

Sermon for Sunday, April 25, 1971 by Andrew A. Jumper, Pastor
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"SPITTING WITH THE WIND"

Romans 12:1-21

Text: "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Romans 12:2

Some years ago I preached what I thought was a rather imaginative and creative sermon. It was a sermon about John the Baptist. The Bible describes John the Baptist. He had been living in the wilderness and his hair was long, he dressed in skins and he ate what he could find in the wilderness. I called the sermon "Hippie in the Holy Land." John the Baptist was something like a hippie in terms of the way he looked but there was one significant difference. Anyway, a couple of weeks after I preached this sermon one of my Elders who was in the Rotary Club came back from a trip to Phoenix and said "You won't believe this but the speaker at the Rotary Club in Phoenix delivered your sermon. You didn't get any credit for it but I heard your sermon in Phoenix, Arizona at the Rotary Club." A couple of days later, one of the English professors out at Tech called me up and said, "Mr. Jumper, did you preach a sermon entitled "Hippie in the Holy Land?" I said, "Yes, I did" and she said, "I thought so. One of my senior students has turned it in as his theme." This morning, the sermon I am preaching is the sermon I preached in Lubbock about a year and a half ago and it has just been published in a national magazine and before somebody beats me to it in St. Louis, I am going to preach it to you. The sermon this morning is entitled "Spitting with The Wind". Our text from the second verse of this 12th chapter of the book of Romans "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind." Now that is sort of the key I want to hit this morning. "Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." Now, it is going to be necessary for me to speak right into this mike because I have been commanded by my internist not to strain my voice this morning. Actually, he wasn't very happy that I preached today but I insisted on it. Now, he's a Deacon, and he was at the early service and he had somebody up in the balcony to run the mike way up and if I got too loud, they were to wave at me. So I carefully avoided not looking at the balcony and I thought, well, the second service I am going to have fun because he is going to be gone. But, then I remembered that I had invited my throat doctor who is also a Presbyterian to come to church this morning and he is a member of another Presbyterian church and knowing the kind of man he is, I know he is sitting out here somewhere. So, I'll have to speak right into the mike again. Actually, my voice is doing reasonably well.

You know out in Lubbock, in west Texas, we are still interested in things about cowboys and indians and the early west and that sort of thing. So many months ago, the paper there in Lubbock ran an article that dated back over an hundred years. What this article was, was the rules of the road given to passengers on the old Wells Fargo Stage Coach line. I thought those were pretty interesting and here are some of the regulations that were given to stage travelers--a sort of traveling etiquette. I want to share some of it with you. One of them reads like this: "Abstinence from liquor is requested, but if you must drink, share the bottle. To do otherwise makes you appear selfish and unneighborly." Another rule of the road stated, "Buffalo robes are provided for your comfort during cold weather. Hogging robes will not be tolerated and the offender will be made to ride with the driver." Another one of some interest reads, "Don't snore loudly while sleeping or use your fellow passenger's shoulder for a pillow; he (or she) may not understand..." Then this rather thoughtful one, that would make you wonder whether you ought to get on

the stage or not. "Forbidden topics of discussion are stagecoach robberies and Indian uprisings." But the one that really broke me up and brought back some childhood memories flooding into my mind was this ancient rule of the road. "If ladies are present, gentlemen are urged to forego smoking cigars and pipes as the odor of same is repugnant to the gentle sex." (How long since you girls have been called the gentle sex?) "Chewing tobacco" it continued "is permitted, but spit with the wind, not against it."

