

The Motive of Right Living
Outline of Sermon

Earl Clement Davis

Pittsfield, MA

June 7, 1908¹

The error of missing the fundamental motive of life brings its just return of failing to enjoy the fundamental richness of life.

- I) The hunger for a happy and satisfying life is right.

- II) But simply because we desire that kind of a life is no guarantee that we shall have it.
 - 1) The world is full of people whose desires are all too evidently set upon the end of enjoying to its full capacity the daily life—the pleasure-seeker will tell you in defense of his folly that he is striving to enjoy life. Little does he realize, until some fatal day opens his eye unto wisdom, that he is simply paving the way for the most atrocious suffering, the just reward for his own short-sightedness.
 - 2) In the same way the selfish person of culture, in a less disgusting, but none the less erroneous manner, seeks for the satisfying life, but with the same results.
 - 3) In so far as our life falls short of an inner sense of richness that shall keep us aglow with a healthy optimism, that shall keep us alive with a glorious purpose, we have missed the deepest significance of life's meaning, and are missing its richest joys.

- III) There are two words in our language which express for us two types of life. One is selfishness and the other is altruism.

¹ This is from the third bound 1908 collection that includes a couple of reports and several sermons, which duplicate sermons found in 1908 bundles #1 and #2. This sermon, alone among the manuscripts in bundle #3, is explicitly dated.

- 1) The utterly selfish man is he who seeks in every way known to him to make his own life the center of all the movements of his activities. At whatever cost it may be to others, his wish must be recognized and satisfied. If it happens that he interprets the meaning of life in terms of the body, and understands that the enjoyable life means that the animal instincts of his body must have their cravings satisfied, and that at any expense he is to reap the full enjoyment of his gross nature, then we have the glutton, the inebriate, the libertine, whose very presence is a menace to decency and the integrity of society. We have had one or two examples of this type of man. In the end, he is left to himself to die in his loneliness to which he has exiled himself.
 - 2) Or suppose the selfish man thinks that the greatest satisfaction in life is to amass property. Everything that he does must be directed towards that end. He leaves behind him a trail of suffering, of corruption, and dishonesty. We have illustrations of that type of man.
 - 3) Or suppose that the selfish passion is that of power, then we have a Richard III willing to stoop to any depth if only he may gain power and control over men and make them serve his end. Witness the politician.
 - 4) Or the selfish passion may express itself in terms of religion, and religious zeal. Self-preservation is the instinct.
 - 5) But the result of all this is the same upon human life, and society. Selfishness breeds suffering and cruelty in the world, and leaves the individual a mean and helpless wreck to be buried in potter's field, to be held up as reproach among men, or to be held in contempt and disgust.
 - 6) On the other hand, is the man who can be called the entirely unselfish man. It is equally impossible to describe such a man.
- IV) The true way of life is the recognition of both of these. The one man is but one among many. Each has his own individuality. We must regard each as an end in himself, to be developed and to grow into the fullness of his manhood, to live the rich satisfying life.

V) We are told that the way to salvation is to love Christ, to enter into his spirit, to have his spirit enter into us, to serve his interests, to obey his truths, to be his follower.

1) This doctrine is profoundly true, if we give the broad meaning to the word Christ. Christ is a word which was applied to one who was a minister to humanity, whose great absorbing passion it was to labor to the end that men might see the way to the great and rich life.

2) It was applied to Jesus because he was such a one. It is a word moreover that means that the person who is thus described is one who is anointed of God, one in whom the spirit of God dwells.

3) To reinterpret the old teaching of the Christian church, or to go back to the teaching of Jesus, and we find that the secret of life is this, not as was said unto you, to love Christ alone in Jesus, but as in humanity, not to obey the teaching of Christ alone as given in the word of Jesus. Not to serve Christ alone as it was in Jesus, but as it is in humanity as we know it. I serve the living God, follow after and watch with the souls who are now praying alone in some garden of Gethsemane. Declare your allegiance to the Christ in humanity that is now being crucified upon the c...²

² Here the manuscript ends clearly incomplete.