

## SUFFERING ENRICHES OUR LIVES

Text: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Tim.2:12.

Already at this Tanforan Assembly Center, there are almost 8,000 men, women and children of Japanese ancestry, who <sup>have</sup> been here, until a more permanent relocation center can be made ready for their occupancy. Over 100,000 Japanese are being evacuated from all the Western Coast of the United States. The mass evacuation has been the result of the present conflict between these two nations, and ~~that~~ <sup>because</sup> there have been a number of suspicious characters who were working against the government of the United States. Since the federal officials and police could not easily distinguish between the dangerous and the non-dangerous, it was made necessary to keep all in a concentration camp for the duration. We feel that only a very small percentage are dangerous, but in spite of it, all have to suffer. The guilty and the innocent have no choice whatsoever.

The majority of the Japanese people living out here were peace loving and sincerely interested in the welfare of the United States, but because the racial and immigration and labor problems were never intelligently settled, the agitation of jingoists, propaganda of labor unions, and the denunciations by some self-styled super-patriotic organizations, intensified by the war-hysteria have thrust their monstrous heads again. The problem of intelligent education and fellowship through the teachings of Jesus Christ is not hopeless yet, but after the war, better plans should go into effect, to preserve the rights and the justices of all, even in times of crisis.



Our purpose here is to bring out the possible good that can come out of suffering in men. The potentialities and the finer qualities of men often emerge when they are caught in a crisis.

### I. FELLOWSHIP WITH MAN

The uprooting of so many people from their homes, schools and communities where they had lived for over ten, twenty, and even thirty to forty years, must have caused a great deal of grief and anguish. The whole evacuation problem has been handled very humanely by the social welfare people, the army personnel, and the various departments of the government. In a general ~~welfare~~<sup>way</sup>, we have been treated with much consideration.

We find evidences of fellowship among men, especially in times of crisis when personal likes and dislikes remain in the background, and the welfare of the whole community becomes the main problem. When all the Japanese people ~~were~~<sup>are</sup> concentrated in one camp, we ~~saw~~<sup>see</sup> many interesting elements entering the picture <sup>for example,</sup> because social and economic status ~~did~~<sup>do</sup> not determine the selection of a stall in a stable for a home. The educated and the illiterate, the wealthy and the poor, the sick and the healthy, all found themselves neighbors. Most of the people <sup>have become</sup> became acquainted with each other with less formality and blushing.

Among the various housemanagers, there seems to be one distinct trait that stands out, and that is <sup>a willingness</sup> to serve their fellowmen. These housemanagers are in charge of tenants anywhere from 85 to 300 in their respective blocks. They are at the beck and call of their people 24 hours of the day, and many have been conscientious about their responsibilities. One vivid case I remember, when a score or <sup>mildly</sup> more people became poisoned from food. Doctors were hurriedly



sent for until the fear of the people were quieted down. Although the remuneration is small, the desire to serve is very dominant among these managers. By undergoing similar difficulties and hardships, thus creating a sense of fellowship in suffering, we find that men here do try to help each other meet the difficulty with heads and shoulders together.

Families that were separated now find themselves living together as never before. The old family ties are blossoming again. Friends are taking advantage of this camp by visiting each other from time to time. Among ~~Some~~ of the first generation Japanese, they are renewing friendships after ~~an absence of~~ twenty or thirty years. In spite of the immediate problem of internment in this camp, there are a number of opportunities and good in *them*.

Among the first generation bachelors quarters in the stables, I have found one man looking after the welfare of a blind individual. In another stable, an invalid placed with a healthy one <sup>is</sup> are getting along well because of human need and service. There are countless accounts of such sacrifices especially among men who are suffering together. In times of stress, we find the good in men coming out and enrichening their lives. Suffering enriches our lives.

## II. FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

Men who have carried the burden for others quickly realize the amount of hunger, pain and sorrow that go on continuously in this world. No one is immune to the tragedies of life. Even the Son of Man had to go through a period of anguish and pain because the very people he had loved turned against him and put ~~in~~ him on



the cross.

The sacrifice and the sufferings Jesus Christ underwent was vicarious because he did not have to die for our sins, but he did because he really loved us. He offered himself so that we might later discover for ourselves the unselfish sacrifice of a godly man. While at Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to his Father "take away this cup from me; nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." (MK.14:36). In obeying the will of God, Jesus died for the sins of the world. Because Jesus sacrificed himself for a greater cause, he certainly proved himself to be the true Son of Man.

We can ask ourselves: What kind of a fellowship can we obtain through oneness with Jesus Christ? Simply this, that as we take upon ourselves the burdens of others, we suffer like Jesus Christ in a vicarious manner. When we show others that we can be man enough to take the responsibility in shouldering the wrongs of others, we thereby set an example for others who might be able to understand the position we take. The righteous and sensitive Christian suffer more because he is acutely aware of the ruthless and merciless practices of some in their unscrupulous relationship with other men. By taking over the responsibility of befriending the less fortunate ones and giving them our helping hand, we learn to serve and share the sufferings of others like Jesus Christ

According to Dr. Williams Adams Brown, the central purpose of "Christ's sufferings in all ages...has been the means of producing such moral transformation." Undoubtedly, the Christian who truly follows Jesus Christ changes in his attitude, his behavior and response to the needs of his fellowmen around him. Christ shows us the real Christian way of life.



