



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“TWO CLAWS HAS THE EAGLE”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: Psalm 120
Date: December 10, 1961

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on December 10, 1961.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Psalm 120).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

This week’s packet contained clippings from publications including: *The Presbyterian Outlook*, *Saturday Review*, and others. These were used as resources for the sermon.

There were also retreat notes:

“Our Children’s World – a Heritage of Hope and Destruction”

Section I, Friday evening

Heritage of destruction: the natural consequences of today’s wrongs will be savage retaliation unless Christians release the power of God’s love to overcome the evil now preparing.

“For they have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind.” “The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children.” Discuss “sins” such as apartheid, Algeria, “Ugly American,” past colonialism, attitude of moral superiority, materialism, moral preaching obviously violated (political rights, brotherhood).

Section II, Saturday morning

Heritage of hope: Christian thought and action in areas of international relations can forestall destruction in man’s time.

Outline social pronouncement on international relations.

Discuss “This Changing Planet” Social Progress, March, 1959, perhaps in buzz sessions under headings of moral foundations, power and security, economic relations, human rights, institutions for peaceful settlement and change, mission of the churches.

I. Introduction

A. Last July, we saw the re-enactment of Bull Run.

1. The first major battle of the Civil War.
2. It started as a picnic – to which several congressmen and their ladies drove in surreys; their picnic baskets full.
3. It ended in complete rout of the Federal troops, with thousands left dead behind.

B. This week we “Remembered Pearl Harbor.”

1. Our seminary choir was on tour, when the news came over the car radio.
2. Each of us looked to the other, wondering how this news announcement would make its impression on our lives, and in the lives of our friends.
3. Pearl Harbor is the symbol of the military’s most stupid, most tragic miscalculation.

C. We hear Mr. Khrushchev making noises like an ogre, rattling his rockets.

D. We think of the Psalmist:

⁵ Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech,
That I dwell among the tents of Kedar!

⁶ My soul has dwelt too long
With one who hates peace.

⁷ I *am* for peace;
But when I speak, they *are* for war.

1. Mesech and Kedar were the towns of ruthless barbarians.

II. On Living in Mesech

A. Military force is the only diplomacy that Russia has yet learned.

1. History has shown that the communists will over-run every nation that they are able – short of war.

a) *In such instances as Tibet and Hungary, where American military power could not be brought to bear, conquest followed.*

b) *When we let it be known that we did not intend to defend Korea, attack came.*

c) *Where we have been able to checkmate, as in the first Berlin blockade, in Turkey, in Formosa Straits, Communists withdrew.*

B. The Callup – necessary in order to be in readiness. Necessary to convince Khrushchev that we are serious.

C. Civil Defense

1. One article says 97% of America would be casualties; another says 97% could survive.
2. In our present state of Civil Defense, certainly we must assume 40 million casualties.
3. Should we have no fall-out shelters?
 - a) *Living as far away as we do from the target area, it would be obvious that we should.*
 - b) *The chances are slim that they would be much help.*
 - c) *But when it is our very survival that is at stake, even a long shot is worth trying.*
 - d) *But so far, the Galbreaths have not been able to hurdle the financial and emotional barriers to doing anything about it.*
4. The alarming aspect of the bomb-shelter issue is that some take the attitude that if we only had a shelter in each back yard, then we would be free to romp into another war.
 - a) *"We could take 40,000,000 dead in stride – it would still leave 140,000,000. Sooner the better."*

D. Let us take seriously the risk that is involved.

1. We are involving all of civilization in this choice.
2. But to refuse to face up to this choice is to condemn all civilization to slavery.
3. "Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper."

III. The Other Claw

A. John J. McCloy must have gotten hold of my sermon, for he draws attention, as do I, to the seal of the U.S. The American eagle has two claws –in the one is a bunch of arrows; in the other a palm branch.

B. Military power is not the ultimate solution.

1. Some day, someone will make a mistake.
2. Surrender, suicide or survival. "If some chipmunk chews through the cable that triggers the Atlas, and Leningrad is wiped off the map, Khrushchev will not be much impressed with the evidence of a somewhat scorched squirrel in penance.

