The Second Wednesday in Lent
Rolling Meadows - 1978

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

ST. JOHN 7: 40-52

Someone has said that a MAN IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT needs a RAY OF SUNSHINE through a CHINK IN THE WALL to KEEP HIS SANITY. Surely there is some truth in that statement. SUNSHINE is our constant reminder that there is a WORLD OUTSIDE -- where people are moving around in FREEDOM -- where there is HOPE AND HELP for people who are in DISTRESS. ..... We remember that in the very beginning, the very first thing that God said was: "LET THERE BE LIGHT." He said that because "THE EARTH WAS WITHOUT FORM AND VOID, AND DARKNESS WAS UPON THE FACE OF THE DEEP." Without LIGHT, the world was in DARKNESS AND CHAOS.

During the last days of our Savior's life, there was NOT A SINGLE RAY OF SUNSHINE to which He could fasten His hope. From beginning to end His walk to the CROSS is a WALK DOWNWARD -- DOWNWARD to the DEPRESSING DARKNESS and DEPTHS of HELL!

"Is there no attorney for the defense?" "IS THERE NO ATTORNEY FOR THE DEFENSE?" ..... There is only DARK AND DEATHLY SILENCE. We sing so bravely and so feverently: "Stand up, Stand up for Jesus" -- but there was no one then to STEP FORWARD IN HIS DEFENSE -- or "stand up" for Him.

© yes

O yes, there was that ANGEL in the Garden of Gethsemane. You say, "Now there is a bit of sunshine. Here is an ATTORNEY FOR THE DEFENSE." But READ BETWEEN THE LINES a little -- and you will discover that Jesus has been in LONG AND EARNEST PRAYER with HIS FATHER. He has been in DEEP STRUGGLE -- so much so that "GREAT DROPS OF BLOOD" came falling to the ground. And when it was all over, the FATHER said in effect, "You there -- messenger boy -- you angel over there -- you go down and strengthen Him." ..... There is not much SUNSHINE in that..... And the DARKNESS GROWS DEEPER STILL.

Procula

"IS THERE NO ATTORNEY FOR THE DEFENSE?" You might perhaps think of PILATE'S WIFE -- scribbling off her note to her husband: "HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THAT JUST MAN." But there is really NO SUNSHINE there. While her CONSCIENCE may have troubled her in her DREAMS and while she may have acknowledged Jesus as a "JUST MAN" --- her real concern was for HER HUSBAND and what his INVOLVEMENT WITH JESUS would do to him. & his Career!

"IS THERE NO ATTORNEY FOR THE DEFENSE?" You may pick an OUTSIDER like SIMON OF CYRENE. You remember that he is the man who CARRIED JESUS' CROSS TO CALVARY. What a GENEROUS THING TO DO! But even in the case of SIMON we are told: "HIM THEY COMPELLED TO BEAR THE CROSS." He did it AGAINST HIS WILL.

"IS THERE NO ATTORNEY FOR THE DEFENSE?" IS THERE NO SUNSHINE? IS THERE NO HOPE? MUST

EVERY DREARY, DARK, SUFFERING STEP ALONG THE ROAD BE ANOTHER STEP DOWNWARD TO HELL?, ...

When you honestly look into your own HEART OF HEARTS, you know what the answer is: "Yes. May God forgive me, YES." THERE IS NO ATTORNEY FOR THE DEFENSE! THERE IS NO RAY OF SUNSHINE FOR HIM!

Every man has a right to DEFENSE COUNSEL. Even the SANHEDRIN recognized that. They demanded that unless there were WITNESSES FOR THE ACCUSED -- some kind of DEFENSE -- NO SENTENCE COULD BE PASSED! ..... But there is NO ONE who comes to the DEFENSE OF JESUS. Search the record! There is NO ONE to PLEAD HIS CAUSE. ..... The voices for the PROSECUTION are INSISTENT AND PERSISTENT. ..... But there is NO VOICE FOR THE DEFENSE!

There is NO VOICE unless you go back to the day when the SANHEDRIN met -- after their attempt to ARREST JESUS had failed..... This is the story of our text..... The CHURCH LEADERS were gathered together to hear the report from the TEMPLE GUARD..... But the SOLDIERS were SO IMPRESSED by the MESSAGE AND THE AUTHORITY with which JESUS spoke that they neglected to carry out their assignment. ..... There is an UNEASINESS in the gathering..... The Sanhedrin believes that the SOLDIERS have been "taken in" by JESUS.... ... The DISCUSSION moves back and forth.....

Finally there is one member of the SANHEDRIN NICODEMUS by name who seemingly STANDS UP in JESUS' DEFENSE. He had sought JESUS out one night to ask some questions. "RABBI, WE KNOW THAT YOU ARE A TEACHER COME FROM GOD; FOR NO ONE CAN DO THESE SIGNS THAT YOU DO, UNLESS GOD IS WITH HIM." ..... And now his mind is CHURNING and his heart is POUNDING. He wants to come to the DEFENSE OF CHRIST -- but he doesn't know how. His FEET -- like ours -- are FEET OF CLAY.

He opens his DEFENSE O.K. "DOES OUR LAW PERMIT US TO PASS JUDGEMENT ON A MAN UNLESS WE HAVE FIRST GIVEN HIM A HEARING AND LEARNED THE FACTS?" That's an EXCELLENT QUESTION, Nicodemus! Surely the other members of the SANHEDRIN will have to FACE THE ISSUES and LOOK AT THEMSELVES IN THE MIRROR..... PRESS THE POINT, NICODEMUS! MAKE THEM ANSWER!

But then comes the DEVASTATING SARCASM -- the PUT-DOWN -- the DEGRADING SNEER: "ARE YOU A GALILEAN TOO?" And that put the WOULD-BE DEFENDER on the DEFENSE. He BACKED DOWN AND DROPPED THE CASE.

"IS THERE NO ATTORNEY FOR THE DEFENSE?" ..... How are YOU AND I DEFENDING HIM? ..... OUTSIDE THE CHURCH, men and women & children USE HIS NAME for CURSING -- and men and women & children CURSE HIM..... INSIDE THE CHURCH, He is STRIPPED OF HIS GLORY by our indifference and apathy -- our LACK OF LOVE AND FORGIVENESS for one another -- our FAILURE TO CONFESS

HIS NAME at school, on the job, at home.

WHAT KIND OF DEFENSE ARE WE MAKING FOR JESUS? He went through the HELL OF OUR DARKNESS that we may have the JOY OF HIS ETERNAL LIGHT. Never forget that!

Amen.