

**“JESUS CHRIST --  
THE MAN  
FOR  
ALL SEASONS”**

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*(This wonderful outline of faith comes to us as a legacy of the Rev. Dr. Webster as a gift to each reader with love and hope from Joan McKechnie Webster and Joan Webster Maybury, the author's wife and daughter.)*

Text: “Follow me.” St. Matthew 4:19

A young man decided to become a Roman Catholic Priest, so he entered a monastery. After a few days he approached the Abbot and said, “I am quite willing to do anything around here, sir – wash the dishes, clean the floors, make the beds, study diligently – but please don’t ask me to preach.” The Abbot replied, “I am sorry, I cannot accede to your request. One of the requisites for any priest is that he must learn how to preach. In fact, I have you scheduled for tomorrow morning to lead the Devotions.” So, the young man dutifully assumed the pulpit the next morning in the Chapel, looked over his congregation and said, “Do you know what I am going to say this morning?” They shook their heads negatively. Then he added, “Neither do I. Please stand for the benediction.” The Abbot approached him and said, “Now, I appreciate your sense of humor, young man, but I definitely want you to bring the message tomorrow morning.” So, the young man again assumed the pulpit, looked over his congregation and said, “Do you know what I am doing to say this morning?” Mindful of what had transpired the previous morning, they shook their heads affirmatively. Thereupon, he said, “Well, since you know what I am going to say, there is no sense in my speaking further. Please rise for the benediction.” The Abbot once again approached him and said, “Now young man, I unequivocally want you to bring the message tomorrow morning and no kidding about it.” So again, he assumed the pulpit, looked over his congregation and said, “Do you know what I am going to say this morning?” Half of them, mindful of what had transpired two days before, shook their heads negatively. Then he said, “Will those who know tell those who don’t. Please rise for the benediction.”

This morning, friends, I know what I plan to say and by God's grace I hope that the Lord will enable me to say it. It relates to a thrilling theme that I hope proves inspiring to us all! It is entitled: "Jesus Christ – The Man For All Seasons." It is presented for a two-fold reason.

The first reason is because it was inspired by the splendid motion picture entitled, "A Man For All Seasons" which depicted the life of Sir Thomas More, whom you will remember was beheaded by edict of King Henry VIII in Tower of London because he would not betray his conscience and say to the King, "Your marriage with Catherine was illegal." True to his own best self, he went to the gallows! He was a man for all seasons!

The second reason the message is presented is because it relates to not "**A Man**" for all seasons, but "**The Man**" for all seasons! It calls our attention to the Man Who says to you and to me. "Follow Me."

*First, Jesus is a man for the springtime of life, for He furnishes to us a sense of purpose.* The springtime of life is a beautiful time, isn't it? "Then my heart with rapture fills and dances with the daffodils." "Oh, to be in England now that Spring is here." Yes, it's a beautiful time of life when we are filled with youthfulness and dynamic. However, it is a time when we desperately need a sense of purpose! One of our great colleagues in the Presbyterian ministry this past generation was Dr. Louis Evans, Sr., Senior Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, California, the largest Presbyterian Church in our denomination. He well-merited the position. Often, he spoke on college campuses. On one instance, when he was speaking to a group of college students, he asked this very important question: "What are you living for?" One student replied that he was going to be a lawyer; another said he was going to be a doctor, others said they were going to be architects, engineers, nurses. Thereupon, with that incisive ability, which was his, Dr Evans retorted, "I didn't ask you how you were going to earn a living. I asked you a more important question. What are you living for?" Now were you to ask that question of many persons, the answers would be distressing – for most people are living purposeless lives! Peter, in addressing his great congregation at Pentecost, said, "Save thyself from this untoward generation," meaning that it was a generation that was going nowhere and had no great objective.

*"Live for something, have a purpose.*

*And that purpose keep in view;*

*Drifting like a helmless vessel,  
Thou can't ne'er to life be true  
Half the wrecks that strew life's ocean,  
Had a star just been their guide  
Might today be sailing smoothly,  
But they drifted with the tide"*

