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Opening Address and Matins Sermons of the Forty-Seventh International Walther League Convention, 1939

O.P. Kretzmann

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OPENING ADDRESS AND MATIN SERMONS
of the
FORTY-SEVENTH
INTERNATIONAL WALTHER LEAGUE CONVENTION

Municipal Auditorium
Kansas City, Missouri
July 17-21, 1939

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A D D R E S S

Rev. Paul Schulz

From all parts of our great country, from the north and east and west and south, large numbers of young people, our boys and girls, together with their advisers and friends, have come to your fair city for the Forty-Seventh International Walther League Convention.

We came to your city with high hearts and glad anticipation. We came here to labor and work in the interest of those who are nearest and dearest to our hearts--our children, the precious jewels of our church. But this work is a joy to us, and we were gladly going to enter upon it. In order to enter upon it in the proper manner, we were going to make this the inspirational service. We were going to sing glad hallelujahs and thanks to God, and we were going to implore His grace and blessing upon the work that we have before us.

In order to give direction to our work we were going to hear from one whom we all loved, a friend of our boys and girls, a man with a large, warm heart and a human, deep understanding and sympathy with our young people in their needs, their troubles, their trials, their questions, their sins and their sorrows.

And now, we stand before you deeply troubled. We stand before you sorrowing. For the God of all mercy, in His

wisdom, has interfered and decreed otherwise. Last night, with shocked and tear-filled eyes we saw the acting president of our Synod translated into his heavenly home, and we stand sorrowing and grieving.

And what now? Should we be shocked into inactivity? Should we be shocked into retreat, give up, and be discouraged? What would he have done? He was a joyful warrior. He would have said to us, "No, don't give up, don't retreat. For shame upon you! Have we not taught you better than that? Have you not learned from us and from our fathers before us that 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble' and have you not learned to 'Lift up your eyes unto the hills whence cometh your help'?"

Since the church is not built upon any man, we must go onward and forward with the special work that we have to do for the building of the church in the kingdom of God.

We shall take that to heart. This being our centennial year, I know that he intended to address you today on, "Our Fathers and Their Faith," and to hold them up to you as an inspiring example. I think we should, in the main, follow these thoughts.

Although we are standing here in deep trouble, we shall still bravely sing our theme song, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God." As you know, this is taken from the forty-sixth Psalm, and I shall try to lift out of that Psalm three thoughts for your consideration.

The first one is contained in the first verse: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

It was one hundred years ago that a number of Lutheran Saxons emigrated from their fatherland over in Germany because they were deeply troubled, suffering from religious persecution, and they sought refuge in this country, the land of the free.

God guided them and led them, and they found that refuge along the banks of the Mississippi in St. Louis, Perry County. But, in a larger sense, our country could not guarantee them any true refuge. There was a higher and better refuge, the refuge of the Word of God.

It was for the Word of God that they had taken their stand. It was their platform. The Word of God was a shield and buckler, and because they would not have that refuge weakened, they came to this country. And they taught this refuge to their children, and their children in turn taught their children, and so there has come down to us a ministry that is standing solidly upon a rock.

Our departed and sainted father who was to have addressed us today was one of those children, and from them we have learned where real refuge lies. "God is our refuge and strength." There is no strength in us, and by nature there was no strength in those fathers who came to our shores one hundred years ago. There was a day when they thought, a little presumptuously, that they had strength, but the Lord brought them

down to their knees to show them that there was no strength in them. God is our strength, and from His words, God's words only, and those of Christ Jesus, is the strength that is the eternal fountain of life from which we draw our strength, from which our church is drawn, and from which our fathers have taught us.

We, in our work that we have to do for our young people, seek our strength in that same place. We, with them, need a refuge. We need a place where we can stand safely and soundly and solidly.

In this dark age we must guard against the foolish youth psychology that old people have done a good job of ruining the world and that our salvation depends on the boys and girls of the nation; that only their clear-sightedness and their high idealism, their ambition, their physical vigor and strength can take this tottering world and right it again, and set it upon its feet; and a lot of other stuff that we hear to that effect today.

We need something sensible, something sound upon which to stand, and that is the eternal Word of God. That is for both the young people and the old. Our young people need a refuge against themselves, against that desperately wicked thing which they have in their hearts. They need a refuge from this world with its allurements; they need protection from the arch enemy.

Our fathers have given them a sound indoctrination, the Word of God, and Luther's small catechism which you know by heart, I hope. That is our refuge.

God is our refuge and strength, a mighty fortress is our God, a very present help in trouble. Our fathers were in trouble. They were in trouble over in the old country, and they came to this country; but that does not mean that they escaped trouble. Other troubles descended upon them thick and fast. They came down upon them when they came to Perry County--sickness due to exposure, hunger, grief and sorrow, and finally they were betrayed by their leader. Then they were plunged into a mire of doubt--doubt which reached down into their very souls and choked their hearts and faith so that many of them were ready to give up in despair.

Oh yes, they knew what trouble was. The Church of God is never spared trouble in this world, nor are we going to despair in our life and work. We realize that we must, through tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God. We know that our work, from the day God gives us our children until the day God takes us away from them again, is difficult, because we are living in a sinful and evil world.

