Sermon Notes and Outlines I

[1950–1954]

In these handwritten notes, King mentions several sources for sermon ideas including the course textbook Christian Beginnings by Morton Scott Enslin, his Crozer professor, and course notes from George W. Davis's Christian Theology for Today. King wrote these miscellaneous thoughts on several different types of paper and kept them in a folder titled "Sermon Notes."

Facing Catastrophe with Faith and courage

(text—Therefore will not we fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountain be carried away into the midst of the sea the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.)

A Man Is What He Proves To be in A Crisis (Ghandi He took of non violence and forgiveness all of his life. But the real quality of his life came in the great crisis when he could forgive a man who had assissinated him.)

God's Search For Man

1 Kings 18:27

What is God doing during the long ages in which men are seeking him? Does He leave man to do all the seeking? That would be like the scene on Mount Carmel when the Priest of Baal could not get an answer from their God and Elijah kept bating them with Satirical suggestions, telling them to call a little louder, because their God might be absent minded or even asleep. The point of such excellent satire was that the living and true God is not like that. (Use to Poem, the Hound of Heaven)

Death couldn't hold him

Easter Sermon Acts 2:24 Moffett


2 Cf. Psalm 46:2, 7. King drew a line below this entry, separating it from the following one. He placed several other lines between entries in this document, which are indicated in the transcription by an extra line of space.

3 Indian independence leader Mohandas K. Gandhi was killed by Nathuram Godse on 30 January 1948. On notecards he titled "Religion and Peace of Soul," King also referred to "Gandhi's dying prayer for his murderer" (King, 1948–1954). In his 28 February 1948 column, Benjamin Mays wrote of Gandhi, "He died practicing what he preached. The press stated that when falling, he gave a sign which meant 'forgive'" ("Non-Violence," The Pittsburgh Courier).

4 "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud, for he is a god either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awakened."

5 Francis Thompson, The Hound of Heaven (1893). "'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest, I am He Whom thou seekest! Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

6 Acts 2:24 (Moffatt) "but God raised him by checking the pangs of death. Death could not hold him."
Why death could not hold him

1. His mind was too great for the grave
2. His love was too great for the grave
3. His character was too great for the grave

Jesus was more powerful on the day of Pentecost six weeks after his death than he was in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

*The Life of Jesus is like a drama—see Enslin pp 374–375*

3. Two challenging questions: can he be found in research?

**Can God Be known?**

What think ye of Christ?

These are two questions which we all face as ministers.

We can know about God, but we can never know God.

The power of the Infinite in the finite

*(The Hand of God)*

*The Jungles Of Life*

Jeremiah 12:5,8. See Protestant Pulpit 9

What is Authority in Christianity?

It is Christ within you, which is love. Not the Bible, not the pope in Rome, but love.

If I would go to Germany and speak in English no matter how loud and how long I talk the people would not understand me. But if I struck four chords of music everyone of the could understand the emotion which I am attempting to convey. As we set out in life we must strike the chord of God’s eternal sound which is love and it will be understood by all people.

Sermon

1. Why does History Move?

Int Why can’t we freeze history

1. Hegel—Absolute working toward Divine consciousness
2. [Karl] Marx—Internal contradiction of matter
3. Christianity—God moves History

We always move round the One, but we do not always fix our gaze upon It.

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7 Enslin, *Christian Beginnings*, pp 374–375. *As the narrative proceeds, the tone of excitement heightens, until in the last pages—the dreadful days in Jerusalem—there is no let down or breathing space till the very end, the death. His enemies are victorious, his body is put in a rock-cut tomb. The curtain falls with the audience speechless. Then after a quick moment the curtain rises again for an instant.*

8 *If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? and if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?*


