

The Fullness of Time

by Dennis Kinlaw

Dennis Kinlaw's sermon explores the profound significance of time in Christian faith, highlighting key historical moments that illustrate God's redemptive work in the world.

Duration: 1:00:18

Topics: "Fullness of Time"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a story about a boy who made a life-changing decision to go into the streets despite his mother's warnings. The speaker then relates this story to the situation in Romania, where people are seeking moral values to make their nation sound. The speaker emphasizes the transformative power of certain moments in history, such as Moses' encounter with God, Isaiah's experience in the temple, Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road, and Augustine's reflection in the garden. The speaker also highlights the richness of resources available to the church today and encourages the audience to connect with each other and pursue freedom and holiness.

Transcript

I had the privilege of having lunch today with one of the members of the group, and before we left each other, he turned to me and he said, have you noticed the passage in John 13? And so we turned and looked at this passage. I want to use it tonight before I begin speaking. Now, before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come, that he should depart from this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end, and supper being ended, the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside his garments, took a towel and girded himself.

After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. One of the things that marks the Christian religion and Christian faith is a profound interest in history. If you will look at the religions of the world, you will find that many of the religions of the world have very little interest in history.

In fact, many of them find that what they want to do is escape it, if at all possible. I ran across an article the other day by Herbert Butterfield, a great British historian, in which he was writing, he himself not an evangelical believer, about the fact that the first history that was written in the course of human events was written by Old Testament prophets. But that should not be a surprise.

You see, if you really believe that God created the world and he is sovereign Lord over it, and it had a beginning and it is going to have an end in terms of his purposes, then what you have done has been to straighten it out so that it starts somewhere and it's going somewhere. And these Hebrew prophets in the Old Testament, they believed that God had started human history time and space were a part of his purposes and that he was going to work out his objectives in space and time for us. Now that was strengthened by the coming of Christ, because if the creation gives us a special view of the importance of time and of space, if you really believe that God himself stepped out of eternity to work out his redemptive purposes from within time and from within space, then there is a value in time and space from God's point of view that we should recognize and that we should honor.

So if you remember that God dwelt among us in our state, in this place, and in these circumstances, redemptively for 33 years, then it's fair for us to say that there is significance for God in the space and the time that he has given to us. We know that time is a gift that comes from him. You and I can't produce it.

There's no way you and I can stretch it. There's no way you and I, except by doing wrong, can shorten our time. Time comes as a gift from God and given for purposes.

But one of the interesting things about the biblical point of view and the Christian point of view is, it was reflected in what Larry was talking about, and he stole part of my message from me when he was witnessing earlier tonight. Part of the biblical view is that all of time is not of the same value, that there are some moments that are more significant than others, there are some hours that are more significant than others, that there are moments in time when eternity touches time and time takes on a significance that is far more important than just in the regular run of events. I ran across an article in Time magazine the other day about a play that started on Broadway a couple of weeks ago.

I hope it's still running, I don't know. But it is a play on C.S. Lewis and his relationship to his wife, Joy Davidman. And it caused me to go back and pull down Lyle Dorsett's volume, his biography of Joy Davidman.

You see, Joy had a very interesting experience. She was a Jewess who grew up in a home in Brooklyn, one member of the family a little bit devout and the other one completely secular. She went to Barnard College in the 30s, early 30s, and she herself became a Marxist and through that she became an atheist and then she became a journalist with the New Masses, which was the communist publication in the United States in those days.

And so for several years she wrote as an atheistic Jewess for that communist publication. She married a man whom she met who was a novelist and they had two children and they moved out into the rural areas north of New York City near Austin and there she lived with her husband who developed an alcohol problem and then was unfaithful to her. When he was unfaithful to her this came as a very shattering experience because she said, up to that point I had never had any question about my worth and now this had happened to me and I had always been in control of my life and now there was a factor in my life which I could not control.

Then one day she got a telephone call from her husband in downtown New York and he said, I am having a nervous breakdown, I don't know what's going to happen to me, I don't know where I'm going but I know that I can't come home and he hung up. And so she spent the rest of the day trying to find somebody who could locate her husband but she couldn't find anybody who could tell her where he was. That evening she spent with her children not knowing where to go or what to do and finally she put her children to bed and

she said, I realized for the first time in my life a sense of helplessness and despair which I had never known before and a sense of profound loneliness which I had never known before.

