

## A BLAZING HEART ON AN OUTSTRETCHED HAND



*Scripture:*

**Psalm 8**

### *Divine Majesty and Human Dignity*

1. O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.
2. Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.
3. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;
4. what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?
5. Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor.
6. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,
7. all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
8. the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
9. O LORD, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

**Luke 10: 25-37**

### *The Parable of the Good Samaritan*

25. Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'
26. He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?'
27. He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.'
28. And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'
29. But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'
30. Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.'
31. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.
32. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.
33. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.
34. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend."
36. Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"
37. He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."



### **A BLAZING HEART ON AN OUTSTRETCHED HAND**

Every great product, every great idea needs some kind of a slogan or symbol. Most of you will remember "Do you use Dial soap? Don't you wish everybody did?" Or, "Don't kill your wife. Let Maytag do the dirty work." And from General Electric, "Progress is our most important product."

And symbols: the bull for Wall Street (I wish that were true!), the bulldog for Yale, the tiger for Princeton, the eagle for the United States, the cross for Christendom.

### **A HEART ABLAZE WITH LOVE FOR CHRIST**

Well, John Knox, many years ago, was so moved by John Calvin's sermon that he said, "I have a symbol for the Presbyterian Church." Do you know what that symbol was? You've seen it, a blazing heart on an outstretched hand.

Do you think that still marks Presbyterians? Can you imagine a blazing heart being the symbol for us? Hearts that blaze up for love of Jesus Christ? Why we Presbyterians are too cool for that. We leave the heat to the Nazarenes or the Southern Baptists or the religious right. That's where the heat belongs. We're the intellectuals, we're the cool people.

Actually, to many churches, we're the cold people. And in many Presbyterian Churches they could put a sign outside in the summer, "Come on in – we're twenty per cent colder inside!")

Not this church. You're warm. We've never been received so beautifully as here. You love each other and you make that evident, and you love the community and you love to make that

evident. You're very warm, but are you *hot*? Does your heart blaze up for the love of Jesus Christ?

I wish, I yearn, at eighty-nine, that I'll have the passion for Jesus that I had at twenty. Believe me, I do. Do you? Do you remember? Remember when you joined the church? Or do you remember when you came back from that conference or church camp when your heart was on fire for Christ and you said you'd never let that die down? Is it still hot? Has it died down? Is it an ash. No. An ember?

### **AN EMBER**

**AH, AN EMBER;  
GOD PUT THAT FIRE IN YOUR HEART  
AND HE'S NOT GOING TO LET IT DIE.**

My son has a wood stove in his home. I love wood stoves. Remember, if you've ever had one – you filled it up with wood at night, hoping that that would keep the house warm. The next morning, it was still cool. You went in and opened up the stove and you looked around and there was nothing but ashes, except, except one little spark and another little spark – embers. You rushed and got some wood, you put it in the stove, turned up the drafts, and within a half hour, that house was heated again. Yeah! You can do that, too.

### **EVERY DAY - ONE THING FOR JESUS ONE THING FOR A NEIGHBOR**

I knew a man who, when he was confirmed, decided that he was going to do for Jesus one thing every day for the rest of his life, and one thing for a neighbor every day for the rest of his life. I met that man when he was sixty, and

he was still on fire. He let the Holy Spirit blow on that. That was the draft in his life, always remembering, always serving, always doing something for Christ to make that heart glow over and over again until it became so hot that he had to do something about it.

Ah, I yearn for that, as I said, in my life, and I yearn for it in your life. I yearn for it in the Presbyterian Church, that it will come alive again, forget all of its bickering, and begin to think of Christ and worship Christ and give its life to Christ, as I hope you will and I will from this moment on.

That flame should be so strong in your heart, it should blaze up so much that you've got to give it away. A blazing heart on an outstretched hand.

### **GRASPING HANDS**

You know, there are many kinds of outstretched hands. (Rit stretched out his hands in a grasping motion.) How many people think that that's the church? Haven't you heard from a lot of people, "I don't go to that church. It's always asking for money." Of course it is! Of course it is! They believe that the minister lulls you to sleep so the ushers can pick your pocket. That's not the church.

Of course the church needs money if it's going to reach out. Of course the church needs money if that flaming heart is going to express itself in the world. The popularity of the storefront church is that it doesn't cost anything. They don't reach out into the world, to others of their denomination and into the world to show Christ to the world. They only have a small fellowship. That doesn't cost anything. But the church of Jesus Christ, it does cost. We need the money because we want to express ourselves in the world.

### **POINTING FINGERS**

But you know there are a lot of outstretched hands. (Rit stretched out his hands in a pointing motion.) You know, John, once in my ministry I almost decided to give up all the classes that teach more about Bible because it seemed to

me that there were many people who were taking that course who didn't see the Bible as God's love story to them, but they saw it as something that would give them the power to say to others, "Look, you don't keep with the Bible. You're breaking certain little phrases of the Bible." It causes them to be judgmental of others and to look on others as less than they are because they know so much.

**AH, HOW WE LOVE TO  
POINT THE FINGER.  
BUT JESUS SAID  
THAT IT'S UP TO GOD TO JUDGE;  
KEEP THAT FINGER IN.**

### **COCKED FISTS**

There are other kinds of outstretched hands. (Rit extended his hands rolled into fists.) I had a wonderful grandfather, and I loved to fight when I was a kid. I was feisty. And he said to me one time when I came home with a black eye, "You know, Roland, whenever you cock your fist, your brain has stopped working." That makes good sense, doesn't it. When you cock your fist, your brain has stopped working. How we've cocked our fists, not only against other religions and against other denominations, but against each other. I know Scots love to disagree with each other, but that doesn't mean that you have to fight about it.

Within our church there are many different views; let's take them all together, let's respect each other's views, but never, never raise a fist against each other or the world.

### **HANDS PUSHING OTHERS AWAY**

There are many kinds of outstretched hands. (Rit raised his hands in the motion of pushing something away.) There are so many out there who feel that the church just pushes them away. With all the articles in the paper about what's happening, look at the people who are in closets, hiding because they feel that the church shuts them out, that God shuts them out.

How many people are in ghettos, hiding in isolation because they think that we don't want them?

How many have you shoved away from your life because they don't dress right, they don't talk right, they don't live right? That's not the church.

### **OUTSTRETCHED HANDS**

Our Presbyterian Church says to forget all that. (Rit stood with outstretched hands as if reaching out to all.) Turn your mind back to Jesus Christ. Think on Christ. What would Christ have you do? What does Christ want you to do? He wants you to take that blazing heart and reach out into the world and heal those who are hurting. He wants you to take that heart of yours where there is unbelief to show them how beautiful Christ is, and what a wonderful thing he has given to us. When we see those who are hurting and isolated, we need to get into them with the warmth and faith that reaches out to say, "I love you, I want you, I want to embrace you."

We need to go out into the world where there is injustice to say, "Oh no, God has taught us to love each other and help each other and to live for each other."

Oh what a world that would be, what a world it can be, if Presbyterians start to glow again. Take that heart that flames and take it out and give it to the world on an outstretched hand.

### **LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD AND LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR**

Jesus said it first, before John Knox. He went back to Deuteronomy: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, with all your mind. And love your neighbor as you love yourself."

*Let us pray: Oh God, let us love as we have been loved. The same passion that Jesus showed for us, let us show for Him. Lord, as we have been served, teach us to serve. Help us to serve. We ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*



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