

THE MAN GOD WANTS

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Ezekiel 22:17, 30

As you know, today is Youth Sunday, and for my text this morning I turn to the haunting language of the ancient drama recorded in Ezekiel, chapter 22:17,30C

And the word of the Lord came unto me saying...(verse 30) I
sought for a man among them who should build up the wall and
stand in the breach before Me for the land, that I should not destroy
it; but I found none.@

On a much smaller scale, it was a time like our own.

A time of world change.

Of international upheaval.

Of political confusion.

Of moral cloudiness.

The little nation of Israel was faced with a bleak and barren future. Huge hunks of their manpower had been taken captive and carried away to a foreign land. Their dream city lay in ruins. Their sacred temple was destroyed.

As always, when the heel of oppression begins to grind hard, there were those who, for the sake of personal expediency, submitted to the evil of compromise. And, even as one bad apple will eventually spoil the lot, their evil influenceClike a creeping malignancyCbegan to crawl down into every area of Hebrew life.

Their easy compromise and thoughtless conformity to the ways of their captives punched gigantic holes in the wall of resistance which God had built about them. As a nation, they lost their sense of destiny. As individuals, they forsook the faith of their Father Abraham. Finally, their only chance for survival lay in the hope that God could find a manCa man who was big

enough to stand in the breach. A man of such gigantic stature that he would know that, apart from God, they could do nothing. But we read:

He sought for a man...but found none. @

The scene quickly changes. Centuries rapidly come and go. As our eyes gradually focus upon the generation in which we live, we see that another day of crisis is upon us.

Gone are the simplicities of the past.

The shape of the future no one knows.

Only one thing is sure:

The present and the future are exceedingly demanding.

As a nation, we have not been carried away captive by some foreign power, but we are in danger of being captured by the philosophy of personal security and peace of mind at any cost.

The tyranny of things threatens to grind us under its heel. Through the gaping hole which materialism has punched into the wall of our resistance the flood tide of a soft religion offering comfort and success rolls in relentlessly.

Who will repair the wall against the oncoming tide? Who will stand in the breach for God? This morning He is looking for a man. And I use that word in the generic sense meaning *mankind*. He is looking for:

A man who is big enough and broad enough and tall enough in conviction, courage and commitment.

A man who is equal to *His* demands.

A man who will put the trumpet of the gospel to his lips and sound a battle cry to which all people will rally.

What are the characteristics of *“The Man God Wants”*? Well, one thing is certain: He will be no

Superman. The world already has more of those than it can stand.

We have supermen who are capable of sending satellites into the atmosphere to encircle the earth. But God wants a manCnot a SupermanC

a man who will fill the atmosphere with
the missiles of love and faith and truth.

We have supermen with such a grasp of the power of nature that they can destroy life on this planet for the next million years. But God wants a manCnot a SupermanC

a man who will learn to harness the powers of
heaven so that people, created in the image of God
who now bear the smirch of sin upon their souls,
will be recreated in the image of His Son.

We have supermen who can harness the suspicion and hatred of the world and make them destroy. But God wants a manCnot a SupermanC

a man who will take understanding and good will
and use them as a catalyst to bind all people
everywhere together.

And God is not looking for His man among the lofty, but among the rank and file. As someone has said:

AThe heroes have done about all for the world they *can* do and now
nothing more will happen until the common people rise up to do
their common tasks.@

There can only be one Norman Vincent Peale. Only one Billy Graham. But there can, and must be, many dedicated parish preachers who, from their unknown pulpits, will proclaim a gospel for the searching heart. A gospel for the guy or gal on the street.

There can only be one Dwight David Eisenhower. Only one Winston Churchill. But there can, and must be, many small-town politicians who attain a Christian statesmanship not always achieved by those who make the headlines. A Little people,® so called, who will leaven the loaf of society with the yeast of Christian love.

There can only be one Albert Schweitzer. Only one Mother Theresa. But, as Elton Trueblood reminds us:

A There can, and must be, a growing group of men and women in all denominations for whom the Christian cause becomes a matter of passionate devotion. Men and women who strive to be more than mere observers of an enterprise to which they give their assent and good will. Men and women who seek to be soldiers in a marching army.®

The difficulty is that the number of such people is not large enough and this morning, God is looking for a new recruit among our youth. He is searching for someone to enlarge that number. Not someone at the Summit, but a person from the ordinary places. And today my young friends, He is looking at you.