C. In ultimate terms, there can be world peace only through world law.

1. This has been implicit in the policy of our last three administrations.
 - a) *The Baruch plan, offered before Russia ever had the bomb, promised that we would destroy our nuclear power, in exchange for inspection.*
 - b) *Eisenhower, in his open skies plan, made a similar approach.*
 - c) *Kennedy, in his superb address before the United Nations made specific proposals.*
2. America has stated her readiness.
 - a) *In survey after survey, America's willingness to concede to U.N. the power to make war.*
 - b) *If our economy were truly threatened by reverting to a truly peace-time economy, would we still want it?*
 - c) *If I were to lose the pension to which I would be eligible at 60, would my ardor cool?*
3. The hard problems to be resolved.
 - a) *U.S. Arms Control Agency has been established.*

D. Will Russia ever accept such a plan? Maybe

1. Both Russia and U.S. are aware of the immensity of the alternative.
2. Both Russia and U.S. are being drained to uphold the military might.
3. Both Russia and the U.S. feel we would win the ideological and economic conflict.
4. We must take the bifocal approach to peace.

IV. Conclusion

From Bull Run, we returned to lick our wounds and gird for a long war. From Pearl arose again our military power. If through lack of will we submit to slavery, or in arrogance, invite conflict, we will not be victors – at best merely survivors.

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: Psalm 120, A Song of Ascents.

Psalm 120: 1 and 2 say:

- ¹ In my distress I cried to the LORD,
And He heard me.
- ² Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips
And from a deceitful tongue.

- On what occasions do you cry in distress to the Lord?
- Think about a time when you needed to be delivered from lying lips and a deceitful tongue. How did you know that God heard your cry?

Psalm 120: 3 and 4 say:

- ³ What shall be given to you,
Or what shall be done to you,
You false tongue?
- ⁴ Sharp arrows of the warrior,
With coals of the broom tree!

- When someone has lying lips and a deceitful tongue, what do your prayers ask God to do about that person?

Psalm 120: 5 through 7 say:

- ⁵ Woe is me, that I dwell in Meshech,
That I dwell among the tents of Kedar!
- ⁶ My soul has dwelt too long
With one who hates peace.
- ⁷ I *am for* peace;
But when I speak, they *are* for war.

- Who do you dwell with who hates peace? Is it someone in your family? Your community? How do you deal with those in the world who hate peace? What do your prayers ask God to do about those people?
- How do you speak for peace?

Study Questions -- Part II

Sermon :

Notes in the packet talk about:

“For they have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind.” “The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children.” Discuss “sins” such as apartheid, Algeria, “Ugly American,” past colonialism, attitude of moral superiority, materialism, moral preaching obviously violated (political rights, brotherhood).

What “sins” do you think a retreat would talk about today?

I.A. Dr. Galbreath refers to the 100th anniversary of Bull Run. Now that we have acknowledged the 150th anniversary, do you think he would have still referenced that event? How do you think our feelings are impacted because there is no one who witnessed it still alive?

I.B. When you think of Pearl Harbor, what do you think about? How do you think generations will remember it when they don’t have personal witnesses to tell them about it?

I. C. This sermon was written at the height of the Cold War. What might a contemporary reference be?

I.D. What locations might the Psalmist mention today?

II.A. What group(s) might we reference today for those who think only of violence and power?

II.A.1.c. Do you think there are places today where we would draw “a line in the sand” to limit aggression? What would they be? Why do we choose to protect some and not others?

II.C. What kind of casualties of attack do you think we need to be concerned with today?

II.C.3. Can you imagine circumstances where your family would need to build some kind of a shelter? What might those circumstances be?

II.C.4.a. Do you think this position would stand in today’s debates about national security?

II.D.2. What risks do we face today by failing to face up to threats to our freedoms? What threatens our freedom of religion?

III.A. How can an American Christian square the idea that our national symbol includes arrows as well as a symbol of peace?

III.B.1. What kind of mistake do you worry that someone will make in today’s world?

III.C. 1. What policy should our nation have about world law? How does your faith impact your feelings about such a policy?

III.C.2. Do you think Americans today would concede that power to the U.N.?

III.C.2.b. How does the economic situation of the last few years impact your feelings about maintaining world peace?

III.D. Do you think Russia will ever again be such a large factor in the equation? What other entities do you view as important in these considerations?

III.D.4. What approach do you think we need to be taking to peace? How does your faith impact your choice?

IV. What impact do you think a lack of will would have today? What might we face?