

GOOD NEWS

A Collection of Sermons

by

Sam Jones and Sam Small

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SERMON TEN

PALM TREE OR BAY TREE?

Afternoon service at the First Baptist Church

Brethren, I share with Dr. Henson this pang of pain in the consciousness that this is the last service in this church. I never felt nearer to God or closer to heaven in all my life than I have felt in Dr. Henson's pulpit, surrounded by the Christian people of Chicago. I thank God for this heavenly atmosphere it has been my privilege to breathe in this church. God bless you. It has been precious to me. I say this, because it is the honest sentiment of my heart. I want you to carry this same atmosphere to the rink every afternoon. The cloud I saw nearly a week ago not larger than the size of a man's hand is gathering and growing, and, brethren, we shall see a rain of grace in this city that shall bless thousands of hearts and homes. God grant that it may be so, and let all the people say amen.

We take up two expressions of David this afternoon, and the more you pray as I talk, the more the blessing will come to you individually. I found out years ago that we get out of a service just in proportion as we put into a service. The more prayer and song and praise you put into a service, the more grace and blessing and peace you get out of a service. The house of God is an exchange where we put in our prayers and praise, and God gives us in return the

GRACE AND BLESSING

Of his presence, and the more you put in the more you get out.

“Riches are,” or ought to be, “like the palm tree.”

This is one expression of David: “**The wicked spreading himself like a green bay tree.**” We narrow the two expressions down to this: “The righteous are like the palm tree; the wicked like a bay tree.”

First let us stop here and ask, “What is a palm tree? What is that thing which I am or ought to be like?”

The Eastern people boasted of the fact that the palm tree was good for three hundred and seventy-six different things.

They said, “We live upon its fruits; its sap we make wine of for medicinal purposes; its wood we use for various manufacturing purposes; its bark, its roots, we use for this and that;” and they summed up three hundred and seventy-six different things that the palm-tree is good for. They say that from its topmost sprig to the last atom of its roots it is of use. There is not a particle of the palm tree that is not useful, and all over, through and through, first to last, it is good for three hundred and seventy-six different things.

“**The righteous are,**” or ought to be, “**like the palm tree,**” good for three hundred and seventy-six different things, good from top to bottom, through and through, and not a particle, soul, body, or spirit, that is not good in the service of God. The religious of Jesus Christ! My Bible here, brethren, looks upon me as a sort of trinity in unity — a body, a mind, and a spirit. Now a man who takes good care of his body, and eats when he ought to eat, and eats with special reference to the great purpose, that man

IS PHYSICALLY RELIGIOUS

The man who takes care of his body is physically religious. Then you contemplate the mind. A man who reads the right books, and only the right books, and who improves his mind and grasps at those thoughts which are ennobling and elevate him, that man is mentally religious, he is intellectually religious.

A man who looks after the spirit and mind, the things of the spirit; a man who lives in a spiritual atmosphere, and who abides in eternal life, and eternal life abides in him here and now — that man is spiritually religious; and, brethren, I like a religion that permeates a man from the top of his head to the sole of his foot.

I like a religion, a Bible, a gospel, a system that looks after me as I am now — soul, body, spirit; mind, body, spirit. A man who eats too much, sleeps too much, drinks too much, sleeps too little, is a physical sinner, and he will suffer for it too. I don't know how much he'll suffer for it in the next world, but he'll catch it in this — no avoiding that! A man who

PUNISHES HIS MIND

My mind has its mouth, its tongue, its digestive organs, its life, just as my body has. There's many a starved mind in this country, brethren. If I were to simply feed my body upon husks that had no nutriment, how could I perpetuate physical life?

If I do not sit down and eat those things that tend to produce strength and perpetuate life, in so far am I sinning against my body. I wonder what those people are doing that spend their intellectual hours playing cards? How much mental food is there in that?

At Walnut Hills, a suburb of Cincinnati a society woman, a member of the church— when you strike that sort of an element, brother, you have a tough element to work on, sure — believed she was pious, but there was nobody else in the city that believed it, though; no one else in the universe had such an idea as that. She believes she is pious, and belongs to the church.

I denounced social card-playing and progressive euchre there that evening. Let me tell you, too, if you play progressive euchre — and I don't care whose son, whose wife, whose husband you are — you are a gambler as much as any blackleg in Cincinnati. That's what I told them there on Walnut Hills, You can't play progressive euchre without the "Booby prize," and you can't play For

A BOOBY PRIZE

without putting up the stakes, and if you win or lose you are a gambler in the sight of God just as much as is the worst blackleg that ever cursed this city. Well, this society woman I was telling you about, said, "Why, I'm disgusted with that preacher. I have a contempt for him. How in the world could I interest my husband at night if I didn't play cards with him? It's the only way I have of amusing my husband."

