15th Sunday after Trinity
SERIES ON DISCIPLESHIP * THE DISCIPLE'S LOYALTY
West Henrietta - 1961

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

St. Matthew 6: 33 Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness!

Queen Mary once gave this word of advice to her granddaughter Elizabeth II, Remember that life is made of loyalty - loyalty to your friends; loyalty to things beautiful and good; loyalty to the country which you love; and, above all, for this holds all other loyalties together, loyalty to God. That was splendidly put! Life is made up of loyalties, for better or for worse, for success or for failure. We live by our loyalties. Tell me where you loyalties are - where does your strongest interest lie? what do you most enjoy? for what do you feel most responsible? what do you love above everything else? what comes first in your life? and it will be a simple matter to predict what kind of life you will live.

God is interested in your loyalty. Christ demands your loyalty. Christ insists that your first and highest loyalty belongs to God. In His Sermon on the Mount He stated simply and clearly, Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness.

Modern man is having trouble with his loyalties. He seems to have no strong, central loyalty to direct him; he seems to be lacking rooted convictions that hold him steady; he seems to be wanting sturdy and lasting love to motivate his life. He seems to be looking for some great, overpowering cause to which he can give his life, but he has not yet found it. He is like the little boy who was walking along a country road with his BB-gun on his shoulder. When the lad was asked, Son, what are you hunting? he answered, I don't know. I haven't seen it yet.

The result is that modern man has his values confused and his loyalties are therefore in conflict. His choices are often second-best. The story is told of a well-qualified man who appled for an executive position with a large corporation. When he was asked about his family, he beamed with pride and stated that his wife and children meant everything to him. It was the wrong answer and he did not get the job. He was told, We have no objection to your being a family man, but we can't use you as an executive. With us the company must come first. .... Another man was urged, by the company for whom he worked, to divorce his reserved

wife. He was then given two weeks' vacation with pay to enjoy a honeymoon with a younger woman, whose charm would be a greater asset to the business. You don't have to be a student of sociology to know that if such practices become widespread, modern civilization, like Haman, is building a gallows on which it will one day hang.

A machinist diliberately ruined an eighteen thousand dollar machine at the factory where he was employed. With a laugh he crowed, What do I care about the factory! It was fun! You don't have to be a student of economics to know that such behavior hurts the factory, those who work there, and finally all of us.

A pastor was counseling with a young man who was living in the far country of vice and sin. He asked him, Don't you feel any sense of responsibility to your mother, any sense of loyalty to your family? Does God mean anything to you? His defiant answer was, What I do is nobody's business but my own. I make my own rules and change them as I please. You don't have to be a student of theology to know that such a path leads to moral ruin.

I know a nation - so do you - powerful and ruthless, that insists the state comes first. In communistic Russia the individual person has little or no value. Its government operates that way too- with no respect for God, or for the distinction between right and wrong, or for the sanctity of the individual. You don't have to be a student of history to know that such a policy must lead to the enslavement of man and the utter rejection of God and religion.

When a man has a false sense of values, his loyalties do not elevate and ennoble him, but rather they degrade and destroy him. Most of the problems that afflict our times spring from a warped sense of values and loyalties that are in conflict and confusion. When men choose cheap and earthly goals, when they devote their life to low and selfish purposes, when they give their highest loyalties to minor causes, they become restless and dissatisfied and world-weary, and they face life with a sneer. They have no inspiring and enduring objective to guide and direct them. The famed historian Will Durant says that life's meaning to him is

to attach oneself to some whole and then give oneself to it with heart and mind and soul. But to what shall we attach our life?

Mountain climbers in the Swiss Alps will tell you that it is good advice not to pay any attention to falling objects. Huge pieces of ice sometimes break off and go tumbling down the mountain-side. They are usually quite distant and not in themselves much of a danger. The danger is that in fixing your attention on them, you may unconsciously follow them too closely, lose your balance, and fall down the mountain. Climbers are advised to keep looking up. Try to keep the top of the mountain in view, they are told, and keep the goal in mind.

The Apostle Paul encourages us, Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For, as he says, The form of this world is passing away. But earnestly desire the higher gifts. Christ seeks to direct your loyalty to the heights by saying, Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. To seek God's Kingdom is to desire His rule in your heart & life. It is to want Him to guide & direct & govern all that you do.

In the Old Testament God said for all time, speaking through His prophet Isaiah, I am the Lord, that is My Name: My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to graven images. When Christ came, He put His approval on this first and highest law, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. In His Sermon on the Mount Christ lists the things to which men are likely to give their first and best attention: food, drink, clothing, money, and then He says, Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness. Christ came to suffer and die that men through faith in Him might again become children of God - children who serve Him first, out of love. From the Cross Christ's arms reach out in love to embrace you and me and all mankind. He offers us His perfect righteousness for our sinfulness. He shows us how to live righteously, that is, right and wise according to the will of God. He wants ~~to direct our~~ our complete loyalty. Follow Me, He says. Take up your cross and follow Me!

When Christ directs your loyalty, your life is immovably centered in Him. When Christ possesses your heart, all your loyalties are made one. Queen Mary was

absolutely right when she stated that loyalty to God holds all other loyalties together. It creates no conflict between loyalties; it strengthens them (all true loyalties.) A person is not less loyal to his friends, to things beautiful and good, to the country which he loves, when his loyalty to God is first and strongest: instead, he is more loyal to all of them. That is the true joy in life, to have it all tied together into a beautiful and harmonious whole, through loyalty to God. H.G. Wells in his book THE RESEARCH MAGNIFICENT tells of a young man who saw life as a succession of days...that became steadily more crowded with ignoble and trivial occupations. Then suddenly he cried to God in the gathering darkness, O GOD, GIVE ME BACK MY VISIONS! In all the confusion and perplexity that surrounds us today, we had better learn to pray earnestly, O God, give us back our loyalty to Thee and to Thy precepts!

When Christ directs your loyalty, you will find in life abiding satisfactions. For centuries Christian people have prayed through persecutions and afflictions, Let but the cause seem beautiful, dear Lord, if we must die. It is not life itself that destroys us, but living without a sense of importance, without an abiding loyalty, without God and His Son Jesus Christ. When Christ directs your loyalty, other problems shrink in significance. When Christ moves into your heart, anxiety moves out. He frees you of your sin and guilt, comforts you in your sorrow, helps you in your work, and gives you true security, while you live here on earth and in heaven forever.

Rudyard Kipling tells the story about Kim, an English boy who grew up in India. Lurgan Sahib of the British Secret Service wanted to employ Kim, but desired first to be sure of his loyalty. He gave Kim an earthen jar, and after he had taken a drink from it, commanded him to throw the jar to the floor. Kim obeyed. The jar broke into many pieces. Lurgan then tried to cast an hypnotic spell on Kim. Gently he stroked the nape of Kim's neck and said, Look at it. It shall come to life again, piece by piece. Look, it's coming back into shape. For a moment Kim felt he was giving in to the hypnotic spell and then quickly took

refuge in the multiplication table. Determinedly he repeated to himself, Twice three equals six, three times three is nine, four times three is twelve. To Lurgan's question, Isn't it coming into shape? he answered determinedly, No, it's smashed! Kim saved himself from delusion and defeat by clinging to something that he knew to be eternally true.

Don't let the Devil deceive you. When second-class values in life seek to cast an hypnotic spell on you and make a bid for your first-class loyalty, find refuge in Christ, who is eternally true. Cling to His Word, Seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness. Give God your highest loyalty, and your life will be blessed forever! Amen.