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Notes: Lenten Address: Pilate Preaches (Matthew 27:2), 1944

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Immanuel Valparaiso, March 1, 1944

1. Our preacher for this evening is Pontius Pilate, governor of the imperial province of Syria and commander of the 10th legion from 26 to 36 A.D. -
2. Of all the people you have summoned to this pulpit to speak to you about their relationship to your suffering Christ ^{Christ} I am, beyond doubt, the straight of all - you see, I never was very important - a minor official in a colonial empire for a brief term - not successful - married by riots - I had nothing but contempt for these fanatical, feverish Jews, constantly bickering & fighting - ^{tried} to bring cages of Rome to the Temple & lost out - tried to build an aqueduct with Temple money & failed on that - as a governor, I was a rank failure -
3. And so it pleases my Roman sense of irony that I should, after all these years, have become the most famous Roman of them all - when Caesar & Seneca & Cicero and Tiberius are forgotten, I will be remembered - beside the Virgin Mary I am the only human being mentioned in your Christian Creed - day after day, century after century, ^{and of time} millions of human beings "suffered under P.P." ^{Irony!} I suddenly find myself famous because early one Friday morning I was face to face, for five or six hours, with One Who was greater than I - Whom I sent to a Cross - Who gave me a dubious & hateful immortality - I who wanted nothing to do with Him in life am now linked to Him forever - seldom ^{more} has your unpredictable God turned ^{moral} history ^{upside down} & twisted events ^{to His own good purpose} -
4. But let me tell you the story of that ^{Friday} morning as I saw it - In all the ^{imperial} provinces of Rome we had kept the right of review & final decision in all capital cases - good administration - ordinarily we followed the policy

Difficult - far away
Pilate - we forget
human beings - ^{of the great} ^{center} ^{the Cross}

One 20 a Cent
man - Pontius
Pilate - should
have to speak as
he would.

OCCASION

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a single life is never

of rubberstamping the decision of the native courts - usually nothing at stake but a single life - not important to the Empire - but that morning there was something else in the air - ^{intruded} you have a saying: judge a man by his enemies - this man had the right enemies - they were mine too - then there was his royal bearing, completely indifferent to the howling of the mob & the shadow of death over him - you may think me a coward and a hard, cruel man, but you cannot call me stupid - I knew - currents & cross-currents beneath the surface of the scene, ^{before me} which made it unique - ^{and so} I did a strange thing for a judge - called him innocent - tried to find a way to let him go - but no chance - the mob & their fanatic priests - when religion goes wrong it can go very wrong - I was up against a religious hatred - a mania for blood - a frantic fear of loss of face - the ultimate evil, the perversion of religion

5. Then - an amazing thing happened - I asked the prisoner "Art thou the King of the Jews" - and he took the whole discussion & lifted it out & away from the momentary & the personal into the eternal & the spiritual - I had to meet the Galilean on the highest level of

the thought & conscience of my time - your man Spengler has said that it was the most dramatic & most amazing meeting of minds in all history - ^{his} not

suddenly we became ^{living} symbols of two worlds - face to face on a Friday morning as the world's hour-glass was turning - the world of power - the world of love; of pride - of humility; of truth - of doubt; of good - of evil - two types of souls, two ways of life, two worlds - forever separate, forever at war - ^{in what place} ^{xx} Must admit that I felt something of that - my conversation shows it - but, you may ask: "Why didn't you let him go? Well, I would have - the mob did not trouble me - the truth began could handle them."

xx
Judgment seat
become a
background
+ 2 C.
Confession

At that
moment

Valpo. March 1, 1844

My enemies lined up
with my ambition and
I was lost - how often
has that happened - a
secret fault & your friends
or your enemies line up.

But - one man in the crowd - understood me - crafty & subtle
knew how my mind worked - Caiaphas - He cried: "If
thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend" - X

Suddenly saw myself summoned to Rome - a bad record -
condemned to exile or to death - my whole career, my
whole life was at stake - ^{it was} His life against mine -
and so I decided - Wrong, you say? - Forgive me -
many of you, ^{20th century} have given up my prisoner for less
than that - a moment of sin - an hour of pride or passion
a bit of money or comfort - you say throw stones at me
but your hands ought to be clean when you pick them up.

7. And so I decided & became famous - interested in
what happened to me after that fateful morning? -
Stayed there more years - then, the ^{whole} story of it! What I
feared happened anyway - recalled - exiled to Gaul -
committed suicide - many legends - the only one which
is true in its essential meaning - stormy nights -
thunder & lightning over Mt. Pilatus - washing my hands -
Your man Shakespeare was thinking of me in the scene
in which Lady Macbeth tries to wash her hands of the
X inhibited of blood: "Out, damned spot! out, I say!"
X

Here's the smell of the blood still. All the perfumes
of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand." I
know what she means - and I hope you will never
know - the desperate attempt to chloroform the soul, to
forget, to run away from ^{the past} ghosts that walk with you forever.

8. Not here to defend myself - but on false impression I
would lie to correct - that I quickly forgot these five
hours - turned to other matters - Aristotle ^{XX} Francis ^{XX} "I do
not seem to recall the name" - that's a wrong picture - I
never forgot Him - in fact, I cannot see how anyone

XX Shivered
in the
warm
morning
sun

"Mother of
Pearl"

TEXT

THEME

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who has ever come face to face with Him, can forget Him -
 you may reject Him as I did, but you cannot ignore Him -
 you may send Him off to some Herod of your own,
 but He comes back again - you may bend your head
 over your own basin of water, but when you look up
 there He is again - quiet & uncompeled, silent & inevitable.
 Your own century has tried to get rid of Him - in
 the noise of war, in the wine of pleasure, in the pride
 of reason - but He will always come back, either in
 mercy or in judgment - that afternoon they crucified Him -
 34 yrs. later - in all the long years He has done that - He comes
 either in mercy or judgment - but He always comes.

no getting
away from
him

9. In many ways I feel very close to the 20th Century - I
 was reared in the religion of Rome out of which all
 life and reality had vanished. I had become an agnostic.
 "What is truth?" - A myth, the creation of man's mind, a
 bubble always broken on a fact - a wild guess at
 the riddle of life, one guess as good or as bad as
 another - what difference does it make? I see all this
 in your century and I feel at once very modern and
 very sad - Nothing new under the sun - the same
 mistakes, the same blindness, the same ^{desperate} efforts to do
 the impossible - to get away from God, to dismiss the
inevitable Christ, to close the windows of your soul
to God and heaven & life & love -

xx
like so
many of my
20th Cent.
friends -
Nathan

10. One more word! A few months before that Friday

shadow of the
Cross there is
room for
everyone - here -
how far away -
how hopeless - room
perhaps even
for me -

I made arrangements to hear Gamaliel, the great
 teacher of the Jews who was lecturing in Jerusalem
 at the time - Talking about one of their prophets,
 Isaiah, I believe his name was - the words: "He is despised
 & wounded etc." - If that is what happened on that Friday
 morning years is a very wonderful religion - Under the