If I was you, sister, I'd send my husband to the asylum. There's scarcely a room in your lunatic asylum that hasn't a deck of cards in it. They amuse the inmates out there with cards, brethren! Sister, you just send your husband out there, and let him spend his evenings out there, to say the least, and let him be amused there, won't you? The Lord pity the woman who has married such an intellectual starveling that she has to sit down and debauch her mind to interest her husband.

Intellectually religious! Thank God for a system, and a gospel of religion, that from foot to scalp makes me a holy man all over! I like that sort! The religion of Jesus Christ makes me eat just like the engineer fires his engine — to get strength to go on! Nothing more, nothing less. My intellectual nature calls for things that bring out the brain-sweat, and

FILL THE BRAIN

With thoughts like God thinks, and the brightest man in this world is the man who thinks the thoughts of God. I can see how the righteous are like the palm tree, for they are good all over, through and through, in every element of their nature. Good for three hundred and seventy-six different things! Brother, how many are you good for?

Sister, get out your pencil and a little piece of paper, and let's run the rule of addition over our life. Now, how many things are you good for? I mean how many things are you good for religiously? You can run a world of things outside of your religious duty, but I am talking about things religiously. Now, how many of these things are you good for? That sister yonder says, "Wait a minute, and I'll tell you. I'm good for — I'm good — I'm — I'm — I — I — um." And, brethren, that's just where she'll get to.

That brother yonder has been in the church for ten years, and he is idle to-day, and God speaks every day in his hearing, "**Go work in My vineyard,**" and he stands there with his hands in his pockets, and says, "I would go to work in a minute if I only knew anything in the world to go to work at." Whenever you hear a man talk that way, he's a fool or a rascal, one inevitably; and sometimes he's

A COMPOUND OF BOTH

and then you get him in bad shape indeed! Standing here idle with his hands in his pockets, and there are thirteen hundred and fifty millions of sinners in this universe! He's standing around idle, with a world sinking, sinking down to hell, and he says, "I can't find a thing to do!"

Brother, when you talk that way, you show mentally you are a blank. If you are intellectual at all, then you are intellectually false, and you misrepresent yourself when you say, "I can't find a thing to do in the world."

I was converted thirteen years ago, and, as God is my judge, I have never found a day since I got religion but what I find some other fellow that hasn't got it. There's work for you. Every sinner in this town is a good field for you to work on. If I was a Christian in Chicago, I wouldn't say, "I can't find a thing in the world to do," and you'd better not go to the judgment and talk that sort of foolishness, for God will say, "Didn't you live in Chicago?" Good anywhere — good everywhere!

Oh, brethren, the Lord gave us the sort of religion that doesn't stand on the banks of the river and shudder and shake with dread, and think; but the Lord gave us the sort of religion that runs and leaps into the current that is lined from source to mouth

WITH HUMAN WRETCHES

God help us to bring them over. The Lord give us the sort of Christianity that doesn't sit around with folded hands waiting for something to turn up, but give us the sort of Christianity that will get that sort of religion that waits for the iron to get hot, but God help us to pitch in and pound on it until it gets red-hot, and then we can shape it like God wants it shaped. It will get warm under the blows of an honest, earnest heart! God everywhere, and God all over!

I want the Christianity that makes every deed of my life and every word of my life a maxim for universal application, and as I apply the maxim the world grows better. Good for three hundred and seventy-six different things! I have heard some brethren in the church say, "You're all loading me too heavy. I must help myself some. I'm going to quit being deacon. You're all putting everything on me."

Look here, brother; get down on your knees and count out the three hundred and seventy-six different things you are good for and busy at, and then when you come out get the measure of the palm tree, and then you'll let them put anything on you. There's something wrong with the man that lies down on the ground with his cross

ON TOP OF HIM

Thank God the cross may be heavy, and you may fall under the load, but no sooner are you crushed to earth under its weight until God puts legs to the cross and pulls you up, and says, "The cross shall carry you the rest of the way." Broken down! Tongue lolling out! Tired-to-death Christian.