The Lord sends us special troubles. In days when we need the advice and counsel of our fathers, the Lord comes and takes one after another, as He has taken Dr. Lankenau.

So the Lord is dealing with us, and the Lord has per-

mitted trouble and affliction to come down upon us, and we ask ourselves, "Why?" Are we not trying to work for the church, thinking especially of our young people? Are we not working for the Lord and his interests? Are we not trying to keep our young people with the church? Why afflict us this way when we need the advice and counsel of our fathers so badly?

So the Lord has troubled us again. Into our joy and happiness there flashed like lightning the news that our dear Father Lankenau is no more, and another one of our fathers has gone to his reward, and we, as far as he is concerned, are left orphans.

But my friends, although we are troubled, we shall not despair. A very present help is the Lord. We have a help in trouble and that is the Lord. He was with our fathers. He came to them when they were in deep trouble, helped them and lifted them out of their despondency, their grief and doubt, and showed them, assured them, that they were an only priesthood, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a chosen people whom he had called to this new country that they should show forth the greatness of Him. So they went forward in His spirit and strength--a very present help in trouble.

The Lord has promised, "I shall never leave thee nor forsake thee," and to Him and His promise we cling this day when in our weaknesses we realize that we need help and we lift up our eyes to the hills and we ask our God to be with us. He has promised us, "I shall be a very present help in trouble."

"A mighty fortress is our God," and so we go on joyfully, the more so, since the Lord promises to make glad His holy city in this world.

The second thought is: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High." There is a wonderful river flowing through this desert world, the river of salvation, and this river bears on its bosom the glad and glorious tidings of redemption. As this river flows along its way, it sings a message to the men and women and children standing on the banks of the river. That message is that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. That the Lord Jesus Christ, Very God of Very God, came down into this world, born of the Virgin Mary, and he, standing in our place, took upon himself our sins, and that he bore our sorrows, our cross, and our shame and utter damnation, the curse of God, and made a full and complete atonement. Thus, he has blotted out the hand writing that was against us and nailed it to the tree.

The river of salvation flows through the world, singing the song of redemption, the song of freedom, the song of glorious salvation in Christ, the song of eternal life.

It was because our fathers would not have that river contaminated that they came to this country. Again the river began to flow. At first it was a brook; then further on it became a stream and began to wander over all the states of our

union. It came to the edge of our country, became an ocean, and it touches South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia, and the little river that began to flow from the church of our fathers is still carrying on its bosom that salvation and is singing that song of life.

The father whom we lost was a great gospel preacher. He was a popular preacher and we all loved to hear him. That was the burden--Jesus Christ crucified--and none other. That was the one thing that he had to tell our young people and that is the thing we would lay upon your hearts. We may tell you this and that, but we have nothing more important to tell you than this: Jesus Christ is your Savior. Take that to heart. By telling you that we are building the city of God where this river flows--"the river, the streams where of shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High."

And there stands in this world a wonderful dome. Its spires rise toward heaven, its flying buttresses reach out, its portals stand open by day and by night and men come and go as the doves come and go. That is the one holy Christian church on earth.

It was to the building of this church that our fathers devoted their lives. The building of this church was the work of life of the man who was to have addressed you today. He worked gladly, eagerly, among the lowliest of the low. For

years he was a missionary among the negroes. He devoted himself to the thing the Lord set before him, and he seldom refused anything the church asked. When he did, he had just cause and reason for doing so.

The building of our church is the youth work. You are the church. You are the church of today and the church of tomorrow, and when we depart this life, as our father has departed, we of course wish to see the work going on, more stones being added, and we wish and hope and believe that the spirit will rise higher and higher until that day when the Church Militant shall become the Church Triumphant. The work of the people is the building of the church of God, and to that we should devote ourselves, making glad the city of God. In that work there is happiness, and it is because of that that we do it. We should find joy in doing it, and we should look upon the work of our advisers in that spirit.

"God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved," for, after all, "a mighty fortress is our God." The Lord also says toward the close of this Psalm: "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

We hear the voice of the divine message still rolling over the world. They rise against Him with chariots and bows and arrows. "Be still, and know that I am God." Then He proceeds to burn the chariots and break the bows and spears and

arrows in sunder, and he says to us who stand behind Him, afraid a little of our enemies, "Be still, don't be afraid, I am God."

He also says that when our ambitions try to go a little too high. Our fathers also for a time had ambitions. They were going to found a great and wonderful church with a bishop, and the Lord came and said, "Be still, and know that I am God."

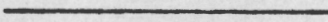
We, my friends, very often today have great ambitions. This is a day of hurry and bustle and we think things don't go fast enough, and we become stormy and disappointed. Then the Lord says, "Be still, and know that I am God."

We sat all day yesterday and far into the night planning the work for our youth, and we were very, very tired because there was still so much to do. Then the Lord took us and stood us at the bedside of our father and he said, "Be still, and know that I am God. After all, I do the planning, and I want you to look upon My hand, and I want you to take this ever again to your heart, 'Take thou my hand and lead me.'" So, we shall "be still, and know that I am God." "I will be exalted in the earth," and we shall learn more and more to give all praise and honor and power to Him, and to Him alone.

