

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Jesus--the Solution to the Human Dilemma

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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Jesus: The Solution to the Human Dilemma

Well, those of you who are a part of Grace Church, you know that I've been in a rut for years and I just keep teaching the Bible week after week after week, verse by verse but every Christmas I try to do something different. It's like variety time for me. So I thought, "What can I do this Christmas to share with you some things on my heart that might be a fresh look at some things we probably ought to understand?"

From time to time I'm invited to speak on university campuses, college campuses or to groups of people who are detached from a church setting and usually you can't just go diving in at the point of chapter and verse because they need to be kind of convinced that they need to even look at the Bible because there might be something important there. And so that's what I thought we ought to do this time and so I want to share with you what I think is simply just a very simple picture of the human dilemma and then I want to offer to you the solution that comes in Jesus Christ.

You know, I'm fully convinced; I guess I get more cynical every Christmas as I get older and I'm very young, I want you to know that, but as I get older I get cynical about Christmas, but I'm fully convinced this year that if even Jesus were invited, He wouldn't come to the birthday party the world is currently throwing for Him. You see, it isn't honest very hypocritical. They don't really care about Jesus. It's very tongue and cheek, it's very patronizing, it lacks two things that I think everything ought to have and that is honesty and integrity. And frankly, I don't even like to attend it but I don't know how to get out of this world to avoid it. It seems to be everywhere and it's a party that I just as soon not be at.

It reminds me when I was in high school, one time, a friend and I went to a party. We didn't know what kind of party it was but there was a girl there that my friend liked. I didn't particularly care for girls for awhile after that, football was what I worshipped but I grew out of that eventually. But there was a girl he wanted to see or be with so we went to this party and of course I was raised in a sheltered pastor's home and got to this party and it was very dark and there was music playing very slow, we used to call it 'necking' music in that day and these couples were sitting in the corners and people were dancing real slow and I said, "This is no fun at all". This kind of party and he said, "Yea, this is no good, what do you want to do to change the complexion of the party?" So we took and we blew out the fuses so they couldn't have the records or the lights or anything in that whole part of the house. We put pennies in the fuse box. Of course, everybody was upset nobody ever knew what

happened and we came in and said let's go into the living room, we had a terrific idea, we had all these games ready. We had a great time. We played games and had a wonderful time. They didn't know what they were missing. I thought of this because I get this feeling at Christmas, I'd like to blow the fuse on the whole deal. You know, I would just like to blow the fuse and say hey, I've got a better kind of party, do you want to see? Let me show you how Christmas ought to be celebrated. I don't know, hypocrisy is a hard thing to deal with and I guess it gets down into my heart the fact that these people are running around feverishly trying to celebrate the birthday of the one they totally reject. That doesn't make sense. They don't want Jesus in their life, they don't want Jesus Christ to make any claims, they don't even want to acknowledge the reality of who He is they just want to have a birthday party so they can have an excuse for all the things they want to do. And it's at His expense.

And I think it salves the conscience of the world into thinking it's Christian. What a paradox. Jesus said so beautifully, so simply, so fully, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly". And then Jesus said so pensively, so tragically, "You will not come to Me that you might have life". I'm come that you might have it but you won't take it. And John sums it up when he says, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not". And men still reject the source of life, they still reject the only hope and frantically celebrate that He was born and couldn't care less.

And for the most part wish He wasn't.

I'd like to take a good look at life without Christ, at a world without Christ to see what is really there or isn't there. Now we live in a fantastic world. If ever anybody could have life and be happy it ought to be twentieth century man in western culture. I mean, we have got everything. Creature comforts beyond belief.

There aren't any limits to what we could have to fill up our lives.