I am disgusted with the Christianity that breaks down. I look back about eighteen hundred years ago, and I see what the disciples of Jesus Christ went through in order to make their way to God, and to make themselves the ministers of God's grace, and I am ashamed of every officer of religion we have upon the face of the earth.

Why, brethren, then they took them out of their homes and stripped them and misrepresented them and crucified them. And yet people are no better now than they used to be.

I wonder if the difference is in the preachers, and not with the people? I have been hunting for a martyr for thirteen years. I want to find a martyr; a fellow that died for the truth. If I could get him I have got a text that I could make things hum. If I could only get the subject.

But I have been hunting one for thirteen years, and I have never found a martyr yet. Oh for a Christian that goes to battle red-hot, and makes it so warm for those who sin that this world would surrender, or put that man out of the way. You can get it in that shape if you want it. God forbid that I should bring a railing and a scoffing against any preacher. I would not

STRIKE A BLOW

at you that I would not have myself struck with. But what is the matter with us? We want a Christianity that walks right out. "**I am come to send fire on the earth.**" And a liquor paper in Georgia denounces Sam Jones as a firebrand. God grant that, if I ever have my name changed from Sam Jones to "Firebrand," I may go forth a firebrand in the name of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, "**I am come to send fire on this earth.**"

We need an issue, brethren — a clearly defined issue, and we must have it, brethren, if we ever get this city for Christ. The devil now possesses Chicago, and the only road we have to take, in order to get it from him, is the road of Christ.

"Why, do you mean to say that the devil has got possession of Chicago?" you ask. I do not mean to say it; I do say it.

"On what grounds do you say that?"

Bless your life, there could not be four thousand barrooms in any city if God's community ran it, for they will run it, lock, stock, and barrel.

You need not say one word about it. Brethren, hear it.

I know that if Jesus Christ was running this city, I know well and you know that if the Lord Jesus Christ was running this city, these things would not be as they are. You say, "Jones, you talk as if we had no churches in Chicago!" Yes. But you are not true ministers of the church, unless you denounce the way in which things are run, and the first thing you have got to do is to get twenty thousand on your side, and then say, "We are going to

BRING YOU TO LAW.”

Now let me say that if Jesus Christ was running this city, do you suppose that a blackleg gambler could be brought up before a police justice and fined only five dollars for committing an offence both against God and man? But I want to say to you that I don't blame that justice. He ain't to blame. Mark what I tell you. Whenever you get public sentiment on your side, whenever you get right principle and sentiment enough on your side in this city, I will tell you what these Commissioners will do. They will fine gamblers five hundred dollars apiece, and conclude to do it before the trial. Put that down in your little books. I am sorry; I am, really, for a poor fellow who has the law to enforce when the devil is running the city. Very sorry for him!

I read an editorial in a leading paper of Cincinnati, a religious paper, saying that if “the religious revival in our city did nothing else, we have been brought to say that we will enforce the law in our city, and will have a moral city.”

Gracious Father, I thank Thee for that consolatory word; but I pray to God that in this city, where we are, the Ten Commandments will be enforced as the law of God and the law of man. Then, when that comes about true, if there is any fellow in it who does not like to live in that sort of a city, let him emigrate. This is the country where

THE MAJORITY GOVERNS

and whenever Christ rules the city the good people here will be in the majority. The majority will say to these fellows, “If you don't keep the Ten Commandments we will put you in jail,” and then all the others can emigrate. I am sure you will furnish them with free transportation. Would you not like to get rid of them? Do you want to foster and keep in your city those who are enemies of law and order? I have said that I wanted to see one city incorporated and fitted up with the enemies of the Ten Commandments of God and the Sermon on the Mount and with infidels.

There it is — a city incorporated: not a church in it: not a single preacher in that city: not even a moral code in that city. Now she is incorporated to herself, and the only difference between that city and hell hereafter is just a question of brimstone. That is all! That is all!

Those devils who are carrying on these meannesses always want to come under the protection of Christ Jesus and God's people. And Chicago bar rooms and all her shameless houses don't want you to do anything more than just to let them call it the city of fires, and let them run their deviltries under the shadow of your morality. God pity us! God have mercy on us! I want a religion that is good to help things

HERE AND NOW

The Lord help every preacher in this city next Sunday morning to turn his guns on the sin of Chicago; and if you will bombard them in the right way they will run up their white flag within thirty days from to-day! Let them sue you for damages.

They cannot make anything out of you, for we have got nothing. They are welcome to all they can get out of this chicken. I tell you if any bank in America was to break to-night they would not get me for a hundred dollars; no, not if every bank was to break wide open to-night.

