

PRESENCING LOVE

He leads me by the waters of peace, pulls off a resurgence within me, and for His name's sake, guides me to find the major contradiction. Even though I walk through the valley of darkness and death, I fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy staff and thy crook are my comfort, thou spreadest a table before me in the sight of my enemies. Thou hast richly bathed my head with oil and my cup runs over, goodness and unfailing love, these will follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

In a word, there are three things that last forever--faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love. Those of us that have been around theologizing for a long time are just a little shocked at the whole idea that theology has to be done all over again in which the category of faith, I've been a man of faith for a long time, now men of faith are out of date--only men of love now. I used to have a hard time with the word faith, I've gotten that pretty well figured out now, where I can say faith and feel like I know what I'm pointing to. To start talking about being a man of love, I know I'm going to get mixed up. I know people are going to think that means some kind of romantic Cassanova--ther're going to think all awful things about myself, I'll have to redo my whole theology for the new word, the word love. Now we've been working these mornings on witnessing love, and justing love, and now this morning we want to work on presencing love.

We want to break presencing love down and take a good look at it. That part of presencing love that is related to witnessing love, this box here as a guru category. And this category here by justing love is the category guildsman, and this box here at the very center where it gets real close to faith as the category of the religious. This model suggests to us that if you know what it means to be a guildsman, you know what it means to be a guru, you know what it means to be the religious, you know what it means to be presencing love. I think one sort of has to get said to himself that you've got a one, two, three punch of love on the world. If you hit the world with the left hand with witnessing love and then you hit the world with the right hand blow with justing love, you whomp the world with your stomach with presencing love--something like that. You really have to put your whole being into this presencing love. It's really sort of like justing and witnessing love have to do with something kind of out here like a flank attack, or planned movements strategies on the world, but presencing love is sticking your own stomach right in the world's face, it's pressing your own being right up against the enemy and it has to do with your style.

Presencing love has to do with being a style. I don't know really whether you're familiar with this odd lecture on style but for all time this little diagram has had a great deal of organizing meaning to me. Whenever I use the word style I mean the organization of space, my space, all around me and my time. That's sort of the externalities of style, your style is the very very practical bitable stuff of organizing your space and time, the time you get up in the morning, the time you go to bed at night, the way you organize your design of missional energy: that is your style. The way you organize your space, the way your space takes on form around you, the way you relate to the globe and to the local; that's your style. And then the other pole of style, the more inward pole of it has to do with the idea that every man's life

is a poem. He builds out of his one life one poem. There is the poem called "Abraham", you know the poem "Abraham?" Abraham is the man who went out not knowing whether he was going and trusted God with his whole life. That's a great poem, that poem of Abraham.

There's another poem called "Moses." Moses was the one who didn't want to go and went, then got this whole mess started. It's a great poem. And you can think of any time you read the life of a saint of some kind, you're interested in the poem of his life, and sometimes little things like a phrase or two hold it, or a statue sometimes will hold it. They used to build a statue of Francis in which he had a little bird in his hand and somehow being utterly at home in the world, utterly at home with nature, utterly at one with the actual simple mundane existence. And somehow that held who Francis was. That was Francis' poem. Well, every one of us is writing a poem with our life, and that poem is a little attack upon the world. It is doing damage to the world forever, so to speak. It is an action. Presencing love is the action of your style upon the earth.

Sometimes we've had sort of long debates, they weren't really debates because nobody was willing to come right out and take the opposing view, but the other side of the debate really went like this, "Why do I have to get up for worship?" "What missional reason is there for getting up for worship?" "What missional reason is there for being on time to everything?" There's a long list of other minor moralities that do not seem to have anything whatsoever to do with getting the job done in history and I think the only thing I've ever heard that sort of began to heal that up for me and for a few others I could name, but I won't, is that the reason why you must go to worship is to be present, the reason why you're five minutes early to a meeting has only to do with presence.

The reason why you must be a relatively moral human being has to do with presence. The reason why you must be a disciplined worker has to do with presence. If you try to justify these little things, practically, it's ridiculous, the effort it takes to get out of bed in the morning with the practical results of being at worship is absolutely ridiculous. It's only because you are attacking the whole history with your style is the only way I can get out of bed and go to worship. The same thing to do with a million other trivial stupid dinky little unmissional things that are utterly necessary--because you're attacking the world here with your style.

