

The Ebb and Flow of Faith

Lincoln Park Baptist Church, West Newton, Mass.
Sunday, August 9, 1964

Scripture: Hebrews 12:1-3

Introduction:

The ebb and the flow of the tide:

When the tide is low, it reveals all the ugliness that hides under the water –

- rocky bottom sometimes
- refuse thrown by men
- just plain dirt

When the tide is high, all this ugliness disappears. The inflow of water covers all the ugliness and dirt that was exposed before.

This ebbing and flowing of the tides to some extent reveals the actual experience that people have in their lives in respect to faith.

-- When the tide of faith is low, there are many ugly things that are discovered in the life of the church and in the life of the individual Christian.

-- When the tide of faith is high, there is revealed in the life of the church and of the individual Christian the beauty and glory of the Christian faith.

I. Many times the tide of faith is low both in the church and in the life of the individual Christian:

1. Judas
2. Peter
3. The faithful deacon that struck it rich when oil was found on his property and gradually cut his relationship with the Lord.
4. The life of the church:
 - a. At the time of the Reformation
The peddling of God's grace – Tetzels, when selling indulgences for the completion of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome used to say: "When the coin jingles in the coffer, the soul flies from purgatory into heaven."
 - b. Immorality and crimes of the Renaissance popes.

5. The present church
 - a. Lack of concern

The church in Philadelphia that failed to come to grips with the new neighborhood that was coming in – Italian families and other minority groups were moving in.

We can send missionaries to foreign nations, but when these people are close to us, we do not seem to care so much.

- b. But there is no more frontier to which to go.

Frederick Jackson Turner and the frontier in American history:

The new frontiers in American life lie in the realm of human understanding. It is here that Christianity is most needed but where at the present time we are at low tide. We have failed at the level of community life.

II. But at other times the tide of faith is flowing high.

- 1. The example of Peter at Pentecost. When told not to speak about Jesus, Peter and John answered:

“Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak what we have seen and heard.”

There is no fear here. Faith is at flood tide.

- 2. The wife of Peter Marshall

- a. Her experience of the presence of Christ in the room where her husband was dead.

- b. Along the shore in Cape Cod, everything was the same. But she remembered the words of her husband before he left for the hospital the fateful morning of his death:

“I’ll see you in the morning.” “I’ll see you in the morning of that great resurrection day when there will take place the great reunion of all the saints with Christ...”

There is no confusion here, no despair. There is only hope and more than hope, certainty. It is faith at flood tide.

- 3. The program of the Church of the Savior in Washington – breaking new ground for the churches in America.

- a. New methods of sharing the faith – coffee shops.

- b. New discipline into the membership – only those who are willing to assume the yoke of discipline.

- c. The whole church is involved in specific projects.

This is faith at flood tide.

Conclusion: How can we maintain our faith at flood tide?
Let us remember that the strength comes from the Lord.

- a. Col.3:1-3. *"If the you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."*

- b. Heb.12:1-2. *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."*

We have the tools in our hands. It is up to us to use them. Let us hold to the faithfulness of God. Underneath are the everlasting arms.

Luis Fidel Mercado, 8/9/64