
The Good News

***“And how are they to
proclaim him unless they
are sent? As it is written,
“How beautiful are the feet
of those who bring good
news!”--Romans 10:15***

**Compiled by
St. Paul’s Lutheran Church**

**Jesus , *The Sermon on the Mount*
Circa 28 CE
near the Sea of Galilee and Capernaum**

5 When Jesus^[a] saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2** Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely^[b] on my account. **12** Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. **15** No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. **18** For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter,^[c] not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. **19** Therefore, whoever breaks^[d] one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20** For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

21 “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ **22** But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister,^[e] you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult^[f] a brother or sister,^[g] you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell^[h] of fire. **23** So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister^[i] has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister,^[j] and then come and offer your gift. **25** Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court^[k] with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. **26** Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ **28** But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. **29** If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.^[l] **30** And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.^[m]

31 “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ **32** But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33 “Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ **34** But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, **35** or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. **36** And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. **37** Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.^[n]

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ **39** But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; **40** and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; **41** and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. **42** Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ **44** But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45** so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil

and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters,^[o] what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

6 “Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.^[p]

⁵ “And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.^[q]

⁷ “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸ Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹ “Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

¹⁰ Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread.^[r]

¹² And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

¹³ And do not bring us to the time of trial,^[s]

but rescue us from the evil one.^[t]

¹⁴ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; ¹⁵ but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

16 “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. **17** But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, **18** so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.^[u]

19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust^[v] consume and where thieves break in and steal; **20** but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust^[w] consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21** For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; **23** but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

24 “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.^[x]

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink,^[y] or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? **26** Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? **27** And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?^[z] **28** And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, **29** yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. **30** But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? **31** Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ **32** For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33** But strive first for the kingdom of God^[aa] and his^[ab] righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 “So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

7 “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. **2** For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. **3** Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s^[ac] eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? **4** Or how can you say to your neighbor,^[ad] ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own

eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's^[ae] eye.

⁶ “Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.

⁷ “Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹ Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? ¹⁰ Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? ¹¹ If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

¹² “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

¹³ “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy^[af] that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. ¹⁴ For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will know them by their fruits.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ ²³ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’

²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. ²⁵ The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

J.G. Butler, *The Martyr President*

April 16th, 1865

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Washington, DC

OUR GRIEF AND OUR DUTY.

THE GOSPEL FOR THE DAY FROM THE 24TH CHAPTER OF LUKE WAS READ.

These badges of mourning, in the Sanctuary to-day, direct our thoughts to the terrible tragedy which has filled our city, our whole land, with sorrow. And though this be our Communion season, I feel that the improvement of this sad Providence furnishes the theme of discourse to-day. I am inadequate to the occasion. My heart has been well nigh paralyzed by the startling Providence. I feel that I am in deep sympathy with you, and with the loyal heart of this entire land. Even treason will blush with shame at this assassination. I would prefer to be silent today--to commingle my tears with those of the stricken household--with the tears of the great American people. I would prefer to hear others speak--to be still, and suffer God alone to speak; but rebellion and treason have culminated in the murder of our beloved and noble Chief Magistrate. This is not the time to be silent. I would be untrue to you, untrue to myself as a citizen of this great Republic, as an Ambassador of truth, a servant of Christ, untrue to the promptings of my own deeply moved heart, unworthy the confidence and love you have ever reposed in me, did I fail to speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

This is resurrection day; the day upon which the Church, during all her history, commemorates the rising from the grave of Him, who, but the third day before, had been crucified. In this drapery we have combined here to-day the emblems of sorrow and of joy. Nature is putting on her Easter robes--the grass is beginning to spring forth, the buds to swell, the leaves are unfolding, and the trees are covered with their varied blooms. After the long and dreary nights of winter, all nature has revived, and holds forth to our admiring eyes an immense bouquet, filling the air with fragrance and the soul with gladness.

These weeds of mourning, reminding us of the murder of our honored President on the *Crucifixion day* of our now risen Lord, are appropriately wreathed with beautiful flowers, preachers of the resurrection, entwined with evergreen, pointing to an immortality in a tearless land

The plotting enemies of our glorious Redeemer supposed the nailing to the Cross ended all pretensions to the establishment of His kingdom among the kingdoms of earth. Unable to resist the power of His truth, they vainly hoped to bury all--even his very memory--in the new made, rock-bound sepulchre. Our Lord crucified, His own friends--His chosen disciples, gave up all for lost. We supposed, said they, that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel. They were looking for the yoke of the Roman oppressor to be broken; but, their Lord put to death, every one in despair went to his own home. The Church to-day--this Christian congregation--the whole Church Catholic, in our land, in all lands, with her

Bible, her Ministry, her thousand agencies for good, shows how false were the hopes, and how groundless the fears of enemies and friends.

Though our beloved Chief Magistrate lies in the chilling embrace of death to-day, and our honored Prime Minister of State lingers in pain beneath the assassin's blow, our Government still lives. *Men may die*--be murdered--but *truth never*. Jesus may, by wicked hands, be crucified, but His cause lives. That is a part of God's plan. Abraham Lincoln has fallen a martyr to truth, to principle, to freedom, to law and order, and good Government. But whilst our hearts are bleeding, our hopes are not crushed. This foul deed of the assassin upon which Heaven frowns, and of which Satan would be ashamed, may fill the land with mourning; but it nerves the heart with fresh resolve and more invincible purpose to contend for the truth, even at the price of life. We have been laying upon our country's altar our most precious treasure. It is all covered with the blood of our husbands and fathers, and sons and brothers--coined into the price of liberty. And now, when rebellion is well nigh crushed, when our armies, flushed with victory, are pursuing a fleeing foe, treason nerves her fiendish arm to strike down our Moses, who, under God, has led us through the wilderness, as he stands upon Pisgah, in full view of the Promised Land, the land flowing with milk and honey.

The most guilty of the murderers of our Lord were not the men who made the Cross, or plaited the crown of thorns, or drove the nails, or thrust the spear; not the Centurion and his hundred men, as they guarded that innocent victim of hellish malice. They were the least guilty. They were but the hand of the power that enacted and expounded the law. Judas was guilty. Herod was guilty. Pilate was guilty--the Sanhedrim, with Caiphas, the Chief Priests, and Scribes; the populace, crying "Crucify, crucify Him"--these all were guilty. Their pride and envy, and malice and revenge, were all embodied, *vitalized*, in that one act, the murder of the King of the Jews.

The poor, miserable, wicked assassin, whose name is not worthy of mention, though he has gone out with a mark deeper than the mark of Cain upon him, and who cannot escape the justice that awaits him, was but the representation and instrument of the enemies of the Heaven-blessed Government, whose Head they have stricken down.

Our father's God, to Thee,
Author of Liberty,

though crushed and humbled in the very dust, to Thee we lift our hearts with confidence, and hope, and thanksgiving, that though the great, and good, and wise man whom Thou did'st give us, to govern; has been stricken down, the people, the government, the eternal principles of Truth, and Freedom, and Righteousness, *still live*.

