

Laymans Sunday

ARROGANCE OF POWER.

TEXT: Micah 6 V 8: 'He hath showed thee, Oh man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?'

I have titled my thoughts for this morning 'THE ARROGANCE OF POWER.' In preparation there were several texts that seemed to fit in with what I wanted to say. Then on Wednesday night I watched T.V. and the Nature of Things. I always enjoy Barbara Ward (Lady Jackson) when she starts to talk in an interview on Conservation. But it was the latter half of the broadcast that really gave cause for concern. The confrontation by dispossessed farmers and Federal Government officials during the recent episode of the proposed Pickering Air Port outside of Toronto .

Text fr. Micah
Not too long ago I re-read the Book of the Prophet Micah and I recalled that he had prophesied to Israel during one of her lapses from following God . The second chapter of Micah and the second verse reads thus: 'And they covet fields and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Israel had grown arrogant and had once more forsaken God. But here several thousand years later the scene was on the stage of life once more and I could sit in my own home and watch men and women , my neighbors , being dispossessed of their land and evicted from their homes and heritage. It was hard to believe what I saw. Discounting all the exaggeration of the news media and allowing that an expert with a camera can choose a setting that enhances and aggravates human action and reaction, that to me was still a grim picture. To what end and what purpose ? When boiled down to essentials it is nothing but a battle between two of Canada's biggest cities as to which will get the lions share of the air traffic. One watched that broadcast with an uneasy sense of almost fear. For the time being those farmers on those 90,000 acres of air strips have had a respite from harassment. But the Federal Government still keeps the expropriated land.

Another aspect of this clash also gave me some unease. It was the attitude of a chap I spoke to about the broadcast. He too had seen it but just brushed aside my protest with "That's the only way the government can handle those fellows. Just jump in and expropriate or they'd never get the land!" I am afraid my thought

II

"Brother it may be your turn next, was unchristian but the more disturbing part about his remark was that it came from a chap who was hard working, a farmer himself in no way an arrogant man, rather was given to a pretty level outlook. One wonders if the acquisition of wealth or power does not create a metamorphosis in a human, changing a man of simple humility into one of arrogance and thoughtlessness."

The Enduring Hills -

Janice Holt Giles in her book *The Enduring Hills* tells the story of herself and her husband both in the city where her husband found work after World War Two and the dehumanising effect upon her husband as he was advanced to a position of power in his company. The loss of their first friends and the artificiality of the people they met and associated with on Hod's rise to prominence. Eventually their marriage started to break up. Their infrequent visits back to the Hills of Kentucky where Hod grew up were a revelation to his city bred wife. Before their marriage became a complete wreck they suddenly moved back to the hills for keeps and found rest and healing in the simple things of country living.

Stand of the Church

Does the Church take a stand on issues such as Pickering. Are we too weakly humble. Do we dare to take sides. Or are we too frightened of being called pressure groups and busy bodies. Incidents like Pickering are not the only big issue in Canada. It is a part of a trend all over the world. We have ~~faceless~~ of faceless corporations becoming super international, their tentacles in every country of the world where there is a buck to be made or a cartel to be formed. When Governments make a concerted effort to control one head two more medusa-like masks appear. These things could not happen were it not for the apathetic acceptance by the public at large. Jesus must have seen the same things in his time but when questioned by the legal minds of those days as to whose superscription was on the coin His answer was Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars and unto God the things that are God's. It was left up to his questioners as to which step they took.

Politics as an ideal -

+ A friend once told me that he considered politics one of the greatest challenges a man could face up to or undertake for his life's work. I suppose I must have looked my amazement. At that particular point in my life I was completely fed up with the crafty way political parties were jockeying for power. The hotel bedroom type of politics of the cities and the back room in some country lawyers office. The idea of serving the people

III

who elected you was all 'old hat' Don't become too involved was the slogan. In other words if a situation was so difficult or too much red tape don't bother trying to correct or unravel. George would look after it. If George would 'nt then the lawyers would

A friend and a political ideal

and that would guarantee that it would 'nt see daylight until at least after the next election. These were some of the matters I talked over with my friend and which were sickening me of politics. I knew too that he had, as a minister of the crown, been experiencing the same sort of thing only much more so. So his expression of politics as being an ideal for life's work sort of hit me between the eyes. "His remarks to me, that we only have one day at a time and if we do our best during that day that is all God asks of us. We can leave the rest up to Him, and we did not need to worry about His part of it." Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's. It was only after my friend's death that many of his friends came to truly realize how much this quiet and humble man had done for the province and the people of Manitoba. The prestige of office made no difference to him. Busy as he was he always seemed to find time to do little thoughtful and kindly things for others. Like calling a younger and greener M.L.A. up to his office and loaning him Kelsey's diary of that explorer's trips through Northern Manitoba. It added so much to my trip to the Hudson Bay and Fort Churchill. Or arranging that a taxi take an old party to see a sick friend in the hospital and call and take her home again. Little things, yes, but they were done to every one regardless of political affiliation or degree of power or wealth. It is too bad that there are times when we do not realize the true worth of a friend until after he has left us. In retrospect I think that the success of this man's life was in his effectiveness in looking after the little things. Tying all the little ends together and the big knots of life fell into proper proportion.

We have had occasion the past six months to worship in several different churches. Once in Toronto twice in London, England; and once in St Magnus Cathedral in Kirkwall, Orkney. The latter built in 1100 A.D. People were friendly, kindly and a pleasure to meet. But in all churches what struck me was the snowy greeting that reacted on our eyes. So many white haired people !! Where were the young people ?

IV.

The common
man is the
chief builder
of his own
domain

Perhaps the arrogance of power has touched them too. There appears to be a wave of skepticism sweeping the world. No government is immune. For the past half century political parties of all stripes have been making specious promises to the electorate not to improve the lot of the common man but rather to ensure the return of the party in power. In turn the arrogance of power has sickened and disgusted the electorate and the hypocrisy of election promises is all too evident to the capable business man who might possibly be induced to run for parliament. The result is that we increasingly see newly elected Governments hunting for capable men to run multi million dollar departments. The very enormity of the position tends to give the individual a sense of status far beyond his capability of service and administration. To cover deficiencies both human and administrative, arrogance is used as a cover-up for ignorance and the official becomes an easy target for vested interests and corporations who know only too well how to use their influence at the proper time and place in the life of governments.

Politics in
Pulpit!

I am not afraid of bringing politics into the pulpit. The point of my talk this morning is what can we as a church a communion of christians do in our small corner of the world. In the average small rural community attendance at church we can usually count on at least twenty to forty people. Let us never mind where the rest are. Those twenty to forty are here and they can well represent an aggregate of a thousand years of living experience. When one retires this maturity seems to be relegated into a nice cosy corner an antique in a corner chair. Why? why? in black capitals WHY? Man is not only flesh and blood. He is spiritual. He is part and parcel of this limitless Universe in which we find ourselves and to which God sends each and every one of us as his stewards. Our great Creator equipped each of us with the ability to think and reason, brains if you will. Medical men assure us that the brain is the last thing to die when we are called on a new adventure. With all our sophistry we have not begun to scratch the possibilities of the human brain if turned to good uses, GOD's use. Perhaps some one will tell you, 'My brain's tired out, I don't want to think any more. Could it be that this answer only means that we are tired of trying to find answers. If we do it alone and for personal power and gain we do get tired out. If we try with others by sharing our experiences so that others may find good and an exhilaration in growth and renewal of the Spirit we may find that we are doing the work we have subconsciously longed for all our lives.