



Of Seeds and Flowers

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GOD AND FREEDOM, OR ...

The Touch of the Master's Hand

Tw'as battered and scarred, and the
auctioneer

Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile.

"What am I bid, good folks," he cried,

"Who'll start the bidding for me?"

"A dollar, a dollar," then, two! Only two?

"Two dollars, and who'll make it three?"

"Three dollars, once, three dollars twice;

Going for three..." But no,

From the room, far back, a grey-haired man

Came forward and picked up the bow;

Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,

And tightening the loose strings,

He played a melody pure and sweet

As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,

With a voice that was quiet and low,

Said, "What am I bid for the old violin?"

And held it up with the bow.

"A thousand dollars, and
who'll make it two?

Two thousand! And who'll make it three?
Three thousand, once, three thousand twice;
And going and gone," said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,

"We do not quite understand
What changed its worth?" Swift came the
reply;

"The touch of a master's hand
And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd.
Much like the old violin.

A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine;
A game-and he travels on.

He is "going" once "going" twice,
He's "going" and almost 'gone.'

But the Master comes and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand,
The worth of a soul and the change that's
wrought By the touch of the Master's Hand

By Myra Brooks Welch

SPEAKING SOFTLY, BUT FIRMLY!

My dear, dear brothers and sisters, Noone, today, likes to read many words. I apologize for so many words, but this sermon preached in 1944 by the renowned Chaplain of the U.S. senate, Dr. Peter Marshall is so filled with the ideas that fit the current reality in our country and world, this Fourth of July, I HAD TO SHARE THEM. Truly, worth reading! Senators used to show up early just to hear Dr. Marshall's prayers. There is a fine movie of Dr. Marshall's life entitled - A MAN CALLED PETER. These prophetic words were spoken 80

years ago. I wish we all could go to church next Sunday and hear a Catholic bishop or priest, or a minister or pastor share the same ideas and prophetic wisdom. Or hear the same words from the mouth and heart of a college professor or president of a university or superintendent of schools or grade or middle or high school principal or Board of Ed. member or any elected politician or newspaper editor or news presenter. All these servants deal with the souls and lives of real people in genuine confusion and so, are involved, whether they like it or not, with a serious SPIRITUAL MATTER. -a matter that goes to the heart of our nation and world. Each of these leaders and institutions have the serious care of souls.

THE FOLLOWING ARE NOT MY WORDS, BUT THE PRAYED WORDS OF A PROPHETIC, FAITHFUL PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER. Dr. Peter Marshall begins:

'My text for today is taken from the first book of Kings chapter 18, Verse 21: "If the Lord be God, follow him! "But If Baal be God, follow Him."

*"The setting of this text is one of the most dramatic in the Old Testament. The leaders of the nation, including the king, had come together to make a great decision. It was a national emergency; something had to be done. Elijah, the prophet, called them to meet on Mount Carmel to settle no less a question than, whom they should worship. **It was a day of choice, a day of Destiny.***

*As long as the Jewish nation could recognize God as Supreme, it could stand. But something was happening to the **national light**. The faith and vision of the founding fathers had faded. Moral decay set in; there was confusion in the minds of the people. They were beginning to forget the principles that had made them a nation. All around them paganism flourished. There were many gods. Convenient gods. (self, ego, pride, power and control, money, etc.) gods that could be worshiped in ways that appealed to their lower nature. Society also had a god. His name was Baal. He was a god of the flesh. His 450 priests encouraged people to follow their natural tendencies and inclinations. Baal had no inhibitions at all. It said, "Look after number one." "Be yourself." "Follow your feelings." "Listen to the crowd; how could so many people be wrong?" - "a good time for everyone." No wonder it grew in popularity.*

But still, Israel, was confused. Their traditions, their inheritances of the past -the early teachings of their parents- were not forgotten. Something of their conscience was not yet drugged, and they were confused and uneasy. They took a little of Jehovah and a little of Baal. They became more and more broadminded. Was it not a free country? Who wanted to be old-fashioned?

So, morality became a relative thing. The old absolutes were regarded as far too intolerant. The national moral standards were lowered. Whatever you believe or think is truth. Little by little everyone became broad-minded. The worship of Baal and Jehovah got mixed -hard to draw a line of distinction. Elijah saw the danger. He saw the confusion and indecision and what would happen to the nation when its moral fiber was weakened. ELIJAH SAW THE END, AS ALL PROPHETS DO!! He saw



that ruin and disaster were inevitable if the nation lost Jehovah and departed from its charter and constitution. Time to take sides. There was no middle or neutral ground. -one side or the other! So Elijah summoned the leaders of the country together to the slopes of Carmel.