Brethren, the best of you won't lose anything. So you go in with the consciousness that you have nothing to lose. That will make you even with them, no matter how the verdict goes.

Let the pulpit be sure that it is right, and then go to hitting hard, and push the war into Africa. Rush it right on. How they will howl, and kick, and rear, and pitch, and talk about vulgarity and vulgar witticisms, and slang, and all that sort of thing. But I tell you, brethren, one thing, that you will get at the meanness of them if you will get at them in the right way. Meanness is always cowardly. One good Christian can chase away a thousand and two good ones put ten thousand to flight if you will

GET GOD WITH YOU

I hope that every newspaper in this city, and every pulpit in this city, will get square up on the Ten Commandments; and I will tell you that if Josh Billings wrote the Ten Commandments — I don't care who wrote them — a man who don't live up to the Ten Commandments ought to spend his life in the penitentiary of Illinois, and sooner or later, if he don't mend, he will break into that institution, too.

They are good for anything and everything; good everywhere, and good at all times. They are good at prayer-meeting§. They are good at family prayer. They are good at visiting the sick. They are good at serving the needy. They are good at helping the weak. They are good anywhere and everywhere. Oh, my, how I do like to see a Christian that knows his rights, let you talk about him and abuse him as you will. How many in this house can say, "I am the Lord's with reserved rights in the world?"

Christianity is like the man when he found the pearl of great price. He sold out everything and put it all into the pearl of great price. Brother and sister, have you a reserved right in Christian life? Turn it all over to God. Then He will use you for His glory and your eternal good.

A reserved right! Some people promise

TO ENTER A CHURCH

if the preacher will not ask them to pray or to speak in public. He takes them in as a sort of honorary members. And don't you honor the church with a vengeance, you honorary members!

A fellow told me one night, "I am going out to the church to-night, but I want you to promise me that you will not call upon me to pray."

"I won't make you any promise," I said.

“Then I won’t go,” he replied.

I said, “I would fight you from now to daylight before I would promise not to call on you to do your duty. How are you to give us an example if you don’t pray?”

The freest man is the one who is ready at all times for anything that God or the church calls upon him to do. Brother, I would rather be a whole Christian and do my whole Christian duty fifty times over than shirk a duty, as you do, once a week. God knows it is easier.

He who does otherwise is always dodging. He never gets clear from fear. He’s afraid somebody will shadow him when he walks out and proclaim all he sees. You want to be good in three hundred and seventy-six things, like the palm tree. Add up your good things until you build up a palm tree in heaven. A good Christian will grow anywhere, like the palm tree, which will grow anywhere in its latitude, in the bottoms, in the marsh, among the rocks,

ON THE HILLSIDE

Some people say, “I cannot be good and keep house,” But there is more religion in the kitchen than in the parlor. “I cannot be good and be a merchant.” “I cannot be good and be a lawyer.” A palm tree grows everywhere; and some of the best people that I ever knew were hotel keepers, were lawyers, were merchants. And every good hotel keeper and every good merchant and every good lawyer is a demonstration of the fact that all of them could be good if they wanted to be. All can be good anywhere, no matter what their business may be.

Another thing about the palm tree. If you plant it in the Desert of Sahara you will notice that it takes root and shoots out, and other palms grow up around it, and these draw moisture, and by and by a palm tree grove is spread around the spring that is formed in this oasis in the desert, where the weary traveler can stop and slake his thirst.

A good Christian is like a palm tree in this respect. When you find one, another one will grow up around him. His roots are like those of the palm tree. They just spring up all around him, and their moisture is the river of life, and these form the oasis in the desert of life, where the weary traveler can slake his thirst in the shadow of the tree of life.

Then there is another thing about the palm tree. I purposed to talk only

ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES

And I have already talked forty minutes. A man told me once it was easier work to preach a sermon than to hear one, and perhaps you are already getting tired of it.

Another thing about the palm tree. You can take it and bend it down and press it right down to the earth, but it shoots itself up again towards heaven. And poor Job, grand Job, when he was smashed down in the ash bank and his wife put additional pressure on his fall by telling him his breath was a stench and his body a mass of putrefaction, and told him to curse God and die.

Job said, “**God, in him will I trust.**” Glory be to God for being like a palm tree. Let us be like the palm tree — good everywhere and through every day in the week, from head to foot: good anywhere you hitch. I like that sort of Christianity.