We shall find our supreme joy in the work we have to do with our young people. We stand before you today grieving and sorrowing, but we shall not despair. We have learned to

be still, and to know that He is God. He again has taught us that, and so we still sing our little song of victory, although it may be with tear-dimmed eyes. "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." "A mighty fortress is our God," and in that faith we go onward and forward from task to task, doing the things that the Lord has set before us to do; and, grant God, we are going to continue to do so. He shall be with us and He shall bless our work, and we shall march on and forward into the sun, into the glorious light of eternity; for, after all, "A mighty fortress is our God."

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.



THE SUNRISE OF MERCY

Prof. O. P. Kretzmann

When we began our Matin services at Detroit two years ago, some of you will remember that we soon discovered that they were a small and partial answer to one of the most profound needs of your heart and mine.

In a world so dedicated to sham and so taken up with routine and organization work, there were few of us who did not feel the need of spending, somewhere along the line, a few moments alone with God--to take out of our lives some of the things that trouble us and to find new courage and strength for the years which lie before us. So all this week it will be your privilege and mine to spend a few moments with God, to hear the long whispers of eternity through all the years behind us and through all the years before us.

I must begin somewhat differently than had been planned, because of the special circumstances under which we have met here.

Just about thirty-six hours ago some of us saw a man die, and that is always a strange thing. Men have seen others die for six thousand years, and they still look at it as a strange and awesome spectacle; one moment, a human being whom thousands have respected and loved; the next moment, clay and dust and ashes.

Since the time our first parents looked back and saw

all the things that they had lost, men have stood face to face with death and have cried out with tears, despair, or defiance, "What is life?" and "What is death?" Thus they have always tried to answer their own questions.

They remember that Anatole France when he was dying said to his friends around his bed, "Draw the curtain; the farce is played out."

They remember Goethe's cry, "More light! More light!" Nobody ever understood what that cry meant.

Shakespeare places in the mouth of one of his characters the words that we all know and which are probably the best that the human heart has ever said about the problem:

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

But against all that, there was once upon a time a man whose hands were nailed to a cross, and as he faced the darkness and bitterness of death, he said the one thing that

could be said: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

So, this morning I begin in eternity and end in time. I want to tell you dear Walther Leaguers what happened at the Hotel President on the second floor at ten-fifteen o'clock Saturday night.

In order to understand, you have to go back seventy or seventy-one years to the day when a father and a mother brought a child down to the front of a church, and there was the voice of a forgotten pastor who took water and baptised Francis John "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Something infinitely great and majestic happened at that moment. Francis John was taken from this world and placed in the Kingdom of Grace and I know that at that particular moment there came down from heaven an angel to stay with that child and guard him. It was with him when he entered upon manhood, with him in days of darkness and light, days of sickness and health.

All the way through life that angel followed Francis John, and on Saturday night that same angel was called before the Maker and was told, "Now call Francis John home, and take him from the Kingdom of Grace into the Kingdom of Glory."

There were a few men and women standing around that bed. None of us had eyes to see what was going on. If we had had eyes to see we would have seen the light of the angel; if

we had had ears to hear, we would have heard the rush of angel wings taking the soul of Francis John forever and ever into his arms, beginning the long journey up to heaven, beyond the flaming ramparts of the universe, beyond the distant stars and spinning ever up and up, taking the soul which had been given into his hands on that day of baptism and setting it down before the feet of God and leaving it there.

So they were alone at last, God and Francis John. And God looked upon Francis John, not for the first time, because he had seen him from all eternity and mercy; but Francis John saw God for the first time.

That is your and my religion. That is about all there is to it, summed up, when you and I face the last realities of life. You either believe that, or you believe what you have heard in the world of the twentieth century.

When that happens to you, as it will happen to every single one of us, there is nothing to be said but that a man has died. So it is a strange thing, isn't it. But I think the stranger thing is still to come. What happened when the angel took the sould of Francis John into heaven was strange in this way; that it happened, not because of anything that he had done, not because he was acting president of our church, not because he was a great man in the kingdom of God, not because of anything that he had said in his whole life; but the angel came and took him because the sunrise of mercy had come to him

many years ago and he had never lost it throughout a long life.

A long time ago in the garden, in the cool of the day, when God was walking up and down looking for some one, and the man stood under the trees trembling and ashamed, and the woman was with him, the voice of God came from beneath, above, around, within and without, for nowhere under the sky could man get away from it, "Adam, Adam, where art thou?"

We hear that voice today in Kansas City, in Chicago, and in New York. All you have to do is change the name of "Adam" to your name and mine. That voice has sounded over the world for six thousand years in the crying of the prophets and evangelists, in the words of the gentle youth from Nazareth and finally, above all, the voice of a man who stretched out his arms on the cross to make the sun of mercy rise over your heart and mine and to tell you and me that every single morning in our lives is new, through the forgiveness of sin by him who hung on that cross.