Take for example, the fact of just information. You can learn so many things. You can expand your horizons. The end of adventure has never been seen. You can read and fill your mind and find exciting things and find and discover cures for this and that and solutions to this and that and now we have incredible technology. I mean, we have everything conceivable. And it's even mushrooming, folks, in ten years you won't believe the kind of world we're living in. Do you realize threethousand pages are published every second? That's a lot of information cranking out. They can't even store it anymore. Books are hopelessly cumbersome. We have to store things on microfilm. I received a deal in the mail about a certain thing that was soliciting a pastor's library. I think it's fivethousand volumes. It comes in a little can like this and you have this huge machine you read it. That's the only way we can store the volume of material we have. And that's too cumbersome, microfilm is too big. Now we have what's called Laser Storage, they store information on crystals. They shoot a laser beam at one of the edges of the crystal and it refracts onto a screen and they can read it. There will be a day when you go to school in college and you'll have a bag of crystals. Have you got your science crystal? You

know. But that's too bulky. They're now developed what's called molecular storage. They can now store information on molecules.

And they've developed a technique whereby it's claimed they could store the entire library of congress on an object the size of a sugar cube. That's incredible. Information. Astounding, sixty million pages a year of scientific and technical literature are published. The advances are unbelievable. A thousand books a day are published. If you took all of the information that man has learned from his beginning to 1945, it would be one inch in the little analogy we're going to do. From zero, from man's historical beginning to 1945 if all that information equals one inch, from 1945 to 1945 equals three inches. From 1945 to 1975 equals the height of the Washington Monument. We have learned an awful lot, folks, we're in the midst of an information explosion that's unrivaled.

Part of the last times, I believe, Daniel 12:4 says that knowledge will increase in the last times. It's going so fast right now we're going to kill ourselves if the Lord doesn't do something. But we have everything conceivable to occupy a man's mind, to fill up his life. The technological advances are incredible. I was reading a magazine put out by Pacific Telephone in which they were predicting the things they are working on that should be in by 1990, some of them right away, some of them as late as 1990. For example, video education in the home. No more going to school. Members of the family will observe. the instructor, hear questions of other students and even ask questions all through their picture telephone at home.

Worldwide satellite stations will make education exciting beyond anything we experience now, you can take your education from anybody, at anyplace in the world and never leave your house. Such picture phones will be set up so that you can touch a button, tune in any course you want. Another thing that was interesting, they said touch a few more buttons and you will be able to turn the pages of a book in a foreign library. Another one, shopping by phone. Deliver us.

Listen to how this works. Of course, there is a consolation, you can just pull the cord. Shopping by phone. If you want to order several items from a store, you dial the store number, you dial a series of item numbers, you insert your card into the slot in your home phone, press a button and hang up. The order is recorded and the price is paid. Portable telephones will replace public telephones because of the destruction problem, they can't maintain them. All the city will be full of little jacks and you will have a little tiny phone like a Dick Tracy size watch telephone, you'll go up to make a phone call, just plug it into one of these little jacks, it will record the number and you'll make your call. I don't know if you've studied holography, this is a most fascinating thing. I saw a complete demonstration of it one day when I was speaking to a civic club and it was incredible. It will beam into your home a TV picture that is threehundred and sixty degrees. So if you want to know who's sneaking up on the good guy, you just walk around and see.

That's only the beginning. We are developing the ability to select the sex of the newborn, to create life in a test tube, the growth of fetuses in artificial wombs, genetic control and micro surgery by radiation and laser beams, development of ova and sperm banks, control of the aging process with a life expectancy of 100 years, elimination of tooth decay by welding enamel on teeth with laser beams, spot welding of the retina of the eye, extended use of the bloodless knife in surgery, extended use of artificial organs such as plastic corneas for the eye, metallic bones, dacron arteries, artificial hearts and computerized electronic muscles. That's the bionic man! Development of synthetic foods, development of ocean farming and possibly undersea cities, experiments in human hibernation You got problems? We'll put you to sleep for twenty years or at least four until your teenagers get into their twenties. Development of effective appetite and weight control program. I was reading the other day that they're developing food that is made out of wood that is 100% nondigestible so you can eat anything you want and since it's wood it just goes through your system. It has no food value at all but you can eat it, nice, good taste and everything. What are you having for dinner oak or ash? Myself, I prefer birch. Development of fantastic cities. In the year, Herman Cohn says in the year 2000, this is interesting, there will be cities of fifty to onehundredmillion people. He calls them Megalopolises and he says they will be so big, for example, one will stretch from Boston to Washington, will be called Bos Wash, the other one from Chicago to Pittsburgh he calls Chica Pitts and from San Francisco to San Diego will be SanSan.