Elijah faced the 450 priests of Baal. IT HAD TO BE GOD OR BAAL. Sacrifices were laid on the altar. Then began the weird pagan performance with Elijah taunting them with razor sharp jibs. "Why don't you cry louder. Cry louder! Wake your god up! NO ANSWER.

Going to an abandoned, broken-down altar, Elijah set his sacrifice upon it and drenched it three times with water. To be more impressive he soaked the altar with water that ran into a trench dug all around it.

Then Elijah prayed- not ranting or foaming or shouting. And his prayer was answered in fire that consumed the sacrifice; dried up the water in the trench and the people looking on cried as they fell on their faces. "The Lord, he is God." "The Lord, He is God."

Dr. Marshall continued: Now, I suggest to you that America needs prophets today to set before the nation the essential choices. A time like this demands strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands. People who have honor, who do not lie. People who can stand above the fog in politics and in private thinking. Freedom is weeping. Wrong rules the land, and waiting justice, sleeps.

It is unfortunate that those who speak for control and wisdom and truth and justice in the newsreels are not particularly photogenic to begin with, but they are usually posed and quoted in such a way as to provoke laughter in our theaters. We, who are concerned, can't help wondering what will happen to a country that apparently is no longer aware of the dangers.

The choices you make in moral and religious questions determine the way America will go. We badly need prophets who will have the ear of America and who will say, "If the Lord be God, follow Him! But if Baal, then follow him!". We need to listen to the prophets who speak the truth while freedom weeps. People have become lovers of themselves more than lovers of their country. All traitors are not enemy agents. Love of power and control has enslaved many of our leaders. Our moral standards have been lowered. No nation makes progress in a downward direction. " If the Lord be God, follow him! " But if Baal, follow him." God or Baal. Jesus or chaos? Conviction/ truth or compromise? Discipline or disintegration? We speak often of the rights and privileges of being American. We now need to hear of duties and responsibilities. No more moral fog! The average church member has forgotten the old disciplines "Today", continues Dr. Marshall, "we are living in a time when many individuals choosing Satan, and non-truth- will pull the nation down with them. Millions of people in America live in a moral fog. They move in a sort of spiritual twilight. Modified morality based on cleverness guides millions of people. Modified dishonesty within the letter of the law is the practice of millions more.

When people listen, God speaks. When people give God a chance, he works his plan! God has a plan for you and me. - and for America and all who truly love America. But only until we -you and I- as individuals- follow it. We must be guided as well as our leaders. We need a prophet who will say to America "How long will you halt and stand between two opinions? "If the Lord be God, follow him! But if Baal be god, follow him!" -and go to hell.

God bless America. May our prayer not be an empty whine of selfish pride and arrogant stupidity. But rather a humble, contrite plea to the god of all nations to make this land we love well worth defending; worth fighting for. Oh God, help us to make America God's country. Amen.

PRAYER OF POPE CLEMENT XI

Lord, I believe, but let me believe more firmly;
I trust but let me trust more confidently;
I love but let me love more ardently;
I sorrow but let me sorrow more strongly.

I adore You as my first principle;
I desire You as my last end;
I praise You as my everlasting benefactor.
I call on You as my kind defender.

Direct me by Your wisdom,
Surround me by Your justice,
Comfort me by Your mercy,
Protect me by Your power.

Lord, I offer you my thoughts that may be of You;
My words that they may be about You;
My deeds that they may be in accord with You;
My sufferings that they may be for You.

I desire whatever You desire; I desire it because you desire it; I desire it as You desire it; I desire it as long as You desire it.

Lord, this is my prayer: May You enlighten my mind, inflame my will, cleanse my heart, sanctify my soul.

Let me weep for my past sins; let me repel future temptations; let me correct my evil inclinations; let me cultivate my proper virtues.

Give me good Lord, love for You,
humility for myself, zeal for my neighbor,

contempt of the world.

Let me be eager to obey my superiors,
to be attentive to my friends,
spare my enemies and to see myself as I really am.

Let me conquer pleasure by austerity,
greediness by generosity, anger by mildness, apathy by fervor.

Make me prudent in judgement,
steadfast in danger, patient in adversity,
humble in prosperity.

Grant Lord, grant that I may be attentive in prayer, moderate in food and drink,
diligent in my work, firm in my decisions.

May I take care to possess interior innocence, exterior modesty, exemplary relationships, and an orderly life.

Let me be diligent in controlling nature,
fostering grace, keeping the law,
and working out my salvation.

Let me learn from You
how fragile is the earthly,
how great the divine,
how brief the temporal,
how permanent the eternal.

Grant that I may prepare for death
and obtain the joy of paradise.
Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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