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<td>12/1/63</td>
<td>Sunday a.m.</td>
<td>Chickasha, Oklahoma</td>
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LET'S MAKE AMERICA GREAT!

OUR SICK SOCIETY

Scripture: Isaiah 1:4-6

INTRO: THE ASSASSINATION OF OUR PRESIDENT ON THE 22nd OF THIS MONTH HAS CAUSED MANY THINKING AMERICANS TO TAKE A FRESH LOOK AT OUR SOCIETY. AT FIRST GLANCE OUR SOCIETY APPEARS TO BE HEALTHY, STRONG AND VIGOROUS. THEN WE DETECT SOMETHING WITHIN THE EYES OF OUR SOCIETY WHICH TELLS US THAT ALL IS NOT SO WELL AS WE FIRST CONCLUDED.

THE X-RAYS OF A MORE THOROUGH AND CONSCIENTIOUS EXAMINATION REVEALS HIDDEN DEEP WITHIN SOCIETY A LOATHSOME CANCEROUS GROWTH. IT IS AT THIS POINT THAT WE HAVE REALLY DISCOVERED THAT OURS IS A SICK, SICK SOCIETY.

WHEN A FANATICAL POLITICAL ZEALOT WILL TAKE THE LIFE OF OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE, OURS IS A SICK SOCIETY. WHEN THIS SAME MISGUIDED MAN WILL GUN DOWN A POLICEMAN WHO IS IN HIS LINE OF DUTY, OURS IS A SICK SOCIETY. WHEN ONE WHOSE LIVELIHOOD IS THE LUST OF DEPRAVED MEN SETS HIMSELF UP AS A GOD TO BRING JUSTICE UPON ANOTHER MAN, OURS IS A SICK SOCIETY.

WHEN 7 LITTLE CHILDREN ARE LEFT FATHERLESS IS 3 BRIEF DAYS OF VIOLENCE, OURS IS A SICK SOCIETY. PERHAPS NO ONE IN AMERICA IS MORE AWARE OF JUST HOW SICK OUR SOCIETY IS THAN THESE 7 LITTLE INNOCENT CHILDREN WHO WILL GO TO BED THIS NIGHT WITHOUT A LOVING WORD OR TENDER KISS FROM THEIR DADDY.

IF THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF THESE RECENT DAYS WILL NOT AWAKEN AMERICA TO THE FACT THAT OURS IS A SICK SOCIETY, THERE IS NO HOPE FOR AMERICA.

IF WE WOULD MAKE AMERICA GREAT WE MUST:

I. THE SYMPTOMS

STUDY THE SYMPTOMS OF A SICK SOCIETY

1. Suspicions

--Christ would turn to our world and say, as he did to his doubting disciples in Mark 4:44, "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

(1) Which arises from ignorance

--When Philip told Nathanael of Jesus, Nath. said:
  John 1:46 "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

--EXEG: Nath. was suspicious of Christ because he had never met him. His suspicions left when he met Him.

(2) Which arises from fear

--Mark 9:38 "And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and he followed not us: & we forbade him, because he followed not us."

--EXEG: John was suspicious of this man because he feared him. He feared that since he "followed not us" that he might distract from their reputation & steal their thunder.

...
Toward the dignity of human life

When asked about the priest & levite who saw him in need, the beaten Jew perhaps said, "When I came to, I was so weak from the loss of blood I could scarcely move -- and dying from thirst. I saw them rounding the curve bent on their journey--first a priest and then a levite. I tried to call to them. I lifted my hand and waved. I'm confident they saw me. They looked in my direction then crossed to the other side of the road pretending that they didn't see me at all! What was in their mind I can't imagine. Bent on some mission I suppose they thought more important, or reasoning that I was none of their business. Pardon me for saying it, but what is the business of religion anyway? Is it just meetings and ceremonies and moral rules?"

a. Because of what others might think
b. Because of the high cost of concern

Dad's experience in Winnfield with 2 men and 2X4.

