

## The Balcony or the Way

Lincoln Park Baptist Church, West Newton, Massachusetts  
Sunday, September 13, 1964

Scripture: Luke 24:13-35

### Introduction:

- A. The story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus catches the imagination of every N.T. reader. Relate again the account.

This story is a parable of our times. The disciples were confused, sad, and in quiet desperation, and so are we. They had been torn apart by the impact of recent events and so are we. They were searching for the meaning of recent events, and so are we.

The perspectives of the balcony and the way.

- B. The balcony

“By the balcony I do not mean the gallery of a church or theatre. I mean that little platform in wood or stone that protrudes from the upper window of a Spanish home. There the family may gather of an evening to gaze spectator-wise upon the street beneath, or at the sunset or the stars beyond. The Balcony thus conceived is the classical standpoint and so the symbol of the perfect spectator, for whom life and the universe are permanent objects of study and contemplation. In this country we would call it, I suppose, the bleachers or the side lines...” [J.A. Mackay, *A Preface to Christian Theology*, p.29.]

“It is not necessary that the Balcony, in the way in which it is used here, be static. A man may live a permanently balconized existence even though the physical part of him have the ubiquity of globetrotters. For the balcony means an immobility of the soul that may perfectly co-exist with a mobile, peripatetic body. [pp.29-31]

“By the road I mean the place where life is intensely lived, where thought has its birth in conflict and concern, where choices are made and decisions are carried out. It is the place of action,  
of pilgrimage,  
of crusade,  
where concern is never absent from the wayfarer’s heart. On the Road  
a goal is sought,  
dangers are faced,  
life is poured out.

Let us beware, however, lest we interpret the Road in a purely physical sense. Many have passed their lives on the Road who never journeyed very far from their desk or their pulpit, from the hospital clinic or a carpenter's bench. Others serve upon the Road "who only stand and wait". For the Road, like the Balcony, is a state of soul."

## I. The Balcony approach to life and truth:

Aristotle and Renan both stood for the balcony way to truth

### 1. Aristotle

For Aristotle, the wise man was the perfect spectator of life, the man who emulated God by "thinking upon thought". Tragic drama was for him an artificially projected spectacle, designed to produce on the spectator a cathartic effect which enabled him to maintain his poise and serenity amid the grim realities of life.

The poet can be a spectator who forms beautiful words from the deepest suffering.

### 2. Renan, author of a famous life of Christ

"I would not like the world to be transformed, because a transformed world would be so much less interesting."

"If there should be a life to come, I would ask the eternal Father to give me a box seat in order that I might see the spectacle."

### 3. We are a nation of spectators

- a. the tourist
- b. the TV viewer
- c. the detached professor and observer of truth

This is the danger which the scholar or specialist falls into.

"I think :: I am" – Descartes

The rational is the real and the real is the rational.

Reason can penetrate all things.

No reality outside that which admits of rational interpretation.

## II. The perspective of the Way

### A. The way is the road of encounter

(1) The disciples had an encounter with the Scriptures

-- the early church and St. Paul

-- Luther & Romans

-- Karl Barth & Romans – the reality of objective revelation

-- the Word of God addressing man

We, too, need to have an encounter with the Scriptures, to be molded and determined by its message and not by the winds of culture.

Importance of adult Bible study. This church will be as strong as it is aware of its dependence of the biblical revelation.

- (2) The disciples had an encounter with the living Lord in the breaking of the bread. In the sharing of bread, they realized that the future Lord was already present.

This was an experience of worship: -- the great hymns  
 -- the prayers  
 -- being together  
 -- the preaching

In all of these the exalted Lord is revealed.

### Conclusion

Let us step out of our balconized existence and walk the path of discipleship.

- (1) The student in high school who experiences commitment –  
 -- What this means to the studies;  
 -- Truth in whatever realm is his interest for the sake of Christ.
- (2) The layman – don Ramón González & evangelism.
- (3) We here -- --Sunday school teachers  
 --students of the Bible  
 --witnesses for Christ in the workplace  
 --the Billy Graham campaign

Poem by Shadut Kennedy

I bet my life

Upon one side in life's great war. I must.  
 I can't stand out. I must take sides. The man  
 Who is neutral in this fight is not  
 a man. He's bulk and body without breath.  
 I want to live, live out, not wobble  
 through my life somehow, and then into the dark.  
I must have God. This life is too dull without.  
 Too dull for aught but suicide.  
 I can't stand shivering on the bank. I plunge  
 head first.