Now, one has to be the presence that's needed. If you had lived three hundred years ago, the presence that would have been needed would be something like Prometheus. Prometheus is the one who went in search of the fire of freedom. I mean he kicked over all the traces, he told the gods to go to hell and he went out after freedom. And for three hundred that was what it took to be a human being, was to be something like Prometheus who endured all scorn to kick every structure in the face in order to be free and to build nations to preserve that freedom and to build economic systems to preserve that freedom. Now it's sort of like Prometheus's are needed like another hole in the head and so that kind of a style is not it. It's not that freedom is not needed, what's needed is committed freedom with the picture of the kind of presence that the world has to have today is the picture of Atlas. Atlas is the guy who has employed his freedom, in holding the thing up, in just being there holding it up, in just being there holding it up, day after day after day after day after day after day till the end of his life being there with all the enthusiasm of the freedom he's gotten loose now for three hundred years holding up this situation and this one and this one and this one. And it's a corporate kind of Atlas that's needed. Now I've always experienced that even though corporateness is such a part of me, that corporateness comes to be as another job.

What it means to be corporate is to hold up the whole group and each person who is a member of the corporate group never experiences himself quite like leaning on one another, he experiences himself like holding up the whole group. And that's holding the group in being in order for the effect of getting the actual world held up that kind of corporateness is a part of what it means to be this Atlas. But it is also a very solitary thing about being Atlas. He's the servant of the group. And hopefully, the kind of servant of the group that is the servant of the world. Being Atlas on a larger scale. Whatever presence is needed, that's the presence. that you and I have to be. If what's needed is happiness, bouyance, etc, why then, we go bouyancy. If what's needed is more morosity, then we outdo one another in being morose. You've got to grasp this style as missional. It's not what you inherited from your parents, it's not what seems to come easy to you and your color of hair, it's what the world needs is the kind of presence that you love the world with. Now I want to suggest that this kind of presencing love is a very secular dynamic and we're not talking here about two kinds of secular action and one kind of religious action. This is just as utterly a part of the dynamic of making history as anything else.

Buddha made history with his style, Jesus made history with his style, Mao Tse Tung made history with his style. If you hadn't had that being being the being he was being, you wouldn't have had justing love going on in China. This is the intensification of this doing. It is the doing where the doing has become extreme personal creation, that is that which backs up programmatic justice and the programmatic witness that goes on as the work of the man who is also being the presence. Maybe to set this up one more way. The world always comes to you as an incredible load and there's a certain delight in being a part of the world at first, but when it becomes clear to you that the world really is a load, and what it means to be a human being is indeed to care, and that you do wake up caring which is also delight, the care for the world that's been given to you is in the initial response sort of like liveliness itself, care and to have a world to care for, but two steps out of the woodwork, and it is one hell of a load so that you wish you did not have this load and if you do have to have the load, you wish you didn't care. One or the other, there are both ways out. One is to have the lead, but just don't care, and that relieves the tension, the other is to care, but not have the lead, and that'll relieve the tension, too.

And so you find sort of two ways out of presencing love, one is the kind that demolishes the care, we have other terms but I want to use the colorful one because this is the one that subtly crops up in my own life, I'll call it the scatterbrained contemplative. The scatterbrained contemplative is the one who has demolished his care and gone off into a whooopaa! of a sort that has no order to it in relating him to his own care and to the world. The other kind of a way out of this thing is the style that I'll call the angry administrator. The angry administrator is the guy who wants to get things done. But actually, he's an attack upon the lead. The load ought not to be the way the load is, dammit. And he gets the load reorganized into some little dinky load that he beats everybody else to death over getting done. And this very subtle way of finding some reason to be angry about the lead is a way out of standing in here. I don't know what you say for the guy who just stands, but I'll use these two words: steadfast humanness. And since care is humanness, I have that in mind that you just steadfastly care. You stand in there under the lead year in, year out, year in, year out, being patient, avoiding the temptations of being an angry administrator, knowing that seventeen thousand things are going to go wrong today again. There's no sense using one of them as an excuse to kick the load in the shins and I subtly require of me today to keep my senses organized over against the load and don't flap out into some scatter-brained contemplative floating. Just steadfast humanness day after day, after day after day after day. One of the images of steadfast humanness is the carpenter who hits the nail on the head, he hits the nail, not his thumb, on the head, and he hits the nail on the head every time, this is the way miracles are done

