

The Expendable

I will read to you one verse of Scripture for our New Testament lesson.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

You know we are in Lent now, and of course we are wanting to think in a special way about Jesus. We certainly appreciate the special music we've had this morning, all of which points to him and we want to think with you on The Expendable this morning using this scripture verse that we have read as our text.

Mr. M.L. White some years ago wrote a book and he entitled that book **The Expendable** [1], and in the book he explains how that in our armed forces there are certain times when a small group of soldiers have to stand at some strategic point and there give their lives in order that the larger army to which they belong may have a few more precious moments to make their preparation for the battle. Now, that thing happened lots of times during our recent wars, and it illustrates the fact that sometimes it's necessary to give up a smaller measure of life in order to preserve a larger measure of life.

That is not only a principle in warfare, but it is a principle of life, that is giving up a lesser measure of life in order to preserve a larger measure of life. And that's exactly what Jesus did.

Now you can illustrate that by a grain of corn, or by any other grain. You plant your grain of corn. Many of you have done that, and that grain of corn, after it sprouts and the little stalk comes up and you begin to cultivate it, you can go and pull up that stalk of corn and you'll not find the grain that you planted. But that grain has decayed, it has given up its life, the kernel of life that was in it, just one grain, that there might be more grains, don't you see, in the various years grown on that stalk.

So the principle of giving up a lesser measure of life for a larger measure of life was really the philosophy that Jesus had. And to conform to this wonderful philosophy of life, it means that we are not going to hoard our lives. Our lives are not to be hoarded, but they are to be expanded. They are to be given out in order that the Kingdom of God might increase.

Now this was one of the cardinal principles of Jesus.

Any of us who will read his life, read the sayings that are recorded in the Bible that he said, You will find that this was his philosophy of life, his cardinal principles. He insisted that whosoever will save his life shall lose it. But whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel, the same shall save. And you noticed in his blessed life that that was his practice. He gave himself to that sort of thing, in accordance with our text that we read to you this morning, found in Second Corinthians, the 8th chapter and the ninth verse.

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty are what he gave up, might be rich.”

That is his philosophy of life. And Paul, the great apostle and a great friend of Jesus, is the man that has given this explanation of the life of Jesus and of the teachings which he taught.

You know it must be a mistake when some people say that Jesus was a martyr, that his life was just taken from him, like he would just go out and kill some man here. Because according to Jesus, he had the power to call down legions of angels to keep his life from being taken. Not

only so, but Jesus was at the making of this world.

He was the one that helped to make the little building block that we called Adam, and if he had wanted to do so, he could have brought in the atomic age or the hydrogen bomb age or anything he wanted to bring in and could have dissolved this whole earth to save his life if he had wanted to do it.

Why didn't he do that? It's simply because that he believed in the principle of laying down a lesser measure of life that our larger measure may be preserved. And we hear him say some things about this. He chose to make his life expendable.

And now you've turned to John's gospel, the 10th chapter, the 17th and 18th verses. And here I quote from that.

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it up again." That is in greater measure, he goes on to say.

"No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself, that I may take it up again."

So he tells us plainly that he laid it down.

We know that Jesus was an impossible man in those days. It was impossible for him to live amongst the human beings with their philosophy of life that day, without being slain. But at the same time he could have kept them from doing it. He had it in his own mind to lay down his life, that we might be saved and think what he has done, laying down just one human body. His body was human, just like ours. Of course it was divine also.

But he laid down, laid down one human life, one human body, and think what that is meant, giving up that measure of life.

Humanly speaking, just think of the wonderful salvation that he has brought to a dying world. Bringing to this world a religion that has the thought of sacrificing and sharing in it, that has caused people to put a different value on a human body. And just think of the human bodies that have been benefited by Christianity, by Jesus just laying down one physical body.

We feel like that one who expands his life for others should be remembered by those others. Don't you think that should be done? We should remember one who laid down his life for us. You know, this has been a practice amongst heroes.

You can read in **Red Hills and Cotton**, where it tells about the old Confederate soldiers organizing to keep alive the memory of their comrades that did not return.

And don't you think it's a wonderful thing today for us to remember the boys at the heads of whose graves stand the little white crosses throughout various sections of the world? Are we to let them go over there and die for the principles that we love and then not remember them? I can't think of anything, humanly speaking, that would be lower than that.

But it would certainly be worse if we fail to remember the Savior of mankind. And so we must remember Him as He gave His life for us, that we might have life and have it more abundantly. But you know, Christians have got to do something more than remember you can remember someone and then not do anything about it. And that's what happens in the world today.

People will do things for us we will not remember. I certainly do think that we ought to remember a certain Nazarene who went about doing good and eventually just laid down his life,

that more life might be preserved throughout the world and that our souls might be saved. You know, there is this thing that happens. There come times when it becomes necessary for somebody to lay down his life for a good cause.

And that's about the only answer that we ministers could give mothers who would come during war times and say I've prayed for a son and yet I got the yellow slip. Didn't understand why God didn't answer and save their son.

