

"Heartache? Yes! But Don't Forget the God of Atom"

Christmas is getting near and there is a question we often ask ourselves at the end of Christmas day: Why can't every day be like Christmas characterized by love, kindness and giving. Perhaps it is because we forget so easily. Perhaps we forget that the main meaning of Christmas is that God so loved that he gave, that Christmas is about giving and forgiving. But there is another reason. Christmas had its shadows. Christmas epitomized rejection, humiliation and bloodshed. The only door opened for Christ, his first day out of Heaven, was a stable door and at his birth the order goes forth for the massacre of the children in Bethlehem. So Christmas was not all joy. There were shadows at Christmas. The Son of God was rejected, born in a cow shed. It was decreed that other children should die and that he would ultimately die.

Is there no way of escaping shadows? Must our lives always be threatened by sickness, frustration, disappointment and death? There is no way. We live in a rebellious world where people have spat in the face of God, rejected infinite love, people have disobeyed the laws of life, forgotten that a judgment day is coming and if the love revealed on the cross cannot help people to be like the one who hung on the cross, what more can God do? No, there is no way of escaping shadows.

I wonder if you have heard of Amy Carmichael. She was adopted at an early age, became a thorough Christian in the Kesic (?) movement, as a young girl went to Japan and nearly wore herself out with two years of intense service. They forced her to leave and go on furlough to

Shanghai, the only furlough in her life, and she is nearly dead. Very quickly she went back to south India where she labored for 55 years without a furlough until her death--55 years! Midway she fell down a deep well, became an invalid for the rest of her life. From that invalid bed was to sow seeds that would influence millions of people. One of the problems she dealt with in the approximately 38 books that she wrote was the meaning of pain. I just want to read you one paragraph from one of her books:

"There is only one place where we can receive, not an answer to our question, but peace. That place is calvary. An hour at the foot of the cross steadies the soul as nothing else can. Oh, Christ, beloved, thy Calvary stills all our questions. Love that loves like that can be trusted about this."

Our Lord was not only our Saviour but, secondly, he was our great exemplar and he knew pain and shadows and the worst pain, of course, was when it seemed that God had forsaken him but God was there. The Bible says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." When the veil was rent, it represented the tearing of the heart of God. When the sacred most Holy Place was laid open to view it brought to mind the ministry of blood drops on the mercy seat over the broken law. It told us about the heart of God where there is always sacrifice represented by the blood drops...always mercy and always law because in law lies our security--no law, you can't predict the certainty of anything. You go outside you might go up rather than out, gravity, sunshine, photosynthesis. Without laws we would be nowhere. The fact that Christ could feel forsaken means that we need never feel forsaken. The fact he felt forsaken did not mean he was. You and I often feel forsaken. It is no evidence we are anymore than his feeling forsaken was evidence that he was. And black Friday became good Friday and

thus was the greatest parable of all that things that hurt us most can ultimately be the best. To suffer is terrible, to have suffered is wonderful.

Malcolm Mugridge said, "The only ultimate tragedy is to so settle down in this world that you feel at home in it." That is the only ultimate tragedy. Shadows compose half the beauty of the world. You can never see a great painting without shadows. In a rebellious world there is only one way that character of rebels can be changed and made luminous and wonderful--that is by pain. Best teacher, most expensive, best teacher and if we would but consider the fact that half the beauty of the world is shadows, we would come to realize that in every human life it is the same. We can only learn to be patient and to be kind, forgiving and to be merciful if we endure pain. Without pain we would be soft, destroyed, worth nothing. I guess that in our pain we remember that God is in control. And I want to illustrate that this morning very briefly. A Christian cutlery manufacturer gave a lecture sometime ago and said, "The girl in our factory who is new takes two days to learn to put together the 17 pieces of our meat chopper." "Now," he said, "I am no scientist and it may be those billions of worlds up there revolving on their orbits without collision--maybe it just happens. But I can tell you, if you put the 17 parts of our meat chopper in a great container, you can toss them around for 17 billion years and you would not get a meat chopper." If you find a watch on the beach, you don't think the wind and waves did it. And when you pass by a tree with some of the bark taken off and you read there, John loves Mary, you don't think the ants

did it. And when those who went enter Canada read the words set out in flowers as they get off the boat, "Welcome to Victoria." They don't think the sparrows dropped the flowers just like that. And when the rosetta stone was found about 200 years ago and with three different languages, nobody thought that that was just the scribbling of earthworms.

