

Sermon for Sunday, July 6, 1975, by Andrew A. Jumper, D. D., Pastor
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"WHEN YOU SEE WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE"

Romans 8:18-30

Text: "For in this hope we were saved. Now Hope that is seen is not hope.
For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not
see, we wait for it with patience."

You and I live in two worlds. One of these worlds is the world that we see. It is the material, physical world. It is the world that is the object of scientific study and analysis. The other world is the unseen world. It is the inner world of values; the inner world of aspirations; it is the world of our secret ecstasies and of our sufferings. This world is beyond the scope of scientific investigation and analysis. Which of these two worlds is the real world?

The inner spiritual world of values--does this world have reality? My own inner world is perhaps the most real thing in my life. It is this inner world of my mind and of my heart where my own reality lies. It is here that I see myself, it is here that the ideas and ideals are born that shape and mold who and what I am. So, I live in a real world--a world open to scientific exploration and examination. But there is another world. It is the world that is in me. It is an inner world that is beyond the reach of science, but it is a world that is most real indeed.

All of us belong to two worlds. Which is the real world? To which world shall we belong? Is the physical world more real because we can feel it and touch it and see it? Is the inner world, the spiritual world, unreal because it is unseen? Is it any less real because it cannot be measured or examined under a microscope or verified by known laws?

Just for example, how does one measure love--or loyalty? How does one weigh principles or ideals? How does one examine character or devotion? Indeed, how does one measure the spiritual world and God?

Jesus said that this inner world is the world of God. He said such things as "The kingdom of heaven is in the midst of you." He said, "You are in the world but I have chosen you out of the world." Twice in his great prayer recorded in John 17, He said, speaking to God of His disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

Yes, there are two worlds, one seen and one unseen. The disciples of Jesus understood this distinction and they knew to which world their loyalty belonged. They knew, and thus St. Peter could speak of the disciples and say of them, as he spoke of their life in this world, he called it "your time of exile." He called his fellow Christians "aliens and exiles."

Where is your allegiance this morning? To what kingdom have you pledged your loyalty and your life today? Unfortunately, too many of us have confused the reality of these two worlds. We have imagined that the only world is the real world. We have focused in on the material world and on material goods and on material things. We assume the other does not exist. But you know it is a funny thing about these two worlds. You cannot serve both of them. You cannot be a citizen of both.

Do you remember Elijah on Mount Carmel as he had the great contest with the priests of Baal? The Jewish people had gathered to watch this spectacle. He said to them, "How long will you limp between two opinions? If God is God, follow Him." (I Kings 18:21) Jesus put it a little differently, but it means the same thing. He said, "No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will cling to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

And isn't it a matter of fact that if we are honest with ourselves that most of us this morning are cripples? We limp between the worlds, the seen and the unseen, not sure where to commit our allegiance. Isn't it true in your life and mine that we have not been willing to make that clear, unequivocal, bridge-burning decision as to which of these worlds we will belong?

Now that's what Holy Communion is all about this morning. This table is a meeting place between two worlds. Do you know what a sacrament is? A sacrament is a meeting place between God and man. A sacrament is a sort of bridge. It is a bridge between the seen and the unseen worlds. It is a bridge between the world that is open to empirical study and investigation and the world that is out of reach of science. It is a bridge where space touches non-space; where time looks into eternity. It is a bridge where the finite reaches out to touch the infinite. This table is a bridge between the world we see and the world that is unseen and over this bridge God walks into our world and He says to us, walking across this bridge, "I love you. I care for you. You are important to me. I have given you my son and here is a tangible evidence in your physical world of what I have done for you so that you may walk across this bridge into my world and become a citizen of the kingdom of God."

Is this unseen world real? This table says it is. You can't weigh it or examine it or prove or get it under a microscope, but this table says the world of God is the greatest reality there is. You have to make up your mind about God's world. Limping back and forth between two worlds won't do. You cannot serve two masters--not really. You have to decide between the two worlds, and give your allegiance to one or to the other.

This morning, God invites you to enter his world through this bridge--the bridge of Jesus who layed down his life for you in order that you might enter the kingdom of God. Here is the bridge. The world we see and the kingdom of God. God invites you to be a citizen of His kingdom. Will you cross this bridge with me?

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