I call you to witness to-day, my brethren, that this pulpit has offered no uncertain sound, during these four years of treason and blood. Neither by *silence*--for *silence* is treason, when the life of the nation is endangered--by thought, look, word, or act, has your pastor given aid and comfort to that thirst for power which has culminated in the murder of

Abraham Lincoln. The loyalty of this pulpit has not been begotten amid the victorious battles of our noble men by land and by sea, nor in the presence of the crumbling ruins of rebellion. But the position of your pastor to-day is what it was at the firing of the first gun upon our glorious flag of Sumter. Though Southern by birth, and by residence, during his entire ministry, his loyalty is not a thing of prejudice or passion, but takes its inspiration from this blessed *Book*, which teaches us to *obey Magistrates, and that the powers that be are ordained of God*. I thank God to day, that I have had no part nor lot in this matter; that He enabled me, in the dark days of our national struggle, when the faint-hearted warned me, and the disloyal hated, and forsook my ministry, that God gave me strength and courage to speak the truth. No man has ever weakened the arm of the government and given courage to the enemy from the inspiration of this sacred desk. This pulpit is in no sense chargeable with the blood of Abraham Lincoln.

When aroused from my midnight slumbers, by the alarming intelligence, that our President had been assassinated--even now we can scarcely realize that he, from whose facile pen we were but a few days since receiving despatches of victories; whose pleasant, placid face is so familiar to many of us; who has just been telling us, and the nation, and the world, of prospective peace, and speaking healing words, words of gentleness and forbearance and forgiveness and love, healing the deep wounds of the nation's heart; the tender and earnest Intercessor, pleading with us, who have given our very life-blood to save Truth, and Freedom, and Government, entreating us to forgive our enemies, and forget the strong blows aimed at our very vitals--that *he* should be stricken down, the *friend* of the offending rebel, we can hardly realize. Yet it is so. His tall, manly form lies in the cold embrace of death today; and as we stand weeping over his mortal remains, the heart of the nation is nerved with new purpose to suppress, at every cost, this costly rebellion, and remove from the land *that* which has given it inspiration and life. But for that, rebellion would never have had being. *This* inspires the pride and tyranny which would make every will subject to its own, which must *rule or ruin*. The verdict of the American people to-day, as it looks upon the spilled blood of the great Champion of human rights, the friend of the oppressed, the emancipator of four millions of bondmen, is, that the land must be *free*--an open Bible, a free pulpit, a free press, free speech, a free people.

These millions, enamored of their chains, may, as the delivered Israelites in their straits, murmur against Moses and against God, and say, would God we had remained in bondage. We may not be able to answer all the hard questions which may arise as to our duty towards the freedman, though God, who has accomplished their deliverance, will teach us; but the one purpose is formed, that the whole land must be free. The voices of God and of the people are one in this verdict. His work is done. I thank God that his sun was not eclipsed during the dark days of our history, when clouds appeared to gather around our starry banner; but when it floated upon the soil of every rebel state--all covered with glory--when the clouds are rolling away and peace is rapidly rising to the zenith. He longed to see this day. He saw, and was glad. Ah! yes, and though our hearts are sad to-day we are glad too--thankful that God gave so good, so wise, so humane a ruler, and spared him to us so long, crowning his government with the prospect of an early, a righteous, and permanent peace.

Our blessed Lord, once called to the death chamber in the Ruler's house, said of the maid, "not *dead*, but sleepeth." And these words of Jesus, on this resurrection day, inspire hope as we stand in the presence of the lifeless Ruler now. *Not dead*; no, he is not dead. He needs no marble shaft to perpetuate his memory, to tell future generations that he lived. He lives not only in the hearts of the four millions of freedmen, from whom he has broken the shackles of bondage, but in the heart of this entire nation his name is embalmed in honor and love. In all future history this name will stand beside that of Washington. If he was the father of his country, under God, Abraham Lincoln was its *saviour*. He sleeps, as we have reason to know, not an unbeliever, but as one who feared God and wrought righteousness. He lives where the martyred men of all ages live--we believe, where the Great Martyr, our Lord Jesus, lives--in that heavenly City, whose air is not pregnant with treason and malice and death; but, where the heart, cleansed and inspired by the blood and spirit of Jesus, is in perfect and eternal sympathy with the great Redeemer, whose name is *love*. May these precious memories and hopes sustain and comfort his stricken widow and fatherless children. May the heavy affliction be sanctified by Him who makes all things to work together for good, and makes even the wrath of man to praise Him.

In a government other than Republican, the assassination of its Head might paralyze its energies or incite revolution. But the affairs of the Republic roll on to-day steadily--guided, under God, by a true and loyal heart, and by an arm strong and resolute. Sustained by the patriotism and wisdom of the nation, as well as by the prayers of God's people, though our joy has been turned into sorrow, the future, inspired by holy resolve, is no less hopeful and bright than when the whole land was flushed with victory. The patriot and christian heart of the nation should, and will, now encourage and make strong the arm of the President of the United States, whilst we embalm in memory the surpassing worth of the fallen Chieftain.

In partaking of this bread and wine, we are carried back to the *Betrayal night*. And here, in the most solemn manner, we renew our consecration to our Divine King. This is a consecration act. We say by it that we are not our own--that we belong to Jesus, who redeemed us by the price of His own blood--that henceforth we are to live not unto ourselves, but unto Him that died for us. As we approach this table to-day, is it not proper, with the remembrance of the spilled blood of this great human Representative of truth and freedom, and humanity and love, before us, that we come as *patriot* Christians, renewing *first* our allegiance to Jesus, *then* to our country--first to the Cross, then to our Flag. The times in which we live call for earnest consecration to Jesus in the cause of our country. Our land has a mission. Our whole history shows God's hand with us. We are to teach the world the Bible taught truth, that *man is capable of self-government*. We are to be the light of the world. In the light of our life the thrones of despots will tremble, and the power of the oppressor be broken. Drawing our patriotism, and philanthropy, and religion from this great fountain of Divine Truth, we are to proclaim to the nations of the earth, through a free pulpit, a free press, free schools, and free people, the truth which only the despot in Church or State fears; and the oppressor ought to fear and tremble, for he is weighed in the balance and is found wanting.

But that our mission may be fulfilled, we must be a *consecrated people*--a people consecrated to the great principles of free government--to the teachings of Jesus, who came not only "to preach the Gospel to the poor, and heal the broken hearted, but to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prisons to them that are bound."

"Hail to the *Lord's anointed*,
Great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed,
His reign on earth begun.
He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.
He comes with succor speedy,
To those who suffer wrong;
To help the poor and needy,
And bid the weak be strong;
To give them songs for sighing,
Their darkness turn to light,
Whose souls, condemned and dying,
Were precious in his sight."

The Church--the whole body of *believers*, of every name--is the living representative of Jesus in a rebel world, to teach the truth He taught, to live the life He lived, and, if need be, to die the death He died, that the kingdom of ignorance, and oppression, and sin may be destroyed.