What is he like, A The Man God Wants®? First of all, I think he will possess

The Stability of a Great Conviction.

A The Man God Wants® must know what he believes, who he is, why he is here, where he's going and how he plans to get there.

Perhaps some of you have heard the epitaph which was carved on a headstone in a certain cemetery:

A Remember friend as you pass by,
As you are now, so once was I;

As I am now thus you must be,
So be prepared to follow me.@"

Well, some character with a wry sense of humor came along and, in a scrawling hand, wrote below:

ATo follow you I'm not content
>Till I find out which way you went.@"

I think the whole world is like that. People want a leader who knows where he stands and why. Only then will they have confidence enough to follow.

Two fleas were sharing Robinson Caruso's island hut. One day the fleas were engaged in a friendly conversation and, when the time came for parting, one waved affably and said to the other: ASo long, kid, see you on Friday!@" Well, at least the flea knew where he was going! And, ATThe Man God Wants@" must have a sense of destiny built upon the foundation of a Body of great convictions.

Louis Evans Sr. tells the story of three horsemen who were riding across a desert on a dark night. As they came to the dry bed of a river, a voice called, AHalt!@" As they did so, the voice told them to dismount, put a handful of pebbles in their pockets, and remount. They did so, and the voice when on, ATomorrow at sun up, you will be both glad and sorry.@" Wondering what all this meant, the horsemen rode on until dawn. When they reached into their pockets they discovered the pebbles were, in fact, precious stones. Dr. Evans says:

AAAs they looked upon the treasure, they realized they were indeed
both glad and sorry. Glad they had taken some. Sorry they had not
taken more.@"

I think one reason why the rank and file of America lives such shoddy lives is that when they have had the opportunity, they did not gather enough jewels of truth and faith. As a result, they

do not have any great convictions to which they can commit themselves. This is not a youth problem, it is a general problem.

For instance, how many of us are very conscious of God and His judgements when we make the choices that govern our lives?

How many of us have very much of an awareness of sin?

Dr. Clarence Cranford, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., tells of a serviceman who had gone to the hospital for a shot of penicillin to cure a social disease which he had picked up on one of his wild forays into so-called Afun@. When Dr. Cranford sought to counsel him about the folly of his ways the lad retorted:

AScience has taken the fear out of sin.@"

Well, let us remember that there are some things penicillin cannot cure. And just because a large segment of our world has lost a righteous fear of God it does not alter the simple fact that, as the bible declares, AGod is not mocked@ and Awhatsoever we sow, that shall we also reap.@"

And, young people, if you are going to be of any use to God and His world, you must get straight on who He is. You must see yourself in relationship to Him and, as His child, you must recognize the need for a firm conviction about

sin,

life,

death,

heaven,

hell,

judgement

and hope.

You must remember that through Christ you have already ceased to be a creature of time and have become a creature of eternity. And, as a stranger here on earth, your job is not to conform to this world but to change it. That won't be easy and therefore: AThe Man God Wants@ will also

possess

The Strength of a Great Courage.

One of the tragic derivatives of the modern philosophy of Aintegration@ and Aadjustment@Cand I say this as a student of psychology who is well aware of the necessity of resolving the unwhole tensions that would destroy us so we can, indeed, become integrated and wholeCone of the sad side effects of this new Apop psychology@ is that it fosters a Chameleon Complex.

We begin to fall for everything and stand for nothing. We develop a wishbone instead of a backbone. We give feeble assent to the pressures of society instead of courageously standing up to them. We are so afraid of being called Asquare@ or Aunsophisticated@ we have learned to believe in everythingCa little bit!

A chaplain was counseling with a young man who found his life in ruins. The GI was defeated. ABut Sir,@ said the soldier, Ayou don't seem to know about and understand the outside pressure. It is terrific!@ AOutside pressure?@ said the chaplain. AOf course I understand the outside pressure. What I want to know is where are your inside braces?@

Well, AThe Man God Wants@Cthe individual through whom and with whom He is going to work to build a better worldCwill possess the inside braces of a great courage.