Now one glorious aspect of our Lord is that He gives us a great purpose for which to live! He Himself lived for a great purpose did He not? As a boy we hear Him saying, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business." During his ministry he declared, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." Standing before Pilate at the end of his ministry, he affirmed, "To this end was I born, for this purpose came I into the world, that I might give witness unto the truth." On Calvary's Cross He declared, "It is finished." Yes, He lived for a great purpose! Moreover, our Lord gives **to us** a great purpose: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you." We are certainly not going to find the answer to our basic problems today through science. Thanks be to God for the wonders of science. Joan and I were privileged to go with the children and grandchildren to EPCOT Center in Disney World and we were tremendously impressed with the progress being made scientifically, Yes, thanks be to God for great scientific advances. But science is not going to save us. Science cannot make a bad man good. It cannot make a selfish man unselfish. It cannot make an angry man congenial. It cannot make a hateful person loving. It takes the Spirit of Christ in the human heart to do that! We cannot find the answers to our problems in secular education. Not one person associated with Watergate was not a college graduate. Theodore Roosevelt was correct when he said, "To train a person mentally and not morally makes him a menace to society! "Some people become so smart you cannot trust them! We must educate peoples' hearts as well as their minds. We cannot find the answers to our basic problems in militarism. It was not a minister but a General of the Army, Douglas Mac Arthur, who said: "The problem is basically theological. It must be of the Spirit if we would save the flesh." The answer is to be found in a nutshell in this simple illustration. A little girl came to see Daddy, who was a Minister, on Saturday night. He knew she loved him dearly, so he didn't reprimand her. He had been busy all week as any Minister worth his salt always is. Not wanting to scold her, he happened to notice two maps of the world on his desk. He tore one

up into several pieces and said, “Now, honey when you get the world together you can come back and show it to Daddy. “He thought that would take her the rest of the evening, However, within a few minutes she came back again with the map of the world all together. He inquired, “Honey how did you ever get the world together so quickly? Well, Daddy, on the other side of the map I found a picture of Jesus and I found that when I put Jesus in place, the world came out all right!” You know as well as I that that is the answer to our problems today! If we heeded the world of our Lord, “Follow me.” Our problems would melt like butter before a fire! In God’s good name, let’s live for a great purpose.

***Second, Jesus is the Man for the summer of life, for he furnishes to us a sense of romance.*** Don’t you love that word? So many people live lives that are prosaic. J. Ramsay MacDonald experienced the difficult task of seeing his lovely wife die. You doubtless remember that he was the Prime Minister of Great Britain. On her dying bed she turned and said, “Ramsay, I have one last request to make of you. Always keep romance alive in the lives of our children.” That’s beautiful, isn’t it? May I be a wee bit personal? This past summer Joan and I were privileged to visit the Northwest with all of its beauty – Banff, Lake Louise, Jasper, Vancouver, and Victoria. While we were in Victoria, we were privileged to stay in a hotel with which many of you are familiar, “The Empress,” As we entered one afternoon, I noticed a pageboy all alone. I wandered up and said, “It’s a beautiful afternoon, isn’t it? He answered, “It certainly is, Sir. “As he answered Joan and I discerned that he was from Australia. Thereupon, I said, “I notice you are from Down Under.” We chatted for a little while. As I was about to leave, he inquired, “Are you on your honeymoon?” I replied, “Yes, a perpetual honeymoon for almost 40 years.” He replied, “My goodness, let me shake your hands, I see thousands of couples coming into this hotel, yet so few seem to be so in love that it radiates!” I added, “Well, I am blessed with a wonderful partner, and I learned years ago to always keep romance alive!”

How do you do it? By following Jesus Christ! Jesus teaches us, does He not, that we are here to love one another. We are here to serve one another. Harken to the following story that comes out of Norway. A wife went down to the shore to see her husband and sons off on a fishing expedition late one afternoon. They headed out to sea. Everything went well for a while and darkness descended. Alas, very unexpectedly, a terrific storm arose -- so much so that Dad said, “We had better head back home.” The storm became so tempestuous that all the lights on shore went out even the light in the lighthouse! They couldn’t see a thing and they didn’t know

where they were going. Death seemed imminent. At that same time the mother at home was working in the kitchen and inadvertently knocked a lamp over and the house went on fire. Due to the terrific wind, it was soon aflame, and it burned to the ground. The husband and sons at sea saw the light and headed towards shore. When they came ashore there was the wife standing. She cried out, "Carl, Carl, we've lost everything!" There was silence. He disembarked, ran forward, gave her a hug, and said, "Ingrid, we didn't lose everything, We still have each other and the boys. A few hours ago, it seemed as though we were going to be lost at sea. We still have everything that really matters!" When are we going to learn the validity of the worlds of our Lord, "Man's life consisteth not of things that he possesses?" Man's life is at its best when he is loving others! Yes, Jesus is The Man For The Summer of life for He furnishes to us a sense of romance.