The bloody struggle of the past four years, of which this tragic deed is one of the closing acts, is full of significance. Nations, as well as individuals, may have their second birth--*must be born again*--before they are prepared for a pure, vigorous, and useful manhood. Our nation *has* been born again, amid the terrible carnage of the battle-field, and baptized by the tears and blood of the entire land. Our noblest sons have been laid upon the great sacrificial altar. Heaven--the God of truth and justice and mercy, the God of battles--has accepted the offering, and now, as we rise to the purity and dignity and responsibility of our renewed nationality, we must offer this last sacrifice, and thank God that our President's dying eyes rested, not upon the ruins of a once mighty Republic, but upon the land redeemed, regenerated, ennobled, prepared for the great mission upon which the King of Kings sends her forth.

We have come forth, not enfeebled by the death agony through which we have passed, but *stronger* than when we entered upon our life trial. God has smiled upon the nation in her noble struggle. Agriculture, manufactures, commerce, religion, all share the divine blessing. A flood of prosperity has rolled over us, in which we are in danger of forgetting God. And yet the religious life of the land has never been so vigorous--our sanctuaries thronged, our treasuries full, souls converted, and the whole Church aroused from her lethargy and pouring forth her treasure and talent not only in strengthening the bulwarks of Zion, but, above all, in ministering to the wants, bodily and spiritual, of our brave

defenders, and even remembering those whose parricidal hand aimed a death blow at the very vitals of our Government.

The life of the nation is healthy, vigorous, to-day--nerved with holy resolve.

As the war-cloud rolls away from the rebel States, we shall witness the desolations of civil strife. Not only are governments disorganized, but the Church, too, needs reconstruction. The Southern pulpit, forgetting the Apostolic injunction, has fired the Southern heart and strengthened the arm of the rebel government, by preaching treason and resistance to rightful authority. The terrible desolations of civil war have swept over these States. All is disorder there, in the family, the church, and the government.

In the midst of our sorrow to-day, our hearts should overflow with thanksgiving that the hand of the destroyer has not paralyzed the arm of our industry nor polluted our altars. A glance at our Southern land shows what our cities and towns would be had the boast of the destroyer been realized, and the slave roll been called upon Bunker Hill. But God has given us the victory, blessed be His holy name! Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end!

We must now address ourselves, as patriot Christians, to the duties of the hour. It is ours to strengthen the arm of the Executive, to encircle him with our sympathies, our confidence, and our prayers. It is ours to remember the brave men who have stood as a wall of fire between us and our enemies; to care for the widow and orphan of the slain soldier; to feed the hungry and clothe the naked of our country's enemies; to educate and elevate, so far as sanctified knowledge can elevate, the four millions of freedmen from whom the fetters have been broken, by the wise counsel of our President and the valor of our arms; to raise to new life the Church, wounded, sundered, bleeding, dying, amid the flames of rebellion; to teach the people to render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's--not to revenge and exasperate, but to forgive, to heal, to help, and bind in one common brotherhood all the states of this Union--to kill the fatted calf upon the return of the penitent, needy, and humbled prodigal. Though the diabolical hand of the assassin has felled the noble President, around whom the heart of the nation gathered, in this work of reconciliation and healing, revenge must not fire our heart. But whilst the dignity of the law and the honor of the Government must be vindicated, the spirit of the fallen One, his humanity, his forbearance, his slowness to wrath, his love of peace, must animate our hearts. Our erring brethren; whilst being taught that treason is *crime*, must yet know that only the love of order and peace insists upon its penalty; that justice is tempered with mercy; that righteousness and peace may kiss each other.

In the memorial of our Saviour's death, and with these emblems of our national sorrow, we must anew consecrate ourselves to-day to these works of Christian philanthropy. Though we be not able to see alike upon all the great questions that have agitated the land, yet with treason and rebellion concentrated in the fell blow of the assassin, as patriots and Christians we must forget our differences, and rise superior to our prejudices. We must

meet the issues of the day as *men*, planting ourselves upon the Bible, as we stand beside the Cross, and unfurl our starry banner, now draped in mourning, with the undying resolve, that, in God's name, *the right shall triumph, though our own blood pay the price.*

God has taught us, during this struggle, what we can do, when deeply in earnest. The Christian and the patriot, sparing not their own sons, have, with them, freely given of their treasure and labor to bind up the wounds and pour in oil and wine. The millions of treasure that have cheered our suffering soldiers may now be expended to restore the ruin of war and heal heart wounds which have estranged the North and the South. There is not before us a season of rest, though the clash of arms is soon to cease, but of labor--self-denying, constant, and earnest. The work so auspiciously begun, so successfully prosecuted by our martyred President, must be carried on, until the world shall enjoy that freedom wherewith Christ makes the people free.

The adage is no more trite than true, that the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The disciples scattered, during the first century, by the persecution and martyrdom of our Lord, and His defenceless ones, did not go with sealed lips, but opened their mouth boldly, declaring the truth. And with our land regenerated by fire, the arm of the oppressor broken, our noble and beloved Leader slain, shall not our tongue be fired with holy zeal, not for party, nor section, but for *truth*? Shall loyalty be timid and shrinking in the presence of treason? Shall freedom hide her head for fear of the oppressor? Shall the press be fearful and compromising? Shall the pulpit give an uncertain sound in this day of battle? Though the atmosphere be poisoned with the miasm of oppression and treason, if *this* sacred desk fail to speak forth the truth in love, may my heart forget her cunning, and my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “Overcoming Fear”
January 15, 1933 (Second Sunday after Epiphany)
Berlin

Matthew 8:23–27: And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. And they went and woke him up, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. They were amazed, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”

The overcoming of fear—that is what we are proclaiming here. The Bible, the gospel, Christ, the church, the faith—all are one great battle cry against fear in the lives of human beings. Fear is, somehow or other, the archenemy itself. It crouches in people’s hearts. It hollows out their insides, until their resistance and strength are spent and they suddenly break down. Fear secretly gnaws and eats away at all the ties that bind a person to God and to others, and when in a time of need that person reaches for those ties and clings to them, they break and the individual sinks back into himself or herself, helpless and despairing, while hell rejoices.

Now fear leers that person in the face, saying: Here we are all by ourselves, you and I, now I’m showing you my true face. And anyone who has seen naked fear revealed, who has been its victim in terrifying loneliness—fear of an important decision; fear of a heavy stroke of fate, losing one’s job, an illness; fear of a vice that one can no longer resist, to which one is enslaved; fear of disgrace; fear of another person; fear of dying—that person knows that fear is only one of the faces of evil itself, one form by which the world, at enmity with God, grasps for someone. Nothing can make a human being so conscious of the reality of powers opposed to God in our lives as this loneliness, this helplessness, this fog spreading over everything, this sense that there is no way out, and this raving impulse to get oneself out of this hell of hopelessness.