She said, all of my arrogance, all of my cocksure-ness and all of my self-love was momentarily shattered. What does one do in a moment of desolation like that? When she said suddenly, in my existential loneliness, she said, I thought, wait, there's somebody here and she said, I knew that I was not alone. She said, it's interesting, it didn't last very long.

She said, you know, it's hard for you to remember those experiences but I doubt if it lasted more than 30 seconds. She said, it's interesting, it didn't take my panic away, it didn't take my fears away, it didn't take my, the shattering experience of concern for my husband away but she said, I knew that I was not alone and my life was turned around now because the biggest question in my life was, who was he? So she said, I began my search and she said, a good Marxist, I turned first to Lenin and I read everything of Lenin's that I could get and for the first time I saw the contradictions in Lenin. She said, then I thought, I'm a Jewish, maybe that's where it is and so she said, I started reading the literature of Judaism.

She said, that felt a little better but she said, I still could not find out who he was and then she said, somebody gave me a New Testament and I found that his name was Jesus and she said, out of that came my Christian life and ultimately her marriage to C.S. Lewis who wrote, you will remember a tribute to her in the book entitled, A Grief Observed, remarkable tribute and all of that came out of 30 seconds. Isn't it interesting how when God decides to move, he can make the ordinary extraordinarily significant? Now, if that happens in individual lives and if you're a Christian, I don't think you have any question about it. Look at the massive literature in the Christian church and in the Hebrew Christian tradition.

We know something happened when Abraham was 75 years of age that had not happened before and the rest of his life was different because of what happened when he was 75. There were those other moments later. You will remember that the same was true in Moses' life.

The first 80 years were of one order and then something happened and we don't know how long it lasted, but in an experience, it could obviously be measured in less than days, certainly in hours and maybe in minutes. Something happened that changed the course of human history because it transformed Moses and then you get the experience of Isaiah in the temple. You get the experience of Paul on the Damascus Road.

You get the experience of Augustine sitting in the garden. You get the experience of Wesley when he said, and I've always loved it, when he said at about a quarter before nine. Isn't that an astounding thing? It was punctiliar enough that he could tell you about where the hands were on the face of the clock when time took on a different significance for him.

You may remember Pascal's memorial, but Pascal began the testimony of what happened to him with these words in the year of grace, 1654, on Monday, the 23rd of November, the feast of St. Clement, the feast of the Pope and the martyrs, and of others in their martyrology, the vigil of St. Chrysogonus, martyr, and others, and from about half past ten in the evening until half past twelve, fire. Not the God, the philosopher, but the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob and his life was transformed. But I've come to love that line, between about ten thirty and twelve thirty, two hours that made a difference.

Now, it would be wonderful if God would make these hours that we have together significant in somebody's life, wouldn't it? You notice that's what Larry was talking about when there were those holy

moments when God came and in the course of his whole life was redirected. And the bishop, his testimony, too. That's true of, I suspect, the most, if not all of us here.

But now tonight my question is not that. We believe that. What I want to ask is, if that's true of individuals, is it also true of human history? Are there moments in human history that for the human race make a difference? Are there moments in human history that for the church of Christ make a difference? And that are as significant for the church of Christ or for the human race as those high moments are in individual lives that we talk about? I think if you, you don't have to think long until you realize that the scripture talks about in relation to Christ and when the fullness of time was come.

That something happened in the birth of Christ and in the incarnation that makes it legitimate for us to say it was one order of time before and it is another order of time since. And so we mark the division of time with the birth of our Savior. I suspect that we could build a biblical case for some other things like that.

Certainly the day of Pentecost made a radical difference. You will remember the prophecies in the Old Testament and the New Testament cite those prophecies in relation to Pentecost. That it was one relationship to God and to his Holy Spirit before and after Pentecost it was a different relationship so that a period of time had the touch of God on it and the world's opportunities, the church's opportunities were different after that moment than they were before.

I suspect there may be something like that in that period of the collapse of the Roman Empire. You will remember when Augustine sat down and wrote the City of God which we would not have had if it had not been for that unusual experience. And I suspect a case could be made that God at strategic points in history, though we can't see his hand, obviously had his hand in political, economic, sociological events.

Early this morning I was reading an article that was sent to me recently on John Hus, you know, the patron saint of Czechoslovakia and one of the pre-Reformation reformers who in, what was it, 1415 was burned for his faith in Christ and for his commitment to the Scriptures. You know, he died for his faith. It was a hundred years later that Martin Luther came along.