When we hear the words of Jesus on the cross saying, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do," we see the true revelation of the Christ and the truly representative of God on earth. In the supreme act of Jesus, we find his willingness to suffer for the sins of others, while "praying for the forgiveness on his murderers, firm in faith that his loss would issue in other's gain, and that men have seen a new revelation of the possibilities of humanity, and of the victorious power of love." We see that same moral transformation in the lives of men who became reconciled and became conscious of the selfishness and pride that put Jesus Christ to the cross, and as a result have turned to penitence, and to a resolution of living a life of faith and love as found in Jesus. Life became transformed as a result of this new awakening in the spirits of men who have followed Jesus as their Teacher and Savior throughout the centuries.

A classic illustration is that of <sup>a</sup> Greek nobleman harnessed to the plowshare with the oxen by his Turkish master because of the unfortunate tide of the war between their respective countries. When the Greeks turned out to be victorious, the Turk took poison in order to avoid a similar fate <sup>at</sup> in the hands of the Greek. <sup>arrived</sup> But the former slave came in time before the Turk's death, <sup>to say that</sup> he needn't fear because his acts <sup>had</sup> been forgiven by his Christian enemy. The Turk renounced his Moslem faith, and in his dying words, said, "I can now die in peace as a Christian."

The influence of Jesus Christ is timeless and universal. By believing in Him and carrying out his teachings, we become closely united with him. The text we have chosen today, also brings out the significance of Jesus' way of life. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." By suffering like our Christ and Savior, we come



to realize the difficult position, <sup>in which</sup> he was placed when he had to endure the pain and torment of his persecutors and accusers. But nevertheless, suffering enriched the life of Jesus, by making him more like his Heavenly Father. Men here on earth, become more like Jesus Christ himself, by sharing the woes and tribulations of this world. Here we find fellowship through mutual experiences.

### III. FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

The third point I wish to stress is that through Jesus Christ ~~man obtains an insight~~ <sup>as</sup> into the workings of God. Since Jesus knew God like his own Father, we must admit that such a thought made the Son of Man fully aware of his kinship with the Maker and Giver of all life. We have to realize that God works through persons, and Jesus was one <sup>of</sup> his representatives here on earth. In the Old Testament times, the prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah and Amos spoke for their Hebrew God. Those who are keenly sensitive to the wrongs going on among men and nations speak for the Heavenly Being with warnings and possible retribution, or the judgment of God.

Randolph C. Miller mentions in his book "What Can We Believe," that "God is Father because he is the creator of our human personalities. It is through our relationship with God that our own potentialities are brought forth and we become persons in the true sense of the world. We become spiritual sons of God by accepting his spiritual fatherhood." No doubt this spiritual relationship with God implies a number of obligations and expectations, but nevertheless, it is very unlikely for a man who feels as though he is a son of God to transgress his heavenly Father. The relationship with God carries with it a very heavy res-



possibility in trying to live according to His ways. By so doing, we can help our fellowmen in bringing out the best qualities in the men <sup>with whom</sup> we come into contact.

Dr. Miller also states that God is both merciful and stern in judgment. He sends the rain to both the just and the unjust. He has no favorites. "If God plays no favorites on the negative side, it is equally true that his blessings are for all." Those who do not follow the law set aside by God, they will suffer the consequences; but on the other hand, those who fear the Lord and abide by his commandments, they are justly rewarded. God will be merciful to the just and the righteous by giving them salvation, love and redemption who follow Jesus Christ and carry his cross for the sake of humanity.

Lastly, Dr. Miller makes a very terse statement when he says, "Even those who are suffering under the general judgment of God may, at the same time, be recipients of his healing love." The judgment of God is universal. Everyone suffers, the guilty as well as the innocent, but still at the same time God is full of mercy and love to all those who will accept Him.

We can also realize the personal interest God has in man because through His Son Christ we have seen that he suffered. We can also infer that God suffers when man become wicked and commit sin. Like a Father, God is patient and anxious to have his earthly children repent quickly for their follies, but when His grace and forgiving love meet no welcoming heart, God's judgment reigns, and men suffer consequently. To punish his children is the last resort of God, but nevertheless, He suffers in anguish because man seldom learns from his mistakes.

God loves us all and in spite of our wickedness, he is always ready to forgive and take us back as his "prodigal sons". We thus obtain fellowship with our Lord when we come into harmony with his ways. By



following the example set before us by Jesus Christ, we continue to have a better realization of what God actually is. He is full of spirit and love. This relationship between God and man is the greatest fellowship anyone can hope for and strive for.

#### CONCLUSION

The hardship, the tragedy, and the agony of existence bring forth the rich qualities in man. In times of stress and great suffering, new personalities emerge into the open because they have a greater concern for the welfare of the people. Suffering also enriches lives because it is this experience that mellowes the personality after, *allowing it* to ~~seeing~~ all sides of life.

Jesus Christ has shown us the way to a richer life by dying for us. We can have fellowship with him by identifying ourselves with the ways of this Savior and Redeemer, who knew God and made Him known to us by revealing the divinity in his ownself. Man suffers and reigns with Jesus Christ.