It will be courage born of a great conviction of what is right and wrong so that even though the norm of public morality falls low and millions of other young people do things and go along with things and become a part of things simply because everybody else is doing it, AThe Man God Wants@ will have courage to be different. As Fulton J. Sheen has said:

ARight is right when nobody=s right and wrong is wrong when everybody=s wrong!@

Is It Right or Wrong?

The other day I came across a series of tests which any Christian can use in determining whether a particular attitude or act is right or wrong.

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|------------------------|--|
| The personal test: | Will it make me a better or worse Christian? |
| The social test: | Will it influence others to be better or worse Christians? |
| The practical test: | Will doing it likely bring desirable or undesirable results? |
| The universal test: | Suppose everybody did it? |
| The scriptural test: | Is it expressly forbidden in the word of God? |
| The stewardship test: | Will doing it involve a waste of God's talent invested in me? |
| The missionary test: | Will doing it likely help or hinder the progress of the Kingdom of God on earth? |
| The character test: | Will doing it make me stronger or weaker morally? |
| The family test: | Will doing it bring credit or dishonor to my family? |
| The publicity test: | Would I be willing for my friends to know about it? |
| The common sense test: | Is it good, plain, everyday, ordinary, common hoss sense? |

A pretty good series of tests, isn't it? And, if on the basis of those tests the conviction comes that a particular attitude or act is wrong, AThe Man God Wants@ will have the strength of a great courage to say: ANo,@ regardless of the cost or consequence, the pain or penalty. And then, AThe Man God Wants@ will possess

The Serenity of a Great Calling.

It is one of the tragedies of our day that over 75 out of every 100 men are not in work for which they are naturally fitted. As a result, they are frustrated and unhappy. The lower 20% are continually changing jobs. Moving here and there. The upper 10% seek to compensate for their frustration with a driving urge to be successful and, in their frantic chase for the god of gold, they become blind to everyone and everything except themselves.

Well, as I see it, there are four things any Christian young person can do with his or her lifeCwell, really there are only threeCbecause we will disallow the fourth choice which is to become a pure materialist, and for a genuine Christian that really isn't a possibility.

A Christian Lay Person

Certainly one of the legitimate goals toward which any Christian young person can strive is to be a dedicated Christian *lay person*. I can't say enough about that, for in the last analysis, the world will not be won by the professional clergy. Rather, the tide will be turned when Christian *lay people* begin to see their lives as a mission and their Christian faith as a vocation. Oh, they may pay their bills by

selling cars,

going to school,

digging ditches,

working at an office desk,

or what have you.

They will do *that* because they *have* to, but they will serve Christ because they *want* to.

And young people, if you will honestly, prayerfully seek God's guidance about your life work, He will make it clear what you are to be and do. If your life is to be spent as a Christian lay person then be the best lay person it is possible for you to be. Be AThe Man God Wants@. Be a person with the serenity of a great calling.

A Church Related Lay Person

And then, the second way in which a Christian may spend his or her life is in a *church related position* doing something for the sake of Christ *as a lay person* at a considerable sacrifice in income.

Two illustrations come to mind. One is of Charles Smith who is now working in the Illinois Baptist State Convention. After nearly thirty years in industry, Charlie left his job and, living on

the investments he made in industry, he now works for a dollar a year. *Not as a minister, but as a lay person* doing the things he as a lay person *can* do. He didn't wait until he was 65 to give God the tag end of his life, but offered Him his experience and energy now.

All of us do not have the resources of a Charlie Smith so we can live on a dollar a year, but anyone can do what Jim Perkins has done. Jim is now in training to become the new business manager for the Northern Baptist Seminary. Here is a young man about 30 years of age with great promise in industry who is laying aside any hope of ever making a large income. Not because he is incompetent. Not because he couldn't do it. But because of a sense of commitment to use his talents as a *lay person* in a *church related task*.

Well, this is a brand new field. Little by little the church is beginning to see the value of using lay people in positions where lay people function best. And, slowly but surely, Christian lay people are saying, "Yes" to those challenging opportunities.