Was it the fact that God did some things in that century in the breakup of the political empires of the world that gave Martin Luther a freedom so that he could survive, so that you and I could be the beneficiaries of his witness and of his work? I wonder if we could make a case, and I'm not the one to do it because I'm not a historian, I'm not the scholar to do that, but I have the feeling that a case can be made that there are times when God acts specifically, definitively in terms of history. Just recently I had the privilege of being with Sam Kamalaisin in southern Russia for a pastor's conference. And it was interesting to be in a country where a few years ago from my point of view I hardly knew whether there were any churches at all in Soviet Russia and find myself worshiping with 175 pastors in one republic from one religious Christian group in that republic and in a church packed with people, 700 people in the seats and people standing in the aisles.

And when the invitation was given, this remarkable response in a country that has devoted itself to the extermination of not just Christianity but of religion itself. And as I experienced that and watched what was taking place, I found myself saying, what has happened here? The passage that came to me again and again was the passage in the book of Revelation chapter 5 where you will remember John sees that the throne of God and in the hands of the one on the throne, the book sealed with seven seals, and he knows that his future is in that book and the future of all of us is in that book. And he wonders who it is that's worthy to break the seals, open the book and let history unroll.

And as they look for someone worthy, they search out heaven, search out the earth, search out under the earth, and there's no one worthy to break the seal and to unroll history. And as he weeps that there is no one worthy to break those seals, one of the elders comes and says, don't weep, there is one worthy. Behold the lion of the tribe of Judah and John turns and looks again at the throne and standing in the midst of the throne is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world and the elder speaks and says, he is worthy and the Lamb of God takes that seven-sealed book that nobody else can open and he begins to break the seals, the trumpets begin to blow and history is different because he's broken those seals.

Now, you know, there is something biblical in that concept that he is the king of kings and Lord of lords and that he is sovereign over it all. Well, I've come to wonder if you and I have lived to a day when that kind of thing is true and we have had the privilege of seeing it. You see, what has happened in Eastern Europe, what has happened in Russia in the last fifteen months is something that sixteen months ago, I doubt if there's a person in this crowd who would have suggested the possibility of it.

I was talking with a person who had a close friend who is in the strategic planning for the Pentagon in Washington and their business is to dream of every possible scenario. Part of their business is to dream of the wildest kinds of scenarios so that everything has been envisioned that could possibly happen and then so that preparations could be made for it. And so he said, I asked my friend who's in the middle of that kind of speculation, did anybody conceive a scenario like what we've seen in the last fifteen months? A man whose business is to dream those scenarios said, nobody dreamed anything anywhere near like it.

I wonder if we've lived to see a period when God has shown his hand and we're in a different world from what we were fifteen months ago, sixteen months ago. There are things that seem to me to give evidence of that. I had a delightful time with Sam Tamalason.

Many of you know Sam Tamalason. Sam was there because he has an Indian passport, was able to get in behind the Iron Curtain with great freedom when we could not. And so he found himself invited to do an evangelistic campaign in one of the cities in Romania and a stadium was rented and so Sam was to preach every night.

And when he arrived, his first visitor was the head of the secret police for the whole country, a man who obviously was responsible for the execution of stacks of people and he was there to threaten Sam Tamalason and to forbid him to preach. And he said, Sam told me, he started down in his questionnaire, his interrogation to intimidate me and he said by the third question I realized he wasn't paying any attention to my answer. So after my third answer when he didn't pay any attention and started on the fourth question, I looked over and said, sir, if you're going to ask me questions, why don't you pay any attention to my answers? If you're not going to pay any attention to my answers, why should I answer your question? I will simply refuse to answer your question if you pay no attention to my answer.

He said the head of the Romanian secret police apologized to him. He said twice in the course of that conversation he apologized to him. He said, you know, Ken Long, the guy I work for is bigger than the one he works for.

Now, you know, I love that kind of confidence and that kind of faith. It's interesting that the man forbade him to preach and he said, oh, that's a decision I can't make. You see, I'm a guest in this country of many of your fellow citizens and they have invited me to preach the gospel of Christ.

And he said, if I'm not to preach, they're the ones who will have to make that decision. You will have to deal with them. He said, I preach.

And every night when I gave an invitation, hundreds responded. He said one night I didn't give an invitation and hundreds responded anyway. He said it was interesting to watch priests from the Orthodox Church in their regalia come forward in an invitation to receive Christ.

