

The Lord's Day Morning

February 4, 1945

“Challenge to Church”
Scripture Lesson – Matthew 16:6-20
Text – Matthew 16:18

The Reverend Dr. Girard Lowe

Introduction

1. Chaplain writing in magazine article in answer to a question, “What do men in service think about the church?” said, “They do not think any more about the church than they do about the National Society for the prevention of Cruelty to Clay Pigeons.”

- a. We may not agree with this chaplain
- b. Fact that he could say it constitutes a great challenge to the church
 - 1. At home
 - 2. Abroad

I. Challenge at Home

- 1. We know great masses of people are not concerned about the church – either its present or its future
- 2. Do not believe this is true because of futility of program of the church
 - a. We have an important program
 - b. Education
 - 1. Sunday School teaching little children real meaning of life
 - c. Social service
 - 1. Orphan's homes
 - 2. Hospitals
 - d. Preaching service
 - 1. Challenging men to be better
 - 2. District Governor of Rotary speaking this week at Rotary Club said the fundamental concept of Rotary was what had made it grow from small beginning of 4 men to its international aspect today. It emphasized fellowship and taught men unselfishness (i.e. service above self).
 - 3. If Rotary does this, how much more the church!
 - 4. If business men recognize this as important in a Rotary Club or any luncheon club, surely they recognize its important in the church.
 - e. No, it is not the futility of our program
- 3. Because those of us who are church members do not attach enough importance to it for others to consider it very important .
 - a. Attendance
 - 1. Must rest on Sunday so can attend to business other 6 days. Business of far more importance than church.
 - 2. Must play golf or fish or rest on Sunday – attach more importance to physical body and its pleasures and comforts than do to eternal soul.

3. Belong to some fraternity or sorority or some social club. If attendance at that and at church interferes, with one another, choose club. So people, of course, think church is not as important as those things.

b. Money

1. Young boy said his father's church did not mean much to him. He paid more to belong to a luncheon club and to the country club than he gave to church.

2. Dr. Ligon of Columbia, Tennessee, telling of young major whose mother was a Catholic, his father not a Christian, who united with their church on profession of faith and sent him a letter telling him he was grateful to him for receiving him into the church and sent check for \$120.00 as his pledge to church for one quarter - \$40.00 a month. This preacher has some wealthy and prominent Presbyterians in his church; yet with a saddened voice he said to me his monthly subscription to the church is more than any other pledge we receive so far as I know.

3. Would to God others would take their responsibilities to the church as seriously as this young Christian did.

c. Work

1. Many will work for civic causes who will not turn hand to work of church.

2. They are saying church and its work is unimportant.

4. We face a great challenge today

a. Men coming home

b. Boy calling mother and asked if she attended church

c. Young soldier who returned from South Pacific to Memphis. Mother wanted to take him home for bath and big dinner with friends, but he wanted to go to church. Church half empty. After church, said to minister we were told out there that people were crowding churches here at home and praying for us. But I did not see the crowd today and where were the prayers for my buddies out there? Then as he walked away he was heard to mutter, "O God, do not let the boys on Guadalcanal find out about this."

d. They will find out what importance we attach to church, and coming home from out there where they have come to find that the God for whom the church stands is very real and with a determination to find their place in the church, they find the same old church with its members attaching more importance to golf, fishing, clubs than they do to the church; then the church shall be anathema to them.

II. World Challenge

1. The mission enterprise of church is more respected today than ever in all of its history.

a. They have seen what the Gospel can and does do to the lives of natives.

b. Boy wrote home: "Christian World Facts" – page 1

"From a member of the U.S. Marine Corps: 'It is really a good laugh on us that we didn't pay more attention to this missionary work when we were back home. Because of the work of a few men with limited funds at their disposal, American

boys thousands of miles from the nearest S.H. Kress store have been received as friends and shown every courtesy a primitive people have to offer. Weeks at sea, a landfall and you don't know what to expect. You finally get ashore and there is a big gang of grinning natives with a tumbleweed haircut passing out fresh pineapple at five cents each.”

c. Native Preaching: “Christian World Facts” – page 2

“We attended services today underneath the coconut palms. I am sure we receive as much grace in our crude, dark jungle as one would in the finest edifice. Many of the natives here are Christians and were on the outskirts of the crowd, grass skirts and all. The time was when these tribes did their share in the creation of the legend of ‘the missionary in a pot.’ In recent years, however, they have become Christianized – the missionary having contrived to keep out of the pot.”

2. Chinese Consul at New Orleans said Christianity found its greatest opportunity in China because it had been demonstrated that missionaries loved them. Some, and all looked alike, had come to rob, some had come to exploit, some to serve. The war had shown them the difference. Now as never before they were ready to receive missionaries; the missionaries stayed in love while others left.
3. We want peace in world.
 - a. Church must bring this peace to the world.
 - b. I am not dreaming.
 1. Rex Brown saying to Dr. Gutzke and me that we had the hope of the world.
 2. Horace Hull planning with his class for post-war world by preparing to support two missionaries. He says only hope is Golden Rule and that can only be put into practice by those who have received the Gospel of Christ.
4. We face great opportunities.
 - a. Brazil
 1. They are calling
 2. State department would stop missionaries but people of Brazil want Them
 - b. Africa
 1. Wide open door
 - c. Mexico
 - d. Portugal
 1. Brazilian Church has challenged us to undertake this work
 - e. Reoccupation of fields
5. We must meet this challenge or once again miss our great opportunity.
6. We must have
 - a. Money
 1. Asking for \$330,000.000
 2. A mere bagatelle
 3. What does church mean to me
 - b. Lives

1. Call for 100 missionaries
2. We have furnished more than this number to armed forces

Conclusion

1. Some of us should give our money.
2. Some of you young people should volunteer to go if God wants you.