Now these are incredible things to think about. In 1??4 the predictions are that we will have household robots and it just goes on and on. It is incredible what man is filling up his life with.

The science and the technology and the information, it would seem that if ever there would be a day when man would be happy, he has created a veritable worldwide Disneyland and he can play all day long. Listen, do you realize how many stores that sell things that nobody needs? Nobody needs them. They don't do anything, except you play with them. Man is filling up his life but you know what happens? It's tragic and I think, maybe, it's just the fact that man has to face the reality that the more stuff he has the more he has to face the fact that he's never satisfied. And that's what the Bible means in Luke 12 when it says the life of a man consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. Whether it's information or whether it's technology or whether it's goodies, whatever it is life doesn't find itself in those things and so today we have alcoholism and we have drugs and we have sex and we have all these other things as people try to fill the gnawing void that can't be filled with all this other stuff.

And then, of course, there's a backlash to all that technology.

We have the other people who want to go natural and so right up next to the computer store is the natural food store. And you can go in there and it's all very natural. We want to run back to nature, we don't like it so complicated. You know why? Because it didn't solve our problems. The frustrations of man, now he's going in a circle.

He can do anything he wants and he thinks that he wants something but When he gets it he doesn't want it so he goes back into his circle to where he started again. Illustration. Arthur Clark a science fiction writer and a futurist described his idea of the ultimate city vehicle and he was looking into the future and what would man need as an ultimate city vehicle, obviously we can't be driving around in BelchFire 8's for the rest of history running into each other and killing off our population so something's going to change, polluting our society so his thing was this. He drew up seven principles that should govern whatever this vehicle is.

1) Simple to produce with a minimum of toolup time, hence inexpensive. 2) Selfrepairing, that would be great. 3) Stylish.

4) Good passenger visibility unobstructed. 5) Computer equipped to aid in driving, so the vehicle can actually think in the process.

6) Top speed 20 milesanhour so there aren't any fatal crashes.

The next one, number 7) The byproducts of this should be non toxic and biodegradable. And with all of those conclusions, his suggestion is that the ultimate transportation for a city dweller is a horse.

Now we have so much, we have developed so much, we have invented so much, we have created so much and there's always that total emptiness when you get to the end of the line. We still kill each other, we still curse each other, we still slander each other, we still sue each other, we still fight each other, there's more crime, more suicide than ever. I read an article in the paper, sad, little children under ten:

twohundred committed suicide last year. Sad. You say, "How could it be?" It's despair, people, it's despair. Raising a child in a technological age it isn't any different than raising them in the age of the horse or anything else if he doesn't have anything on the inside. Time magazine says America is like an unloved child, smothered in candy, we're fat and full of pimples and still crying for more.

What is the answer to a society with everything and yet facing the reality that it has nothing and it comes off so hypocritical?

What's the answer? Well some people say education. We could be happy if we could just educate people. We've got to educate them not to do this and not to pollute and not to do this. B. F. Skinner comes along and says what we really have to do is control their brains. We've got to get little zappers in there and block out part of their brain. We'll block out the criminal part and we'll block out the having too many babies part and we'll block out the pollution part and we'll control everybody and we'll have an elite group of people who'll run this little blackout factory and we'll move in and put the