He said God was present. But then he said something that I do not think I will ever get over. Some of you have heard me share this and you'll be patient with me, but let me share it again for the sake of those who haven't.

I do not think I will ever think quite the same way again. He said to me, he said, you know, one night, Dennis, I was aware of sound in my audience that I could not explain. I didn't know what it was.

And so he said I tried to, while I was preaching away, sense what it was. Then I noticed the sound came in waves. And he said as it came in waves, then he said I noticed it came every time I used the name of Jesus.

And then he said it dawned on me it was the ladies in the crowd weeping. And then he said the noise got louder and I realized all the men had joined the women as they wept every time the name of Jesus was mentioned. Then he said at that point I found, Ken Law, that I was weeping every time I mentioned the name of Jesus.

Then he said this, this is what I will never forget. He said, Ken Law, when the last alternative option to Jesus has been exhausted and exposed for its bankruptcy, the name of Jesus takes on remarkable power. I wonder if I have ever heard an academic statement on philosophy of history comparable to that.

I wonder if that's not the explanation of human history. That we choose our delusions and God lets us follow them until they collapse. And until they're exposed for what they are.

And that there is something about life itself that will do them in. You see I've lived through at least three of those. Empires that were as formidable as anything in the ancient world, Darius or Nebuchadnezzar or Ramses or any of the rest.

Because you see you and I, some of us here can remember when Hitler came to his end in a bunker taking his own life and the life of his lover. I can remember when Hirohito became a human being and a day he lost his divinity overnight. And you and I have lived to see what may be one of the greatest political delusions and empires in human history come to almost a total collapse.

And you and I didn't lift a finger to accomplish it. And it wasn't done with political or military might. It was collapse from within.

And I wonder if we have not lived to see a day when God has given the church of Christ an opportunity that it has never had before. A sixth of the earth's surface now open apparently to the gospel of Christ. You know one of the things I love is that while he's working up here he's also working in other places.

Yesterday, day before yesterday, I got a phone call from a couple, from a man here in Wilmore who has come here, his daughter is in college. He spent several years in the Philippines as a missionary among Muslims. And he said, you've just come back from Europe.

And I said, yes. So he said, will you tell me about it. So I told him a little.

And he said, I believe God's been speaking to me. And I said, oh. He said, yes.

He said, I'd like to go to eastern Russia. He said, there are a lot of Muslim people there. I'd like to take the Jesus film and spend the rest of my life working among Muslims.

You see, he said, I lived among Muslims. I know what it is to live in a community that's hostile. I know what it means to live among people that may kill you.

He said, you know, I've lost my fear of that. It would be a great privilege. Do you suppose that kind of thing would be possible? Well, let me say, these days I'm not ready to say anything's impossible.

And I don't believe that it's the economic forces of history that have brought it all about. I still have that vision in my mind of the Lamb sitting on the throne, breaking some seals, and new possibilities are opening up because of it. Now, just recently I have had some conversations with Mary Fisher, whom some of you know.

And the other day I read a report of the 92nd birthday of Walter Judd, who in 1940 I heard speak on China. One of the most dramatic missionary messages I ever heard in my life. One of the most powerful.

And if you know, if you've ever known Walter Judd, you know he was an incredible figure, powerful figure, and a great Christian. He gave much of his life to China. Then he gave much of his life to the United States and the United States Congress.

And it was interesting that he felt as much a missionary there as he did when he was in China. And as needed as a missionary there as he did when he was in China. But at his 92nd birthday, his comment on the Tiananmen Square was this.

He said, I'm so glad God has let me live to see the riots in Tiananmen Square. He said, they have justified my life. Now, he said, I know the Marxists are still in control, but you can't tell me it's for long.

Could it be that you and I are going to live to see the two largest chunks of human race outside of, say, India and the world, apart from India? The two largest chunks of one of human surface and the other of the human race open to the cause of Christ in a way that they've never been open in the last millennium? Would that be fair? I don't know enough about church history to be absolutely accurate in my statements or dogmatic in them on those kinds of things, but certainly an opening. Now, is this something that we should be paying attention to and saying, God, does this bear upon me? I want to raise the question with you about that. Is it presumption for you and me to believe that what has happened in human history bears on people sitting in Bernard Chapel in Asbury College in November of 1990, coming from the kind of places you and I come from? I wonder if we do not need to realize that if there was a day when a person could be a Christian without being missionary-minded, that day's over and over forever.