Have you ever seen someone in the grip of fear? It’s dreadful in a child, but even more dreadful in an adult: the staring eyes, the shivering like an animal, the pleading attempt to defend oneself. Fear takes away a person’s humanity. This is not what the creature made by God looks like—this person belongs to the devil, this enslaved, broken-down, sick creature.

But the human being doesn’t have to be afraid; we should not be afraid! That is what makes humans different from all other creatures. In the midst of every situation where there is no way out, where nothing is clear, where it is our fault, we know that there is hope, and this hope is called: Thy will be done, yes, thy will is being done. “This world must fall, God stands above all, his thoughts unswayed, his Word unstayed, his will forever our ground and hope.” Do you ask: How do you know? Then we name the name of the One who makes the evil inside us recoil, who makes fear and anxiety themselves tremble with fear

and puts them to flight. We name the One who overcame fear and led it captive in the victory procession, who nailed it to the cross and committed it to oblivion; we name the One who is the shout of victory of humankind redeemed from the fear of death—Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Living One. He alone is Lord over fear; it knows him as its master; it gives way to him alone. So look to Christ when you are afraid, think of Christ, keep him before your eyes, call upon Christ and pray to him, believe that he is with you now, helping you . . . Then fear will grow pale and fade away, and you will be free, through your faith in our strong and living Savior, Jesus Christ.

Let's say there is a ship on the high sea, having a fierce struggle with the waves. The storm wind is blowing harder by the minute. The boat is small, tossed about like a toy; the sky is dark; the sailors' strength is failing. Then one of them is gripped by . . . whom? what? . . . he cannot tell himself. But someone is there in the boat who wasn't there before. Someone comes close to him and lays cold hands on his arms as he pulls wildly on his oar. He feels his muscles freeze, feels the strength go out of them. Then the unknown one reaches into his heart and mind and magically brings forth the strangest pictures. He sees his family, his children crying. What will become of them if he is no more? Then he seems to be back where he once was when he followed evil ways, in long years of bondage to evil, and he sees the faces of his companions in that bondage. He sees a neighbor whom he wounded, only yesterday, with an angry word. Suddenly he can no longer see or hear anything, can no longer row, a wave overwhelms him, and in final desperation he shrieks: Stranger in this boat, who are you? And the other answers, I am Fear. Now the cry goes up from the whole crew; Fear is in the boat; all arms are frozen and drop their oars; all hope is lost, Fear is in the boat.

Then it is as if the heavens opened, as if the heavenly hosts themselves raised a shout of victory in the midst of hopelessness: Christ is in the boat. Christ is in the boat, and no sooner has the call gone out and been heard than Fear shrinks back, and the waves subside. The sea becomes calm and the boat rests on its quiet surface. Christ was in the boat!

We were along on that voyage, weren't we? and the call, Christ is in the boat, was once our salvation too. And now, strangely enough, all of us are at sea again, on that voyage without faith, without hope, overwhelmed, in chains, in bondage, paralyzed by fear; we have lost heart, lost the joy of living, our limbs heavy as lead; each of us knows what it's like. Perhaps, or most likely, we don't even quite realize what has happened to us; we are already so used to this state of affairs that it seems natural to us, and we almost like it that way, all this misery around us and in our own lives. What would we do if we couldn't even complain anymore?

And that's the worst of it: we don't even want to find a way out. That is the final triumph of Fear over us, that we are afraid to run away from it, and just let it enslave us. Fear has conquered us; it can be found among us in various forms. Some persons have become dull and insensitive and just live from one day to the next, brooding gloomily and doggedly along, but too apathetic to take their own lives. Others are noisy about their fear, pouring it out to everyone else in the form of crying and complaining. Still others, on the other hand,

think they can drive out their fear with fine words and bold fantasies, and if they shout these words loudly enough it may seem to take care of things for awhile. But those who know can recognize in such empty words the horrifying power of fear all over again. Fear is in the boat, in Germany, in our own lives and in the nave of this church—naked fear of an hour from now, of tomorrow and the day after. That is why we become apathetic, why we complain, why we intoxicate ourselves with this and that. What else is all the razzle-dazzle and drunkenness of New Year's Eve, other than our great fear of a new era, of the future? Fear is breathing down our necks.

Those who would try to keep up their pride, as if all this had nothing to do with them, as if they didn't understand what it's all about, would hardly be human. No one human could fail to understand what the people of the world have to be afraid of today.

But look here, right in the middle of this fearful world is a place that is meant for all time, which has a peculiar task that the world doesn't understand. It keeps calling over and over but always anew, in the same tone, the same thing: Fear is overcome; don't be afraid [John 16:33]. In the world you are frightened. But be comforted; I have conquered the world! Christ is in the boat! And this place, where this kind of talk is heard and should be heard, is the pulpit of the church. From this pulpit the living Christ himself wants to speak, so that wherever he reaches somebody, that person will feel the fear sinking away, will feel Christ overcoming his or her fear.

You of little faith, why are you so fearful? In these words we must hear all the disappointment of Jesus Christ in his disciples and all his love for them. Do you still not know that you are in God's hands, that where I am, God is? Why are you so fearful? Be of good courage, strong, firm, adult, sure, confident, not shaking with fear. Don't hang your heads; don't complain about what bad times these are . . . I am in the boat. And Christ is here, too, in the nave of this church. So why not hear him and believe him?

We have come here, very probably, because somehow or other we know that something in our lives needs to change, and because we think perhaps the church can somehow help us with this. We are aware of how meager, how poor, how petty and short-sighted our lives have become. All of us see only our own worries and difficulties and no longer those of others that may be a thousand times worse. Our affairs seem so enormous and infinitely important to us that we have become dulled toward anything else. This is the work of fear in us. And now we sense that we can't bear to be hemmed in like this anymore; it's suffocating. The call of the church cuts through this questioning and foreboding. There is one thing we are lacking: to believe that the Almighty God is our father and our Lord. To believe that for God, our greatest cares are like the worries of small children in their parents' eyes; that God can turn things around and dispose of them in no time at all; for God it's easy, not hard at all. We must believe that a thousand years in God's sight are like a day [Ps. 90:4], that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts [Isa. 55:8-9], that God is with us in spite of everything. Let us receive the call of the church once again: You of little faith, why are you so fearful? In the midst of the storm, Christ is in the ship. Away with you, Fear! Let us see you, Lord Jesus, strong helper, Savior!

But now comes a host of objections and excuses. We say we would like to believe, but we simply can't anymore. The suffering is too great. Oh, but let's not take this kind of talk too seriously. You cannot believe? Well, neither can we. Do you want to believe?—in that case you already do, in a way, perhaps not very strongly, only a beginning, but perhaps a thousand times stronger than many others who think they are able to believe. Don't worry about your faith, whether it is weak or strong. Just look to him in whom you believe, and speak to him: Lord, increase our faith! [See Luke 17:5].

