



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“INVESTING OUR AFFECTIONS”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: Mark 14:32-35
Date: October 9, 1966

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath at Westminster Presbyterian Church on October 9, 1966.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Mark 14:32-35).

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.

You might also want to look at the words of the hymns that were part of the service that day:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Gracious Spirit, Dwell with Me

Blest Be the Tie That Binds

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.

I. Christ and His friends

A. Sitting with a friend through a deep family crisis, the friend said "We don't know what our friends mean to us until we go through real trouble."

B. Jesus' relationship to friends is no more clear than in the deep crisis of Gethsemane.

1. Having left the place of the last supper, Jesus passed from Jerusalem, accompanied by twelve disciples.

a) *As he entered the garden, he invited them to wait for him.*

b) *Taking Peter, James and John, he went deeper into the garden and asked that they stay awake and keep watch.*

c) *Then he went alone from there.*

2. Concentric circles

a) *The world that he loved --*

b) *A few friends -- only twelve*

c) *Three intimate friends*

d) *Himself*

II. A World of Facelessness

- A. Seward Hiltner, getting on the elevator saw two men in hospital attendant's jackets getting off.
1. "Anything special happen?" "Not really. Somebody in 3-B bumped himself off."
- B. Calling on MacWork in University Square Apartments I found the door locked.
1. I saw the directions to take the house phone, push the number of my friend's room; he would push a button that would unlock the door, etc.
 2. But I couldn't find my friend's name -- and I couldn't enter to ask someone -- so I had to walk away to find a public phone.
- C. A parishioner said, "Last place we lived, any time the front porch light went on, the neighbors all thought it was open house. We had no privacy, so we haven't cultivated our neighbors' friendships here.
- D. Sartre -- "Hell is other people."
- E. In most of the world, a phone is a status symbol. Here the unlisted number.

III. The Role of Anonymity

A. The City.

1. Ft. Couch was the stockade built by the original settlers for use in event of Indian attack.
2. Ft. Pitt served the same purpose down at the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela.
3. Cities were built as a place of mutual protection and defense.
 - a) *Immigrants, from the farms of Iowa or Puerto Rico, head for the city.*
4. The city becomes a threat.
 - a) *But one is safer at night in Africa's jungles than the jungles of some of our cities.*
5. Those in the city build physical and psychological walls to retain the privacy that was taken for granted in the small town.
 - a) *This privacy costs money.*
 - b) *We find people in our slums, desperate for lack of privacy -- no place to hang the laundry, no place to put a sick child away from the others, a toilet shared by three other families.*

B. One of the prices of Jesus Messiahship was his lack of privacy -- his lost anonymity.

1. Unlike the Pied Piper of Hamelin, he did not gather behind him in a growing crowd all those whom he encountered.
 - a) *Jesus had few friends -- only twelve.*
 - b) *And most of the time, they were not all with him.*
 - c) *He had only three with whom he was really close: Peter, James and John*

C. Martin Buber, "I-Thou" relationships

1. Decryd the "I-It" relationships of the city that made other people mere commodities to be used.

- a) *Our common origin in God demands that we treat all others as persons, to be treated with profound respect.*
- b) *God intended that we should discover ourselves as we enter into a depth relationship with others.*
- c) *To one who came from a small town, this is appealing.*
 - (1) We never thought in terms of "the grocer," "the doctor," "the minister"
 - (a) *Euphemistically, "the grocer" was Mr. Price, "the doctor" was Doc Hart, and "the minister" was Dr. Neale.*

IV. A Place for the "I-You" Relationship

A. "I-Thou" is impossible in the city.

1. We cannot take time to enter into an I-Thou relationship with the girl at the checkout counter -- nor with the trolley driver -- nor the telephone operator.
2. The I-Thou of the small town was not all it was cracked up to be. Everybody knew everybody else's business. Enmities were abiding and ostracism could be total.

B. "I-It" is still immoral -- even in the city.

1. Humiliated and angry toward a friend who treated the waitress scornfully -- ignored her when he didn't want what she offered.
 - a) *Boorishness in the guise of superiority.*

C. "I-You" -- a fractional relationship

1. This is not a denial of the "I-Thou" -- the place of deep personal relationships.
2. Nor does it justify our treating people as though they were things.
3. It protects us so that we have time to develop some genuine friendships.

V. The Application

A. Confused relationship with neighbors

1. We feel guilty that we aren't close to our neighbors
2. We sometimes feel a bit persecuted that our friendship doesn't seem to get the expected warm response.
3. Proximity is not a very adequate reason for establishing a deep relationship.