Toward the needs of others

United Fund in Chickasha needs $38,000 - subscribed $35,000. 1964 Budget, PBC=$105,000 - subscribed, $95,133.00

Lack of Conviction

"Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind:"

In Religion

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Paul admonishes "That we henceforth be no more children tossed to & fro, & carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, & cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Where there used to be clear colors of conviction within religion there now is a drab pale gray. We no longer are really sure about anything. Two dangers -- fanatic & religious agnostic. A "fanatic" is one who has lost sight of his objective while doubling his efforts.

In Patriotism

"Render therefore unto Ceasar the things that are Ceasar:"

"I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplication, prayers, intercessions, & giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, & for all that are in authority."

How long has it been since you prayed for our governor, president...? Some feel that real patriotism belongs to prior generations. "America" or "The Star Spangled
"Banner" cannot begin to stir our souls as much as some unintelligent jittery tune on a nervous juke box.

(3) In morals
--- Hosea 10:13 "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity.
--- II Tim. 3:6 Rate of illegitimacy increasing. Immorality an accepted practice among youth. Parents instilling no moral convictions, but rather a blind obsession to be popular at any cost, etc.

4. Lack of Respect for Authority
--- II Tim. 3:1-2 "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemous, disobedient to parents."

(1) Which is unwittingly taught by parents
--- II Timus: Speeding & stopped by patrol. Hard things said about him. Or having child watch out back window for patrolman while you add 10 or 15 miles to the limit. Harsh, heartless criticism of pastor, school principal, teacher, referee, etc.

(2) Which produces a generation of social misfits
--- II Timus: Beatniks. Teenage girl who wanted to dress different because everyone else was being different.

II. THE DIAGNOSIS ACCEPT THE DIVINE DIAGNOSIS OF A SICK SOCIETY

1. A depraved nature
--- I John 5:19b "The whole world lieth in wickedness."
--- II Timus: That shot fired in Dallas, Texas which took the life of our president said, what God's Word has been saying for thousands of years -- "man is depraved, innately evil, & if left alone man would destroy himself" etc.

(1) Which is common to all
--- Rom. 3:23 "All have sinned, & come short of the glory of God."
--- Rom. 3:10 "There is none righteous, no, not one."
--- II Timus: There is buried within each of us something of the nature of a Judas, a John Wilkes Booth, a Lee Harvey Oswald, a Ruby. All men suffer from this dread malady.

(2) Which man cannot change
--- Jer. 13:23 "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil?"
--- II Timus: In a time when education, scientific advance, cultural development, & economic strength is at an all time high, a president is murdered, a policeman is slain, & an assassin is executed at the hand of a hoodlum. In what clearer terms could the fact be spelled out to us that man cannot change his own nature, that he cannot lift himself by his own bootstraps, that man cannot provide his own redemption?
2. **A disregard for other's rights.**

--The attitude of the unjust judge as expressed Luke 18:4 is all too often the prevailing attitude of our sick society. "I fear not God, nor regard man."

(1) Which are not granted according to race or creed

--Acts 10:34 "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons."

--Dec. of Indep: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

--ILLUS: When the Samaritan came along he saw the beaten man--naked, bleeding, half dead. That is all it took. He saw the man. He did not ask who the man was--a Jew, Samaritan, or Arab. He did not ask him how much he was worth or to which organizations he belonged. He simply ignored all the barriers that his people had built up against other races and creeds. The beaten man needed help and the heart of the godly Samaritan went out to him in actual help.

(2) Which must be protected by the strong

--Dec of Indep: "That to secure these rights, government are instituted among men."

--ILLUS: Perhaps the beaten Jew said, "I suppose we are always going to have to deal with people like those robbers—the strong taking advantage of the weak. They never seem to think of people as people but only as someone to exploit for their own purposes. Somebody has got to take the responsibility for protecting the weak against the strong. Somebody has got to stand up for those whose rights and freedoms are ignored or abused. Maybe one of these days there will be a nation that will have laws and a conscience and the courage to do that. At this moment it seems a long way off."