We say that it is not life's misery that frightens us, but rather our own sin that we fear; and that we need to fear it, so we won't be overcome by it! Again, that sounds so right, but it is really only a trick of fear itself. No, it is not true that we must be afraid of sin. Those who are afraid of it are already up to their necks in it. Fear is evil's net, spread to catch us. Once evil has made us afraid, confused us, we are in its clutches. Don't be afraid, be of good courage . . . How can you meet the enemy with fear in your heart? You of little faith, why are you so fearful? Isn't God greater than your sin? Let God grow strong in you; then sin is knocked down. Believe in God . . . Lord, strengthen our faith!

Now, finally, let the most depressed and despairing people speak, those who ask: Isn't our time up? Aren't the years of catastrophe, of utter decline and breakdown, the chaos of our lives in both great and small things, which no one can ignore, the sign that God has let us go? God doesn't want us anymore. There's no more mercy coming our way from God. God is against us, and we have to accept it. It won't do to keep clinging if we aren't wanted. This is the cry out of the very depths of despair. There is only one thing that helps, and it is what the church does with any of us who thinks and feels this way. It takes the cross and places it before our eyes and asks: Did God abandon him? And since God did not abandon Jesus, we will not be abandoned by God, either.

Learn to recognize this sign in your own life. Learn to recognize and understand the hour of the storm, when you were perishing. This is the time when God is incredibly close to you, not far away. Right there, when everything else that keeps us safe is breaking and falling down, when one after another all the things our lives depend on are being taken away or destroyed, where we have to learn to give them up, all this is happening because God is coming near to us, because God wants to be our only support and certainty. God lets our lives be broken and fail in every direction, through fate and guilt, and through this very failure God brings us back; we are thrown back upon God alone. God wants to show us that when you let everything go, when you lose all your own security and have to give it up, that is when you are totally free to receive God and be kept totally safe in God. So may we understand rightly the hours of affliction and temptation, the hours in our lives when we are on the high seas! God is close to us then, not far away. Our God is on the cross.

The cross is the sign that stands in judgment on all the false security in our lives and restores faith in God alone. Be of good courage, be valiant, be confident, be certain—that is what it says. Yes, but everything depends here on making sure that one last, terrible misunderstanding does not arise. There is such a thing as false courage, false confidence . . . and this false confidence is itself only the most subtle form in which fear disguises itself. Let us return to our story.

When the disciples were climbing aboard the boat, they seemed quite confident; they seemed not at all afraid. Why were they confident? They looked at the lovely calm sea and saw no reason to worry. But as the wind and waves increased in force, the disciples lost their calm and fear grew in them. They gazed apprehensively at the wild sea. Its appearance had made them feel safe, but now fear was gaining the upper hand. The story says that Jesus was asleep. Only faith can sleep without a care—that is why sleep is a reminder of paradise—faith finds its safety in God alone. The disciples couldn't sleep; their security was gone; their confidence had been misplaced and now was lost. It was a false sense of security—it was only fear in disguise. This sense of security does not overcome fear and soon breaks down. Only the faith that leaves behind all false confidence, letting it fall and break down, can overcome fear. This is faith: it does not rely on itself or on favorable seas, favorable conditions; it does not rely on its own strength or on other people's strength, but believes only and alone in God, whether or not there is a storm. It is the only faith that is not superstition and does not let us slip back into fear, but makes us free of fear. Lord, make this faith strong in us who have little faith!

But the other side of the coin is also true. When Christ is in the boat, a storm always comes up. The world tries with all its evil powers to get hold of him, to destroy him along with his disciples; it hates him and rises up against him. Christians surely know this. No one has to go through so much anxiety and fear as do Christians. But this does not surprise us, since Christ is the Crucified One, and there is no way to life for a Christian without being crucified. So we will suffer and make our way through together with Christ, looking always to him who is with us in the boat and can soon stand up and rebuke the sea, so that it becomes calm.

However, it does seem to be true, what you have surely all been quietly wanting to say for some time, that today Christ is no longer doing such amazing things. He is so strangely hidden away that we often think he is no longer there at all! Dear brothers and sisters, what do we know about what Christ can do and wants to do for us, this very evening, if we will only call upon him as we should, if we call out, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" That was fear all right, but it was faith in the midst of fear, because it knew where help comes from, the only place. We say there are no miracles anymore . . . but what do we know really, you and I? We will certainly be ashamed of ourselves if one day we are allowed to see what God can do.

They were amazed, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" We can well understand their amazement. What sort of person is this on whom fear has no effect, who overcomes the fear in human life and takes away its power? By asking this question, we are already on our knees before him, praying to him, pointing to him, the wonder worker, and saying, This is God! Amen.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "I've Been To The Mountain Top"

April 3, 1968

Memphis, Tennessee

Thank you very kindly, my friends. As I listened to Ralph Abernathy in his eloquent and generous introduction and then thought about myself, I wondered who he was talking about. It's always good to have your closest friend and associate say something good about you. And Ralph is the best friend that I have in the world.

I'm delighted to see each of you here tonight in spite of a storm warning. You reveal that you are determined to go on anyhow. Something is happening in Memphis, something is happening in our world.

As you know, if I were standing at the beginning of time, with the possibility of general and panoramic view of the whole human history up to now, and the Almighty said to me, "Martin Luther King, which age would you like to live in?"-- I would take my mental flight by Egypt through, or rather across the Red Sea, through the wilderness on toward the promised land. And in spite of its magnificence, I wouldn't stop there. I would move on by Greece, and take my mind to Mount Olympus. And I would see Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Euripides and Aristophanes assembled around the Parthenon as they discussed the great and eternal issues of reality.

But I wouldn't stop there. I would go on, even to the great heyday of the Roman Empire. And I would see developments around there, through various emperors and leaders. But I wouldn't stop there. I would even come up to the day of the Renaissance, and get a quick picture of all that the Renaissance did for the cultural and esthetic life of man. But I wouldn't stop there. I would even go by the way that the man for whom I'm named had his habitat. And I would watch Martin Luther as he tacked his ninety-five theses on the door at the church in Wittenberg.

But I wouldn't stop there. I would come on up even to 1863, and watch a vacillating president by the name of Abraham Lincoln finally come to the conclusion that he had to sign the Emancipation Proclamation. But I wouldn't stop there. I would even come up the early thirties, and see a man grappling with the problems of the bankruptcy of his nation. And come with an eloquent cry that we have nothing to fear but fear itself.

But I wouldn't stop there. Strangely enough, I would turn to the Almighty, and say, "If you allow me to live just a few years in the second half of the twentieth century, I will be happy." Now that's a strange statement to make, because the world is all messed up. The nation is sick. Trouble is in the land. Confusion all around. That's a strange statement. But I know, somehow, that only when it is dark enough, can you see the stars. And I see God working in this period of the twentieth century in a way that men, in some strange way, are responding--something is happening in our world. The masses of people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya; Accra, Ghana; New York City; Atlanta, Georgia; Jackson, Mississippi; or Memphis, Tennessee--the cry is always the same--"We want to be free."