just one hammer blow after another on the head of the right hail. Another way miracles get done is one turtle step down the right road. These rabbit runs down the wrong road will get you nowhere. Just one dinky turtle step every day down the right road, produces a miracle. Now, you break this down, you've got the style of the guildsman, and the guru, and the religious. Let's look at those in detail here. This guildsman has got to have himself a worldly confidence. It was great back when we could talk about being mission, you know. The church is mission, we said. And somebody asked us what we knew about politics and we said, well we're going to get to that one of these days, the church is mission to politics. And they wanted to know what kind of political system was needed in the future, well that's what the church has got to figure out the church is mission. So we could be tremendous experts within church renewal without ever really being confident in the world, realizing we're doing this on behalf of the world, things were relatively taken care of.

Now after Summer '71 it began to be clear that we were all going to have to get an education on politics and economics and culture. We were going to have to learn how to be confident out there. We were going to have to out think and out live and out die Mao Tse Tung and anybody else that thought they were doing something, that that's what it meant to be a guildsman. You were going to have to know what in the world was going on and learn how to think it through to the right center and that's I find, a frightening demand upon my style. The second one is tactical success. When you've really got human lives on the line, when you've really got social vehicles on the line, when you've really got the future of man in your sight, it's not a matter of going out there and trying to do something. It's a matter of literally forging tactical systems that do not fail. You and I have experienced this in the small things of our lives, just what a demand that is upon you to come up with tactical systems that actually work, to think through to the bottom until this RS-I program comes off, or this Cabaret actually happens, and all of the lights work and all of the loud-speakers work and the costumes are not ripped and the moths did not eat the socks and so on. Everything's there, and that everything works. Tactical systems that don't fail. Now that's almost a motto, it seems to me that needs to become on the wall. And back behind those tactical systems that do not fail is the battleplanner. A guy who knows how to think through to the bottom where the contradictions are, so if you do build a tactical system to deal with them and you do deal with them with your tactical system, you won't fail. Now some people have a weird idea of success. They want success to mean that all problems in the world have been solved. NO, success means that you literally get your situation changed. You literally get dealt with your major contradictions and what always happened when you deal with a major contradiction is that you have another major contradiction to deal with. That's the advance you make. It's sort of like you're pounding on a door that won't open and then you open it and you find yourself within a brand new room with seventy more doors that have to be worked on and so you may wish you hadn't dealt with your major contradiction and won because it gets you into more major contradiction to win with.

But that's what it means to win, to constantly be going through one door after another into a new universe of major contradictions. And building tactical systems that actually do succeed and do accelerate history, which is the next point here, to catalyze and avalanche. The guildsman is never interested in simply doing something to justify his guildsman's badge. He is out to see an avalanche of social change take place. To find those places in society, as we've often put it, where a great swirl of action ensues on the other side of it. There are many many kinds of things you can do to have the style of life that's always smoking out the avalanche points and putting your tactical expertise there so that great things happen in history. That's going to be crucial in our style and then I'll just put here vocational solutions. A guildsman is a solution to the vocational crisis wherever he's working, whatever he's doing, he is a living walking embodiment of the solution of the vocational crisis. Well, that solution

is in one sense simple, it simply means to be part of the total global social development with a plan. To be detached, therefore from his specific job, but engaged in it in the light of his broader job that he has given himself to and sort of go into your various profession and various roles of religious and secular leadership as the man who has just solved the vocational problem because he has this broad picture worked through of what has to be done in history and therefore he does his specific trained task in that context and makes out of garbage collecting, if necessary something meaningful. That vocational crisis is only a crisis because people attempt to make out of their various types of garbage collecting the meaning of their life. And when you realize that fourth layer of tax law in Illinois is just one more form of garbage collecting, just one more nitty-gritty job that somebody has to do and the meaning of your life will never be found there and then you find the meaning of your life in a radical devotion to the reconstruction of the resurgence of the globe and then you go back into the Illinois tax law, and it's amazing how much meaning there is there, just meaning out the gazoo, having to do with the resurgence of man. If you had to have the meaning of your life to be found in that it was ridiculous. And dentistry, doctory, any other kindery is the same way, they are just utterly meaningless in themselves if all you're doing is keeping one little dishwashing machine running in the old social vehicle. And how to give somebody a way to just be a living solution to the vocational crisis. That's the style and power of it. And you can think of that kind of human being penetrating through the structures of society where literally everybody is a walking embodiment of the vocational crisis. Finally somebody's happy at his work. However here is the guru. Now the main job of the guru is the sanctification of man. Just every man and each one. He's got the task on his back to bring holiness, to bring humanness, into the depths of human beings and that means he is a living embodiment of the invitation to comprehensive care. He's just always inviting people to comprehensive care, he's always inviting people to radical integrity. I have the hardest time with radical integrity, but I finally got it a little bit cleared up for myself when I began to realize that radical integrity was just bearing the cost of being a human being. Being delivered to you humanness was sort of fun at first. But after you forced that down the road you began to know you were paying a rough price for being whatever bit of authenticity, finally opting for being a human being, whatever the price. And deciding that you will bear the price of being free until death. And that kind of invitation to radical integrity where you allow people to just never again be spoofed, but just go on being a human being whatever it cost. That's a hard invitation to get given, but it's important, it's a loving invitation, it's a crucially helpful invitation. And then finally the invitation to happiness. And if I had to give a long talk on happiness, I'd talk about problemlessness and joy mainly. But we've had many lectures on that subject.