3. **Biblical illiteracy.**

--Matt. 22:29 "Jesus answered and said unto them, 'Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."

(1) Which is content with a theoretical knowledge of the Bible.

--ILLUS: The priest and Levite had such a cold knowledge. I can hear the beaten Jew say, "You'd think those fellows never read their scripture. Maybe they just read what they want to or having read it straightway ignore its meaning. Why is it that our religious leaders have to make religion so everlastinglly complicated—making religion something to argue over rather than something to live by? By the roadside, I didn't need a sermon on the love of God. I needed someone to
love me for God. I didn't need a definition of a neighbor; I needed a neighbor!

(2) Which fails to grasp the spirit of Christ
--Acts 10:38 speaks of Christ as one "Who went about doing good."
--ILLUS: Wild man of Gadara; adulterous woman at well; Greeks brought by Andrew; Centurian's son; Malchus' ear.

II. THE TREATMENT SUBMIT TO GOD'S TREATMENT FOR A SICK SOCIETY

--Jer. 8:22a "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?"
--ILLUS: Even as physical ills cannot be treated in mass, neither can spiritual ills be treated in mass. Must be indiv. treat.

1. A Confrontation with our True Image
--Psalm 109:22 "For I am poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me."
   (1) Which may not be pretty
   --Jer: 30:12 "For thus saith the Lord, Thy bruise is incurable and thy wound is grievous."
   --Rev. 3:17 "Thou sayest, I am rich, increased with goods & have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched & miserable, & poor, & blind, & naked."
   --ILLUS: The folly of refusing to face this picture. Ex. Alfred Johnson & grandmother.
   (2) Which calls for confession
   --Isa. 6:5a "Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, & I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

2. Contrition of Heart
--Luke 15:21 "And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven & in thy sight, & am no more worthy to be called thy son."
   (1) Which seeks forgiveness
   --Psalm 109:26 "Help me, O Lord my God: O save me according to thy mercy."
   (2) Which brings an about-face
   --EXEC: We do not read of the prod. son returning to the hog pens, because his contrition was genuine.

3. A Saving Encounter with the Great Physician
--Even as Christ spake of the sickness of Lazarus, so he may speak of our sickness today, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." (John 11:4)
   (1) In which one is completely made over again.
   --II Cor. 5:17 "Therefore If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things become new."
The "new birth"

(2) Which alters one's basic desires

— Eph. 2:2-6 (READ)

CONCLUSION: Each of us is included in our sick society. Your acceptance or rejection of Christ will help your world to become better or to grow worse. For there is no hope beside him.

Our deceased president intended to conclude his undelivered speech in Dallas with this portion of Psalm 127:1

"Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

May I add "Except the Lord keep you, your life here and hereafter is in vain."
INTRO: CERTAIN EVENTS OF RECENT YEARS HAVE CAUSED MANY THINKING AMERICANS TO TAKE A FRESH LOOK AT OUR SOCIETY. AT FIRST GLANCE OUR SOCIETY APPEARS TO BE HEALTHY, STRONG AND VIGOROUS. THEN WE DETECT SOMETHING WITHIN THE EYES OF OUR SOCIETY WHICH TELLS US THAT ALL IS NOT SO WELL AS WE FIRST CONCLUDE.

THE X-RAYS OF A MORE THOROUGH AND CONSCIENTIOUS EXAMINATION REVEAL A HIDDEN DEEP WITHIN SOCIETY A LOATHSOME CANCEROUS GROWTH. IT IS AT THIS POINT THAT WE DISCOVER A THREAT TO AMERICA'S GREATNESS.