Think for a moment about the starry heavens to ask if God is in control. Tolemi (?) thought there were about a thousand stars. Now we know that in our own galaxy there are billions and billions. There are many stars in the universe as there are grains of sand on all the seashores of the world and our sun is a very modest star and yet it is one million, three hundred thousand times as big as the earth but if you go up to Orion to Beetlejuice it is two hundred and fifty times bigger than our sun. And if you go on to Antares it is five hundred times bigger than our sun. And our tiny planet, it has three ways of moving, on its axis one thousand miles an hour, four miles a second. Why don't we get thrown off? Because of law, gravitation. It also goes nineteen miles a second around the sun, thirteen miles a second with the sun on an orbit that may take in billions of years. So here are the three movements of earth on its axis, a thousand miles an hour; four miles a second with the sun thirteen a second, around the sun nineteen miles a second. Think of that sun, a burning bush of the skies, continually recreating itself. If it didn't everything would die. If it were 10 degrees hotter or 10 degrees cooler all life would be destroyed. And think of the atmosphere, if smaller or bigger, it would destroy us. Think of twenty miles up in the ozone layer, a thousand feet in thickness that protects us from the

actinic rays of the sun. How marvelous is that buffer which is there just in the right place, just thick enough. Think of the atmosphere itself. It is seventy eight per cent nitrogen and twenty one per cent oxygen and but for the nitrogen once a fire started you could never stop it. We talk a lot about H_2O , well hydrogen is the most flammable gas there is and oxygen is needed in all burning and when you put them both together it is a good fire extinguisher.

You know, water weighs 800 times more than air. Water has to be taken up and kept in suspense and one day it has to drop as rain. How does it do it? Well, in evaporation it occupies 1600 times more space than in its state as water. So it can be held up there and suspended. But it is not enough to have water up there if it all came down in cascades, we would be all in trouble. It has to come down as tiny drops. What forms it into drops? Well, the electric charges of the clouds concentrate that evaporated water into drops but each drop needs a speck of dust. How can the dust be replenished? You know, it has to keep on raining century in, century out. No rain without dust in the clouds. Cannot be drops without dust. So twenty million meteors every day enter the clouds and turn into dust, twenty million which can be seen with the naked eye and lots that we can't see. Think of the miracle of that. Approximately three quarters of the earth's surface is water. If the ocean depths were not as deep the earth would be covered by water to one or two miles and there would be no human life. Lots of wonderful things in this world of ours. Think of one of the smallest seeds. Lot of seeds anticipated boats and planes. There are seeds that have parachutes that waft through the air, milkweed, for example, they have parachutes that go through the air and then come

down. And my favorite, like the ones that are like the ships, is the coconut. It goes through all the tropical lands and I was born in the tropics. Coconuts fall from the trees into rivers and they always float with the eyes of the coconut up and in the process of time as they travel down the rivers, through the eyes comes leaves which become the sails so the winds carry them hundreds of miles. Our planes, our ships have all been anticipated in the jumble seeds of nature. The dandelion has a sort of catapult that ejects seeds, all sorts of mechanisms. The wonder of it! If our earth were not tilted $23\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ every day would be the same. There would be no seasons. Despite its tilt it is very regular in its movements so it does not lose $1/1000$ of a second in a century. That is why we can predict eclipses. If the earth lost five seconds every million miles, in six thousand years there would be six months lost and it would destroy all the seasons and all life. Think of the grass that we tread down and we scythe down is often under ice, it propagates itself, it preserves itself. It is pleasant to the eyes; it feeds most of the living creatures of earth. Think back again of what we have said about water. Water, like all liquids, you anticipate as it gets cold it would get heavier--so does water until it gets within four degrees of freezing, then it gets lighter. Otherwise the sea would become solid ice, the rivers would become solid ice and all the living things in the sea and rivers would die. Instead it gets lighter as it gets to freezing and it rises and forms a protection on the top.

Let me move to another world, your world and my world. Each one of us is composed (there are various estimates) of roughly sixty trillion cells. In 1996 at Cornell University at a scientific

gathering I handed around photographs of a nano instrument, a nano tool that is microscopic turned out by microengineering and they hand out photographs of the ____ much, much, much less smaller than a drop of blood. Now, I would remind you that in a drop of blood there are about 5000 cells. It takes about 3,000,000 cells alongside one another to cross a dinner plate. Now they have the ability in microengineering to make nano tools, tools so small you cannot see them. They can make motors the size of a pin head. But nature got there first. We mentioned our body has about 60 to 70 trillion cells and these are so small that they cannot be seen without an electron microscope. In Darwin's day they thought of the cell as an amorphous blob and they thought that life could be made easily. You add sodium to chloride and you get salt so we get a few chemicals, stir them up, expose them to wind and rain and electricity and you get life, no, no. That idea is gone. No respectable scientific journal will accept an article since 1979 that says life came by random accident. But in Darwin's day, this invisible cell was thought of as an amorphous blob, however, now under an electron microscope it can be enlarged 200,000 times and it was only in the 1960s that James Watson and Francis Crick (?) discovered DNA, the double helix, which is like that because in itself it can be extended like a ladder with crossing railings and it has 3 billion nucleotides, 3 billion chemical data bases on the spines of this ladder. And these 3 billion nucleotides dictate to the genes and there are approximately 50 thousand genes in everybody's genome which is the bag of hereditary stuff in every cell. There are approximately 50,000 genes in that microscopic cell. And each gene has a place for 130 amino acids. It is the