And another reason that I'm happy to live in this period is that we have been forced to a point where we're going to have to grapple with the problems that men have been trying to grapple with through history, but the demands didn't force them to do it. Survival demands that we grapple with them. Men, for years now, have been talking about war and peace. But now, no longer can they just talk about it. It is no longer a choice between violence and nonviolence in this world; it's nonviolence or nonexistence.

That is where we are today. And also in the human rights revolution, if something isn't done, and in a hurry, to bring the colored peoples of the world out of their long years of poverty, their long years of hurt and neglect, the whole world is doomed. Now, I'm just happy that God has allowed me to live in this period, to see what is unfolding. And I'm happy that he's allowed me to be in Memphis.

I can remember, I can remember when Negroes were just going around as Ralph has said, so often, scratching where they didn't itch, and laughing when they were not tickled. But that day is all over. We mean business now, and we are determined to gain our rightful place in God's world.

And that's all this whole thing is about. We aren't engaged in any negative protest and in any negative arguments with anybody. We are saying that we are determined to be men. We are determined to be people. We are saying that we are God's children. And that we don't have to live like we are forced to live.

Now, what does all of this mean in this great period of history? It means that we've got to stay together. We've got to stay together and maintain unity. You know, whenever Pharaoh wanted to prolong the period of slavery in Egypt, he had a favorite, favorite formula for doing it. What was that? He kept the slaves fighting among themselves. But whenever the slaves get together, something happens in Pharaoh's court, and he cannot hold the slaves in slavery. When the slaves get together, that's the beginning of getting out of slavery. Now let us maintain unity.

Secondly, let us keep the issues where they are. The issue is injustice. The issue is the refusal of Memphis to be fair and honest in its dealings with its public servants, who happen to be sanitation workers. Now, we've got to keep attention on that. That's always the problem with a little violence. You know what happened the other day, and the press dealt only with the window-breaking. I read the articles. They very seldom got around to mentioning the fact that one thousand, three hundred sanitation workers were on strike, and that Memphis is not being fair to them, and that Mayor Loeb is in dire need of a doctor. They didn't get around to that.

Now we're going to march again, and we've got to march again, in order to put the issue where it is supposed to be. And force everybody to see that there are thirteen hundred of God's children here suffering, sometimes going hungry, going through dark and dreary nights wondering how this thing is going to come out. That's the issue. And we've got to say to the nation: we know it's coming out. For when people get caught up with that which is right and they are willing to sacrifice for it, there is no stopping point short of victory.

We aren't going to let any mace stop us. We are masters in our nonviolent movement in disarming police forces; they don't know what to do. I've seen them so often. I remember in Birmingham, Alabama, when we were in that majestic struggle there we would move out of the 16th Street Baptist Church day after day; by the hundreds we would move out. And Bull Connor would tell them to send the dogs forth and they did come; but we just went before the dogs singing, "Ain't gonna let nobody turn me round." Bull Connor next would say, "Turn the fire hoses on." And as I said to you the other night, Bull Connor didn't know history. He knew a kind of physics that somehow didn't relate to the transphysics that we knew about. And that was the fact that there was a certain kind of fire that no water could put out. And we went before the fire hoses; we had known water. If we were Baptist or some other denomination, we had been immersed. If we were Methodist, and some others, we had been sprinkled, but we knew water.

That couldn't stop us. And we just went on before the dogs and we would look at them; and we'd go on before the water hoses and we would look at it, and we'd just go on singing. "Over my head I see freedom in the air." And then we would be thrown in the paddy wagons, and sometimes we were stacked in there like sardines in a can. And they would throw us in, and old Bull would say, "Take them off," and they did; and we would just go in the paddy wagon singing, "We Shall Overcome." And every now and then we'd get in the jail, and we'd see the jailers looking through the windows being moved by our prayers, and being moved by our words and our songs. And there was a power there which Bull Connor couldn't adjust to; and so we ended up transforming Bull into a steer, and we won our struggle in Birmingham.

Now we've got to go on to Memphis just like that. I call upon you to be with us Monday. Now about injunctions: We have an injunction and we're going into court tomorrow morning to fight this illegal, unconstitutional injunction. All we say to America is, "Be true to what you said on paper." If I lived in China or even Russia, or any totalitarian country, maybe I could understand the denial of certain basic First Amendment privileges, because they hadn't committed themselves to that over there. But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of the press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right. And so just as I say, we aren't going to let any injunction turn us around. We are going on.

We need all of you. And you know what's beautiful to me, is to see all of these ministers of the Gospel. It's a marvelous picture. Who is it that is supposed to articulate the longings and aspirations of the people more than the preacher? Somehow the preacher must be an Amos, and say, "Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream." Somehow, the preacher must say with Jesus, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to deal with the problems of the poor."

And I want to commend the preachers, under the leadership of these noble men: James Lawson, one who has been in this struggle for many years; he's been to jail for struggling; but he's still going on, fighting for the rights of his people. Rev. Ralph Jackson, Billy Kiles; I could just go right on down the list, but time will not permit. But I want to thank them all.

And I want you to thank them, because so often, preachers aren't concerned about anything but themselves. And I'm always happy to see a relevant ministry.

It's alright to talk about "long white robes over yonder," in all of its symbolism. But ultimately people want some suits and dresses and shoes to wear down here. It's alright to talk about "streets flowing with milk and honey," but God has commanded us to be concerned about the slums down here, and his children who can't eat three square meals a day. It's alright to talk about the new Jerusalem, but one day, God's preacher must talk about the New York, the new Atlanta, the new Philadelphia, the new Los Angeles, the new Memphis, Tennessee. This is what we have to do.

Now the other thing we'll have to do is this: Always anchor our external direct action with the power of economic withdrawal. Now, we are poor people, individually, we are poor when you compare us with white society in America. We are poor. Never stop and forget that collectively, that means all of us together, collectively we are richer than all the nation in the world, with the exception of nine. Did you ever think about that? After you leave the United States, Soviet Russia, Great Britain, West Germany, France, and I could name the others, the Negro collectively is richer than most nations of the world. We have an annual income of more than thirty billion dollars a year, which is more than all of the exports of the United States, and more than the national budget of Canada. Did you know that? That's power right there, if we know how to pool it.

We don't have to argue with anybody. We don't have to curse and go around acting bad with our words. We don't need any bricks and bottles, we don't need any Molotov cocktails, we just need to go around to these stores, and to these massive industries in our country, and say, "God sent us by here, to say to you that you're not treating his children right. And we've come by here to ask you to make the first item on your agenda--fair treatment, where God's children are concerned. Now, if you are not prepared to do that, we do have an agenda that we must follow. And our agenda calls for withdrawing economic support from you."