10 Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770–1831) was a German philosopher who argued that history reveals a dialectical nature, that of two contrasting ideas combining into a synthesis through time and ultimately culminating in the discovery of God, the Absolute Spirit.
are like a choir of singers standing round the conductor, who do not always sing in
tune, because their attention is diverted to some external object. When they look at
the conductor, they sing well and are really with him. So we always move round the
One. If we did not, we should dissolve and cease to be. But we do not always look
toward the One. When we do, we attain the end of our existence and our rest, and
we no longer sing out of tune, but form in truth a divine choir about the One.
Platonus 11
Kinds Of Christians
1 Institutional Christians (solitary)
2 Intellectual Christians (and seekers of after religion)
3 There are experiential
4 There are inheritance Christian
Gong Forward by Going Back—The paradox
Luke 2 4512

“John is Arisen, even the John I Beheaded” Mark 6 1613
Good text on conscience
Series Of Sermons on Sin—See Theology II (notes 14

Nathan’s parable —II Samuel 11 and 12 The story of Davids adultery is not written
so much to show Davids wicket, but to show the moral courage of Nathan. Nathan
had the moral courage to stand out against the evil of King in the court. The story
is Nathan centered rather than David centered
How To Find God
(1) God is manifest in the world and its creatures This is natural theology
(2) God is found in the stream of History He is found in Christ and the Prophets
This is dogmatic theology
(3) He is found in Soul secret and direct experience of God. This is mystical theology.
For a well rounded religious life we should have a part of all of these. Not all of
one
Sub—Invinsibles For Cataclysmic Times
II Kings 18 2015 A cleansing element

11 Platonus (204?–270 CE) was a Roman philosopher who developed the concepts of neoplatonism
12 “And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.” King devel-
opled this into a complete sermon (see King, “Gong Forward by Going Backward,” Sermon at Dexter
Avenue Baptist Church, 4 April 1954, pp 159–163 in this volume). In his personal copy of The New Tes-
tament of our Lord and Savor Jesus Christ Revised Standard Version, King wrote the words “Gong Forward
by Going Backward” next to Luke 2 41–47
13 “But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded. He is risen from the dead.”
14 King’s notes from Davids course include the following topic headings “Sin and its Relation to
to God,” and “The Process of Forgiving Sin” (Class notes, Christian Theology for Today, 29 November
1949–15 February 1950)
15 “Thou sayest (but they are but vain words), I have counsel and strength for the war. Now, on whom
dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?”
the thing that we choose now might be the very thing that will piece you in later life

(Preach this summer) Trying God in A moment Of Crisis

(Lord let the cup pass from me)\(^{16}\)

Here Jesus will was in conflict with God’s will\(^{17}\)

I am convinced that for men who love the risks of faith and the divine adventure, who can live hard and like it, the ministry presents the noblest and most rewarding of careers. The task is especially difficult in these days, and it is a good thing for the ministry and for the Christian Church that the task is so challenging, and that it taxes every power of manhood. Nothing is to be gained by making the entrance into the ministry easy.

Remember the strange question that Jesus put to the paralytic. The afflicted men had begged Jesus to heal him. But, instead of complying at once, the Master asks a question “Wilt thou be made whole?”\(^{18}\) What a question to ask a cripple! Might not Jesus have known, even without the man’s spoken plea, that he sincerely desired to be made strong? But no, no necessarily so; for there are some advantages in being a cripple. A cripple is not expected to work. He need carry no responsibility. He does not have to stand up to the pressure and demands of life, like the well man. His friends are very tender, they wait on him, eagerly fulfilling his every wish. Hence it happens occasionally that sick people unconsciously fall in love with being sick. They feel, subconsciously of course, that the advantages of being sick are more to be desired than the disadvantages of being healthy. Psychology has demonstrated again and again that some people do not get well because deep down in their subconscious selves they do not want to! Do you really want the health which will mean work and responsibility? Are you prepared to accept the consequences of being a well man?

(\textit{Every} all the universe is in some way the expression of the life of God.)

The universe is indeed a unity—a oneness [will?] many. Of course, for convenience study we divide this universe into chemistry and physics, biology and botany, and the other sciences. It must be remembered however, that when we study one of these sciences we are getting only a partial view of the whole. It is like living in a large house when, desiring to see the surrounding world outside, we go first to one window and then to another. But we are looking at the same world.