There are many reasons this morning why I am glad I am a Lutheran. The strongest one is that above all churches I know, it gives me a new chance every morning, it tells me that my sins are forgiven and that I can once more stand in the sunrise of the mercy of God.

That is your religion. How in the world there should be a young man in the Year of our Lord, 1939, who should be ashamed of that is more than some of us can understand; or that

there should ever be any one who was baptised in our church and confirmed and who, some how or other, has tried to get away from the view of life and death which I have just presented to you. Let me say to you, that there is something inescapable about the sunrise of righteousness. You may try to hide, as the psalmist tried to hide in the darkest corners of the world.

You remember the poem by Francis Thompson written one hundred years ago in which he talked about Christ in this way:

"I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;
 I fled Him, down the labyrinthian ways
 Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
 I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
 Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
 And shot, precipitated.
 A-down titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
 From those strong feet that followed, followed after.
 But the unhurrying chase,
 And unperturbed pace,
 Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
 They beat--and a voice beat
 More instant than feet--
 "All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."
 I am sure there are some of us this morning who have

brought memories to this Matin--things that we should like to forget. I can promise that I hold in my hand, my dear young friends, a knife that will cut off all the past that you want to forget. "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

For you and me there need never be a single memory in life which burns. As children of God we have only memories that bless. So cut off whatever must be cut off this morning and know that your future lies in the hands of God.

Peter remembers his denial; Matthew remembers the toll gate; and St. Paul remembers the days when he persecuted the Church of God, but they dashed the tears from their eyes and looked forward into a future bright and glorious, because the past was buried in the bottomless seas of the pity of God.

That is your religion, to please God. That is your life. You and I must live like that so that when, at the end, somewhere in the world, the same thing happens which happened at the hotel on Saturday night, an angel will start that long journey up beyond the flaming ramparts of the universe, beyond the stars and the spinning world and set you and me down before the feet of God and leave us there.

Don't you think that is enough to live on, and to die on?

THE SUNRISE OF HOPE

Prof. O. P. Kretzmann

There is a very old saying in the English-speaking world that, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." While that may be true in some instances, yet there are certain times in the history of man when the deep and profound and mysterious hopelessness of man without God begins to appear on the surface.

You and I know that we live in a singularly hopeless age. Perhaps some of you were among those who a few weeks ago rose up particularly early in the morning in order to turn on the radio at five o'clock. A man was speaking in a hysterical voice about the rights of a certain people. Right or wrong, that didn't matter that particular morning. What really mattered was that millions of men and women of every generation was listening to the voice of a man in fear and trembling for the days that lie before us.

There are few good students of government who don't tell us that war is inevitable. So, we are going to wipe out of the world another generation, hopeless and helpless against our better knowledge.

That same hopelessness of the world reflects itself in the individual lives of men and women. How many times have you and I seen young men and young women who look forward to the future without any particular joy or hope. Tomorrow, they think, will be much like today and so the best thing to do is

just to muddle through somehow and hope against hope that things will turn out all right.

Some one has said that "hope is very simply the absolute and sure confidence that tomorrow will be better than today." My dear Walther Leaguers, that, together with the mercy of God, is the very heart of your religion--the absolute confidence that in the life of the world and of the church and in your own life, tomorrow will be better than today.

In order to place that before your hearts this morning, I should like to tell you two stories, both of which you have heard many times before.

I would like to take, in the first place, the case of the most hopeless man in the history of the world, a man so completely hopeless that all the lights of life had gone out and he was facing the end of the road alone and in the dark.

It was about two o'clock on the day of the crucifixion that, amid all the cursing and jeering and the howling of those around the cross, there came a quiet, very insistent voice, almost a whisper from one cross to another cross, from a dying man to a dying man, and that voice said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

I must confess to you that particularly in this Year of Our Lord, 1939, with the world stumbling in darkness, I have been fascinated by that figure. Just look at him for a moment; look at his eyes, the eyes that could see beyond the dirt and

sweat and blood and see the agony and blood of our Savior,
"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

Look at his humility. He didn't ask for much. He didn't dare to ask for the forgiveness of his sins, for the forgetfulness of God, for his misspent years. All he desired in death was that some one would remember him.

Then look what happens. Like a flash of lightning somebody remembers him, and the answer comes, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." So the most hopeless man in the history of the world is the man who now has the greatest hope, the hope which you and I have this morning.

Suppose we make this very, very practical. The dying thief, or his children, walked the streets of Kansas City this morning. It takes very little imagination to know what sort of life he lived. Perhaps some of you know just how it went. It was an easy life, a life of taking the easiest way out of all difficulties. It was a life in which he always tried to cut corners, just to get by--a life of running away from God. Then all of a sudden he discovered that you might be able to live that way, but you can't die that way, and he was paying for it drop by drop from his hands and feet. Just so, the men and women in Kansas City who live that way will one day have to pay for it.

Look what happened. There is a constant procession of men, since the dawn of time, on the road to paradise. They

are always marching, one right after the other; and that night two figures joined them--the eternal Son of God and the poor thief.

