Radio Station WNWC
Arlington Heights, Ill. - 1966

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

Could ye not watch with me one hour? If we listen to these words as Christians we knaow and believe that the young man who spoke them ~~under the moonlit sky~~ in the Garden of Gethsemane was very God of very God, Begotten, not Made, being of one substance with the Father from all eternity. He was the God-Man for whose summons the uncalled legions of angels were waiting. ~~He was the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the great I Am that I Am, the Son of the Living God in a foreign land.~~

What does He say? Something so wistfully and sorrowfully human that it is almost beyond understanding - something that we have said to a friend from a sick bed or in an hour of deep loneliness and great trouble: Could ye not watch with Me one hour? Can't you stay and help me through these dark waters? Won't you keep me company in my loneliness? ~~And here in one swift lightning moment in the darkness of the Garden we catch a glimpse of the wistfulness of Jesus Christ - the great mysterious loneliness of the Son of God.~~ This is not God flinging His compassion from aeons away on us who must live and die alone in the dusk of the earth. This is God as one of us, in the very heat and pain of life. This is God, ~~not with drums beating and flags flying, but~~ lonely and alone in the darkness under the tress of Gethsemane.

Perhaps these are the words which must come to us during this new Lenten season: Could ye not watch with Me one Hour? To watch with Him and then to report on what we have learned in our watching is our great and compelling task.

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Can you imagine even for a moment the humanly incredible burden which the prayers of all mankind place upon the heart of God? ~~It all began thousands of years ago in a Garden in the cool of the day. Then prayer came from the lips of kings, patriarchs and prophets - from the children of the covenant, from wise men kneeling before a Baby in a manger. At last the flood of prayer paused for a moment for a single, lonely prayer: Father forgive them for they know not what they do.~~

~~Then, however, it really began!~~ Day by day ~~for two thousand years, first from the depths of caves and catacombs where the followers of Him who had prayed on Calvary were compelled to hide, then rising into light, swelling, spreading, surging over the earth -~~ in the first lispings of childhood, in the solemn celebrations of all the churches - from hut and hovel, from palace and hospital - in the last confessions of the dying - from 10,000 times 10,000 - day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, the prayers of a stricken humanity have come to the heart of God. While a little boy was asking for a bicycle, a man was begging for relief from the pain of cancer. And God hears them all and answers them all! ~~Sometimes His answer is Yes! Sometimes His answer is No! Most often it is Wait a little while!~~

God hears and He answers because a Man called Christ Jesus hung upon a Cross and died with a prayer on His lips. By that death and by that prayer He became the great, single Voice in the Universe which supports our prayers, ~~for there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus~~. On our knees we are never alone! There is always this other great Voice speaking for us and with us - the Voice of Him who has earned the right to pray for us - ~~to be our Mediator~~ - because He gave His soul unto death and took us away from a silent, voiceless, prayerless life by His own prayerful death: Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.

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The Cross of Christ has given us the power to pray, a Person to pray with us, and a Mediator to pray for us! I wonder how many of ~~you~~ us appreciate the full implication of what this means. ~~All observers agree~~ that modern man's ~~thought is full~~ of a sense of darkness, of the fragility of existence, of man's finitude, of the unpredictabilities of life and history. In a word, he is full of anxiety. Why this conspiracy of darkness and of fear? Why this cosmic loneliness?

There is only one answer and only one thing to do. Tonight, today, tomorrow, somewhere, sometime you must come to see a Man die - and by knowing why He died you will enter a new and lovely world - a world where you can be good with God - where you can be poor with Christ's poor - despised with Christ's despised - accounted foolish for His sake - and yet by His grace accounted so good that He becomes a beggar for your heart - so that you, too, can join Him in pardoning the unpardonable, loving the unlovable, and forgiving the unforgiveable.

This is the great message of the Cross and the Suffering Savior. This is the beginning and end of History. ~~It is the only source of reality, peace, & meaning for your life!~~ It is the end of anxiety - for now there is One who knows us, One who loves us, One who cares, One who wants to hold us close to His heart, One who has promised never to leave us desolate. ~~When you say your prayers today, try to remember that your voice now reaches the heart of God because a Man died on a Cross to make this great mystery, this holy wonder, this final miracle possible.~~

