

Sermon for Sunday November 25, 1973 by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor  
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"SOMETHING TO GIVE THE KIDS"

II Timothy 1:1-7

Text: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you." II Timothy 1:5

I am in something of a quandary this morning because I really had something on my heart these last few days that I wanted to share with you and I've been trying to put it down on paper. It just hasn't come out like I've wanted it to, so I will largely ignore my notes this morning. During this Thanksgiving week I have been thinking about our spiritual heritage here in America and the great country that we have. There has been something growing in my heart that I wanted to share with you.

In order to do that let's go back a little bit into history and let's go back to the beginning of the 16th century. There as the 16th century began in the 1500's most of the serious Christians across Europe were aware that the church was desperately in need of reformation. As a consequence, it was not surprising that reformation broke out almost spontaneously all across Europe. Now, it's true that it first came to focus as we remember it historically in the person of Martin Luther but actually reformation was spontaneously breaking out all across the country. By 1540 the Protestant Reformation had taken two basic forms, one under Luther and one under Calvin.

The way the Protestant Reformation took shape under Luther was this way. Luther took the basic position that everything would be retained in the church that was not expressly forbidden by Scripture. Consequently, today if you go to a Lutheran service, and if you are familiar with the Roman Catholic service, you will find a great deal of similarity because Luther kept everything that was not forbidden by Scripture.

Another form that the Protestant Reformation took was under John Calvin in Geneva and Calvin took an entirely different approach. Calvin said that we will keep only those things that are commanded by Scripture or necessarily inferred from it. And you can see that that is quite a different thing, to say that we will not have anything that is not commanded or expressly inferred by Scripture.

Now the heritage that you and I enjoy in the Presbyterian Church goes back to John Calvin. A disciple of John Calvin was a young man who came to Geneva to sit at his feet and study under him and his name was John Knox. Eventually young Knox went back to Scotland and there through his ministry he had a tremendous impact not only on Scotland but on England as well. As the 17th century was approaching the half-way mark in the 1640's, the English Parliament, which was under control of the Protestants, appointed approximately 150 religious leaders to come together there in London at Westminster Abbey to set forth the faith of Protestantism. Out of that meeting of great religious leaders there was produced three of the greatest documents in the history of Christendom outside of the Bible itself. The first of these was the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Confession gets its name, of course, from where they were meeting--Westminster Abbey. The Westminster Confession is an effort to state in simple, systematic, theological terms what we Calvinistic Protestants believe. The other two documents were the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Back in those days (and we still ought to do it today and I wish we could get back to it in our own church school) they taught religion to the children and adults by question and answer methods and the Larger Catechism

had longer questions with longer answers and the Shorter Catechism was designed to be learned more quickly. They learned by this question and answer method. For example, the Shorter Catechism began, "What is the chief end of man?" "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to serve Him forever." "What rule has God given to direct man how he may glorify and enjoy Him?" "The word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him." So that's the way they taught. Out of the Westminster Assembly came the Westminster Confession, the Larger and Shorter Catechism. Now, the reason I told you this is because what was going on in those days was to have a profound impact on the world. More importantly, what was going on was to lead to the colonization of America and to lay the ground work for what we believe and what we stand for as a nation. All of that was laid in those documents.

Now let me explain to you how it worked out. As Calvin and those who followed in his footsteps understood the Bible--this Bible had certain things to say about who God was and who man was. The Bible had something to say about what man was to be and what his reason for being was; that is, why God had created him. Therefore, when the men appointed to the Westminster Assembly began to work, the very first question of the Larger and the Shorter Catechism was this question, "What is the chief end of man?" "Why was man created?" "Why did God make us?" And the answer came back, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." So one of the first principles of the Protestant Reformation was the understanding of why you and I exist--to glorify God--to worship and to honor and to serve the Lord. Now you think about that for a minute and the implications of it. Project yourself back into history. Imagine you are a member of a nation ruled by a king and often the kings were despotic. Imagine yourself in a land where either the king or the rule of a corrupt church is law. You are not your own man. You are the vassal of the state. You do what they tell you to do. This means that if my chief end is to glorify God and if this is done in disobedience to the state or the Roman Church, then I am going to be persecuted by the state and the Roman Church and that's exactly what happened. As a matter of fact, Europe knew a blood bath as it experienced the Roman inquisition and even in England, Protestants were burned at the stake.

Do you see? As men began to understand that their chief duty was to glorify God they could not tolerate any man or any government or any church that tried to keep them from doing that. So, when they were persecuted for that belief, many of them eventually came to America--they came to a new land where they would be free. They understood that no human or human organization could lay claim to the whole man. They stood unalterably opposed to any form of totalitarianism that claimed the whole man. And that's why we Christians and why America has been so vitally opposed to communism. We cannot--we will not--tolerate any form of totalitarianism that demands the whole man.

When the time came to write the Constitution of our country, they wrote this concept into the Declaration of Independence. They said, "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; (that is equal before God) that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights.... Do you see? If a man's chief end is to glorify God, he has been endowed by his Creator with certain inalienable rights that no man, no government, no church, no totalitarianism force can take from him.

