

Idea By "All The Difference In The World"
Dr. George M. Docherty (ill of Scotland)
(Rev. 1:5-6).

Feb 21 - 83 AM
P.M. Brentley Nov 29, 87
P.M. Grove Park July 2, 89
P.M. Brentley June 30, 91
A.M. Lake Drummond. About 3 1/2 hrs
P.M. Lake Drummond. Sept 19, 97
A.M. N.W. Feb 25, 2001

The title of the sermon is: ("All the Difference in the World.") The difference that Christ makes in a man's life. The text is taken from Rev. 1:5b,6: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

It was Brandon, the Celtic monk, when he went up that great glen to meet the king of Inverness to tell him the story of Jesus. The king was a Druid, a Pantheist; caught up in the fears and superstitions and cruelties of that religion; with it's human sacrifice. And having told the story of Jesus, the king said to Brandon, "Sir, if I become Christ's man, what difference will it make to my life?" (repeat the question).

And since then, 1300 years later, it is the question we are all asking ourselves, even though we come to church Sunday by Sunday. It is the question in our contemporary society that becomes a more and more a difficult question to answer. What we're discovering is that the Christian gospel has not entirely failed in that it has spread a new wave which we call Western Civilization. We are living in an age when it is difficult to know who are the Christians and who are not the Christians.

Go to any ballgame, stand in any line outside a public place, visit any shopping market, any store; walk the bustling sidewalks and look at people's faces and it is very difficult to know who are Christians and who are not.

It's said that in the Pentagon when you get a job there, people discover in the first day whether you're a Republican or Democrat and within the first 3 months, whether you're a Communist or not. But you can be in the Pentagon a lifetime and they may

He's there talking about Jesus. He made his testimony and he was immediately arrested. We know that he was there. We know that he was among other prisoners, under the heat of the sun, breaking the rocks of the quarry. So he thought there must be a place where there is no more heat of the sun. And he stands looking out to the horizons-- the brightness of the mornings and the darkness of the evenings. And he's thinking: Heaven must be a place where there is no more sea. And they approach John in his prison cell--he is not complaining about life or what he might have been if only he had been free. He is making no complaints that he followed Jesus to this place. No, instead of that, he found the experience of the presence of Christ. In that cell the Christ stands there with all the glory as one might come to the Son of Man.

And John is writing a book. Not one of those psychological books about doom, derision and built, but a book about the glory of the Christian life. And he begins it with a benediction. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

There is John and there is our good living secular. And I've got to ask this man: what is missing? And I come to John and I say, "John, what would you say to this man?" John would say three things to this good living secular.

The first thing he would say, "my friend, of all of the uncertainties of life I am sure that God loves me." The King James version says, "unto him that loves us." But surely the love of God was not simply something that happened at Calvary. The love of God is that experience that takes place all through our lives. And John sitting there in that cell was saying, "I can not be sure of many things. But one thing I am sure of--I know that God loves me." And that is something that your ethical secular knows nothing about.

"Oh yes I do," he says. "I know you can't put it like that. I don't need to go to church to know that God loves me. I can walk out of an evening on a moonlit night and watch the spread of the Milky Way and the infinities of space and I can see them

never discover that you're a Christian.

What has happened is, and this is the irony of the church, it seems that sometimes the people in the church are falling short of what we regard as Christian. And again and again we see people outside the church, who have nothing to do with the church, yet by their lives measure up to something of the stature of Christ.

What I want to do this morning, remembering that our Lord said, "The children of darkness are wiser than the children of light." We might say that children of darkness are better than the children of light.

Let's compare the best of the outsider with the best of the insider. The best of the secular who makes no claims to be a religious man. For example, a Christian who answers the question he is asking. Let's imagine ourselves, as I can imagine myself, very easily; visiting what we call an ethical secular man. He is a good man but has no time for the church. It's probably a summer's evening and he is probably sitting in a screened porch, with a view of the garden, and the fireflies. And we sit there and look at this man. We know that he is a good man. A faithfully married man. Father of three children. He pays his income tax and regularly pays his mortgage. He goes to work day by day and probably shares with his neighbors as they go to work. This man will put his hand in his pocket for any appeal made with a good cause. He probably heads up a charitable organization or is on the board of trustees of the local hospital. This morning, when we go to church, he cuts his lawn, or

This man has never been in prison. And this man is a man of integrity. The only difference is that on a Sunday morning, when we go to church, he cuts his lawn, or practices golf on the golf course; never darkens the door of the church.