little zappers on there and do it to them. And other people say, well it isn't that tough all we need to do is to train them so we'll develop daycare centers and we'll take children out of the home and there was a bill in congress to this affect three years ago, we'll take babies out of home at sixmonths, train them until they're five and then put them in the public school system and by that time we'll have it educated out of those areas. Congress voted it down, incidentally, they may not always. And other people say, well it's higher education, we've got to develop an elite group of people who will solve the problems of the world by higher education. Higher education can't solve much of anything in terms of what's in man's heart. Kafka's great story of the defiant fisherman is the best picture of higher education I've ever seen. He pictures a city that is totally bombed out, it's been devastated, it is flat and the bombing has just occurred so that every single building in the city is down except one building. And there's one beautiful pristine, white, clean building without a mark on it, sitting right in the middle of a bombed out city, smoke and smoldering and burning and bleeding people and bodies everywhere and death everywhere. There's one solitary man walking through the rubble, he paces through the rubble, he comes to this building, he ascends the stairs, he goes in, he goes up and up and up till he reaches the top floor and down at the end of a long dark hall he sees a light, he walks down the hall and sure enough it's a bathroom, he walks in and he sees a man sitting there fishing in the bathtub, he looks and says, "You're not going to catch anything". He says, "I know" and keeps on fishing. "There aren't any fish". "I know", and keeps on fishing. "There isn't even any water." "I know", and keeps on fishing. Kafka says that is higher education. Scary. What's he saying? He's saying higher education is somebody up somewhere looking for something that isn't there while the world is dying because it isn't dealing with real problems.

It doesn't do any good to change a man's mind. It's like Polius at USC said, "When you take a man's mind and give it high impact. and do nothing for his soul all you do is create a monster".

Technologically trained but small of soul and all you've done is get a problem on your hands. The answer is not in education because it's just one man educating another man and none of them have been able to solve the problems. Some people say, well of course the answer is in rationalism. The human mind can solve everything.

You know, I'm the master of my feet, I'm the captain of my soul, I will solve all the problems of society. Funny joke, we can't solve anything. Rationalism didn't work. You know the German Rationalists came along a few hundred years ago and they said we will only accept what the mind of men can understand, the mind is ultimate. And so a bunch of them decided to attack the Bible because in those days the Bible kind of reigned supreme in the European society and they were a very absolute objective people who believed in objective truth. There was a right and a wrong. And they said we've got to get rid of the Bible so they went through the Bible, Graf, Wellhausen, Baur, Straus, Fernoun some of these people, and they said let's take all that isn't able to fit into the mind of man out, all the miracles, anything supernatural and they took it out. One of them came up with 27 verses that he felt were still valid. 27 verses in the whole Bible. You know, they were and over there

there was a mountain and down there there was a valley, you know, that was it.

But you know what happened? It didn't take very long for them to realize that when they had done that, they had just crucified their souls because if there wasn't any supernatural then there wasn't any God and that gnawing longing in the heart of a man that says there's a God somewhere could never be satisfied and they were in agony, absolute agony. And so there was a movement in Europe known as Neoorthodoxy and Karl Barth, a German [Swiss?] theologian, decided we just killed ourselves, guys, we've got to put some miracles back in. So Karl Bar&h came along and started grabbing the miracles and started chucking them back into the Bible. And he got them in there. And so you'd say to him, hey Karl, terrific, you put all the miracles back. Yea.

You believe in the virgin birth? Oh yea. You believe Christ died?

Yea. You believe He rose from the dead? Yes. You believe He's coming again? You believe He walked on the water? Oh yes. Do you believe that happened in actual history? No. Well, where did it happen? Well it happened in heilegesichte, superduper history.

You say, what's that Karl? You see, he wanted the miracles but he didn't want them enough to put them back where they belonged. He had them up in a fog. That's why when he came to the end of his life, he never did explain what he meant, at the end of his life somebody said, "What's the greatest thing you ever knew?" The only thing he could say was, "Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so". You see, they all found out that rationalism didn't work. I mean, it didn't work to have any God, it didn't work not to have any miracles, it didn't work, you couldn't answer the hunger of a man's heart, an eternal hook to hang his destiny on. And even when they put them halfway back in, that didn't work either because they had to create an unreal environment.