Our nation, then, was founded on this basic religious insight into who and what man is. So it was that here in America our forefathers raised a banner--a banner that spoke of the purpose, the dignity, the worth of every man. In the years that followed that banner often became soiled and dirtied and tattered because the ideal often got out of focus. Consequently, we were often guilty of such

things as religious intolerance, of the creation of the institution of slavery, of racial discrimination, of economic repression, of social injustice. But always the staff stayed planted and the banner, though dirty and stained, still fluttered in the breeze of history. And the ideal would come back into focus even if but momentarily. The separation of church and state, the freedom of religion, the abolishment of slavery even though a family war had to be fought, the growth of the labor movement, a whole system of jurisprudence seeking to assure justice and equality before the law, the desegregation of the races, the equal opportunity laws--all these came about because that ideal--that understanding of man--floated banner-like over the land and over the hearts and minds of the people. Even today we still wrestle with the meaning of this ideal in terms of poverty, of ghettos, of education, and the whole spectrum of civil rights. Yes, we have often bungled the job, made mistakes, wasted money--but we are the only nation in the world who is today taking seriously and earnestly the problems of human needs on a scale never before seen in history.

Let me summarize for us that I have been saying. Our nation is founded on a concept of man that grows right out of Scripture through the Protestant Reformation--a concept of who and what man is and of what his chief end is. America is what it is today because of Christian men who had a faith that was rooted in the Bible. On that faith they created a new nation.

But let me raise a question. If our nation is founded on a moral and spiritual insight that grows out of a faith in God and the Bible, what will happen to us as a people and as a nation if we turn from God and if we turn from our faith and if we turn from the Bible? Is it not obvious that if we cut ourselves adrift from our moorings that we will end in disaster? Already we have been shocked into the awareness of moral irresponsibility at the highest levels in our nation. But far more serious, this moral laxity is evidenced as a wide-spread condition across the whole land evidenced in the kind of movies that are being produced, the kind of smut literature that is available to anybody. What are we to leave our children? What heritage will we pass on to the youth of today? Will there be something for the kids?

With these thoughts and questions in mind I would like to call your attention to our scripture for this morning. St. Paul is writing to a young Christian named Timothy. He is a young man with great responsibility. Paul apparently has put him over a congregation of Christians as their pastor. But Paul has great confidence in Timothy. One of the reasons is that he is a young man with a past--he is a man with a spiritual past, with a spiritual heritage. His home and his family had given him something--it had given him an atmosphere of faith.

We do have a great nation. We do have a great national heritage built on a profound and basic insight into who we are and what our relationship to God should be. If we are to leave something for the kids--if we are to give our children a spiritual heritage that will continue to make us great as Christians, as a nation, then we must give our children what Timothy had--a godly home.

Mr. J. Edgar Hoover was a great American and a great Christian. He said not long before his death, "One of our great challenges today is to make American youth into productive citizens of tomorrow. Young people are full of energy, initiative and talent. They are looking for something to do. They need guidance. The key lies here." Yes, the youth of today need guidance. If they do not get it in the homes from their parents, I don't know where in the world they will get it. How can we raise a generation of morally responsible youth who can rise up to give moral leadership to our nation if we are not teaching them in the homes? Mr. Hoover went on to say this: "This nation was founded on religious freedom. Religions



have guided us in the past. They must continue to be our guide in the future. An America faithful to God will be an America free and strong." And then he added this, "The country as a whole must draw from its great heritage of religious freedom...to meet the challenge of the future. The family is so important to the proper rearing of young people."

What about the future--what about the future when the home is failing to communicate strong moral codes, strong ethical standards to the youth of today? What sort of future is there for a morally bankrupt generation that has not been taught right from wrong?

Do you realize that morality cannot be separated from a relationship to God? People say we can have a moral standard, we don't need God. Well, let me ask you this. Who is going to set the moral standard? Who is going to say what is right and wrong. God has given us a moral standard. He has set forth what is right and what is wrong. Therefore, true morality cannot be separated from what God says about right and wrong. Yet, our homes are increasingly drifting away from religious commitments. I hear people cry out against the immorality of our day, against the changing moral and sexual standards of young people. But it is not enough just to cry out in protest. If we are to leave something for the kids, we must begin in our homes and in our own lives to be a God-fearing, Christ-centered people. We must be a people who put duty and responsibility to God above our own selfish desires and pleasures. There can be no moral fiber, no moral backbone to a nation whose families are not willing to pay the price of moral responsibility.

Yes, you and I must regain a certain toughness about ourselves and our families that rejects easy self-indulgency for stern duty. You see, there are no easy answers to the moral dilemma of our time. In the seed-bed of America--the home--we must begin to pay the price of moral and spiritual toughness if we are to leave something for the kids.

Let us call ourselves back to the church as families. Let us call ourselves back to a renewal of our relationship to the one institution in our society that stands for moral rightness--the church. Let us demand for and of our children religious training, Bible centered Sunday schools, Christ-like teachers, so that our faith may dwell in our children as well. Let us demand of ourselves the price a heritage demands--the price of regular worship, of full commitment, that it may be said of our children, "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your home and in the lives of your mother and father and now, I am sure, dwells in you."