We compare him to the Christian. And the Christian we are going to choose is John who wrote the book of Revelation. And we find him in a very unusual place. It seems to be an unusual place for a Christian. He is imprisoned. He is on the Isle of Patmos which was the "Devil's Island of the East".

Secular man

Christian man

the great Creator's hand. I can walk out to the beach and see the tide and the waves beating themselves into whiteness upon the shore and I can see there the love of God. And on a spring day, I can see the azaleas and the dogwoods--and all around me is the love of God. I don't need to go to church to know that God loves me."

Oh yes, my friend, but we don't find the love of God in nature, I look at the starey Heaven and I see the love of God and the infinity of God. And the voyage of a moon around Jupiter and I begin to feel the vastness of the infinity of God, but there is no love in outer space.

I go and see the tide going and beating itself into whiteness upon the shore and I think of the unfolding providence of God thousands of years before I was born--and thousands of years after I am dead it will be making the same incoming and outgoing flow--and I see there the providence of God. And I too walk in the summer or spring day and I see the beauty of nature and see the traveling birds and I know there is the beauty of God. But not the love of God Nature is wild and tooth and claw.

ill I remember a ^{the story is} lad one time in Scotland who climbed a mountain to see a sun rise and came down the wrong side of the mountain and the result was that at the bottom of the mountain he was on the wrong side of the river and was lost in a highland moor.

*lost in
Barnes
L.R.* It was a pleasant summer day. And he walked across the moor and the darkness came on eventually and he could have layed down and died, but nature would not have cared. Because nature doesn't care. Nature is impervious to human suffering of the cry of the broken heart.

ill I remember I was once an assistant minister in a church in Glasgow. In one of those vast differentiated housing schemes with every house the same. Mass produced. In that church was a woman not untypical of many churches, who came to church Sunday by Sunday and sang the songs of David, alone. Sandy her husband, never came to the church. She would like for him to come. They were very much in love with each other.

She came to ^{him} me once and said, ^{broader} I wonder if you would come around Friday night, and say a word to Sandy. Just a wee word, to get him to come to church. Friday night ^{the minister} I had dinner with Sandy and his lovely wife. His house was different from any others. What a garden--it had a privot hedge that was cut with geometrical precision. There was a winding crazy pavement with green moss between the cracks. The lawn was like a billard table. And the trees were blooming. And we were upstairs enjoying the very happy supper together. And then about 10 o'clock--Sandy knew why I had come. And I had not come to the point--and at 10 o'clock, ^{the preacher} I came to the point and Sandy was not surprised. He said, "Sandy, why don't you go to the church? Why don't you come every Sunday and sing the songs with your wife?" He said, "well, to tell you the truth, I do not need the church. My garden, that is my religion. While you are singing the songs of David, I am in the garden watching the delicate greens--and I feel the cold loamy soil in my fingers. I am at one with God and nature. In fact he says, that's my creed." He pointed to a calendar on the wall on which was the poem written by (Ella Wheeler Wilcox) which said--

The kiss of the sun for pardon,
The song of the bird for myrth,
One is nearer God's heart in a garden,
Than anyplace else on earth.

And that was that--he never came to church. His wife was there always. She became gravely ill and was in the hospital until she died. ^{apparently} I was asked to speak the funeral service and, as was the custom in Scotland, it was held in the house. The funeral car drove up to Sandy's garden and ^{the preacher} I didn't recognize it. The privot hedge was rank. There was grass between cracks of the crazy paving. And the lawn had become a hayfield. And it seemed that even the birds were silent in the trees. And there he sat in a lounge beside an oak casket, in which the most precious possession that he ever had lay very still and silent. They loved each other very much. There were no children

The dear man sitting there with his head in his hands. And I thought, "Sandy, your garden's got nothing to say to you. Nothing. What you need, my man, is another garden where there are also flowers and open tomb and a Saviour who says, 'I'm alive forevermore'. To give you the comfort that only he can give you.)"