But the wicked are like a bay tree. Do you know what a bay tree is? Now you will find your latitude, some of you. If you have studied yourself for hours you will know. A bay tree, you know, is good for nothing in the universe that we know of. God may see good in it, but we cannot. In the first place, a bay tree will come out and blossom as prettily as any tree in the land, but

NEVER HAS ANY FRUIT

Then another thing about the bay tree. If I were going out for a load of wood I would drive five miles further rather than to have to split up a bay tree. It is so hard.

Then another thing about a bay tree. It not only has no fruit upon it, and not only is it not fit for wood because it is so hard to cut, but it will only grow down in a marsh bottom, and is fit for nothing but shade, and it shades just right where the sun ought to shine.

The wicked are like the bay tree. Oh, brethren, what is a wicked mother worth to her children? Oh, sister, what are you worth? You will bear and blossom out beautifully in your worldly life, but you have no fruits of righteousness. You flower best in the marshy bottoms of sin, and you are fit for nothing but to shade, and you shade the light of heaven from your precious children.

God forgive us. Brother, is it true that you are a bay tree? In any heavenly sense are you good for anything? Any good for thyself or any good for the next world? Oh, brother, you flourish best in the swamp of sin, and do nothing but shade, and you shade the light of heaven from the precious ones in your home.

Mother and sister, let us go to our homes this evening

AND ASK OURSELVES

“Am I like the palm tree, or am I like the bay tree?”

I might talk an hour about this subject, but we have got enough to think about. And the first ten days of our meeting I want to put into solid thinking. I want to get you down to bottom rock. I want to get you down to the roots. We want to shuffle off the incrustations of evil until we can plant our feet on the “rock of ages,” and then we will stand secure when the last storm has swept over us. I know I am not up, but I am down, and the way up is down.

If you want to go up, start down. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Thank God a good Irishman once came to a meeting.

I said, “Now, all of you that have not backslidden and want to see a good meeting, let us kneel down and pray a little.”

And after the services I said, “Brother, don’t you want to see a good meeting?” to this Irishman, who did not kneel down. “Yes, but you sort of mixed your work. You did not ask for backsliders to kneel.” Now I understood the case. And I just came there twice a day and poured in the hot grape and canister for three days and nights, and then I said, “Now, I want every backsliding and godless member of the church to come up here and pray:” and they had like to

RUN OVER ONE ANOTHER

trying to do it. This Irishman said to me, “Brother Jones, I had my feet on the top round of the ladder, and you have got me right on the ground again.”

“That is where you belong: now, brother, you lie there and take root. Let the root of family prayer run out in the rich soil, and grapple with the rocks and clay, and let the roots of secret prayer and searching discussion grapple with the rocks and clay, and then you will never blow over.” And the Irishman answered, “And, faith, that has been my trouble. I’ve been blowing over right along.”

If you go down deep enough you will never break off the stem. Go down and down, David said he was brought low and the Lord helped him. Good Lord, help me to go down. And, brothers, God will help us to see eye to eye. Some of you don’t understand me, and, perhaps, I don’t understand you. But God will help to bring us to where we can see each other face to face mark what I tell you.

There are as good people in this house as, any that live on this earth. I never said otherwise. I will tell you another thing, as I said in Moody’s church. You talk about living out of the church. It is all I can do to live in the church. It is the only house that Christians have got: and if they turned me out of one I would join the next I came to, and be ready for the next opening of the door: and if they turned me out I would go again.

A COLORED MAN

was noticed joining a church every time he could get a chance. He was asked, “What makes you do that way?”

He answered, “Oh, it did me so much good the first time that I joined that I want to keep on a-joining every time you open the door.”

Thank God for His grand church. And if you will put the church out of the movement in Chicago I will leave the city on the next train, I am powerless without you. My efforts will be to build up your membership, not to cut them down. I wish only to put the prize under you to lift you up. God bless you, and help you to see that this is the great work of the preacher. I have suffered in my room when you were isolated from me: on my knees when you were not around. I beg you to believe that my heart is in the church. And there is not a church that is not as dear to my heart as the pupil of my eye.

God bless you and help you to see that the church of Jesus Christ is the only hope of this world. If that is the truth, then let us make the church what God wants it to be. And now come to-night, praying for a good time. I want every man in this house to say, who can sincerely say, "I want to be like the palm tree." If you can sincerely say that, will you stand upon your feet and join us in this prayer?

~ end of sermon 10 ~

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