And then, of course, there were the people who came along and said, "Oh yes, the answer is in religion, we've got to get all the way back to religion". And so we've had it all, mysticism, cultism, eastern religions, legalism, all kinds of conceivable areas of Christian There's no end to religions, of religions there is no end, believe me.

I can't even keep up with them. People say have you heard about this one? About once a week I hear about a new one.

Timothy Leary use to say before he stopped saying things, he use to say, (they put him in places where he couldn't say too much) but he use to say, "What we all should do is start our own religion?" Everybody had a religion and you know what? Religion doesn't make it.

Religion is man inventing God. That is backwards, people, that is backwards. Religion says; and man created God in his own image.

People reached out, they tried to get God so they created God. They didn't want the God of the Bible because He's too demanding, you see, They didn't want the standards that He set so they made their own.

Kierkegaard called it a leap of faith, you just develop your own thing and leap out there, friends. And you would ask a liberal theologian, "Well, what was your leap?" "Oh, that's something you don't talk about. It's my first order of experience, I've had contact with the holy other, I've touched the ground of being." Does that confuse you? It's hopeless because these people are just jumping into a contentless experience. "Oh yes, I believe in God, oh yea, I've touched God." You know, you even hear it today on a layman's level but on a philosophical level they were leaping around everywhere saying there's something out there, I've touched the being, whatever. The simplistic would be that the Indian who thought that there was a happy hunter in the happy hunting ground, he invented it.

Once the philosopher started leaping, everybody was off and leaping.

Pretty soon the artist started leaping into their own contentless experiences. It use to be when you went to an art museum, oh, it's a lovely painting, there's a lady, there's a man and a little kid, a horse and a mountain. Now you go and it's askew, you know. You don't even know what it is. I was looking at one the other day and it said, I think it was titled 'Maiden ascending a staircase'. Maiden ascending a staircase. It was incredible. There was like six big blotches of different color. There wasn't a maiden and there wasn't a staircase, there wasn't anything. Francis Schaeffer points this out that what's happened is they're just jumping and jumping. They're just jumping out there inventing their little deal.

And it happens in music. Play some of John Cages music sometime.

It sounds like two garbage trucks collided. It doesn't make any sense but that's his leap, leave him alone. He has a right. And, of course, we hear all of this philosophical openness to any kind of religious experience and what happens? In comes the occult, in comes eastern mysticism and captivates the minds of people. In comes TM, transcendental meditation, and scoops up these people just sitting around who are open to just anything that comes along.

But after all is said and done they can try it in all those areas.

They can look for it in education, rationalism or religion and they always come up empty and there's despair there. Sartre has written a novel which is his comment on life. He calls it Nausea that will give you a little idea of his view of things. He was a sad man, sad pessimist. The opening of the book, the main character O'Conton says this, quote; "Nothing happens, there are no beginnings, days are tacked onto days with no rhyme or reason: an interminable, monotonous addition.

There is nothing, nothing absolutely no reason for existing", end of quote. So here's a man who's concluded there is nothing and no reason to live and he says now I'm going to go out and see if I can find something. First I'll look in science and education, just what we were talking about, and he looks in science and education and he says this doesn't make it because it only explains the mechanics not the meaning.

I can put it in the testtube and oh yea, that happens but it doesn't say why. That doesn't make it. He says, "I know what, I'll have my own leap, I'm going to live for experience". And he goes all the way from thrills to theology and every experience in between. He goes all the way even masochism, any kind of an experience and when he sums it up he says this, "If my life existence is meaningless then every experience I have is also meaningless because I'm the only one who can authenticate my experience". And he says, "I know, I'll try humanism.

I'll lose myself with people, I'll give myself to people, love your neighbor, love your brother, help other folks. And I did but I found out people, for the most part, are evil or selfish or bigoted or hateful or even murderous and I didn't care for that". And then he says, "There's only one other thing I'll try and that's love".