Some years ago when Dr. Karl Barth was visiting in Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, and you know Karl Barth was one of the great theologians of the 20th century and of Christendom...ranked with Augustine and Aquinas and certainly Luther...and as the old man was talking, one of the students asked him this question. (After all of your great lifetime of study, what is the greatest discovery that you have ever made Dr. Barth?) And Barth, who inevitably had a pipe in his mouth said, (the greatest discovery I ever made was: Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells

me so.) And that my friend is what you don't know until you come to Jesus.

John says something else--not only does God love me but made me free from my sins.

He has loosed me from my sins. The King James version says, "washed me from my sins."

The man is in prison, shackled by his ankles. He is confined. He has no freedom at all. But he can say, "my soul is free because Christ loosed me from my sins--I am a free man, my sins have been forgiven. By him who has the keys of life and death and Heaven and Hell." And that's something the outsider knows nothing about.

The ethical secular ^{man} says, "that's the trouble with you preachers--you are always talking about sin. And there is no such thing as sin."

As C.M. George said, ("modern man no longer worries about his sin.") We talk about sin but who takes it very seriously. All the trouble today, you just haven't read enough books. It is a matter of diet, it's a matter of genes, it's a matter of vitamins. It's a matter of doing a little study. And if you could sit down and really be disciplined you could get into this thing you call sin--let's get rid of the word

Leighton Ford - (Gaily, Suburban) Born out of Wed lock - given over to Family to Raise; After Flight Family Disl; Wanted meet his mother - Oritorio Canada - Cohed, 5 Now, Time! Old Woman, sitting under tree 103 Cabin - emotional, Talked, leaving! ASK if any thing do in Hand - Anna - TENTS "Just love the son" Every one wants that!

V5B

Min - Mt's - Old Man Torch - Brother an you fast? Why NO - living her 40 yrs -

I mean how found Jesus? Didnt Paul say, Bible says in Heaven - What I mean so Paul Xmas/Band

No - Bill over hill 5 miles down. My G Are Ready Judgment Day? When is it?
It may be next wh, year, but dont know! Well, when you find out, let me know. The old woman may want to go

sin and what do we have in it's place? The word that comes to my mind is guilt.
both boys

The people outside the church are filled with all kinds of guilt. Anyone knows that people of a downtown church all come for the life of the church. We're always worried about what we're to do; and we come to realize what Paul was talking about when he said--"the evil that I would not, that I do. And the good, I would, I do not". We take the easy way out and the short-cuts. Have you ever noticed on TV, what would they do without a drink? Any catastrophe, any business, they pour out their whiskey or whatever it is, and soda--this is their absolution. This is the absolution for their guilt. And if people don't take sin seriously in the church, they take guilt seriously outside the church. Just think of the thousands of psychiatrists who are, synomous-terms-in-this-context, as day by day they are talking to people, and what are the people talking to them about? It is because they are worried about guilt. Now guilt and sin are synomous terms in this context. And you can get any short-cut you like. You can go high on drugs or you can go on dope and alcohol. You can try and spend your time looking at the television. And that isn't terribly good for you either. You can go on saying every way, every day, I am getting better and better. Only every day and every way you discover that you are growing worse and worse. You say, well, someday, I'll be different. When New Year's Eve comes-- you're still the same man you are the first of January. Only slightly worse--because you are older and not able to fight abainst it the way you did when you were young.

And what this outsider is inquiring is, to know what redemption is. ^{See Excludy} I received a letter from an alcoholic in my congregation once who finally broke through. He said, "George, it is as if I had been emancipated. The mistake in mine eyes, is bubbling like a paradise, the birds are singing in the rain, that Christ the Lord is risen again."

(JOHN MACEFIELD STORY--prisoner that I am, that his soul is shackled. Mine soul is free. Christ, my friend, can do that).