And, kids, if God should call you to work in this particular area as a *lay person* in a church related job even though the financial sacrifice may be great and you forego many of the luxuries and pleasures your friends may enjoy, you will do it with a sense of serenity born out of a great calling to be "The Man God Wants."

Full Time Christian Service

Then, of course, you can give your life to Christian service in the traditional sense. I've said a lot about the need for Christian lay people and I don't mean to nullify what I've said. But, young people, listen: While we need teachers,

scientists,

farmers,

plumbers,

businessmen and

businesswomen,

the supreme need of the hour is for more and better preachers. And frankly, there isn't any more fascinating occupation on earth.

Are you interested in the greatest challenge this side of heaven or hell? Try preaching.

Do you wish to make a worthwhile contribution to the thought of your day? Try preaching.

Are you interested in a life of contrast? Are you fascinated by people? Are you intrigued by the potentiality in all people? Try preaching.

Are you concerned for the lost, the broken-hearted, the downtrodden? Try preaching.

Oh, you'll have

sleepless nights,

terrible temptation,

depressing failures,

disappointments undreamed of,

abuses heaped high

and moments so low you will feel forsaken by all, including God. But, if you try preaching, you will also have

joys undreamed of,

peace that the world cannot give,

praise undeserved

and the satisfaction

of being in the will of God, knowing with a sense of serenity, that yours is a great calling. But --

Before You Try Preaching, Try Praying.

Try yielding. God has too many problem preachers already. Make certain of your calling.

Make sure there is nothing else in all this world you can do and be truly happy!

Then, and only then, when you are convinced you are AThe Man God Wants@ try preaching, and preach as though your life depends upon every word you speak.

This week I received one of the most warmly wonderful and thrilling letters I have ever read. It was such a blessing to me I just have to pass it on to you.

ATonight I clinched or came to the decision I=ve been pondering over for several years: what would God have me do?

It wasn=t a spectacular decision. No flashing lights or fancy miracles.

AThree things affected my decision. The first was a picture of Christ I=ve carried in my wallet since it was handed to me when I was baptized here at Morgan Park Baptist Church. It=s a beautiful picture, isn=t it? It reminds me again and again of His sacrifice on Calvary. Tonight, it almost talked, saying: >Ken Walther, what are you doing for Me?=-

AThe second thing which influenced me is a short note from my vacationing Mother. >Dear Ken, Grow. Love, Mother=@

Ken=s letter goes on.

AI think you get the meaning of her note without any explanation. I=m growing physically. I=m also growing in my fellowship with Him. One of our chapel speakers the other morning said

>Christianity isn=t a bed of roses.=

You know that, Dr. John. I=m just learning it. First John 1:7 is the best guide post I can find for growing, >But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.=

Let me walk in the light!

AThe third item is not unfamiliar to you, pastor. (He enclosed a little slip with these words):

✕God has something better for me than I can plan for myself.=

ASince you first mentioned those words one Sunday, they have stayed with me. If they were important enough to be included in a conversation between two top preachers, then I=d better heed them. You were in bed, I believe, when you spoke them. Well, I don=t keep them in bed with me, but I have a little card scotch taped on the mirror next to my upper bunk. Every morning I can=t help but read those 12 words. They are dynamic, aren=t they!

ASo here=s my decision: If in the past I claimed a Savior who died for me and told His disciples to go into all the world preaching and teaching, and if I am growing spiritually as I feel I am, at present, and if these 12 words are true, I have a future which needs to center around God. I=m wearing a Timothian pin. And yes, I=m wearing an extra special smile because of a dedicated feeling in my heart. God has spoken to me, calling me into a future service of teaching and preaching His word. And I Have said, AYes!@

Thank God for another APreacher-Boy@ given birth by this great church!

AI sought for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the breach before Me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none.@

This morning God is seeking someone. Someone who is big enough and broad enough and tall enough in conviction, courage and callingCsomeone, not from the summit, but from the ordinary placesCsomeone He can use.

This morning, my young friend, He is looking at you! How about it? Will you be AThe Man God Wants@? Will you be The Woman God Wants? You need only say: AHere am I Lord, send me...@ and the angels in heaven will join Him in saying

AI sought for a man...and found one!@