(There is no loss of energy or matter says science. There is no death. What we call death always turns out to be a change of form, or a different expression of life.) Two gases unite to form what we call water. At a given temperature it becomes solid. Again it becomes a liquid, and with its change of rising temperature, disappears in a

\(^{16}\) Cf. Matthew 26:39. King would use this passage as the basis for other sermons (“A Way Out,” 22 May 1949, and Garden of Gethsemane, Sermon Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, 14 April 1957, pp. 90–94 and 275–283, in this volume, respectively).

\(^{17}\) After this entry, another person expanded the outline with references to materialism, wealth, pleasure, luck, astrology, and idleness.

vapor, uniting with other elements for other forms. But in all the series of changes, not a particle of matter, nor a throb of energy has been destroyed.

I would rather fail in a movement that will ultimately succeed than to succeed in a movement that will ultimately fail.

[Subject Insatiable Hopes]

Luke 24 13–31

How was it that Christ did to give the follower a ray of hope even though their desires had not been satisfied?

What does Jesus offer to man to make him optimistic when all of the desires of his life seem to be optimum?

1. Belief in the whole Christ
2. Belief in history
3. Fellowship

Jonah

I Intro

II When man revolt against the will of God disaster is inevitable

1. What is the will of God?
   1. Judaism’s approach
   2. Approach of catholic church
   3. Christ’s approach—Law of Love

III You are inevitably your brothers’ Keeper

We need a spare tire so if anything happens we may use it.

Luke 22 42

Theme—What resources can we have in a moment of crisis that will keep us stable?

Here Jesus’ will is out of harmony with God’s will. What did he do to make his will coincide with God’s?

In a moment of crisis what spiritual resources do we have?

I Some try evasion

1. Feet—disciples
2. Drinking—
3. Suicide
4. Friends—your best friend might be your worse enemy

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19 Luke 24 13–31 recorded Jesus’s encounter, after His resurrection, with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. King used this story in the sermon Questions That Easter Answers, 21 April 1957, pp 283–293 in this volume.

20 Genesis 4:9

21 “Sayng, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me. nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” King developed this passage and theme into a full sermon (King, Garden of Gethsemane, 4 April 1957, pp 275–283 in this volume.
1950–1954  

Jesus Conquers Time  

We are victims of time  

Jesus identified himself with something that transcended time  

"On Facing the Challenge of a difficult situation"  

See Fosdick's, "Making the Best Out of a Bad Mess" in Hope of the World

Sub—Pride of Achievement

The record of King Uzziah illustrates it. Listen. His name spread far abroad, for he was marvelously helped, till he was strong. But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his own destruction."23

Success breeds a sense of self-sufficiency. Men no longer feel the need of God. Then they fall.

see Sockman "The Higher Happiness" p 30, 31

Sub — The Omnipotence of God

Text "He telleth the number of the stars . . . He healeth the broken in heart."25

God is powerful in the physical and the Spiritual realms

See Chap 2 in Weatherhead's—Why Do Men Suffer

Sub — The Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth

Text Rev 19:6

See Protestant pulpit p 238[* preach to preachers]

AHD CSKC Sermon file, folder 49, "Sermon Notes"

22 On an attached notecard, King wrote this reference to a sermon in Harry Emerson Fosdick, Hope of the World, pp 117–125. He also delivered the sermon "Making the Best Out of a Bad Mess" at Ebenezer on 24 April 1956.

23 Cf 2 Chronicles 26:15–16


25 "Success breeds a sense of self-sufficiency. Men no longer feel the need of God. Then they fall." Sockman also considered racial prejudice. "Or think how the pride of race poisons human relationships. When a person has nothing else of which to be proud, he can always fall back on his race, provided, of course that he is white and Aryan. And how much of our race prejudice is fomented by people who have little else but race to distinguish them!"

26 Weatherhead, Why Do Men Suffer? pp 26–46. Weatherhead titled his second chapter "Is God Omnipotent?"

27 "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

28 King refers to the first page of Joseph Fort Newton's sermon "Reconciliation" in The Protestant Pulpit, p 238.