I've come to the feeling that God has done something that now puts us in the place where the responsibility is on us. And he says, the door is open. I've moved.

Now, you have an opportunity to move. Now, what are you going to do about it? You see, if God has moved like that, then every person who calls himself a follower of Christ ought to be concerned. And that interpretation is compatible, I think, with what I find in Scripture.

I notice that God has called us. You remember Jesus, when he spoke to his church the first time after the resurrection, said, As the Father has sent me. He had a call, and he was sent.

And sent for what purpose? He recited for us a few moments ago, For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. That when God sent Christ, he had the whole world in mind. And if you and I are followers of him, and if we have heard his voice to follow him, then we ought to have that kind of perspective, too.

Now, there was a day when there were a lot of doors that were closed to us. But the question is, when they're closed, maybe we can say that's not our responsibility. But when those doors open, then that may put us in a radically different position.

You know, I was with the family of George Luce, who was chairman of the board here until July. Died in July. And at the funeral, I was talking with two of his brothers.

And one of his brothers said to me, he said, You know, our father said some things to us that we could never get over. They were the largest, I think, single bus builder in the United States, maybe in the world, I don't know. And you've seen their school buses all over the United States, as well as some of their recreational vehicles, sort of the Cadillac of that type of vehicle.

But Joe said to me, You know, my father would say to us, Boys, we're not in the business of building buses. We have bigger business than that. Our business is to spread the gospel of Christ across the face of the earth.

And building buses is the way we have an opportunity to do it. So our business is not building buses. We build buses so we can do what God has called us as a family to do.

And you know, that's a different mindset, isn't it? Wouldn't it be interesting if the professor, I notice Paul Deaton back there shaking his head, if the professor in Asbury College's faculty, whether it's mathematics or biology or Bible, would say, My business is not teaching mathematics or biology or Bible, but my business is participating in what Christ went to the cross to do, and that's to redeem a world that's lost. My way of doing it, teaching mathematics or biology or Bible. I suspect the teacher would be a different kind of teacher.

I suspect the learning would be a different kind of learning. You know, I suspect the pastor would be a different kind of pastor. If he felt, My business is to be a part of Christ's redemptive work to reach a world with the gospel, and my way of doing that is pastoring the local church in my community where I am.

I suspect it would make a radical difference in the kind of pastoral leadership that that pastor gave. Now let me burn that home a little closer. What if a college president were to say, My business is not running a college.

God's called me to something bigger than that. God has called me to be a party with him in the redemption of the human race. The way he wants me to do it is to be a college president.

I suspect it would make a radical difference in the way an institution was run, don't you? So I wonder, if we do not need to think through afresh what our relationship is to what God is at work doing in the world today and how we fit into that. I'm convinced we need to think universally in a way that we've never thought before. And, you know, if you'll go through Scripture, you'll find that that's what God had in mind all along.

The Jews never understood. The Jews said, He did all this for us. Look what He did.

He called Abraham out of her, the Chaldees, so we could have the land of Canaan. Then He appeared to Moses in the wilderness and He called him to lead us out of Egyptian bondage so we could have the land of Canaan. But if you go back and read the call that God gave to Abraham, it wasn't so the Jews could have the land of Canaan.

That was part of the package, but it was for a bigger purpose. And that was so that redemption could come to the whole world. If you read the passages relating to the call to Moses, you will find that Israel was to be a kingdom of priests.

And priests are not in the temple for themselves. Priests are there for the sake of other people. And Israel's call was to be the kingdom of priests for the rest of the world.

I dare you to go through the Old Testament and notice the universalism that's there all the way through. When I was a student at Asbury, I was convinced if I wanted to speak on missions, I had to go to the end of the Gospels to get a missionary text. Let me tell you, the great missionary texts of the Scripture are loaded all through the Old Testament.

When God gave redemption, the possibility of redemption to man, He had everybody in the world in mind. Now, some of our forefathers understood this. When you look on the cornerstones of some of these buildings, you'll find free salvation for all men, full salvation from all sin.

And that's an interesting concept of what our business is. But its salvation is to go to the ends of the earth and for all men. I think that the significance of the part is never seen correctly unless it's seen in terms of the whole.

And that wherever you are, your part in the work of God, you will never understand it and fulfill it adequately unless you see it as a part of the whole thing. You know, if we ever see that, then there is no place in the world that isn't significant. If there is no place in the world and there is no job in the world, it is not important.