***Third, Jesus is the man for the autumn of life for He furnishes to us a sense of values.*** How desperately we need them! So many people get their values all mixed up Dr. William Temple, one of the great theologians of the last generation, wrote that the world today is somewhat like a store in which a mischievous boy has gone at night and switched all around the price tags. On the things which are expensive he puts the cheap price tag, and on the things that are inexpensive he puts an expensive price tag, and the next day people are taken in! We give today \$2,000,000 a year to ball players. But we give the average college professor - most of them with Ph.D. degrees -- \$25,000 a year! There is something the matter with our sense of values. Jesus says the greatest value we can have is character: "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?" Shakespeare wrote. "With all thy getting, get character." Please remember the following story out of the Highlands of Scotland. An American tourist was visiting there at one of the Lodges enjoying a most delectable meal in a lovely setting. He got his eye on a beautiful Collie dog and inquired who owned the dog. He learned that it was owned by the gentleman who was waiting on him. He said, "Mac, I understand you own that Collie dog. I am taken on with it. I would like to buy it." Mac replied, "I am sorry. It is not for sale." "Oh, come on now. I am blessed with the world's goods." He enjoined as he pulled out his wallet. "I'm quite willing to give you a most generous gift for the dog." Thereupon, Mac replied, "Sir, have you not yet learned that there are some things in life you cannot buy?" You may be privileged to buy a Cadillac, but you cannot buy character! If you are blessed with the world's goods, you may buy a house, but you can't buy a home! "It takes a heap'o' living to make a house a home." When are we going to learn that the most important things in life

are intangible. At the entrance to Milan Cathedral there is this beautiful inscription in Latin, "That which pleases is for a moment, that which troubles is for a moment. That only is important that is eternal." An old minister was speaking to a young college student and inquired: "What do you contemplate doing with your life?" The young lad answered that he contemplated going to law school. "That's wonderful. Then what?" "Well, after I graduate from Law School, I expect to enter a law firm and I hope to prosper." "Splendid. Then what?" "Oh, I hope to be married and raise a family," "Well, that's wonderful. Then what?" "Oh, I hope someday to be sufficiently prosperous to be able to retire." The old minister replied, "That's wonderful. Then what?" "Well, I guess I'll die." "Then what?" "Well, said the young man, I have never given that a thought." Said the old minister. "Don't you think you should? You are going to be living in eternity far longer than you are going to be living here." Are you living for the things that are eternal? Jesus Christ is The Man for the Autumn of life for He gives to us a sense of values.

***Last, Jesus Christ is the man for the winter of life, for He gives to us a sense of resources.*** Lord Buchan, the great Canadian statesman, gave the greatest definition I know of an atheist: "An atheist is a person who has no invisible means of support." That's excellent! A Christian, then, is a person who possesses invisible means of support! God knows we need them. The longer I am privileged to be in the ministry the more I am surprised, not at the people who crack but at the people who carry on - thanks to the resources they have found in Christ! "My God shall supply you every need," wrote Paul.

He gives to us the resource of His Word! "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My Word shall never pass away," A business executive was quoting to his secretary a certain passage from the Scripture, He wanted to make sure it was correct, so he called in the office boy and asked that he go downstairs to the library and bring up a copy of the Bible. He stood before his boss who said something that I hope you will remember. "Son, right now you are carrying the Bible, In later life, you will find that the Bible carries you." Yes, it will carry you over the rough places. In the moment of bereavement, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." In the moment of weakness, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

He gives to us, too, the resource of prayer. Said Jesus. "Ye ought always to pray." A number of years ago a young man in Kansas age 13, was running home from school. He fell and hurt his right knee. He didn't think anything about it at the time. Several hours later it began to swell but he continued to do the chores at the

farm along with his five brothers. Mother and Dad went off to Church on Sunday morning and attended services in the morning and afternoon and arrived home late. To their consternation they found that their son was in bed unable to move. They immediately called their doctor who came to examine the boy and said, "My goodness, the boy's life is in jeopardy. We're going to have to amputate." The boy, thereupon, said, "Please don't! Please don't!" The doctor responded: "Only a miracle can save this boy if we don't amputate." Thereupon, the young lad asked, "Will you please give us forty-eight hours to pray about this matter?" So, Mother and Dad and five brothers united in a continuous circle of prayer. The old doctor came back frequently and said, "You are wasting your time." When forty-eight hours had passed, the old doctor again examined the boy and said "I don't understand it. A miracle has taken place! The boy's leg is going to be all right!" Who was that 13-year-old boy? Ike Eisenhower! How different the world would be today without him – the leader of the free world! He was a man of prayer! Later in life, during the invasion of Europe, he stood on a promontory off Italy. As he saw the planes heading for the invasion of Italy, he doffed off his hat, covered his heart, turned to his colleagues and said, "Let us pray." God help you if you haven't got the invisible means of prayer!

What, then, is the gist of this message? It is this: Jesus Christ is The Man for the Springtime of life, giving to us a sense of purpose. He is the Man for the Summer of life, giving to us a sense of romance, He is The Man for the Autumn of life, giving to us a sense of values, and He is the Man for the Winter of life, giving to us a sense of resources. Yes, He is The Man for All Seasons! May we have the sagacity to accept His invitation, "Come, follow me."