If there is ever the slightest bit of pride in your heart over your christianity and over your faith, you might remember that the first soul bought with the red coin of redemption would be some one sitting in our prisons today. You and I might remember that perhaps toward dusk on Good Friday, God the Son said to God the Father, as one might say if one were bringing a friend home to dinner, "Father, I am coming home now, and I am bringing company, not for a night, not for a day, but for all eternity, and my company is a poor thief."

Then God, the God of almighty pity, leans down from heaven and touches the flower of repentance and hope that has been born in the human heart.

Well, that is your religion. That is something to live on and die on, and yet long before you come to that end, to the end of the road where the dying thief was on that day, you can have that glorious hope in your daily life.

Now here is the second story for this morning. It was down on the sea of Galilee. Three men had been out fishing all night but they had caught nothing. Because they returned in the dark, they did not notice that a crowd had gathered on the shores to listen in the early dawn to a speaker. The

crowd, eagerly pushing forward, followed him down to the river, and he turned to the three fishermen and said, "Give me your boat as a pulpit." So the boat of these fishermen became the pulpit of the Son of God, and he preached to the crowds on the shores of the lake. When the sun was up, he turned to the three and said, "Now launch out into the deep and let down your nets." But Peter said what many human beings have said before and since, "Lord, we have been out there all night and we have caught nothing." Then all of a sudden, Peter looked up toward the lights of the eternal and for the first time in the history of the world, somebody said to God, "All right, now, no matter what things look like to me, no matter what I may think about my future, nevertheless, at Thy word I will let down the nets."

"Nevertheless, at Thy word." There is your and my hope for tomorrow. That sin in your life, the sin which you may have been fighting against and praying all these many years, and you may be on the verge of giving up; "nevertheless, at Thy word" I will try once more. That quarrel you have had with a friend and you have decided that it is hopeless and that you are going to hate him or her for the rest of your life; "nevertheless, at Thy word" I will try it once more. Or there is that problem in your life that looks so hopeless, there seems to be no way of solving the question which is before you, you are up against a blank wall; "nevertheless, at Thy word" I will try it once more.

Constantly the driving, relentless hand of the living Christ tells you that tomorrow will be better than today.

Now, my dear young friends, with that hope, the hope that in all the shadows of life there is one who has traveled the way before, that makes life grand and sure and brave and strong and free.

You may say to me this morning, it sounds simple, but over and over again I have prayed for certain things in my life and my prayers have not been answered. There are certain things that I must have in order to live happily.

You can well imagine that the trouble is that we pray for what we want instead of for what God wants. It is well for us to remember that there are two prayers in the world and in your and my heart that will always be answered, even long before we pray them--the two greatest prayers, "Thy will be done," and "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."

The only difference between us here this morning and the dying thief on the cross two thousand years ago is that his future was only for a few minutes, and ours is for a few years. So the same hope and the same absolute confidence in the years that lie before us and the guiding hand of God can be yours and mine.

When the way grows dark we may look back and know that once upon a time there was a man on this earth for whom

the world grew dark and he waited for God to bring his life to consummation. They say that as he waited he suddenly turned to Peter and said, "Now, Peter, go and preach."

And Peter still under the shadow of the days that lay before, said, "Preach, Lord? Shall I preach to those that crucified thee?"

And the Lord answered, "Yes."

"Shall I preach to those who placed the crown of thorns upon your head?"

"Tell them that it has become a crown of glory in the universal kingdom."

"Shall I preach to those that curse you?"

"Yes. And make a special effort to find the soldier that pierced my side and tell him that there is a nearer and better way to my heart than that."

You see, that is the way God does it. You and I with our tear-dimmed eyes can barely follow him in God's way. Your life and mine is to be always up, up, toward the last rim of eternity where our hope and our faith will be translated, and you and I can, across the years, see him swinging over the hills into eternity, and always and forever there is on his lips the words with which he said good-by to his disciples, good-by to our eyes, but not to our hearts: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world". And suddenly you know that in him and through him is all that you have ever asked of God.

THE SUNRISE OF POWER

Prof. O. P. Kretzmann

One night a few months ago millions of Americans, seated at their radios, heard the trembling voice of a man who told a very strange story. He said that about twenty years ago while he was in a little town of Mississippi, he had lost his memory. All the intervening years he had spent in an institution without memory and without hope, until this particular radio program had brought him to New York City in the hope that by his telling his story over the air, some one might recognize him and he would be able to find those whom he had lost twenty years earlier.

The story was, of course, personal and peculiar. Yet at the end of that appeal to the radio audience it was no longer a single man speaking to the men and women seated around their radios, it was no longer a strange and peculiar story, but it was very suddenly the voice of your and my mad and dying world calling to the far corners of the universe.

Mr. "X" said at the end of his appeal, "Won't somebody please tell me who I am? I do not want to spend my remaining years on earth alone." And suddenly, like a flash of lightning, he had placed his finger on the two questions which more than any others disturb your and my world--the question of who you and I are, and the question of loneliness.