Well, maybe just a little bit on problemlessness. I've always liked those texts on "Look at the birds" and "Look at the lilies," you know they don't worry. They have plenty to eat and they're taken care of, well, why do you worry, Jesus says to his disciples. If you just get with the major contradiction, all the trivial problems will be handled as a matter of course. You and I know how full life is of just temptations to have problems and we really think that problems are real, that human beings are supposed to have problems. Your wife, probably your dearest colleague are the source of your greatest suffering in this area. They always have the audacity to come up to you and say "so and so is sick today and won't be able to do his job." "The car won't work today and we're going to have to find some solution to that." "We're out of X, Y, Z and somebody has to go get it." It seems like to me these people always come up to you with a glint in their eye just waiting for you to collapse into a pool of problem-filled existence. And I've noticed that if you win over the temptation and just refuse to have a problem, you know if somebody comes in and says "The house is burning down." And you say, "Well, that's interesting, we're probably out of fire extinguishers, too, aren't we?" They get angry with you.

You realize it makes you happy, and then you go over your list. Everything in your life makes you happy. I mean, that is a hard man to deal with again. And that kind of happiness will cost you as well. But to give people permission to have no problems, to give people permission to just be happy in the actual conditions in which they have to grasp themselves as an example of what happiness is and not expect to have to find happiness somewhere. That's what it means to lead the sanctification of man. Now back behind there I think the guru is a kind of, I'll call it a primordial dialogue. This is the dialogue with the depths of your old Testament and the New Testament and the "hoogamageeta," maybe. He is the dialogue with what's going on in the foundation stones of humanness. And the ancient ways in which that's been put together. He's going to need that kind of equipment and you and I, in order to be gurus, are going to be very grateful for these last twenty years we've spent on this kind of thing, all this work we've done on the Old and New Testament and the meaning of faith and so on and so on and so on. On worship and what worship means and the symbolic, we're going to be thankful as we move out into the secular presence of guruship.

The third point is the symbol expert. We've all said that symbols are the key out of the civilizing enterprise, but the expert symbol-maker, the guy who knows what it means to decor a room, the guy who knows what it means to lead a liturgy, the guy who knows what symbols are actually holding human existence and which ones are crap, that kind of expert is a rare bird. And being a guru, I think, involves us in that.

And then four here--a global fellowship. The kind of gur we're going to be is not some Indian guru or some North European Christian guru or some East Texas guru, but we're going to be a global guru who can enter into fellowship with a peasant in Yugoslavia or India and build fellowship across incredible boundaries. I remember the first time this kind of experience began to sneak up on me, I was shocked. I mean I was terrified to death going out to teach an ITI where people of the other urs were. I had taught the ur image course many times and was very confident that it was right, but to put it into practice in India was scary as hell. And I got there and began to see that it was right, but to put it into practice in India was scary as hell. And I got there and began to see that it was literally possible to establish a colleagueship w with another ur and to have this kind of fellowship actually come off in your midst even though you most wanted that of all things in terms of you plan. It was shocking. Just absolutely shocking.

I think we'll never get over the shock of building a global fellowship which in every local community, you think about going out to do those LCC's the fellowship we built among diverse groups and some of those places were shocking to me when people came together in Peoria that had never been