III
III
V. 6

John goes on that, "not only does God love me and am I rid of my sins, I am a priest unto God and his father. I am a priest." I am coming to a _____ congregation as to what a priest might seem like. Just a little out of place, until they ask themselves the question, what is a priest. A priest is one who mediates between God and man. The high priest in the temple mediated between the altar and the people and the blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the altar and the people. And the people were united with God. He put his hands on the scapegoat and sent him out to the wilderness and he bore away the sins of God. The sins of themselves born away by God. Then came the Reformation. And the mistakes we (Protestants) make when we think we abolished priests. Not at all. If the priesthood of all believers means anything, it means that everyone of us is a priest. We don't require to go to a high priest. WE don't require to go to the minister. We have access straight through to the holy of holies. Because Christ is the only mediator between God and man. And so I commune with God, directly because I'm the priest. Whereupon my friend says, "if you mean prayer. If you mean talking to God. I don't need to go to church for prayer. I can pray anytime I like." Have you ever looked at the people who says, "I can pray anytime I like," very seldom pray. My friend, to whom do you pray?

Prayer is a dialogue, an "I-Thou" relationship, to use Martin Buber's phrase, in which my simple soul against the eternal God meets in that moment of mystery we call prayer. Archbishop Temple once said, if he had five minutes to pray he would speak for one minute and listen for four. And in the man of prayer is John in Patmos and the saints of this congregation know what I'm saying. They sit there and they commune and there is coming into their presence nothing less than that vision that John saw of one standing there whose garment glistened like snow. Out of whose mouth came a two-edged sword. And standing there in fear and trembling we feel the hand laid

upon us saying, fear not my child--I am with you even unto the end of the end.

To know that is to be a Christian, my friend.

Have you ever talked to the cosmic universe?

Have you ever talked to $E=MC^2$?

Have you ever talked to yourself in which you become convinced that you are growing better and better every day, only to realize that you're talking to yourself?

Prayer is only possible between a man and the living God.

Eep
 In one of the shipyards in Glasgow, there was an apprentice, a man who came in every day into the parish church which was next door. And he walked down the center aisle and sat in the front seat. A young lad, with heavy working boots and greasy overall his rust hands and his cap in his hand; and he sat in the front seat. And he looked up at the cross and stayed for 2 or 3 minutes and then he would go back to his work. And the minister noticed him coming in every lunch hour. And he went up to the lad and said, "Jimmy, I want to ask you a question--that/shouldn't be asking, but I'm curious. What do you do--what do you say when you sit there every day?" He said, "I just look up at the cross and I say, 'Jesus, this is Jimmy. And then I go back to my work.'" The lad met with an accident and he fell from the top deck to the hull of an unfinished ship and was mortally injured. He called for the minister, who looked at this child who was dying and said, "I saw it all so clearly, I saw the holy city of New Jerusalem. I saw wide streets paved with gold and sparkling with jewels. I saw light lighter than the setting of suns and the rising of suns, and at the end of this great Broadway, there was a choir of angels and archangels around the throne of glory singing--'Lord of Lords, and King of Kings.' A Hallelujah Chorus that Handel wanted but didn't quite manage to make. And in the center was Jesus Christ himself sitting there--King of Kings, and Lord of Lords; and up the center of that street walked Jimmy with his cap in his hands, his overalls and his rusty stained fingers. And when he came before the great throne, there was silence in heaven. And when he who sat upon the throne then said, 'Jimmy, this is Jesus.'"

I see it all clearly, I see the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, streets paved with gold & sparkling with jewels, a choir of angels of glory singing, Lord of lords & King of kings, a Hallelujah Chorus that Handel didn't quite manage, in the center was Jesus Christ
My friend, we haven't reached that yet.

What was the answer the king got when he said to Brandon, as Brandon told the story of Jesus. "If I become Christ's man--what difference will it make to my life?" Brandon didn't say you'll be a better man or you'll pay your debts or you'll be a good neighbor or you'll be generous. Not at all. He said, "You will behold wonder upon wonder. And every wonder prove; the wonder of knowing that God loves you. The wonder and miracle of knowing that your sins are forgiven. The wonder of knowing that day by day you walk by Jesus, the Christ, in a mystery of prayer that is beyond all understanding."

And if we know that, we too, with John, can say, "wherefore unto him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

Let us pray.

Lord, we do believe. Help thou our unbelief. Amen.