God knows that the twentieth century has tried to answer these questions. They have come to you and told you who you are. You are an animal; you have come up from the primeval ooze; you are a beast of the field; you have no destiny but the dust; or perhaps you are an economic cog in a social order which is beginning to break down; or, as in Europe, your generation is cannon fodder for the day when men shall rise up and shed men's blood for possessing a greater part of the earth.

These are the answers which you hear from the modern world on this July morning, 1939, so clear and so tragic and so bitter that we need hardly spend any time on them.

Abroad in the world is a restless sense of futility. "Why should I do anything special for God or my fellow man if I am only a beast of the field? Why shouldn't I 'gather rose buds while I may' and live and die like a beast of the field?" It is a restless asking of whether the game is worth the candle, a shirking of duty and an evasion of responsibility that is the mark of a world without God. Helpless in politics, helpless in economics, helpless in religion, man continues to stumble around the streets of the world hoping against hope to find the way out and home. I sometimes honestly believe that we in the Lutheran Church do not see that clearly or sharply enough.

This morning we hope on our convention program to

break into our business for a few moments in order to present to you one of our missionaries to the Apache Indians in Arizona, and I want you to think as you listen this morning of something that happened one morning in the California hills two or three years ago when some of us were there in camp. We had then two girls who were devoting their lives to teaching in the missionary schools for the Apache Indians. So instead of lectures one morning, we turned the floor over to one of these girls and she told about the work among those Indians.

One of the campers asked her, "What is your most serious, most difficult, problem?"

She answered so quietly that for a moment we didn't realize that she was condemning us, that she was reading an indictment which some of us would never forget.

"Our greatest trouble is that down the road about four miles the white man has begun to establish the outpost, and when the white man touches the Indian, an honest Indian becomes a dishonest Indian; a sober Indian becomes a drunk Indian; and a moral Indian becomes an immoral Indian."

There were at least a few of us that morning who realized that here was somebody whom we had sent out as a missionary and she was standing on the thin line which separates the christian world from the pagan world. After two thousand years of preaching of the gospel, all she felt was that she would to God that the world which you and I have built

would stay away from her poor Indians.

And so, there is no cause for satisfaction among us this morning, is there? And yet, on the other hand, those of us who have felt that will perhaps say that there is nothing that can be done about it. You may repeat that ancient prayer of the Breton fishermen as they launched their boats into the sea, "O God, Thy sea is so great and my boat is so small."

Face to face with all that, is it possible that you and I, our beloved church, can do something about it? There is no way of finding an answer to that question in the twentieth century. It is only the old, old, way which men and women have followed whenever the church has gone forward, and that is strangely enough to turn back and up; back two thousand years and up to the rim of eternity in order to try to see with our tear-dimmed eyes the reason for that strange, compelling, surging power which was the secret of the new testament church.

I do believe that that sunrise of power came on a golden afternoon when a young man was standing at the foot of Mount Hermon and around him stood a few ragged men and a few women. No one else was around, not a cent of money was there; yet half-way up Mount Hermon was one of the great temples of Diana, a veritable storehouse of all the riches of paganism.

It was there at this particular moment that the young man did a very human and understandable thing. He said what you and I sometimes say, "What do people think of me?" "Whom

do men say that I am?"

There were some wrong answers, and then Peter gave the right one--Peter, who was to shed his blood for that acknowledgment--"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And he turned to Peter and made that confession personal and intimate: "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against it."

That was the sunrise of a great tradition of power--heathenism on the hill, and christianity in the valley. There has never been a statement of more heaven-inspired defiance in the history of man.

He wasn't really alone that afternoon. If the disciples had had eyes to see, they would have seen behind him the goodly fellowship of the prophets; they would have seen still further in the dim future the glorious company of the apostles, and through all the centuries the thin red line of saints and martyrs, scholars and reformers; all those who were to feel the rope and fire and sword but who, at the same time, would receive the kiss of the bridegroom.

I say to you, my dear Walther Leaguers, that this morning the end of that tradition is not yet. Sometimes you and I might think that now the center of power has shifted. Men seem no longer to want to die for God. They now die for blood and race and soil. They follow hypnotic voices shouting to the ends of the earth. They no longer die for God and Christ

and his church. Yet one of the very strangest things about our futile world is this, that every now and then somebody that is not in the christian church suddenly closes his eyes and sees the power of the crucified.

John Masefield in his famous play, "The Trial of Jesus" has one particular scene in which the soldier who has been standing guard at the tomb, goes back to Pilot's wife and tells her that the body is gone.

She turns to him and asks, "Where is it gone, where is he now?"

"Loose in the world, lady, where no power can touch him now."

Loose in the world this morning in Kansas City, Chicago, New York, Paris, London, Berlin, Tokyo--"Loose in the world where no power can touch him."

If you need any further proof of that, you know that nobody hates a person who is dead. Hate dies with the object hated. Only love reaches beyond the grave, for hate always stops at the tombstone. Nobody in the world today hates Napoleon or Bismarck. Nobody stands guard over the tomb of Nelson or clenches his fist at the name of Bismarck; but they still stand guard over the Savior's tomb, and they clench their fist and they pour out literature against him. Why? Because he is still alive.

