without reservation: In Christ you are all sons of

God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither sasave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. What Christ preaches is not artificial do-goodism, where people rush off for someone to help and then pat themselves on the back for being such good people. It is much more difficult than that. Christ's demand is altogether clear: Love thy neighbor as thyself. Who is my neighbor? The person who is there, meeting me in my business travel, school, play, shopping - wherever it is - right at home, next door, where ver I am. My neighbor crosses my path ever day. Right there, where you are, God is calling you to love as you have been loved - no exclusions; to be merciful as you have received mercy - no exclusions; to deal with every human being of whatever race or color as the redeemed of Christ - no exclusions; to be an ambassador of the mighty Son of the Most High God who means what He says: Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out. No exclusions! Amen.