I grew up in rural Mississippi when most of the men still chewed tobacco and those big brass cuspidors were still very much in evidence in every public place. I just wonder how many of you remember the days where anywhere you went in any public place had those big brass cuspidors. How many of you remember that? Watch out, you are dating yourself! Do you know those things are antique pieces now? Now, if you chewed tobacco, there were several things you had to learn. My face has been a number of colors, it's been red from embarrassment, it's been white from fear and one time it was green. The first thing you learn about chewing tobacco is don't ever swallow. That's when you turn green. The second thing you learn about chewing tobacco is always spit with the wind, otherwise you get a face full of tobacco juice. Now if I might change this somewhat homely and uncouth idea to other areas of life, I would like to suggest that much of the crisis that is now being precipitated in the world is a result of people spitting with the wind. Or, to put it another way, part of the crisis today is due to the fact that whichever way the wind blows, that's the way some people are spitting. Or, again, to push my point a little further, in the sort of world we live in today, we are in desperate need of some people who dare to spit against the wind.

Our scripture for this morning says that the Christian is one who does not conform to the world. The Christian doesn't conform to the world. He is not somebody who is always spitting with the wind. Jesus once put it this way, "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." (John 15:19) To be a Christian means to be different and may mean that people will hate you. Is there anybody here this morning who likes to be hated? Now if you do, you are ill, emotionally--because the psychiatrists call that masochism--the need to inflict punishment on one's self. Isn't it the fact of the matter that all of us yearn to be liked, to be accepted, that we want to be a part of the "in" group? And isn't it also a fact that most of the problems you and I have arise from a break down in human relationships, out of a sense of alienation and separation from others? If we spit against the wind, if we do not conform, we are considered "odd" or "peculiar" or "different" or "weird". It ought to be clear, then, that if a person truly decides for Jesus, it ought to be clear that if a person is going all out for this Christ, that his life is going to be an offense to others. Jesus said, "I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." I don't like the sound of that but that's what my Lord said. "I chose you out of the world, I chose you to be different from the world and because of this, the world is going to hate you." As a Christian your life is going to be a judgment on the world and the world is going to hate you. To truly be a Christian is to spit against the wind.

The winds of change are blowing today. It is true that there is no progress without change, but it is also true that mere change does not necessarily mean progress. A lot of our young people today unfortunately think that if they simply change things, they have got progress but that is not true. You can't have progress without change but the very fact that you are changing, does not necessarily mean progress. As men and women who are called by Christ to be in the world, but not of it, who are not called to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by Christ, what role do you and I play in a world that is being swept by change?

Take for example, a freshman who is beginning his educational career at a place such as Washington University. Suppose he begins his educational career out there as a Christian young person--and every one of you can apply this principle to yourself at whatever age you are in terms of your business, or how ever you invest your time. As a Christian young person, what is his or her role on campus? Every new student at any university is thrown into a strange new world when he first goes off to school. It's so different from what he has been experiencing. He comes from a familiar, stable environment with certain steady relationships into a totally new world. He desperately wants to be a part of this vital, new life--to be accepted, he wants to "belong", he wants to be a part of what is going on. This would be true in high school, I think too. But what if the requirements for acceptance, what if the rules of the crowd for belonging, what if the requirements of the group for being a part are contrary to Christian convictions and Christian practices? What's that young person to do? Will he lead a life conformed to the expectation of his peer group or will he lead a transformed life? Does one dare to spit against the wind?

Look, for example, at this whole business of sexual morality. In our day we see the development in our art forms--particularly the theater--a permissiveness that glorifies promiscuity as well as various forms of perversion. We see things in the theater today that many of us never dreamed we would be seeing. Yet, in spite of the so-called "new morality" the New Testament is quite explicit about morality. Now there are those today in the church who are trying to change the church's attitude about sexual morality to being more permissive. Our brothers in the United Presbyterian Church have had sent out to their churches for study a report on sexuality that if it becomes the standard of our society, we are thrown back to ancient Rome. The leading liberal magazine, "The Christian Century" had an issue, two issues ago, I believe, devoted to homosexuality in which it was saying that the church must endorse homosexuality in order that the homosexual won't feel excluded. Now even a very mediocre student of history knows very well that any nation whose morality degenerates, that that nation is on the verge of internal collapse. But I want you to know that it's hard to spit against the wind. I have occasion to counsel with people from all walks of life and particularly young people. It is an established fact that the young person today who has strict moral codes finds it increasingly difficult to maintain those codes and standards. Such a person finds pressures being brought to bear from his peer group, pressures from public media, pressures from society in general. I want to say to you, that the conduct they see going on in the adult examples that you and I are giving them are not helping them very much. Shall a young person conform or does one dare to spit against the wind?