And so he chases after love but the only kind of love he can ever come up with is sexual and every time he gets into a sexual relationship he destroys the object that he tried to love because love for him is only lust. And finally he says at the end, "I dreamed of killing myself to wipe out at least one of these superfluous lives".

Nothing.

There's a lot of despair in the world and maybe I've unmasked a little of it but maybe you're saying, "But I don't see all of this".

You know, people cover it up. You can't just walk around saying, "I'm in despair". You can't walk around like that all your life so you cover it up. You buy a new car, you buy a CB radio so you don't ever have to think. If it isn't music you can talk to some jerk who's got something to say on another line and you can say that strange language, you know. I'm sure there are some good things talked about, I don't know. But you can fill up your whole life. You can go home and turn the TV on loud, go to bed and listen to the radio till you fall asleep, get up, turn on the radio again, you can fill your life or you can just buy things all the time. Keep buying things so you always have something that makes you feel good or you can have your hobby or your sport or you can just drink booze and dull your senses or take drugs or you can just do what's totally absurd. You know, some people do that. They just flip out. Did some of you notice a movie that was on television a week or so ago, Catch 22? That is one of the greatest philosophical comments on the human dilemma I've ever seen. Very, very clear.

Listen, here are these guys and I think it was World War II and they were on this island and they were flying missions for the Air Force. Flying missions and they were stupid missions and very dangerous and the guys hated the duty and they only hoped that when they hit 25 missions that they could get out. So they got a new colonel who came in as soon as they hit 25 he raised it to 30, they hit 30 he raised it to 35, they hit 35 he raised it to 40 and on and on. No way out. There's the human dilemma. That's a metaphor of the human dilemma. No way out. You're trapped on an island in a stupid existence doing meaningless things and there isn't any way out. Now there was only one way you could get out of that duty. Those of you who saw that picture remember what. The only way you could get out of that duty is to be insane because they don't want insane people flying those missions but you had to turn yourself in for being insane and if you're smart enough to turn yourself in for being insane you weren't insane. And that was Catch 22. The only intelligent people in the human dilemma are the ones who are nuts, who've flipped out. It's like a kid told me one time who was totally spaced out. He says, "Man I may not know any answers but I sure don't have to mess with the questions anymore". And so the guy finally decides there's only one thing left to do. Build a raft and paddle to Sweden.

That is not intelligent that is stupid. You can't build a raft in the middle of the Mediterranean and paddle to Sweden. But don't you see what the point is? When man has all of his rational options closed out he does what is irrational, absurd because he has no other choice.

Do you want to know why people do the strange, irrational, bizarre things they do? It's despair. You say, "Well, John, why does man feel this despair?" That was the introduction. Just so you'll know where you are. Why does man feel the despair? I think there are three things, basically, that we could use to sum up his pressure points.

This is where man feels the drill. Number one is the area of sin and guilt. Man lives with a sense of his sinfulness and the guilt that comes behind that sin and he is forever trying to deal with that issue. Sin is a reality. Look at Romans chapter 3 for a moment.

I want to call your attention to a very simple passage here that helps us to see the human dilemma in terms of sin and guilt. In Romans chapter 3 and, you know, this is where the Bible enters in, see, and the Bible is saying look, we know what's going on, you know. You want to know what the human dilemma's all about the Scripture will tell you precisely. The Bible speaks to man. Now what you have in Romans ? verse 10 is this, "As it is written, there is none righteous. No, not one".