WHEN A FANATIC POLITICAL ZEALOT TAKES THE LIFE OF OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THERE IS A THREAT TO AMERICA'S GREATNESS. WHEN A MISGUIDED YOUTH GUNS DOWN A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE AND ANOTHER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IS CRIPPLED FOR LIFE IN AN ATTEMPTED ASSASINATION, THERE IS A THREAT TO AMERICA'S GREATNESS. WHEN THE WATERGATE SCANDAL FLOODS OUR HOMES THRU EVERY CONCEIVABLE NEWS MEDIA AND MANY DELIGHT IN IT, THERE IS A THREAT TO AMERICA'S GREATNESS.

SURELY THESE AND OTHER EVENTS AWAKEN US TO THE FACT THAT WITHIN OUR GREAT NATION THERE IS A SICK SOCIETY. BUT THIS SICK SEGMENT OF OUR SOCIETY DOES NOT MEAN THAT AMERICA IS TERMINALLY ILL. THOSE AMERICANS WHO CARE MUST BE BRAVE ENOUGH TO FACE THE FACT THAT WITHIN A SICK SOCIETY THERE IS A THREAT TO AMERICA'S GREATNESS AND THEN ACCEPT THE CURE OFFERED IN JESUS CHRIST.
WHAT MAKES A NATION GREAT?

Not serried ranks with flags unflured,
Not armoured ships that gird the world,
Not hoarded wealth nor busy mills,
Not cattle on a thousand hills;
Not sages wise, nor schools nor laws,
Not boasted deeds in freedom's cause,
All these may be, and yet the state
In the eye of God be far from great.

That land is great which knows the Lord,
Whose songs are guided by His word;
Where Justice rules 'twixt man and man,
Where love controls in art and plan;
Where, breathing in his native air,
Each soul finds joy in praise and prayer—
Thus may our country, good and great,
Be God's delight—man's best estate.

- Alexander Blackburn
OUR SICK SOCIETY

Used: CHICKASHA, FIRST Sunday a.m. 12/1/63(XXX+++?) Bath.

F.B.C., Ponca City 6-2-68(XXX+++?) Baptisms.

F.B.C. San Angelo 7-8-73-AM(XXX+++?) Bapt. 214.49
1st, 4@75Sp. each.
Our Sick Society

by

Jerold R. McBride, Th. D.

PASTOR FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
CHICKASHA, OKLAHOMA
This is a sermon delivered on December 1, 1963 by Dr. McBride in the First Baptist Church of Chickasha, Oklahoma.
OUR SICK SOCIETY

Scripture: Isaiah 1:4-6

The assassination of our president on the 22nd of November has caused many thinking Americans to take a fresh look at our society. At first glance our society appears to be healthy, strong and vigorous. Then we detect something within the eyes of our society which tells us that all is not so well as we first concluded.

The x-rays of a more thorough and conscientious examination reveal hidden deep within society a loathsome cancerous growth. It is at this point that we have really discovered that ours is a sick, sick society.

When a fanatical political zealot will take the life of our chief executive, ours is a sick society. When this same misguided man will gun down a policeman who is in his line of duty, ours is a sick society. When one whose livelihood is the lust of depraved men sets himself up as a god to bring justice upon another man, ours is a sick society.

When seven little children are left fatherless in three brief days of violence, ours is a sick society. Perhaps no one in America is more aware of just how sick our society is than these seven little innocent children who will go to bed this night without a loving word or tender kiss from their daddy.

If the tragic events of these recent days will not awaken America to the fact that ours is a sick society, there is no hope for America.

I invite you to join me at the bedside of our desperately ill society, to look into its eyes, to feel its fainting pulse and to take its temperature. Let us study the symptoms which are so obvious and then let us try to make some diagnosis of the ailments which plague this society. Having diagnosed the case, we shall attempt to prescribe some treatment that can bring once again color and health to our society.
THE SYMPTOMS

Suspicion

One of the most obvious symptoms of our sick society is a permeating spirit of suspicion. The Republicans suspect the Democrats, and the Democrats naturally suspect the Republicans. Labor is suspicious of management and management is suspicious of labor. One religious movement is highly suspicious of another and, in the spirit of retaliation, such suspicion is met with suspicion. And even within the ranks of individual denominations there are those who are suspicious of all who do not pronounce their Shibboleth with the emphasis on the right syllable.