Another wind blowing in America today is the wind of revolution and rebellion. In my lifetime I have never known a group of young people who were as characterized by revolution as are the youth of today. And I want to say to you, that revolution can be a very good thing. If revolution couldn't be good, there wouldn't be an America today. There are many elements in our society today that are in desperate need of revolutionizing. The world isn't totally good that you and I live in. In one respect the hippies--the true hippy--of today has my undying admiration. They are in total rebellion against a society they reject and by which they refuse to live. And in many cases their rejection is certainly well founded. So they are living this committed life of rejection and I admire them for it. I could only wish their rebellion and rejection went one step further and offered some positive and constructive alternatives. But unfortunately there are other kinds of rebellion and revolution today--there is indiscriminate revolution, revolution that is non-selective, revolution that irresponsibly sweeps everything before it and that is not good revolution. But anybody that thinks that the communists are not behind a lot of the irresponsible, non-selective revolution going on in the world today

are so naive. We need today Christian young people who dare to revolt against that kind of revolution, who dare to spit against the wind. We need young people who are not afraid of revolution, if something needs revolutionizing, but who also are not afraid to conserve values in our world and nation that ought to be retained, that deserve to endure, that are worth keeping. You see, not all of our past, not all of our heritage, not all of our tradition is bad.

Another wind blowing through the land today is the wind of racial change. In 1954, in an historic decision, the Supreme Court banned racial segregation in the schools and our nation began a long overdue and yet a traumatic adjustment to a new way of life. I hope no one would feel that what happened in 1954 was not a good thing. It was. It was over due. But in recent years we have seen the winds beginning to shift and to blow from a new direction until today we are confronted with a strange phenomenon--reverse discrimination! We see black racism and a form of racial militancy that is destructive, and is reforming lines that had been broken with so much effort and so much agony and so much price. We are seeing industries right here in our own city destroyed, wrecked and ruined by reverse discrimination. Unless our black leaders in the area of race dare to spit against the wind, unless the Christian Church dares to stand its ground against white racism--I have no toleration for racism, white or black--and I think the church must stand against white racism but it also must stand against black racism and unless we do, our nation may find itself bathed in blood.

Another wind of change that is blowing is the concept of what is good, of what is worth committing life to. You know, some of our young people are finding out that Jesus is really worth committing life to. When I was in the hospital, some of our young people came up and prayed with me and it warmed my heart and then this morning they came in between services and prayed with me and it meant so very much to me. That's commitment. But the word "commitment" is used very loosely today. For example, one of our modern authors is a man named William S. Burroughs who has written some books and if you haven't read them yet, don't waste your time. One of them is entitled Junkie, one of them is entitled Queer, one of them is entitled Naked Lunch. Now a fellow author, Alan Ansen, describes Burroughs as a "deeply committed personality." But what does he mean by commitment? What is the nature of Burroughs commitment that Ansen talks about? Well, Ansen answers the question himself. He writes, "This commitment he finds in addiction to narcotics...To use drugs without losing consciousness or articulateness, to love boys without turning into a mindless drab is a form of heroism." I want to say to you that a society that glorifies as heroic a person who is a drug addict, a self-confessed homosexual, and an alcoholic has some strange winds blowing through it. Who dares to spit against the wind? Who dares to say that not all commitment is good? Who dares to raise a protest and insist that commitment worth glorifying as heroic is commitment to that which is wholesome and good and noble.