There come times, let me repeat it. When it becomes necessary for people to lay down their lives for a good cause. Now when you come to that, go back and think about God the Father. God the Father had only one Son, and that Son was in this world to save a great cause. Did God save his Son from it or let him die for a good cause? We all know the answer. God let his own Son die for the great cause for which he was dying. So we want to remember, and not only remember, but we want to do something about it.

It's not enough to remember, as we have said now someone will be asking, well, now, if we've got to do something about it, Preacher, tell us what it is that we ought to do and how to do it, and we'll do it. We'll just step right out from our indifference and do it. We're conscious that we've been indifferent to his cause and all of that and maybe not sacrificing enough. And if you'll just tell us. I don't have to tell you.

Jesus has already given you the prescription, the formula, and what is it? Why, it's over in Luke 9:23.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."

And then somebody answers, Oh, I've been bearing my cross all of these years, but I don't know, friends, anything about which there is a greater misunderstanding than this matter of bearing crosses. There are three words in the Sacred Scriptures that have a solid, solemn note to them, and one is burden, the other a thorn in the flesh. And the third cross, and they don't mean the same thing.

There are lots of people that feel like that because they have had a burden to bear, that they have settled up everything with God and ought to be saved. I don't know how you are, but I have never seen a person in my life that was of any age that had not had a burden of some kind of bear in regard to relatives or something that to something would have a burden to that. Now, if a burden would save people, why everybody in this world be saved and you just can't be saved that way? It's not the burden that saves.

Neither is it the thorn in the flesh now. Now the thorn in the flesh, we never know what it is, but part, I imagine most every person has a thorn in the flesh, a skeleton in the closet. Just something that you hold in your own heart and you don't tell anybody what it is.

Paul had one, You know, he had a thorn in the flesh. But I challenge anybody to find out where he ever made any expression that would tell us what that thorn was. And so if a thorn in the flesh would save people, perhaps all the people in the world would be saved.

But now, when you come to a cross, it's something different. A cross is like this, you see, something that's worthwhile to do. You know that that ought to be done, and you're able to do it or have it done. It may change some of the plans of your life to do it, But that cross that you see out there is something you don't have to take up. It's something you ought to do. You can see how it would benefit the humanity and the Kingdom of God to do it. But you don't have to do it. Shouldn't take it or leave it.

You can't take a burden or leave it. Burdens are on everybody.

You can't take a thorn the flesh or leave it there with everybody but across you can take it or leave it. Jesus said if any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross. It's a matter left to you whether you will do that or not. I saw Jesus this morning was one who bore a cross. He didn't have to do it. Don't you see? He could have called down angels and all of that. But he chose to pick that thing up and carry it because of what it would do for me and do for you and for everybody else in the world.

Now, the great age in which we have come, we're going to have the chance to bear lots of crosses, to pick up things and go with them. That we don't have to do. But if we will do it, it'll cost us something, but it will amount to something.

For Jesus Christ, I like to think about on one night there was a voice came from heaven and it was saying peace on earth, goodwill toward men that you know, voices have been coming since then. I think any great poet who's a good Christian gets voices from the far distance somewhere and causes him to think about words. And I'm thinking this morning about this one: Are you able?

Says the Master, If you be crucified with me, that's a great question. To give, to give, and to give again what gods has given thee, to spend thyself, nor count the cause to serve right gloriously. That question has come from God through the voice to the world today. And I think that I hear from a million choirs today the voices of human being that have heard that. And they're saying, Lord, we are able, our spirits are thine, remould them. Make us like thee, divine. Thy guiding radiance above us shall be a beacon unto God to love and loyalty. If we have that friends, that response, we'll pick up our clothes and do something for the one whom we are remembering. It's a matter of sharing. We've got something to share, and it's that spirit that's going to send the church forward and do good in this whole world.

You've heard that sweet little story and tell it for the benefit of these fine boys and girls in the children's choir. My mother sent her, a little girl, to town one morning and she was gone longer than she thought she ought to be. And after a while she came in and the mother said, darling, you stayed longer than I intended for you to stay. And she said, well mother, I know I did, but said I found little Mary down the street and she had broken her doll and was just crying her eyes out about it. And mother said, and you were a sweet little girl and helped her to fix her doll. And she said, no, Mama, I didn't help her fix her doll. Well then why did you stay so long if you were not helping her fix her down? She said. Mother, I was helping her cry.

You know, this thing of Christianity is something that we share. And this morning, as we face up to the day, just a month off Easter, as we travel along here in Lent, may God help us to realize that we are builders, we are carpenters in His Kingdom, and we are following the great carpenter of all time as we build a Kingdom and help to bring in a Kingdom such as the heart of God is craving. So then, as we go forth from this service today, let's remember our text.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you, through his poverty or you through what he expended, might become rich."

Friends, let's remember Jesus and let's remember to do something about it in our lives.

Our closing hymn is 219.

If there are those that would like to join the church on professional faith, that is, joining for the first time, or if you want to join by a letter bringing your letter from some other church, we'd be glad for you to come while we sing #219.

[Singing]

Now may the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the sweet communion of the Holy Spirit abide with each one of you, here and out yonder in the name of Christ we pray.

[1] Correct reference maybe: William L. White, *They were Expendable*, Harcourt Brace 1942. ... offers an account of Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Three's heroic actions during the disastrous Philippine campaign early in World War II.