This deadly poison of suspicion has permeated every fibre of our society. Such suspicion will eat away the very foundation upon which our nation is built. Christ could ask us even as he asked his disciples in Mark 4:4, "Why are ye so fearful: How is it that ye have no faith?"

As we study this suspicion more closely, we learn that it arises from ignorance. We tend to suspect those things of which we have the least knowledge. When Phillip told Nathanael of Jesus Christ, Nathanael said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Nathanael was highly suspicious of this carpenter from Nazareth because he was highly ignorant of him. When he met him and his ignorance gave way to knowledge, he found there was no basis for suspicion. True, there are some things of which we should be suspicious. But this deadly kind of suspicion which is a symptom of a sick society is based not upon facts, but rather upon ignorance.

Suspicion often rises from fear. John turned to Jesus and said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name and he followed not us, and we forbade him, because he followed not us." John feared that because this man did not belong to his little group that he might distract from his reputation and steal his thunder. Even as extreme suspicion is a sign of a sick mental condition, so it is a symptom of a sick society.
Indifference

This dread malady has its roots far back into the early days of the human race. Jesus tells of this problem in Luke 10:32: "Then Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side."

Indifference toward the dignity of human life is often expressed. A human life is precious in the sight of God, regardless who the person may be, or what position he may hold, or how much he may differ with us.

When asked about the priest and the Levite who saw him in need, perhaps the beaten Jew said, "I shall never know what was in their mind. Perhaps they considered their mission to be more important than I. Perhaps they felt that I was none of their concern." And then this man would bend nearer to us and say, "Excuse me for being so brazen, but what is the real purpose of religion anyway? Isn't it more than rituals, sessions, moral laws, theological jargons and theories? Isn't the purpose of religion to reach down to the level where men live and to help them, and to stand for the dignity of human life?" There remains today a sense of indifference for the dignity of human life because of what someone else might think.

Others are indifferent toward the dignity of human life because of the high cost of concern. The Samaritan's concern cost him perhaps all of his wine and all of his oil, most of his money, and a great deal of his precious time. Because of the high cost of real concern there are few who are willing to pay the price.

Several years ago when I was just a small fellow my father accepted the call of a church in central Louisiana. Dr. M. E. Dodd, then pastor of First Baptist Church in Shreve-
port, called my father to the side and said, "That is a pretty
difficult town to which you are going. Some people...there
lack proper respect for human life." We found out a few
years later what Dr. Dodd meant.

One summer day we were eating lunch. Our parsonage
had just been moved to a corner to make room for an edu-
cational building behind the sanctuary. A great deal of
lumber was yet around the house. Hearing the cry of a man,
we rushed to the front porch and saw a man running down
the sidewalk. He passed our house, his shirt was torn and
his back was slashed and bleeding. Half a block away a
man with a long knife was pursuing him. My father leaped
down from the porch, picked up a two-by-four about five
feet long and planted himself in the middle of that sidewalk.
When the man arrived he said, "If you respect your health
you'll fold the knife and call it a day." He didn't think my
dad meant what he said. When he was about to take one
more step he realized that that preacher meant business. He
decided that, after all, it was time to call it a day, and he
folded his knife and went back to his truck.

My father found the bleeding man and took him to a
doctor who treated him. This man had run by literally doz-
en of men on the main street of that town and not one of
them would lift their hand because of the high cost of con-
cern. They feared that they just might get stabbed in the
back if they tried to stand up for the dignity of a fellow-man.

I say it is high time, regardless of the cost, that individ-
ual Christians and the church step down from the porch of
lethargy and unconcern and stand up for the dignity of man-
kind. There may be those who are so depraved and so blind-
ed by prejudice and radical bigotry that they would knife
us in the back for planting ourselves on the sidewalk of life
and saying, "We believe as Jesus believed, that every man
is precious in the sight of God."