Another wind of change that is blowing today is a wind that whistles through the windows of the church. It is the wind of theological change. Here our theologians are trying to make the Christian faith palatable to modern man who is very scientifically oriented, or so our theologians tell us. I find this isn't true at all. I find now that the church has abandoned its proclamation of the supernatural acts of God in history that man who is incurably religious has turned to other things such as drugs, witchcraft and spiritism. In order to make the Christian faith palatable to modern man, the theologians have tried to take the supernatural offense out of the Gospel. Are historical events an offense to the modern sceptic? Does he believe that Jesus really wasn't raised from the dead? Then we will do away with that. Does he believe that Jesus wasn't truly God? Then we will do away with

that. Does he believe that Jesus didn't walk on water, that he wasn't born of a virgin, that he didn't feed the 5,000 miraculously? Then we will do away with those things and say that it really isn't true. So Bultmann, one of our leading theologians, takes away the offense of this historical Jesus and says only the message of the New Testament is important. Therefore, we no longer speak of the Jesus of history--who was a very ordinary mortal--but we speak instead of the Christ of faith--whatever that means. But does the very concept of Christ cause modern man problems? Then Paul Tillich removes the offense and says that Christ is not important, only his ideas are important. And then, we have the amazing spectacle of a man trying to win the allegiance of men by Jesus and holding him up for ridicule! You know one of the fundamental doctrines of the church across the centuries has been that Jesus was truly a man because it was man who was a sinner and who was indebt to God to pay for his sins. The church has said at the same time that Jesus was truly God because only God could make a sacrifice adequate to pay for the sins of man and so we have spoken of the two natures of Christ--that he was truly man, yes, but he was truly God, yes. So here comes Bishop J. A. T. Robinson and in his little book Honest to God, he writes "It (the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus Christ) conjures up the idea of a divine substance being plunged in flesh and coated with it like chocolate or silver plating." ridiculing my Lord, irresponsibly misinterpreting the meaning of the historic creeds of Christendom. And all this in a vain effort to win the intellectual admiration of people who are ultimately going to reject Christ anyway! We are trying to convince the modern world that all the things the church has said about Jesus are not really true and they can believe in him after all, that it is quite intellectually appropriate to accept him when the offense is stripped away. Who dares to spit against such a theological wind? If we remove the offense of the virgin birth, if we remove the offense of divinity of this man, Jesus, if we remove the offense of the miracles of his life, if we remove the offense of reality of his crucifixion, if we remove the offense of his resurrection from the dead, if we remove the offense of his coming again in judgment to the world, what is there left? There is no value in believing in him.

We don't need a new theology today. What we need is some theologians who believe and who dare to spit against the prevailing winds, a theology that dares to proclaim the Christ of the New Testament without apology, who dares to point to the Jesus of the offensive cross in the assurance that the foolishness of God as St. Paul says is wiser than men. The young person or adult who preserves his ultimate loyalty to Christ must spit against the wind. He must remain, in the eyes of the world, an utter fool simply because he places himself alongside the one who was--and is--and always will be--"despised and rejected of men."

I had a funeral some months ago and after the funeral, a lady of another church came up to speak to me and she said, "I am out of agreement with what my minister is preaching and I don't go to church any more because I don't want to hear the social gospel preached." She said, "I am out of accord with my denomination because I don't believe anymore many of the things it is saying but on my death notice it is going to show that I am a charter member of that church." Now, I want to ask you something. Was she spitting against the wind? Where was her loyalty? Was it to Jesus or was it to some building somebody had put up and she had been one of the first members of it? I want to say to those of you that are visiting this morning because you are dissatisfied with what is happening at your church, where is your loyalty? Is it to Jesus Christ? Where is it? Do you dare to spit against the wind? To whom and to what shall we commit our lives? To whom and to what shall we pledge our ultimate loyalty? To a building or to Jesus? The man or woman who seeks the acceptance of the world will be forced to spit whichever way the wind blows. But the man or the woman who has committed his life unequivocally to Jesus, who has