And so, as a result of this, we are asking you tonight, to go out and tell your neighbors not to buy Coca-Cola in Memphis. Go by and tell them not to buy Sealtest milk. Tell them not to buy--what is the other bread?--Wonder Bread. And what is the other bread company, Jesse? Tell them not to buy Hart's bread. As Jesse Jackson has said, up to now, only the garbage men have been feeling pain; now we must kind of redistribute the pain. We are choosing these companies because they haven't been fair in their hiring policies; and we are choosing them because they can begin the process of saying, they are going to support the needs and the rights of these men who are on strike. And then they can move on downtown and tell Mayor Loeb to do what is right.

But not only that, we've got to strengthen black institutions. I call upon you to take you money out of the banks downtown and deposit you money in Tri-State Bank--we want a "bank-in" movement in Memphis. So go by the savings and loan association. I'm not asking you something that we don't do ourselves at SCLC. Judge Hooks and others will tell you that we have an account here in the savings and loan association from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. We're just telling you to follow what we're doing. Put your

money there. You have six or seven black insurance companies in Memphis. Take out your insurance there. We want to have an "insurance-in."

Now there are some practical things we can do. We begin the process of building a greater economic base. And at the same time, we are putting pressure where it really hurts. I ask you to follow through here.

Now, let me say as I move to my conclusion that we've got to give ourselves to this struggle until the end. Nothing would be more tragic than to stop at this point, in Memphis. We've got to see it through. And when we have our march, you need to be there. Be concerned about your brother. You may not be on strike. But either we go up together, or we go down together.

Let us develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness. One day a man came to Jesus; and he wanted to raise some questions about some vital matters in life. At points, he wanted to trick Jesus, and show him that he knew a little more than Jesus knew, and through this, throw him off base. Now that question could have easily ended up in a philosophical and theological debate. But Jesus immediately pulled that question from mid-air, and placed it on a dangerous curve between Jerusalem and Jericho. And he talked about a certain man, who fell among thieves. You remember that a Levite and a priest passed by on the other side. They didn't stop to help him. And finally a man of another race came by. He got down from his beast, decided not to be compassionate by proxy. But with him, administered first aid, and helped the man in need. Jesus ended up saying, this was the good man, because he had the capacity to project the "I" into the "thou," and to be concerned about his brother. Now you know, we use our imagination a great deal to try to determine why the priest and the Levite didn't stop. At times we say they were busy going to church meetings--an ecclesiastical gathering--and they had to get on down to Jerusalem so they wouldn't be late for their meeting. At other times we would speculate that there was a religious law that "One who was engaged in religious ceremonials was not to touch a human body twenty-four hours before the ceremony." And every now and then we begin to wonder whether maybe they were not going down to Jerusalem, or down to Jericho, rather to organize a "Jericho Road Improvement Association." That's a possibility. Maybe they felt that it was better to deal with the problem from the casual root, rather than to get bogged down with an individual effort.

But I'm going to tell you what my imagination tells me. It's possible that these men were afraid. You see, the Jericho road is a dangerous road. I remember when Mrs. King and I were first in Jerusalem. We rented a car and drove from Jerusalem down to Jericho. And as soon as we got on that road, I said to my wife, "I can see why Jesus used this as a setting for his parable." It's a winding, meandering road. It's really conducive for ambushing. You start out in Jerusalem, which is about 1200 miles, or rather 1200 feet above sea level. And by the time you get down to Jericho, fifteen or twenty minutes later, you're about 2200 feet below sea level. That's a dangerous road. In the day of Jesus it came to be known as the "Bloody Pass." And you know, it's possible that the priest and the Levite looked over that man on the ground and wondered if the robbers were still around. Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking. And he was acting like he had been robbed and hurt, in order to seize them over there, lure them there for quick and easy

seizure. And so the first question that the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"

That's the question before you tonight. Not, "If I stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to all of the hours that I usually spend in my office every day and every week as a pastor?" The question is not, "If I stop to help this man in need, what will happen to me?" "If I do not stop to help the sanitation workers, what will happen to them?" That's the question.

Let us rise up tonight with a greater readiness. Let us stand with a greater determination. And let us move on in these powerful days, these days of challenge to make America what it ought to be. We have an opportunity to make America a better nation. And I want to thank God, once more, for allowing me to be here with you.

You know, several years ago, I was in New York City autographing the first book that I had written. And while sitting there autographing books, a demented black woman came up. The only question I heard from her was, "Are you Martin Luther King?"

And I was looking down writing, and I said yes. And the next minute I felt something beating on my chest. Before I knew it I had been stabbed by this demented woman. I was rushed to Harlem Hospital. It was a dark Saturday afternoon. And that blade had gone through, and the X-rays revealed that the tip of the blade was on the edge of my aorta, the main artery. And once that's punctured, you drown in your own blood--that's the end of you.

It came out in the New York Times the next morning, that if I had sneezed, I would have died. Well, about four days later, they allowed me, after the operation, after my chest had been opened, and the blade had been taken out, to move around in the wheel chair in the hospital. They allowed me to read some of the mail that came in, and from all over the states, and the world, kind letters came in. I read a few, but one of them I will never forget. I had received one from the President and the Vice-President. I've forgotten what those telegrams said. I'd received a visit and a letter from the Governor of New York, but I've forgotten what the letter said. But there was another letter that came from a little girl, a young girl who was a student at the White Plains High School. And I looked at that letter, and I'll never forget it. It said simply, "Dear Dr. King: I am a ninth-grade student at the Whites Plains High School." She said, "While it should not matter, I would like to mention that I am a white girl. I read in the paper of your misfortune, and of your suffering. And I read that if you had sneezed, you would have died. And I'm simply writing you to say that I'm so happy that you didn't sneeze."

And I want to say tonight, I want to say that I am happy that I didn't sneeze. Because if I had sneezed, I wouldn't have been around here in 1960, when students all over the South started sitting-in at lunch counters. And I knew that as they were sitting in, they were really standing up for the best in the American dream. And taking the whole nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. If I had sneezed, I wouldn't have been

around in 1962, when Negroes in Albany, Georgia, decided to straighten their backs up. And whenever men and women straighten their backs up, they are going somewhere, because a man can't ride your back unless it is bent. If I had sneezed, I wouldn't have been here in 1963, when the black people of Birmingham, Alabama, aroused the conscience of this nation, and brought into being the Civil Rights Bill. If I had sneezed, I wouldn't have had a chance later that year, in August, to try to tell America about a dream that I had had. If I had sneezed, I wouldn't have been down in Selma, Alabama, to see the great movement there. If I had sneezed, I wouldn't have been in Memphis to see a community rally around those brothers and sisters who are suffering. I'm so happy that I didn't sneeze.

And they were telling me, now it doesn't matter now. It really doesn't matter what happens now. I left Atlanta this morning, and as we got started on the plane, there were six of us, the pilot said over the public address system, "We are sorry for the delay, but we have Dr. Martin Luther King on the plane. And to be sure that all of the bags were checked, and to be sure that nothing would be wrong with the plane, we had to check out everything carefully. And we've had the plane protected and guarded all night."