It doesn't matter whether it's washing feet or what it is, if it's part of the whole plan. You take the guy on the football team whose business is to serve as a decoy and to get either the lineman or the back out of the way so a hole can be filled so the guy with the ball can get through. If he's the decoy and pulls the other guy out of the way, and as he goes, people say, what's he up to? He's got his own game plan.

He doesn't care whether he gets the credit or not as long as the touchdown takes place. Now, if we could see all that we do in relation to what Christ died on the cross to accomplish, I think everything we did would take on a new sanctity and a new significance and a new excitement and there would be a new, fresh thrill about it because God has called us to big business. I think we ought to think universally as believers.

Now, the second thing is, I've decided we ought to think eschatologically. Now, don't push me too hard as to what I mean because there are a lot of questions I can't answer. But I do not think we ought to think without thinking about the end.

When I was growing up, we used to hear a lot about the second coming. We don't hear too much about that anymore. I guess we preached it in such a way that when you preach it long enough, people don't pay

any attention to you.

I remember the guy who told me, he said, I set up a prophecy conference in my city and he said, I got a number of churches to cooperate and I got the best prophecy expert in the United States. I could get to come and preach on the imminent return of Christ. And he said he sent me a long bill of particulars about what he had to have in terms of space and accommodations and provisions while he was preaching to us on that Christ might come before that next service was over with.

You know, you go far enough in that and people don't pay any attention to you anymore. But the reality is, it's a biblical thing that there is going to be an end and that God is moving everything toward that. And He is Lord and He began it and He's going to wind it up.

I remember old Dr. Otto Pieper from Princeton who was invited to speak to a group of liberal Presbyterian preachers. And when he got through speaking, there was a question and answer period and one of them turned to him and said, Dr. Pieper, I picked up sort of an implication in what you were saying that you believe in the second coming of Christ. And old Dr. Pieper, greatest scholar I think I ever sat under, he looked around at the preachers in particular to the guy who questioned him, said, well, He began it all.

I assume He will wind it up. That's a vital part of my faith and it ought to be a vital part of yours. Now, if God is in the business of exhausting the options, letting us exhaust the options, we have an opportunity now for God to do something that I think has not been true in my lifetime and yours.

And we ought to face it with a certain amount of joyous anticipation and confidence. The reason I use that passage in John 13 where he said he knew where he came from, that he came from God, and he knew where he was going, that he was going to God, he didn't have any problem washing people's feet because if washing their feet was going to get the end accomplished, that's what he was here for. He wasn't here for position.

He wasn't here for place. He wasn't here for privilege. He wasn't here for what he could get.

He was here to fulfill and to accomplish the purposes of his Father and knowing that those purposes were going to be accomplished and that he couldn't lose. He didn't care what the Father led him through to get there. And you know, we need some of that sense within us.

He's going to win. He's going to win. Christ is not going to lose.

I think sometimes we've let the secular world around us put a despair within us and a doubt within us and an agnosticism in us. We ought to come out of the present moment saying if he can pull that kind of kingdom down, he can pull any of the other kinds of kingdoms down and he can establish his kingdom and we need to be believing and giving ourselves wholly to it. I think if we understood that, we would be ready to make some sacrifices that maybe sometimes we have tended to forget about.

I remember Elsie and I were in a meeting in tenure with the Christian Medical Society and after I had finished speaking one night, we had a very precious time, a very moving time. When I left the podium and walked out, people were slipping out and I noticed Elsie sitting with the young couple. And so I, you know how when the Spirit of God moves on you sometimes, you don't want to talk, you don't know what to say.

And so I just walked over without a word and sat down with this young couple and with Elsie. And suddenly I was aware that the young couple, both of them were weeping. And then the young lady looked

across at me and she said, when you pray, why didn't you pray for the Muslim world? I felt rebuked, but what could I say? I hadn't thought about praying for the Muslim world.

You see, her husband was a doctor in Abu Dhabi, Christian doctor, graduate of Harvard. And she said, you know, it's illegal for us to witness where we are. She said, we're missionaries and it costs a formidable amount of money to keep us there.

We could go to the Philippines for a fourth of what it costs us to live in Abu Dhabi and we could be a hundred times as fruitful. And then both of them wept and said, should we go to the Philippines? You know, it's interesting, sometimes the response that you find in your heart that's sounder than anything you could have thought up with your head, I found myself sort of exploding and saying, you don't have any option. If there are human beings there for whom Christ died, then the body of Christ has to be there.