There is indifference toward the needs of others. To
bring this truth home to where we live, let us turn to our
own community. Here in our own city of Chickasha we have
a very small goal for our United Fund--$38,000. There are
a number of churches in our town which have budgets lar-
ger than that. Weeks after the subscription program has been
completed the fund is still $3,000 short. Why? Our town has not escaped the infectious virus of indifference. Our attitude seems to be, "So a little child has to go to bed hungry! What do I care? My child has food to waste. So a little child has no shoes! What do I care? My child has shoes to spare. So a little child must live in a house which the parents cannot afford to heat! What do I care? We can let our children run in and out of the house leaving the doors open and heat half of the outdoors."

If only the Jebusites or the Amorites or someone else miles away were infected by indifference, I wouldn't be so disturbed. But the symptom of indifference has even infected the society of the church.

Lack of Conviction

We live in a spineless, convictionless age. Romans 14:5, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; let him be persuaded, let him stand for something. There are three areas in which I see a minimum of conviction. The first is in religion.

Jesus says, "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Paul admonishes "That we be no more children, tossed to and fro." Where we once flew the vivid colors on conviction, we now raise the drab gray flag of compromise. There is the danger of becoming a religious agnostic who wanders in the nebulous realm of religious generalities.

Secondly, there is a lack of real conviction in patriotism. Jesus did not oppose patriotism. He said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Paul writes to Timothy and says, "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplication, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority." How long has it been since you prayed for the governor of our state, or for the president of our nation, or for our senator in Washington, or for our own state senator in Oklahoma City? How long has it been?

Some feel that such patriotism belongs to the era of George Washington. "America" or the "Star Spangled Ban-
ner” cannot begin to stir our spirits as much as some unintelligent jittery tune blaring from a nervous juke box. The flag no longer brings a thrill to the hearts of many and the pledge of allegiance is spoken from the lips out. Ours is a sick society.

A lack of conviction is evident in morals. Hosea said, “Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity.” The rate of illegitimacy increases. Immorality becomes an accepted practice and a status symbol among many groups. Many parents no longer instill moral conviction, but rather an obsession for popularity no matter what the cost may be.

Lack of Respect For Authority

We look again at our ailing society and see this other symptom. Timothy is forewarned by Paul. “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud blasphemous, disobedient to parents.” Running rampant in our society is a spirit of blatant disrespect for authority. There is present a political ideology that is akin to anarchy. Many times parents unwittingly teach a lack of respect for authority to their own children.

A father, speeds down a highway, knowingly and deliberately breaking the speed limit. A patrolman, at the risk of his own life stops him and, in a courteous manner, gives him a ticket. As he drives away he says very harsh words about that patrolman. The little boy sitting in the back seat learns his first lesson on respect for authority.

Parents go home from church and make critical, sniping, heartless, harsh criticisms of the pastor—and the little child listens and he learns his first lesson on respect for leadership. Or the parents make harsh remarks about a school principal, a public school teacher, or even a referee at a football game. In this act they undermine any sense of respect for authority in their children’s minds. Then they wonder later on in life why their child is so rebellious.

We may produce an entire generation symbolized by the teenage girl who said that she wanted to dress differently than anyone else, and when asked why, she replied, “Everyone else is dressing that way.” Ours is an age of rebellion.
Lack of respect for authority and disbelief in orderliness are symptoms of a sick society.

THE DIAGNOSIS

A Depraved Nature

The shot fired in Dallas, Texas, which took the life of our president, and was heard around the world, said what God’s Word has been saying for hundreds of years. “Man is depraved, man is innately evil and if left alone man will destroy himself.” This is one diagnosis of these symptoms, which tell us, if they will tell us anything, that man is innately a sinner, and that in himself there is no salvation. In 1 John 5:19 the Bible says, “The whole world lieth in wickedness.”

