

This sermon title may be misleading. We are not going to talk about the literal making of a man. I am reminded of a little boy who knew his SS lesson well. One day he had a severe ache in his side. He rushed to his mother and said: "O Mommy, I think I'm getting ready to have a wife".

The Mita copier people, in the TV ads, play upon the eagerness of single women to meet single men. So they introduced the Mita man..the term they use in their sales persons.

The title may be thought to be chauvanistic as well. It should read: "the making of a man and/or a woman" But that is a little awkward...the more accurate. The same principles are involved.

There is a lot of concern over what makes a real man or a real woman. A recent book was called REAL MEN DON'T EAT QUICHE. Someone commented that most men don't even know what quiche is, and if they did, they wouldn't like it,

What is the making of a real man or a real woman? Our three readings for the day give us some remarkably clear outlines.

The first lesson is from Isaiah. Isaiah was in the temple when he had a momentous encounter with God. He writes:

I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with two he covered his face; and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And one cried to ~~the~~/other another and said "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him who cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

Then said I, "Woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts."

Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from off the altar, and he touched my mouth, and said "Lo, this has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven" Then I heard the voice of ~~God~~ the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" Then I answered, "Here am I, send me".

Now hold that wonderful scripture in mind as we turn to the NT to a similar episode in the life of Peter. One day Jesus was preaching on the shore of Gennesaret. Crowds pressed on him. He noticed two empty boats standing on the edge of the water while the fishermen washed their nets. Stepping into one of the boats Jesus asked Peter, its owner, to push out a little into the water, so that he could sit in the boat and speak to the crowds from there. When he had finished speaking, he said to Peter, "now go back out in the water where it is deeper and let your nets down and you will catch lots of fish"

Peter was weary and answered "Sir, we have worked all night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, we will try again". This time the nets were so full that they began to tear. In fact it is not long until both boats are so full that they are about to sink. Then we are told that Peter realized what had happened and he fell on his knees before Jesus and said: "depart from me Lord for I am a sinful man". It was then that Jesus said to Peter and the others: "Do not be afraid. From now on you will be fishers of men".

What a memorable story. But there is another. It is told by Paul in I Cor 15. It is the story of how the resurrected Christ appeared to the disciples...first to Peter and later to the rest of the 12, and then to 5000 more followers...many of whom were still alive when Paul wrote...and finally Paul writes "he appeared to me". Listen as Paul continues, "For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God". Then he goes on to write "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them..."

You see the similarities in these accounts, do you not?

Here was the making of the three of the greatest men who ever lived...and there are 3 definite steps in their growth.

1. The first of these steps was a painful moment of self-discovery. "Woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips". Isaiah fashioned himself as a good and righteous man, but, suddenly, in the presence of God, he saw himself as he really was... something of a sham, goodness to parade before others but too superficial to build a satisfying life upon.

Peter probably thought he had it made too. He owned his own fishing boat, and was a successful small business man. He had a good life...his work, his family, his health. What more could he ask? Peter did not know until that fateful day when he crossed paths with Jesus, and Peter cries out "depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" Suddenly Peter realizes how

empty and meaningless his life was. His complacency was shattered the day he met the Master and discovered the truth about himself.

Paul even had a different name before his confrontation with the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus. He was Saul, the dreaded persecutor of the early Christians. What a radical change took place in his life the day he met the Master. Suddenly of how misguided, how cruel, how vindictive his previous behavior had BEEN.

Jesus Christ shows us a we really are. If we are going to exchange our dull lives for lives of merits, we are to have to see ourselves as God sees us. That is the first step.

2. The second step is the experience of divine grace. The seraphim touched Isaiah's lips with the coal and said: "Lo, this has touched your lips, your guilt is taken away and your sin forgiven". Peter acknowledges his guilt and immediately Jesus says to him, "Do not be afraid". Paul writes, "by the grace of God I am what I am"

PT Forsyth described the nature of the modern church with devastating simplicity when he said: "We have churches of the nicest, kindest people, who have nothing apostolic or missionary who never know the soul's despair or its breathless gratitude"

What he is saying is this. There are many of us who could not sing "Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me". We have never felt ourselves to be wretches. We take

pride our self-sufficiency. Because we have never seen our need we have never encountered our savior,

Keikegaard once put it: "The majority of men never experience the spiritual life, they never experience the qualitative encounter with the divine". To see ourselves as we really are and then to experience the bountiful grace of Jesus Christ is one of the dramatic experiences available to men and woman.

One of the Jesus people in LA gave her testimony over the radio sometime back. She was a pretty girl who had gone to Hollowood hoping to achieve a career in films. A man assured her that he was produced who would soon get her a major part in one of his productions. In exchange, she gave herself to him, he introduced her to drugs. When under the influence she sold herself to men. In oments of relative sanity she was hoorified at what she was doing. She was bitter with shame and shocked with fright.

One day she stumbled into a Christian coffeehouse, where a group of Jesus poeple understood her plight. They took her to a house in which they lived as a community of faith. They stood by her as she dried out, praying as she screamed in agony during the withdrawal. At the depths of her suffering she suddenly had a wonderful sense of peace and love. Jesus, she felt, was by her side. She believed in him. From then on she recovered quickly and knew beyond doubt that her moment with Jesus was her moment of conversion.

Most of us have never reach the depth of degration this girl experienced, but some time in our life we must vrealize our absolute depaendance on God and experience his power to make us into a new creation.

3. Seeing ourselves as we really are, experiencing his grace to make a new start in life - those are the first two steps in making a real man or a woman. But there is a third. That is the call to a purposeful life.

The Lord asks: "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" Isaiah cries out "Here am I, send me". Jesus says to the fearful Peter: "I will make you fishers of men". Paul acknowledges that because he persectured the Christians he was the least of the spostles, but he adds: "I worked harder than any of them".

In my conversion Tolstoy wrote:

Five years ago faith came to me: I believed in Jesus Christ, and my life suddenly changed. I ceased to desire that which previously I had desired, and on the other hand, I took to desiring what I had never desired before. That whi ch formerly used to appear good in my eyes appeared evil and that which used to appear evil appeared good"

Before his conversion, Tolstoy has acquired fame and fortune thru his great writting. But he was unsatisfied.

"I fought duels", he wrote, "I gambled, I wasted my substance wrung from the sweat of peasants and deceived men. Lying, robber adultery, drunkenness ~~xx~~ was my life". His conversion, one of the most dramatic of modern times, gave his life a nuew purpose and meaning and, he affirmed, an abiding satisfaction.

The making of a man, the making of a woman. Olliver Wendell

Holmes when he was in his 80s was riding a train, deeply engrossed in what he was reading. The conductor asked him for his ticket. Frantically Holmes searched it out but could not find it. The conductor said: "Never mind, Mr Justice, when you find it just mail it to the company". "But I must find it now" Holmes said, "Unless I do, how in the world will I know where I am going".

Holmes spoke for many of us. We are not sure where we are going. The journey is pleasurable. The scenery is attractive. But where are we headed? If we are to make our lives count, if we are to channel our energies and our resources toward something real and lasting, we need to see ourselves as we really are, we need to experience God's grace and power, and we need a sense of direction, of purpose, of destiny. Then we shall become real men and real women.

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