B. As students

1. Daughter wrote home "I discover that I am what I am because of the community from which I came. Now I see many communities, and I can pick and choose which I shall be a part of."

C. As a church.

1. We feel a nostalgia for the little church we knew -- until we remember some of the conflicts and politicking.
2. To try to convince you that we should be a fellowship of 2500 intimate friends is neither realistic nor helpful.
 - a) *It could only lead to frantic superficiality.*
3. But within the 2500, it is to be hoped that you will find a dozen who are good friends and three in whom you may have deep confidence.

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: Mark 14: 32-35

Mark 14:32 says: "They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

- What do you think it would be like to sit and watch Jesus pray? What do you think he might say in His prayers?

Mark 14:33 says: "He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled."

- What do you think is the significance of taking these three with Him?

Mark 14:34 says: "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

- Have you ever felt sorry to the point of death? How does it impact your feelings about being alone to know that Jesus could feel the need to have others stay with Him?

Mark 14:35 says: "Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him."

- What would lead you to fall to your knees to pray? Knowing what was in store for him, do you think the request for the hour to pass from Him is to reinforce His humanity?

Study Questions -- Part II*Sermon :*

I. A. When have been times when you became fully aware of what your friends mean to you?

I.A.2. Who is in your concentric circles? Who would be your 12? Your three?

II.A. Today we don't know who Seward Hiltner is but we can picture the situation. Yet in this situation, someone committing suicide is not considered anything special. Do you think the anonymity of the situation is why the person said "bumped himself off" or would it have been more likely that a more somber term would have been used? Do you think it was that feeling of not being special that might have led that person to take his life? What difference might it have made in that person's life if they had had a circle of 12 or even three to call on? What difference might it have made if he had Jesus in one of his circles?

II.B.2. With the proliferation of cell phones, do we ever now feel as if we must leave a place in order to make contact?

II.C. As an individual, how can you balance privacy and hospitality? How does being a Christian impact your feelings about offering hospitality to others?

II.D. At moments when you feel overwhelmed by people, what do you do and where do you turn?

II.E. Thinking again about cell phones and the internet, how has that changed the availability to connect in other parts of the world? How can it help us link to the people in Haiti, Malawi, India and other places in ways we couldn't in 1966?

III. Dr. Galbreath talks about how in frontier days the fort or the city was a place of mutual refuge and defense. In our time, the city -- or neighborhoods within it -- can be viewed as places of danger. What neighborhoods in Pittsburgh do you consider places of danger? How can we as Christians connect to the people living there so that they can feel the same sense of security we feel in our neighborhoods?

III.A.5.b. Have you ever lived in such close quarters that you felt you had no privacy? What impact did that have on your life? What would you do if you had a sick child and felt you had no place to keep her away from others? In some parts of town, siblings complain if they have to share a bathroom. Do you think they can even imagine what it is like to have a toilet shared by four families? How can we talk to our young people to help them grasp the way others live not just around the world but in parts of Pittsburgh? How can we use those lessons to teach them about caring for others?

III.C. According to the website "My Jewish Learning" Buber suggested that "when a person encounters another person in total immediacy, he or she may also experience a glimpse of God." According to Walter Kaufmann's translation of Buber's book *I and Thou*, in one model, which he calls "I-It," we relate to others as members of categories or as instruments of achievement. In the other, "I-Thou" or "I-You" (translations from the original German differ), we relate with the entirety of our being to another whole person. For Buber, this is more than a way of relating to others; it is also how we can, a bit at a time, experience God's presence in the world." Thinking back to the hospital story, the person who referred to a patient "bumping himself off" was following the I-It model. Do we risk our relationship with God when we see others as It? What steps can we take to make sure we are viewing others as "Thou?"

III.C. c. 1. Looking at that week's bulletin, it is hard to miss the fact that the most of the women who served in staff and leadership roles were identified as "Mrs." with their husband's first name rather than their own. In what way does that make those women appendages and lean toward "it" rather than "thou?" What does that tell you about the times and when do you believe that changed?

IV.A At what point do you think it is important to move from "it" to "thou" in any interaction? Doesn't God expect us to treat everyone as "thou" at least in attitude if not in detail? How can we make that a practical application of our faith in our daily lives?

IV.D. If we work to maintain the "thou" relationship with everyone, how do we then differentiate those in our circles, our twelves and threes?

V.A. With increased mobility, how do we define our neighbors?

V.B.1. We choose to be Christians. How do we make sure that our Christian community treats others as "thou" when our priorities can be so different?

V.C.2. What will you do this week to strengthen the "thou" of your relationship with the Westminster family? How can you make that effort meaningful and not superficial?