This depraved nature is common to all—none escape its grip. “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” And again the Bible says, “There is none righteous, no not one.” There is buried within each of us something of the nature of a Judas Iscariot, a John Wilkes Booth, a Lee Harvey Oswald, a Jack Rubinstein. All men suffer from this same dread malady. It expresses itself in your life in one way, in mine another, and in Oswald’s in one way and in Rubinstein’s another, but all of these expressions go back to that one common virus—the depravity of mankind.

One factor which has encouraged this virus to go unchecked is heretical liberal theology which teaches that a man is innately good, that salvation is simply discovering your true self and developing your innate goodness. Man cannot change his depravity. Jeremiah said, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil?”

When education, scientific advance, cultural development, and economic strength is at an all time high a president is murdered, a policeman is slain, and an assassin is executed by the hand of a hoodlum. In what clearer terms could the fact be spelled out to us that man cannot change his own nature, that he cannot lift himself by his own bootstraps, that man cannot provide his own redemption, that he is helpless apart from the grace of Jesus Christ? This disease triggers another.
A Disregard For Other's Rights

The attitude of the unjust judge as expressed in the parable of our Lord in Luke 18:4 is all too often the attitude of our society. He said, "I fear not God, nor regard man." "I don't care about God, I have no regard for man."

Rights are not granted according to race, or creed, or color. Peter discovered this when he said, "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." The Declaration of Independence reaffirms this in these words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

I suppose if anyone could claim to be conditioned by being brought up in an area where he would be inclined to rob from others their rights, or at least to grant them in a piece-meal fashion, or at best, to make certain people second-rate citizens that I could make such a claim. I began in the first grade and graduated from the twelfth grade in Huey Long's hometown. You don't get any more southern than that. Two important experiences came my way when I was a small boy. First of all, a primary Sunday school teacher taught a lesson on the good samaritan. As a little child I had not mastered the fine art of pigeon-hole theology. This art can only be mastered by adults. Since the Samaritan stopped and helped a beaten Jew I thought that I should help Jack Shortey, a little colored boy who lived a block from me. I hadn't learned to think in neat little convenient compartments. That teacher destroyed the effect of all conditioning that was around me.

A few years later an American history teacher made me memorize almost all of the Declaration of Independence. I could not escape the impact of the part which asserts that all men are created equal and that God has given them their rights. "Who am I to take away their rights," I ask myself? As an American I knew that I could not agree with the predominate attitude, and as a Christian I knew that I could not agree.
The Declaration of Independence says, "That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men." No one can close and close the doors of this church and say, "You cannot hold services." Why? This cannot be done because the government is instituted to prevent that. The federal government stands for the purpose of preserving our rights. To think that anyone could close our doors is inconceivable. What about the federal government when it preserves the right of an American who is paying taxes and who perhaps is more educated than many of his fellow-men in Mississippi?

What about the Federal government when it tries to preserve the right of that colored man to vote? Oh, some would exclaim that the government is composed of a bunch of dirty birds when it does that! But when it keeps our doors open and gives us our liberties, that is something else. This is a sign of a sick mind and a sick and illogical society which has learned to think in convenient little pigeon holes. We are suffering from the disease of disregard.

I can hear the Jew as he talks to those about him after having been rescued by the Samaritan, "Perhaps there will always be people like those robbers--the strong running over the weak. These ruffians never seem to consider people as human beings, but only as victims to exploit for their own selfish gain. Someone must step forth to defend the powerless against the powerful. Someone must help those whose liberties and rights are abused or disregarded. Perchance one day a mighty nation will emerge which will establish the laws and have the conscience and courage to protect these rights--but, from where I stand, this day appears to be a long way off."

I must stand two thousand years removed from this beaten Jew and say, "My friend, two thousand years have passed and I must still say it seems as though it's a long way off. We have the law, but we lack the conscience and we're void of the courage."

