

AGAPE IS COMPASSION

We have journeyed across the Land of Mystery and discovered there-nesses which do not go away.

We have also been fording the River of Consciousness. At each point we had to make new decisions about our relationship to life to the there-nesses. Now we are coming to the base of the Mountain of Care. We have shifted universes when we arrive.

The only way we have to talk about responsibility and care, thanks to our fathers from the last couple of hundred of years, is in moral categories. You ought, you must, right/wrong, good/bad. Most recently, we have been living in an era of the Protestant ethic in which the only metaphors we have used to speak of morality, (care, responsibility or concern) have been with that overtone of "Righteousness". Out of our need today you are invited to struggle with me about the proper response to life's problems. Because I, for one, was effectively brainwashed in that era, I have a long way to journey out of the jungle of moralism. We are fighting old metaphors to reach down to the bowels from which were created to touch that reality.

That shows us just being concerned. On the mountain of care you do not have to become concerned, rather you discover you are a concerned human being. Next week we will begin to sail on the Sea of Tranquillity.

Let me read a poem first, a psalm. Then we climb up the Mountain of Care. You may remember this one. I have read it before. All God's children have read it before. This really is the whole lecture, so take careful notes.

The Lord thundered in the heavens,
and the Most High uttered his voice,
hailstones and coals of fire.
And he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
he flashed forth lightnings, and routed them.

Then the channels of the sea were seen,
and the foundations of the world were laid bare,
at thy rebuke, O Lord,
at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.
He reached from on high, he took me,
He delivered me from my strong enemy,
and from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me.
They came upon me in the day of calamity;
but the Lord was my stay.
He brought me forth into a broad place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

The Mountain of Care is our mountain on this planet. At the top is a huge eighteen foot speaker. The lid comes off and out comes this huge speaker. It's one message: the way life is. "The way life is" shouts to you and to every creature on this planet. It roars across civilization.

The first thing this mountain yells out at me (and it always calls my name) is "Cramer, you belong to me! You belong to me Cramer!" The secret is: that is the universe talking. That is God talking. That is the way life is,

just speaking to me. "Cramer, you are the creation. You are mine. You are all bound up with what is going on. In fact, you are it. You are creation. You are life."

When you let that get through your head and it begins to run around inside your skull, you come to the conclusion that it is not talking to anyone else on this planet but you; it has your name on it. It is an announcement about the way life is. "Cramer, you are mine. I care for you. I care for you, Cramer, you are mine." Now, there may be no real speaker on a mountain, but one of the first times in my life I remember life getting that said to me was when I was 14. My mother was from a large family she was the seventh child of thirteen children. About five of those did not live much beyond the first year. But, when the Cheney family got together, they got together, and they saw to it that things got taken care of. You got in trouble with a Cheney and they called out across the mountains and you had six or seven brothers to deal with. Their old man reminds me of the father in Suddenly a Great Notion. The first time I experienced the blood bond between them was when I was about 14 years old and turned out for boxing. It was a popular sport in those days. My first boxing match was in a little school gym in the mountains. The match was between Billy Hickey and Donnie Cramer. It was scheduled for three two minute rounds. We used big pillow type gloves. When all my relatives found out I was going to fight they all came. Not only that, they all just took over the front row. All of them were loggers. They wore their cork boots wherever they went and they had little wooden boards put on the bottom when they went inside. But if they needed those cork boots for work or sport they just took those boards off. When I came into the ring they roared, "Hey, Donnie, kill him!" My response was, "What's going on here? What is this, a Roman amphitheater?" I got out there and just sparred around a little bit. They roared, Kill him! Kill him!" The whole thing came loose and I began to go after Billy throwing those big gloves around. All of a sudden, I whacked this guy right on the chin. He went down like a pile of bricks. I won the fight with a technical knock out. His chin was out of joint. I had actually hit him with my elbow. Now nobody knew except relatives because they were covering the front row. No one else could see, and apparently the referee did not see.

If you wanted to take one of that family on, you could have a major brawl. Now, what was going on there? In an incredibly reduced context. Someone got a loud yes said to my being. The intrusion of an unmistakable verifiably not me. Yes, be a fighter win! Now that's care. It is like the universe itself had burped me into history. I came from its womb. I came from the bowels of this earth, I am sent into it. I am this creation. I am of this earth. I am a loved man and I love it.

However, let us watch our romanticism. This mountain, this earth is the same one that sends boulders down to smash our illusions. Without that mountain, with that word pronounced over it, this planet would not be. I depend upon it. It has my own blood. I have its blood. I love this planet. I love this earth. I love this place. I am a human being. The kind of response you make when you get clear about the fact that you are cared for, is that someone has to be responsible.

The second part of that living before the mountain of care is that it announces to you, "Cramer, this world is your family. They are your brothers. Every last one of them is your brother." Now we've heard that before. When I was a child I heard that in Sunday School, all are brothers and sisters in Christ. And I lived my life out of that. That has been a brainwashing. Now that has been reduced, but it is a part of our story, part of the way life is. We are brothers in Christ.

One time a friend gave me a book, which had cost him about twentyfive dollars. It was one of the most expensive books I had ever had in my life. It was a "big think". It had exaggerated photographic pictures in it, with a story written by James Baldwin. In it Baldwin weaves a story about what makes this planet livable. It is when you finally stand before the fact that there are people you know in Hong Kong, or Caracas, or New Delhi.

I was deeply addressed by this at that time and I still am. Something strange happens to you inside. You begin to listen. It is someone you love. You begin to listen for the weather in that part of the world. When a typhoon runs across Hong Kong I stand at attention. You know someone who is in Hong Kong, like Nai Wang Kwok, or others

who are friends or colleagues. You find yourselves having a way to accomplish what could not have been done before. You listen for any news that comes. To anything which happens in China you stand at attention. You have a whole new set of relationships to this planet when you begin to particularize the brothers, the sisters in Christ. It is as if something has happened to the Movement. That is just these past four years since we began to deploy our colleagues and have the International Training Institutes overseas. They are precisely the tool by which you stand before the fact that you are cared for a part of one family. You are the family. I mean to tell you that you burn your heart out to save that brother, to save that family. They are my family. I spend some life on them and they spend some life on me. We have been on this planet together. We are one body, we are up against a common enemy. I count those brothers as important. I am going to do whatever is necessary to see that they come off.

Don Cramer