It is always true in the history of man that there

are two kinds of faith in the world--the saving faith of the redeemed, and the protesting faith of the damned; and both of them testify that this is the day of his continuing power, that absolute confidence has been the sure mark of those who have done great things for his church.

St. Paul, while lying in prison, was called by the jailor "a prisoner of Nero," but Paul in his epistles said, "I, therefore, a prisoner of the Lord." And every morning the voice came into the prison cell and said, "Here is what you are to do;" and every evening the voice came back, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Joan of Arc before her persecutors said, "You tell me that it is good to be alone; I tell you that it is good to be alone with God."

Then there is our Father Luther, standing before the bloodhounds of Rome and the princes of a great empire, "Here I stand, I cannot do otherwise."

There were your own fathers and mothers coming to a strange land, building new altars to an old God, with still the same tradition of power in the church.

I wonder if it wouldn't be true to say this morning that one of the things that we ought to take away from this convention is just a little more defiance. It may not be amiss for us to say that we could stand a generation of men and women in the church of God who would laugh a little more--

forever and ever. That is the secret of power. Never mind if you never stand on a platform before a great convention. If you demonstrate that power only in the hidden corners of the earth, there are eyes that see far better than the eyes of men and women.

You remember the story contained in Scott's dairy-- Scott the antarctic explorer. As he and his dying companions pushed on day after day he soon saw that there would come a time when they could go no farther. The last entry reads, "I do not know if this book will ever be found, but if it is found let the world know that we saw this thing through to the end and stuck by our dying companions to the very end."

When, sometime later, that book was by great good fortune found, there wasn't a single soul in the christian world who didn't stand and salute, for something great was passing by. The tragic fight against circumstance and death, not waiting for applause or the eyes of the multitude, seemed more glorious than ever as it goes down in defeat. That is your answer for your life and mine.

They say that over in Africa this morning, far up a great river, there is a stone with a little white picket fence around it. It is one of the few gravestones in the world under which there is no body decomposing into dust. All that lays under that stone is the heart of David Livingstone. You remember that when David Livingstone died, the Africans whom he

had helped so much would not permit his heart to leave Africa. So, day in and day out you can find black men and women kneeling at the white picket fence paying their tribute to the heart of a man who knew what the power of God meant in his life.

But that is not what I want to tell you. They say that when Livingstone's body was to be shipped to England to be buried in Westminster Abbey there was a tall black servant who refused to leave his dead master. When the body was placed on the boat he insisted that they take him along. He couldn't speak English, but by gestures he told them what he wanted. When the body was placed on the great steamer, the black man stayed close to him; and as the procession in his honor wound its way through the streets of London, the black man was the first to walk behind the coffin. For three days while the body lay in state, the black man stood silent and motionless beside the coffin to pay his last tribute. He had nothing for which you and I would look this morning, no power of speech, no brilliance of mind, nothing which the world would respect, except, I say to you, the greatest power in the world-- the power to look up and to follow the last mark of the blood royal of the children of God. Amen.

THE SUNRISE OF GLORY

Prof. O. P. Kretzmann

In the book of the Revelation of St. John, the twenty-first Chapter, second verse, we read, "And I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven."

I imagine that there is no one of us here this morning, no matter how young we may be, who has not already become conscious of the swift and inevitable passing of time. It has been only a few days since we came here to enjoy the hospitality of our brothers and sisters in Kansas City, and now today we are once more ready to return to our homes.

It is inevitable that yesterday becomes today and today becomes tomorrow and tomorrow becomes today. We speak of childhood becoming youth, and youth becoming middle age, and middle age becoming old age, and we speak of morning becoming afternoon, and afternoon becoming evening, and all the time I do honestly believe that we have sort of turned things upside down.

This strange and mysterious passing of time, the endless procession of our days and years from the eternity of silence to the eternity of triumph, began many years ago when God created the earth. "And the evening and the morning were the first day," "And the evening and the morning were the second day," and the evening and the morning were the third

day." With this He set the note for the tolling refrain of our days and our years.

The whole creation you and I know moves toward morning and not toward evening. The last thing that God will do for you and for me is to give us morning, a matin in which there will be choirs of angels and archangels and cherubims and seraphims and the voice of a preacher who once said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending."

So, for the last time this morning, I am profoundly concerned with the task of setting your faces toward the morning. We have spent a great deal of time on resolutions and convention problems, the inevitable things that come to you and me as we make our way through life and as we work in the kingdom of God. In our morning services we have discussed the problems of our life, our past, present, and future, our troubles and our sorrows, and yet behind it there was one last reality, the ultimate thing--a city beyond all cities, a kingdom beyond all kingdoms, an empire, fair, and hold, and high in which my Lord Christ is king.

Let's go back to the same man whose words you heard read from the altar a few moments ago. He was sitting on a little island in the Aegean Sea writing the things that God wanted him to write before the end should come. So he writes to that congregation and to this one, and he complains that this is not right in the world, and this should be changed.