Biblical Illiteracy

We have never lived in a time when we have had more
seminaries, or more churches, or more Bible teachers or more Christian literature than today. Yet there are millions who remain void of any real Bible literacy. Jesus turned to a large number of prominent Bible scholars and said in Matt. 22:29, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." Just what did Jesus mean? These men were professional religionists. They could out-quote most any of us today. They knew much about the facts of the Bible, but they failed to grasp the real message of the Bible. This is the Biblical illiteracy—the dread disease—which these symptoms indicate.

This Biblical illiteracy is content with a theoretical knowledge of the Bible. Perhaps the beaten Jew said, "I needed no sermon on the love of God as I lay beaten. I needed a practical demonstration of the love of God. I did not need a discourse on ethics; I needed a display of ethics."

Biblical illiteracy fails to grasp the spirit of Christ. Christ is spoken of as one who went about doing good—doing good to the wild man of Gadara, to the adulterous woman at Jacob's well, to the Greeks brought to him by Andrew, to a Roman Centurion's son, and to Malchus. We may know all the kings of Israel, we may know all the names of the apostles and be able to trace all of the journeys of Paul, and still be Biblically illiterate. For to know words in the Bible is not necessarily to know the Word of the Bible.

Biblical illiteracy, disregard for others rights, and, above all, a depraved nature, are our diagnoses. What possible treatment can be prescribed for these dread diseases?

THE TREATMENT

Jeremiah asked centuries ago. "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" There must be treatment somewhere. Even as the physically ill cannot be treated en masse, but each person must be treated individually, so the spiritually ill must be treated individually. The treatment has three phases.
Confrontation With Our True Image

Until a person is willing to learn of his symptoms, hear the doctor's diagnosis and then confront the fact that he is indeed a sick man, he will never accept the treatment. This is the first step which so many miss because they will not face their true selves. They have carved out of their own imagination an image which they think represents themselves, and they become extremely angry when confronted with a true picture of themselves. The Psalmist was big enough to confront his true image. He said, "I am poor and needy and my heart is wounded within me."

Sometimes the image is not very pretty. Jeremiah says, "Thy bruise is incurable and thy wound is grievous." Christ says in Revelation 3:17, "Thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." There is folly in refusing to face our true image. There is a balm in Gilead, but it will be of no healing efficacy if we refuse to face our true selves.

Contrition Of Heart

The prodigal son said, "I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." The prodigal son not only confronted his true image, he also was sorry for what he saw. Such contrition issues forth in the earnest seeking of forgiveness. The Psalmist says, "Help me, O Lord my God: O save me according to thy mercy." This must be the spirit of our contrite hearts. Real contrition brings an about-face. We do not read of the prodigal son's going again to the wicked city or returning to the hog pens of sin because his contrition of heart was genuine.

A Saving Encounter With The Great Physician

Even as Christ spoke of the sickness of Lazarus, so he may speak of our sickness and say, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (John 11:4).
The basic need of our sick society is found in neither economic reforms nor moral legislation, but rather in men's experiencing a saving encounter with Jesus Christ. In this encounter a person is made all over again. There is no hope in remodeling this world--at best we would only rearrange its sins. We need to scrap it and start all over. This is precisely what a saving encounter does.

The Bible asserts, "Therefore if any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things become new" (II Cor. 5:17). This is the need of our world--a saving experience with Christ. This experience changes desires, hopes and aspirations. There is no hope apart from this encounter which provides forgiveness of sin.

We may continue to educate our young people, to prosper in economics and in science, but we will remain a sick society until our depraved nature is changed by a saving encounter with Christ in whose blood alone there is healing power.

Our late president intended to conclude his undelivered address in Dallas with the first verse of Psalm 127 which reveals so clearly the only hope for our sick society, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

Surely our society has learned by now that, "Neither is there salvation in any other." In Christ remains the only hope for our world--the only remedy for our sick society.