We begin by recognizing that God says there aren't righteous people there are only unrighteous ones. "There is none that understands, there is none that seeketh after God." You know when Adam sinned what's the first thing he did? He ran and hid. And men have been running and hiding from God ever since. They don't seek God. "There all gone out of the way they have together become unprofitable", it's a word in the Greek that means to go sour like milk, they've gone sour. "There is none that does

good, no not one. Their throat is an open grave, their tongues use deceit, the poison of snakes is under their lips, their mouth is full of cursing. Their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways and the way of peace they have not known and there is no fear of God before their eyes". Now there you have a summation of man's sinfulness. It's in his mouth, it's in his feet, it's in his hands, it's in everything he does because man is a sinner. The result of it is he feels guilt, verse 1? talks about the fact at the end of the verse that all the world has become guilty before God. Sin has consequence. You can't sin and not feel the results. It's like pain, when you inflict harm on your body your body sends impulses that tell you you've done that. And your conscience and your so I will respond to sin with impulses of guilt. And people run like mad to cover that up. They drink, they take drugs, they sleep, they go to the psychiatrist and they want so badly for them to tell them it isn't your fault that you're the way you are your mother shouldn't have locked you in the closet when you were a kid or always giving you the smallest banana, you know, and your sister got the bigger one or whatever. People want to abandon themselves to sin and then they want to get out of the consequence but they can't get out and so they try to escape in areas that don't really do anything but magnify the reality of their sin. They justify. Today, the latest ploy to alleviate guilt is to justify it. We've lost our morality so we can do that. Now, all of a sudden, sin is macho, right? Ump, see. Or sin is cool, not hung up, see. I flow baby. Whatever is going, man, I'm in it. I like sin is natural, it's only natural, man, biological. Or it's liberated.

We were under all that bondage, now we've been liberated, see. All of these are ploys to deal with guilt but it's the hypocritical thing, it never really solves the problem. There is always, I believe, gnawing in the heart of a man and a woman and a sense of retribution in someday, I'm going to repay you. There's got to be payment. And the reason I believe that is because I believe God has given that consciousness of sin to every man to drive him to the knowledge of God Himself. Man has been running and hiding and he tries to find all different trees to hide from and pretty soon he gets exposed and he runs for another tree. And God seeks and man hides because of sin and guilt.

There's a second pressure point in the human dilemma and that's lust and desire. Like Oscar Wilde said and I agree, "Lust is a cruel master". It's a terrible thing to be driven totally by your own lust and desire. If ever there was a lusting society it's the twentieth century America. It is incredible, I mean, you just drive down any street and it is just loaded with things that pander lust and evil desire. I mean, now you can go to a massage parlor and use your Master Charge, your BankAmericard, dirty book stores over here, great big billboards with halfdressed people on them, solicitation to go to certain movies. Billy Graham said the movies are like the drippings from a broken sewer and he's right. There's no end to it all just pandering, pandering and pandering what is the most responsive part of a man that is his lust. And the family has died because everybody's out on the street looking at the billboards to see where they want to put their lusts to work. Everybody left home and they've traded lust for love and sensuality for security and so the family died. And when the family dies everything is gone. There's no warmth, there's no acceptance and there's no fulfillment so we have despair.

In Ephesians chapter two look with me at verse 3, Paul chronicles a little of this when he says in verse 2, "You're guided by Satan, the prince of the power of the air", and then in verse 3, "Among whom, also, we all had our manner of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind or the thoughts". So we have a thought, we desire out of the flesh and we fulfill it. That's pretty much man and we become, really, the children of wrath. In other words, we begin to feel God's retribution, God's judgment. And so man suffers from the pressures of sin and guilt, lust and desire. Can't ever get out of it, he can't ever get himself divorced from this driving force that destroys him, destroys his family, destroys his society.

There's a third thing. I think the third pressure point that man faces, and I'm trying to analyze these as I see people and as I feel in my own heart and as I look at the scope of the Scripture.