And then I got into Memphis. And some began to say that threats, or talk about the threats that were out. What would happen to me from some of our sick white brothers?

Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the promised land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the promised land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.

Tom Omholt
Sunday, September 16, 2001
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Washington DC

This past Tuesday at 10:00 am I was called upon to do a funeral for a member of this church, Betty Leslie. Betty was 75 years old. She died for a disease known as Alzheimer's – a vicious, cunning and deadly disease that seems to strike so swiftly and indiscriminately.

As we began Betty's funeral on Tuesday I had no idea of the number of funerals that would take place in the days and weeks to come, because, you see, on Tuesday morning part of America died. This country was attacked by a vicious, cunning, and deadly disease known as terrorism. It struck quickly and indiscriminately. It struck at the central nervous system of this country. It struck at the very heart of those things and those people we hold dear and true. This disease attacked two of our great cities. I was born and raised in New York City, and I have treasured my last 17 years here in Washington.

A disease is a thing. Terrorism takes on human form. It is etched on the faces and burned into the souls of real people, many of whom profess to be a religious people.

As we shed our tears for Betty on Tuesday I had no idea of the flood of tears that would soon stream from the eyes of husbands grieving for their wives, wives for their husbands, parents for their children, children for their parents, friends for their friends, and friends for perfect strangers who somehow through this terrible tragedy now had become their friends.

As we placed the pall on the casket on Tuesday I had no idea of the hundreds if not thousands of palls that would be placed on caskets in the days and weeks to come.

Today we would like to rejoice and be glad in the day that the Lord has made, but we find it extremely difficult to do so. Why? Because there is a pall covering all of us this Lord's day. There is a pall of disbelief and despair wrapped ever so tightly around us. There is a pall of three nagging and disturbing questions that perhaps we must try to answer before we can move on and get ourselves out from under this heavy pall of deep sadness.

The first question was asked of me on Tuesday afternoon. Why did God let this tragedy happen? Where was God? When I die and go to heaven that is the first question I'm going to ask God. And if I die before you I promise that somehow, someday I'll let you know the answer so you will no longer have to struggle with that question.

Where was God Tuesday morning? Let it be known that God created the heavens and the earth and everything and every- one in it. God gave us the world as a gift to enjoy and to take care of. God's hope is for us all to get along, to love one another just as he has loved us. But when things go wrong in the world God is not some great puppeteer in the sky who will pull the necessary strings to suddenly interrupt human interactions. God is not a

Hollywood director who can yell cut, stop the action if he doesn't like how the movie is going.

Where was God on Tuesday? Same place he was when his son died on the cross of Calvary on that first Good Friday. Who is to say that God wasn't running up the stairs of the Twin Towers while frightened people were running down. Who is to say that God wasn't searching and saving people knowing that the weight of steel and concrete would soon come crashing down on his shoulders, just as the full weight of sin and evil fell on his son's shoulders and crushed him on the hard wood of the cross. Who is to say that God wasn't on the flight that crashed in Pennsylvania wrestling with the terrorists, and letting the world know in no uncertain terms that evil might win a round or two but that the powerful goodness and love of God will win the fight, and achieve for the frightened faithful the final victory.

Where was God on Tuesday? God was among the lost and grieving at the Pentagon. God was in New York, standing as tall as a tower, and with his heart exposed to evil's onslaught. Where is God now? Right here. Helping, caring, loving, comforting us through prayer, the scriptures and the bread that will soon be broken and the wine that will soon be poured.

Before I continue, allow me to share a brief word about my friends Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. I don't know where these guys got these theological perversions that they spew forth on people. I don't know how they can so crudely misinterpret the Good News of the scriptures. To say that God worked through these terrorists attacks to punish a godless America because America continues to embrace liberal groups, pro-abortion groups, gays and lesbians is not only ill timed but down right evil and doesn't deserve another word in today's sermon.

The second question that covers us like a pall is the question about going to war. My son, who will turn 20 next week, asked this of his mother the other day -Will there be a draft or lottery? Are we going to war? Is it right, even under these circumstances, for people of faith to wage war against others?

Remember, we gather here today in this place in the name of Jesus who talked about loving one's enemies, forgiving one's enemies -turning the other cheek.

But we also gather here in the name of Jesus who one day put together a whip of cords and with righteous anger drove the money changers out of the temple. Maybe the time has come for the people of God in America to swing the whip of cords in order to drive out the terrorists from the world temple, but being careful as to how far and wide the whip is swung.

This is not a time for John Wayne bravado. This is not a time for vengeance. This is a time to carefully and prayerfully do what God wants us to do to bring justice and peace to the earth.

The third question that covers us like a pall is the question about hope. Is there hope? Some years ago when the USS Thresher sank off the coast of New England rescuers could hear tapping inside the hull. Sailors inside the stricken submarine were tapping out the words, *Is there hope?*

Perhaps at this very moment there is someone in the rubble of the World Trade Center tapping on a steel beam or a piece of concrete that same question. Maybe right now a survivor of the Pentagon explosion is asking that important question of a doctor in a Virginia hospital with the blinking of her eyes. Maybe if we listen carefully we can hear that question about hope being communicated by the beats of our troubled hearts.

Is there hope? I believe that if we answered our first question affirmatively then we can answer this question in the same way. God is alive and well. God has not left us desolate. God is here. Right now. And where God is among God's people, there is always hope.

Since Tuesday morning we have seen the signs of hope. We have seen acts of courage, kindness and compassion. We have seen rescue workers refuse to leave the pile of rubble in New York so they could continue to search for survivors. We have seen parents embracing their children with renewed intensity.

The sharing of peace in worship has taken on new meaning. People are not putting off until tomorrow the important things they need to do today. We all have a new appreciation for life and its fragility.

After Betty's funeral on Tuesday we were unable to get to the Virginia cemetery for the committal service. We decided to meet at the cemetery the next day. As I drove into Virginia I went by the Pentagon, and I could still see some smoke hovering over it like a pall. On my way home, after the committal service, I decided to stop by Sibley Hospital to visit with Jim and Celia Lose. You see on Tuesday morning God had blessed them with a baby girl.

As I entered the room, I couldn't help it, but I looked for any signs of a pall. There were none, thank God. Instead, my eyes beheld a little baby girl, Abby Susannah, a jewel in the crown of God's creation.

I saw that she was wrapped ever so tightly, not in a pall, but in simple and beautiful baby blanket. It was a blanket of love that provided Abby with warmth and security.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, the pall is lifting. As the faithful people of God we are on the move again. We have come through the night of terrible tragedy and deep sorrow into a glorious new morning of hope and healing. Let us walk together. Let us hold on to each other and to this wonderful God of ours. Let us hold on to the signs of God's goodness and love, the cross of his son Jesus Christ, and, perhaps a simple and yet beautiful baby blanket.

May God bless you this day. May God touch you, as only God can, with his comfort and strength. May God lead us all to that bright and beautiful day when there will be peace in our hearts and peace in our world.

Amen.