

## **God is Firmly Fixed**

I read to you from Psalm 119:

“For ever, O Lord, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”

Another translation says it this way:

“For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in the heavens.”

That word “settled” is an old fashioned word. “Thy word is settled.” It tells of a world of religious consciousness that we don’t know much about.

“For ever, O Lord, thy word is firmly fixed in the heavens.”

Thy word is settled. There is a dependable architecture to the universe. In that dependability rests an understanding of a unity of all that is synonymous with the Word.

“Thy word, O God, is firmly fixed in the heavens.” We are not caught in helter-skelter time. There is available to each of us a relationship with Life that is dependable. The history of Humankind has confirmed to us that when that relationship is understood and when it is taken seriously, it not only informs life but also saves life.

“Thy word, O God, is firmly fixed”. The Bible says there are those who take advantage of others, but they will not gain the pleasure of this God. It says that this God is partial to those who bear the burden of others in humanity; and has sided with them in the struggle. The insight is all there. This God has built a universe in which love is the only thing that is certain to open the door to the tabernacle of God’s presence.

Our tradition says the future is always your opportunity to claim more understanding about what it means to be in servant relationship to the Creative One.

The world of the Psalmist, true though it is in the experience of many, seems strange in times like this. “Thy Word is forever settled in the heavens.” There is a Universe that is unified. God agonizes over the fracturing and the use and misuse of Creation.

What happens to these concepts of fulfillment in a world like our present world? What happens to ideas about salvation? People under the burden of the awesomeness of the Presence of God are pushed to ask questions about the nature of the Creator who gave us this life. It is clear from the standpoint of the Gospels that whatever else God is, God is at least sensitive to what God has

done. Therefore, we are not jokes of Creation. We are intentional life facts in the Mind and the Spirit of God. In fact, God is capable of knowing that we were in fact created. The scripture says it this way: "The hairs of your head are numbered." This was the language of inspiration that said that whatever vastness God is, vast Principle, vast Form, God is not so vast that we are not known.

So we develop what is known as the personal God. The theological error is that as this idea worked itself through the culture, the meaning of the personal God was transliterated. The Church transmuted this to mean that God is a "buddy." This is the foundation of a new cultural religion. Churches have come to the conclusion that religion exists with a God who is available at your behest, waiting for you to call with your latest "foot-cramp"! This is not a personal God, this is a chummy God; this is a pocket-sized buddy.

But this is not the God the Psalmist is addressing. As we approach the God of the Psalmist, we approach the Sense of the Presence of Awe – that Primary Force that dreamed the dream of Creation, and we have a sense that we are known. With limited vocabulary and cognitive mechanism, we can speak a word and we will belong to a God who knows the ocean, who knows the storm, and knows the storehouse of the snow. When we close our eyes in prayer, we can be sure that we are known. Yet I would not be so presumptuous as to say: Come on, I know God, and I need this now! But that is what our culture is telling us. Because of this error, we have no awe. "Thy Word, O God, is fixed forever" – that is an awe-inspiring idea.

The 119th Psalm bespeaks God's terrible investment in Creation. Thy Word, O God, is not something held apart. The earth is all a part of creation, and when the parts know it, they become servant to that Unified Work. There is, therefore, a terrible intentionality invested in the affairs of the world. God did not leave the Creation without the clear understanding of the wholeness, and of community, of love and affection, and the binding of the parts that were indicated in the nature of the design.

You say then, where do we look? Do you know what I think? Camus led me to this one. He said, you know, the oppressed are always the natural protectors of freedom. And as I look further, I have found that perhaps the deepest secrets of what I am trying to talk about are surfacing. The toiling masses are vibrating with the sense that life should be more for them. They may be tormented, struggling, but they are determined that their dreams of a better life will not disappear in the shadows of imperialism and massive power. Even though it may seem that their goals for freedom are literally receding, they struggle, they fight, and they die with a hope that pushes through the shadows of the moment, and hangs on to receding goals with fierceness. The wretched of the earth may be the new revelation of the Word of God that asserts that all belong – all colors, all classes, all races and all nationalities.

Maybe the message is there. The Church may be at the edge of becoming irrelevant to God. The Word of God would insist in times like this that every one of us would be struggling to find a way to contribute to the unity expression. Maybe the Church is not there.

God agonizes. God's statement of the Word in our time is obviously outside of the Church.

You know, there is another secret. It is not just outside the Church. Jesus did a very interesting thing. He taught us something that we can't forget. He said, that the Word is lodged in you. He didn't say in the Church. He said, in you. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is within you."

There is a short story by Tolstoy. There was a man who had no basic involvement in the social situation; he was really not concerned, and he listened to a piece of music, it was by Beethoven, it was the Kreutzer Sonata. In Tolstoy's story, a man heard this music and it changed his life. He became involved in a new social consciousness about the world in which he lived. Somebody said, well, how could that be? He experienced something akin to pure beauty. How could he then be changed? Because there was, what the philosophers call, the point within him. I call it the soul, where such unhampered certification of the Word is resident. A point within the person, where truth, and the demands of truth, reign in an unfettered way, and the moment of beauty resonates within. If this were not true, then a moment of beauty would seem foreign to the human being.

But anyone encountering a moment of defenseless beauty, finds an amazing tug on his or her own soul. It haunts and indicts. It is because there is something within them that knows. How did it get there? It is the waiting Word that is outside the culture, because the culture has rejected it. It is hidden in your soul. And in that moment of beauty, the more beautiful the experience, the more it speaks to you. It is almost like I have heard it before....I have been here before...I have seen this before, because it is the symbol of God's informing your personal existence; it is the point of truth within you from which you cannot run. Truth, the trysting place where the Love of God and the love that is the center of your aliveness, come together.

The Word of God is in no trouble. The promises registered in the Glory of what God has already done, not just in the Universe, but what God has done and is doing in you, is not up for grabs.

Thy Word, O God, is firmly set, and when we know that, we will come and serve.