It doesn't matter what the cost, because you see, he's going to reign and he's going to reign everywhere. The cross is going to be erected in Abu Dhabi as much as it is in the Philippines. And if you're a part of the body of Christ and he's led you there, you don't have any option.

The cost is not the thing, but he will reign. And what you're doing is a part of that. Now, I think we ought to look at how rich we are in resources to do today things that could never have been done before.

Just let me talk for a minute about us, this group right here. Isn't it interesting the network that is represented in this group? I hope as you move around in your spare time or in what free time you've got, you'll get acquainted, because you've got John Mark Braben here who's leading a seminary, a Protestant seminary in Ecuador. You've got Fernando Palomo here who has started an evangelical seminary in Central America.

You've got Stanley Key who just flew in from Paris to be with us. And do you know, there's a Wesleyan seminary beginning in secularistic pagan Paris. You just start moving around in this group and notice who's here.

There's a sense in which the people that are in this place tonight, we represent a network that touches the earth where it doesn't, the potentiality is there. Now, how often do you find groups with this kind of potential? So you have that. You heard me talk about the navel of the earth.

It's interesting, when one of our professors, Skip Elliott, took a group to Estonia in 1979, if I remember correctly, to Russia, and he was coming out through Estonia. On Saturday afternoon, they got into their hotel in Tallinn and they looked and the building across the street looked religious. And when they walked across the street to check it out, it was the largest Methodist church, I think, in Europe.

So the next day they went to service there. Those days they were careful to identify everybody that came, and so they said, who are you? So Skip said, well, we're a student group from a small college in Kentucky. And the Estonian looked and said, Asbury? Now you and I can put a feather in our cap on that kind of thing.

That's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about accountability. Talk about the materiel that we have available to us.

The people that we have contacts with in this crowd. Interesting how many tens of thousands of people are touchable by the people who sit in this room tonight. You just turn your head loose and think.

About the tens of thousands of people that are touchable through the people who sit in this room tonight. You think about the financial resources that we have. You say, wait a minute, I'm a Methodist preacher.

That's all right. But compare yourself with the typical person in Africa. We are incredibly wealthy.

We're going to give account for every penny that ever came to our hands. The resources that are available to us. And resources not only available to us personally, but available in people whom we can influence.

Do you think Christ is unaware of our privileged position? Or did he put us in that privileged position so we could do something for him? You think of the talents that are represented in this group. You think about your own? Before you get through here, you look around at the people and get acquainted with some of the others. It's amazing the talents that are represented in this group.

You think about the potential in prayer. I appreciated what Bishop Borgen said about prayer tonight. You know, I think maybe for the first time in my life, I'm beginning to sense some of the potential in intercessory prayer.

I've been a preacher all my life. All preachers talk about praying. And all the good ones pray.

But there's a difference between that and intercession, isn't there? And the difference between that and coming to the place where you know something of the power of intercession. I'd like to ask you if you know anything about the power of intercession. You know, I've developed a funny idea about getting old.

There are certain privileges in it. You know, there's no question, but that as you get older, your options narrow. And so you sort of lament the fact that your options begin to narrow.

You don't have as many options as you want to have. But you know what I've come to believe? If the options narrow this way, it may be that the potential for some other things go this way. So let me talk, let me labor the point of intercession for a minute.

Do you know anything about intercession? If God prays, and the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, it's not an unworthy calling for any of us. Or we could keep going. I think about the thousand students that we have here and the 700 across the street.

There were only 120 at Pentecost. Jesus only had 12. And we've got 1,700 here.

I think one of our assets is the theology that we have. We don't get any credit for that. It was given to us.

But you know, the possibility of a clean heart, the possibility of a single motive, the possibility that God can do something in the human heart where the division is taken out, and a life can be focused on one end, like Paul when he said, For me to live is Christ. The possibility that the law can be taken off tables of stone and written in my heart, where I do it not because of an external pressure on me, but I do it because of grace from within. That's freedom.

That's freedom. That's what the world hungers for. That's what the church hungers for.

Richard Halverson was here in April for the centennial celebration with the students. He stood up in chapel and his opening words were, he said, Will you do me a favor? I'd like to hear you sing Holy, Holy, Holy without accompaniment. The sound of the audience singing that thrill of the auditorium, soon as we got through Holy, Holy, Holy he turned his back to the audience and started staring at the organ because over

the organ there is the word holiness under the law.