3 billion nucleotides on the spine of the DNA double helix that dictate which aminoacid into the genes. Then, another chemical, a messenger chemical, called RNA takes the word from the DNA system to the ribosomes, little factories of which there are thousands in every cell. And, please follow me, every microscopic cell is a great city--what they thought was an amorphous blob, is full of nano tools. Today, when they look at the cells through the electron microscope they see machines that certainly could have come out of some engineer's manual. There are minature tweezers, scissors, motors, valves, levers, pipes, these are just some of them. Hundreds and hundreds, thousands, because the ribosomes are thousands in every cell. And the ribosome takes the message from the DNA double coiled helix as to what aminoacids they are to have. And when you think that 20 must be arranged in the sequence dictated by the data bases the nucelotides, the possibility are 10^{70} th which is approximately the number of atoms in the universe. So, if you ask the question: What is the likelihood that some life could be guaranteed there in the cell by this manufacturer of the aminoacids being put in the genes, being taken by the ribosomes to the little factories to manufacture proteins of which we are made--all we are is a mass of protein enervated by air. What are the chances? Well, walk around all the seashores of the world, it might take you 40 or 50 years and pick the right grain, pick the right bit of sand, one grain of sand of all of those. What are the chances, so you know you are going on a life tour, you are going to visit all the sea beaches of the world, explore all of them and there is one there that is the secret of life--I wouldn't take it on, would you? The chance of the cell with the aminoacids in the right order going into the genes is much more difficult than that. Three

times as difficult as if you had to select one grain of sand to find the mystery.

We are wonderously made. The Bible says we are fearfully and wonderfully made. The Scripture talks about God counting the hairs of our head. He does more than that; he counts the aminoacids in the genes of our cells and there is so much we yet do not understand about it but all we know is the idea of randomness is dead. Evolution has taught that by chance occurrence known as mutations, some of which proving beneficial would be kept, would ultimately solve the problem. But mutations in the cell occur about once in every 10,000 generations. There just is not enough time in the universe to do it. One scientist read a book recently and said, "Given all the time you have in the past, present and future, you could never buy randomness to create a single cell, not even a bacteria." Randomness is dead. The heavens declare and we declare and every cell declares the marvel and the mystery of a God who is everywhere present. Remember the idea of the omnipresence of God does not mean that God is spread out so you have a bit of him here and a bit there and a bit of him over there. The omnipresence of God means that God is every where fully present. Now, these things we have found difficult to understand until lately but now they have divided the atom up into many subdivisions, quarks and ²yuons, etc., and some of these can go through steel. The idea of an omnipresent God is no longer something strange to us since we have discovered that fragments of life can penetrate steel.

The greatest illusion that human beings cherish in the matter of seeking pleasure, because whatever we do this is what we are looking

for, we are looking for happiness. Every choice we make, even the murderers and the thieves, is in order to bring happiness, bring joy. Our greatest illusion is to think you can have pleasure without pain. The birth of every child should teach us a lesson, travail, then fruit. That is the law of life in a sinful world, travail then fruit. In a rebellious world that has forgotten the law of God, that sneered at the love of God, that law is inevitable and inescapable. There is no escaping the shadows. Without the shadows there would be no beauty. You ask most parents about their greatest joy and their greatest sorrows, they usually respond with one word: kids. Ask a mountaineer who has reached the top and looking at the glories of what he has seen. I asked a mountaineer who was recently killed, I had a little interview with him a few years before, "Why do you do it, it is dangerous?" He said, "Oh if you could see the glory, if you could see the splendor looking out all over life's peaks you would understand why we do it." If you think of the agony of getting up there, the pain, hard to breathe, the danger. So it is an illusion and delusion to think you can have pleasure without pain. But it is wonderfully comforting to know that God is in control of the pain. He was there at the cross. When the veil was rent his heart was torn. The blood of Christ was shed, the heart of God felt the pain.

I want to read with you and leave with you a well known passage. Would you look with me at Matthew 6: beginning at verse 25, "Therefore, I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?"

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? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow. They neither toil nor spin, yet, I tell you even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothed the grass of the field which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you? Oh ye of little faith, therefore, don't be anxious saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink or what shall we wear. The gentiles seek all these things. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all but seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things shall be yours as well.

Prayer: Lord, help us to believe you are in control even when everything is dark and the earth is shaking and we are weak and afraid. Help us to remember Calvary and to know that you are never nearer than when you seem furthestest away. Help us rejoice in the fact that we have a wounded God and in all our suffering you are afflicted and in your love, mercy and tenderness you bear us from the womb to _____ in the grave and through the tomb to resurrection. Increase our faith that we may have more joy for Christ's sake.

Amen