The third one is purposelessness and meaninglessness. It seems to me the worst of all is to not have any reason to be. Like Edna St. Vincent Mallay said, "Life must go on, I forget why". Or like Arthur Miller in his play has a woman and her husband sitting at the breakfast table, they never talk, she sits there with her hair all done up in things and she has on that old ratty bathrobe and she looks like yesterdays breakfast, he sits across the table and he's down in the mouth and he reads the paper and she says, "You never talk to me, life has deteriorated to how many miles we get on our Volkswagen". Pretty sad when life gets to that level. But it is for a lot of people. You know what the Psalmist said? He said the ungodly are like the chaff which the wind drives away. You know when they harvest the wheat and they put the grain in those little baskets they would go in and they throw that right in the air and the grain was heavy enough to fall back into the basket but the wind would blow the chaff away and that's how it was separated because it was useless, it was worthless and I think that's what God is saying about man. That man is useless apart from Him and man has that feeling of uselessness, purposelessness. He has no eternal hook to hang his life on and say, Hey, I belong here, this is where I hang. He has no sense of eternal continuity. You know, one of the greatest statements ever penned in the whole Bible is this, "Your fruit shall remain", remember when Jesus said that in John 15, "You shall bear much fruit and your fruit shall remain"? Listen, it's one of the most exciting things in the world to know that your life can have an eternal continuity.

It's incredible to think of that. You're not just plopped in and gone, ashes, forgotten. If you're a Christian, you have a part of God's eternal plan, you are in the flow of destiny with God. If you don't know Christ you're just phistgone and you have voided the purpose for your being. Time magazine recently introduced and so did Newsweek as I remember, a new philosophy that's sweeping the country.

Tens of thousands of people are in it it's called EST or est, you've seen it probably. Warner Earhardt which is a pseudonym for a guy who is an exused car salesman somewhere who just took on that fancy name and developed this thing. But what happens is that people go and they go for a couple of

weeks and what it is it's a brainwashing technique.

He goes in there, they have a couple of weeks of this intense painful, concentrated, mental smashing. I mean, they are battered and smashed and beaten verbally and captivated. They can't even leave to go to the bathroom. They keep them there, they're on the floor sweating and writhing and he just literally destroys them and drains them and smashes their ego and I can't imagine all this is involved in it.

When it's all over and you've been through the whole thing and it's done with, he gets up and this is the last thing this is the closing statement he makes, "Well, you've got it now because there's nothing to get". Obviously the truth is what's so what's not so obvious is so what. What is is so what and he leaves. That is something. All that and all you know is so what. Boy, he's got the handle on the problem of man so what. So what meaninglessness. There's got to be a point of reference in the universe. There's got to be a hook to hang your life on, a rock, a standard, a source of abundant life.

There's got to be meaning somewhere. The deist comes up and says, God is a cosmic force up there somewhere. Well, that's nice to know but that doesn't touch me. The fatalist says, God is just a practical joker and the religious hedonists says He's a glorified grandfather and the pantheist says He's everything and somebody else says He's a cosmic party pooper and Christianity comes down to He's a loving, sovereign, holy, righteous God and He's the hook to hang your life on. And He's come into this world and He was born as a man as a babe in Bethlehem and that's Christmas. And I dare say that if you are having a party without a reality of Christ the party is a sham.

I'd like to break your party up if I could and offer you a real party, a real celebration. Jesus is God. God wanted us to hang our life on Him and so He came down and said here's how through My Son Jesus Christ who lived and died and rose to give you life.

Christmas has no more meaning to people without Christ than any other day in their life but with Christ every day has as much meaning as Christmas. Every day. Christmas is "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory", what glory?

"The glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth". We saw that it was God and we gave Him our lives, that's Christmas and Christmas is nothing but that. Let's pray.

Our Father, we do acknowledge that apart from You we only have sin and guilt to pay for out of the past. Lust and desire to experience in the present. Meaninglessness and purposelessness for the future. And that's no way to live. You never meant that. You've been reaching down to touch us since Adam. You've been looking for us among the trees of our own makings as we hide. May we be honest and open enough to come out and say God, I guess I need You, I want the Christ of Christmas, the Lord Jesus Christ the living God in human flesh who died and rose again that I might

have life. I want the abundant life You give, I take the gift. Father, it's my prayer for the folks that are here who know you that they might, this morning, freshly commit themselves to You, for those who don't that this might be the first real Christmas when Christ is born in them. Amen.

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