The whole faculty was sitting in the choir along that day and I was grateful. And we had to watch him while he stared transfixed at those words, holiness under the law. And when he finished he turned around and looked at the audience and he said, Do you come in here so often that you forget those words are there? I hope you don't.

That is the missing element in contemporary evangelicalism. That's a good Presbyterian. It doesn't matter who you are or what your tag is, if you know Christ your heart wants to be clean and it wants to be possessed by him.

That's part of our theology. What a priceless heritage we have. What a resource we've got.

You know, I ran across an interesting quotation. I don't draw any conclusions about my reading material, but let me read you a quotation from Rolling Stone. It appeared in May of this year.

Every year Rolling Stone has a lead article on the year, sort of a cultural critique for the year. And it tries to forecast what it calls, what it says will be the quote, hot mood for the next decade. So this was 1990, so they wanted to forecast what the next decade would be like.

They said the 60s were the me decade. The 70s were the tasteless decade. The 80s were the decade of deal making and conspicuous consumption.

And they said the 90s are going to be the disingenuous decade. Now listen to what Rolling Stone says. They say that in the 90s people will be quick to say kinder and gentler things, but they won't really do anything about it.

Stylish and ambitious 80s alumni now have two choices. They can radically reform their greed driven values or considerably easier pretend that they have done so. Hopefulness is great.

The will to improve oneself is all American. The problem comes when we really don't believe all the super nice thoughts, but we keep on saying them anyway. This is at the heart of the true early 90s mood.

Fake earnestness. Make believe innocence. Pro forma sanctimony.

It's not always overt hypocrisy, asserting one thing and doing the opposite, but a more subtle and a more common cousin. Gratuitous goody-goody-ism. Paying lip service to virtue simply because it makes you or your listeners feel better.

Look for more anti-homelessness dialogue in the final five minutes of all the sitcoms. Look for the word biodegradable to appear on every grocery package imaginable. And look for the homeless to remain wretched, the environment to remain in peril.

We're in danger of becoming a nation of Eddie Haskell if we can muster the will to remake ourselves into altruists and ascetics fine. But let's not fake it. That's a word from Rolling Stone for the world, but I wonder if it isn't a word for the church, too, because we're the people of the language above all languages, aren't we? Of commitment, surrender, concern, compassion, devotion, but so oftentimes there's a vast difference between what the lips are saying and what the reality is within us.

Sam told me about an experience when we were listening through. He said he was in Romania after the revolution and he said he heard the story of a student who lived in Bucharest and his mother was talking with him and she said, I said, son, don't go into the streets. It's dangerous.

She said, please, for goodness sakes, don't go into the streets. There's where all of the students were going. She said, for my sake, don't go into the streets.

She said, for God's sake, don't go into the streets. And the boy looked up at his mother and said, Mother, it is very seldom that the moment ever comes in anybody's life that takes his total measure. But such a moment has come for me.

I have no option. I must go. When I was in Bucharest the other day his name was on one of those crosses in the square because he went into the streets and they shot him and killed him.

But it's interesting. Romania has a chance now because two days after I came to Bucharest Sam Kamalasin found himself in the office of the president of Romania, a Marxist communist. And the president said to him, Mr. Kamalasin, what help can you give us on helping us develop a national sensitivity and commitment to the moral values necessary to make a nation sound? Sam said, Ken Loft, couldn't lose a chance.

I looked at him and said, sir, the basis of all moral values is in that unshakable kingdom of Jesus Christ. And if you want to know anything about moral values, you've got to start with him. He said, interestingly, the next day his minister of culture and the minister of culture's associate was sitting in Sam's service sat through them all.

Do we live in a day that takes the measure of all of us? I'm not sure about this last thing. I asked three people at the supper table and none of them knew it, but I heard it once. Maybe you can give me the truth of this afterwards, but it's a great story.

What I heard was that when Lenin was negotiating the revolution in Moscow, the bishops of the Orthodox Church were meeting in a very hotly debated discussion of which vestments were appropriate for what occasion. And while they debated which vestments to wear, the communists took Russia. Now, I'd like to know what you and I are debating in our hearts.

I suspect the only way we can be free is when we're saying, is what I'm doing going to be justifiable when I meet Christ in terms of Calvary's sacrifice? See, I think the measure of everything when we come to that point is going to be the cross. And that's what I wanted to share with you tonight. And we have two days to think, and I'd like to think that something unique, something that God produced might come out of our time together.

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