But if you read that strange and mysterious book, you will see that steadily he climbs. Perhaps the turning point was in those very mysterious words, "And there was no more sea." For St. John the Beloved on the island of Patmos, the sea which was constantly beating against the shore with a thundering noise, was the symbol of the loneliness of the heart of the world, the symbol of all separation from the heritage which God wanted us to have, the symbol of pain and loss and tears, and then death. So to him the sunrise of glory appears as, "There shall be no more sea." Then up, up, so far that I can barely follow, he says, "And I John saw the holy city coming down from heaven."

Perhaps you think there is a strange and striking contrast between that old man sitting on the shores of the Aegean Sea nineteen hundred years ago and we who are gathered here this morning. He was old and you are young; for him the years had passed and in his eyes were the shadowed memories of that first generation which carried God to the far ends of the earth. He was alone and you are here in a great convention. Yet behind all this apparent contrast there is a profound and essential and deep eternal unity between St. John the Beloved and this convention this morning. His task is ended and yours is only beginning; but it is the same old everlasting task of building the city of God on earth, a tabernacle where God may dwell with men. He was old and you are young, but you are tied

together with ties stronger than blood or family.

He saw the sunrise of a new and better world, and it may please God that some of you may see beyond the sunset of our western world the sunrise of a new faith and hope which we have long since lost. So these words may well apply to us here this morning.

There is only one way for you to leave Kansas City today and go home. Strangely enough, no matter how far you may go over land or sea, you can go in God's way only when your heart already rests in heaven. You can go in God's way only when the vision of eternity and of the city of God is in your heart.

"I John saw the holy city coming down from God out of heaven." Oh, it's easy enough to say that here this morning with the inspiration of a convention and our fellow christians all around us, and it's easy enough for you to believe it; but to carry it to the day when you are tempted in your business office, to carry it out into the street of your home town or wherever you may be, to stand against the conspiracy of blood and hate and fear and lust and sin to which you are going back today, I know of no way for you to do that except to carry in your heart a vision of the city of God.

The great painter Raphael once painted a picture in which he had all the saints of God on earth looking up to the city of God, her towers far and fair and high; but in the

middle of the crowd was one whom you can recognize and who is no longer looking at the vision. The features of the man are those of St. Paul. He has looked at the vision and his brow is furrowed in the attempt to bring that vision to the men and women of the world.

That is your task--that no matter what life and time and circumstance may do to you and me, that you and I will know that our task in the world is to build the city of God, and to see in our home towns and in the dictators of the world and in everything else that we call history the momentary scaffolding for the city of God.

Now I say to you once more, there is only one way to keep that vision in your heart, just as there was only one way for St. John the Beloved. If you read on in that same chapter you will discover that he says that in the middle of the city is a throne and on that throne is one who had said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending." And he saw my Lord Christ, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, king of yesterday and tomorrow, the God of history and the Captain of my soul; and perhaps just for a moment St. John closed his eyes and remembered the afternoon when he had seen that head, covered with dirt and sweat and blood, drop under the weight of a crown of thorns. All that was over now. There was no cross, there was no Asia, no Africa, and no America. There was only John and the King of Kings and the city of God.

This vision will make your life like a candle which is lit on a high altar. Do you think for a moment that anything mattered to St. John after he had seen that vision? Do you think he cared very much whether men laughed at him or whether his body was racked with pain or that his little plans were falling into dust? I am certain that after that vision came to him he was the most powerful figure in the world, a man who had surrendered his heart to our Lord Christ.

What our church needs in the days that lie before us is just a few men and women who will have the mysterious god-given faculty of dying to themselves, dying to our own plans and own ambitions, dying to the things that men consider important, dying to the false gods of our own century in order that we might live for Christ and for others.

Some one has said that life is a musical instrument and that it doesn't matter very much that the musical instrument finally crumbles into dust, so long as the melody lingers on. It is impossible for any one of us to give you the melody of God here on earth, but perhaps here and there in our conventions this week and in our services a few of you have caught the first note of the melody which I hope all of you will hear throughout all eternity--the melody of faith, of hope, of mercy, of power and of glory.

Perhaps some of you have been close by when a mother puts her child to bed at night. She says to the child, "Put away your things, your soldiers and blocks and toys. It's

time to go to bed." Put away the broken toys and the clocks that built castles that never seemed to come out right. So there will come a twilight for you and me somewhere, sometime, in which a voice will come and say, "Now put your little things away. Put your dollars and cents away, they don't matter now. Put away the books that you read which never quite seemed to make sense. Put away the dream castles that you built; you can leave them all now, because it is time for you to go to sleep."

But that will not be the end. There will be another morning and another matin, and some one will come and take you by the hand and lead you and you will see on the sunlit glowing walls of the city of God a tapestry, not of your own weaving but in it will be the little things that you tried to do for God and his church finished while you and I slept the last dream of sleep--finished by a hand that once was torn by nails--and in your heart will be a new mercy and on your lips will be a new song and forever and ever you will know the glory that never was on land or sea. I am as sure of that today as I am sure that you and I are still here on this earth.

With that in mind, I commend you to God and to his mercy. Amen