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Have you ever stopped to think about the homelessness of Jesus, who left the security of His eternal home to come into our world of hate and guilt and misunderstanding? Faxes have holes, He said, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head. Nowhere to lay His head, never to be able to relax, always surrounded and beset, and always exposed to the onslaught of the unknown: this is insecurity, this is the very prototype of the homeless One. And yet He goes on, mysteriously embodied in the plan of God, ~~walking beneath the shadow of His Father's~~ ~~everlasting arms~~ the everlasting arms, always ~~connected with the guarding of the angels~~. And therefore He could calmly go to sleep in the little boat that threatened to capsize, while His disciples' panic went beyond control. Even in that ultimate dereliction on the Cross when the face of the Father vanished about the ninth hour and He could only cry out his rejection, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? He framed His complaint in the words of a psalm of the Holy Scriptures, and thus prayed in the words His Father had given to Him. So here again the circuit to the Eternal was closed and His Father was with Him. And when at last He said, Father, into Thy hands I commit My spirit, this was like a thanksgiving for the sheltering of ~~God's~~ the Father's loving Hand, like a prayer of gratitude that now He could let himself fall without a care, even though His body remained hanging helplessly from ~~the nails of~~ the Cross.

Because all power in heaven and on earth has been given to this Lord, the world no longer reeks of alienness. Jesus, your Savior, will never leave you nor forsake you. ~~The lights of the Father's house are shining off in the distance. They are a sign that we are expected and that we have a goal. With such a Savior at your side, you need never again be homeless, or lonely, or utterly forsaken!~~

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The great secret of Christianity, the source of its power lies in the Cross of Christ. Here is the very heart of our faith! ~~The silences of eternity, the councils of the Holy Trinity, the crying of prophets, the long night of waiting, the whimper of a Child in a manger - Palm Sunday, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost - all point to the center of the world's history and the heart of the world's hope - the Cross of Christ. In it the entire age-long conflict of sin and grace comes to a burning focus.~~ We have on Calvary the full generosity of God and the full shame of man.

The Cross of Christ brings us to an overwhelming consciousness of our sin. We must remember that sin is always division. It is the breaking down of fellowship. Sin is wandering, loneliness, going away, going astray, separation. It always has the same tolling theme. We had a home once and lost it. We had a fellowship and broke it. We had a love and we forgot it. And there is finally no difference in kind between the little hates, jealousies, malices in our hearts and in the church, and the roar of planes and bombs and guns. It is all of one piece. It is all sin. It is the crashing of our world into pieces because of sin.

And yet, there comes now the amazing, humanly incredible miracle of the Cross - the miracle of forgiveness, the restoration of fellowship, the return to the Father's house. In Him our brokenness is healed, and our union with God and man is restored. ~~Our great separation so long now and so bitter has been ended by the reunion with God through Jesus Christ.~~ The bonds of sin are loosed. ~~We have again the freedoms beneath and beyond all human freedoms - freedom from fear of sin, freedom from want of God, freedom of worship of God, the freedom of speech to God.~~ No wonder Christians sing: In the Cross of Christ I glory!

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The great burden of the Christian message to our world of anxiety, ~~frustration, and tension~~ is that through the Cross of Christ we are redeemed, restored, forgiven. This is an accomplished fact. This is a finished redemption. ~~It is one of the most curious phenomena of church history that even within the framework of the Christian Church there has always been the effort to make Christianity a quest instead of an achievement. In Contrast to all other religious systems the faith of Christianity is a fact, done and complete, and not a search for higher truth. The life of the church may be a quest, a progression toward a goal~~ but never its faith. ~~The essence of Christianity is that something has been done and nothing remains to~~ be done. ~~It is finished,~~ holy, perfect. How that message fits into our world with its haunting sense of incompleteness, of unfinished faith, of broken dreams and lost hopes!

This is our message and our faith: Once and only once in the long story of our incompleteness there was one task that was done - completely, finally, absolutely - ~~by every standard of measurement, human or divine~~. The work of our Lord from the first cry in the manger to the last cry on the Cross was a divine symphony coming to its final and inevitable end, complete and perfect, turning all our unfinished lives, the loose ends of history, the frayed edges of time into something new, complete, holy and glorious. Our Lord's cry, It is finished, was the cry of a worker whose work is done, a soldier whose victory is won, a Savior whose purposes have been accomplished. And since that day - and forever - He has in His grip these days and these years and what we have done to one another and to Him. He has restored the ancient, divine balance between justice and mercy. Now and forever mercy rules the believing heart and the believing church. Dare to believe it, ~~dare~~ to confess it and make it the theme of your heart and life: You are redeemed, restored, forgiven! It is finished.