

UNDERSTANDING THE BURDEN WE FEEL

JAMES EARL MASSEY

Understanding the burden we feel. The act of preaching involves the preacher and the hearers in a series of dynamic moments. On God's initiative a speaker does his or her work bidding for an interaction that can grant comfort or the pressure of challenge, and the whole experience pulls upon the inwardness of one and all, speaker and hearer. As for the preacher's experience of this inward pressure, Samuel H. Miller, onetime Dean of Harvard Divinity School referred to it as "the joy and embarrassment of preaching." The inimitable Gardner Calvin Taylor uniquely described this inward pull as "the sweet torture of Sunday morning."

THE BURDEN OF PREACHING

I have long looked upon preaching and graciously experienced it as a burdensome joy. Burdensome, because of how the preparation and delivery aspects of the pulpit task weigh so heavily upon the preacher's selfhood, together with so many other unique demands. But preaching is also a joy because of the divine purpose that makes it necessary and the redeeming eventfulness that it can effect for those who receive it with faith and openness. Whenever anyone is hearing a God-sent preacher, the future is opening before them. Those of us who preach know that ours is a work of mingled drama and felt distress. The drama has to do with being on business for God while the distress issues from that awesome feeling of being so immediately responsible and so personally exposed as we do our work. This felt responsibility is sensed as a burden.

Students of the Hebrew text of the Old Testament will recall Isaiah's frequent use of the word *massa* to describe what speaking for God made him feel. This term is used quite often about some physical load under which an animal or a person is laboring, but Isaiah used it to reflect the weighty responsibility of the prophetic task.

Dr. James Earl Massey delivered this lecture during the Beeson Lectures February 18-20, 1997, held on the campus of Asbury Theological Seminary. His theme for the three-day series was "Preaching from the Inside-Out." The text presented here was transcribed directly from Dr. Massey's lecture. Dr. Massey is a life trustee at Asbury Seminary and dean emeritus and distinguished professor-at-large at Anderson University School of Theology.

THE ASBURY THEOLOGICAL JOURNAL

SPRING 1997 • VOL. 52 • NO. 1

I could cite you the instances—many, many, many. I have them listed here. Many recent versions have translated the Hebrew word *massa* as “oracle” departing from the King James Version’s “burden,” but the notion of heaviness is still to be understood as associated with the task of proclaiming the oracle because the responsibility of handling the oracle falls so weightily upon the one charged by God to voice it. Isaiah, however, was not alone in his use of the term. A look at Lamentations, a look at Nahum, a look at Zechariah, a look at Malachi will also reveal this use of the term *massa*. It’s what the prophet felt, it’s what the God-sent preacher feels. And how any preacher can become top heavy in doing his or her work and feel proud of it is something I don’t understand because of the burdensome nature of the whole task.

The preacher’s sense of feeling burdened as God’s speaking servant is compounded by the attendant awareness of being so personally exposed as we speak. One does feel exposed, for one is speaking not only about God, about whom so many say there is so little we can know, but we are speaking for God, although there are those who say there are no ultimate truths. We feel the task as inward pressure, indeed, a distressing burden, which is perhaps why some preachers opt to use humor as they begin the sermon. Or they might deal in levels of confession throughout the sermon seeking to find some measure of relief from the pressure through the spirit of a lighter sharing with the hearers. Now, we all know that there is some measure of relief that comes when we achieve some sense of rapport with others who are listening to us, when we are assured that they have to some extent identified with us and are open to what we are saying. But this grants the pressured self a sense of companionship on the one hand and a wider working space on the other.

It might seem very strange that preachers feel so burdened and exposed since preaching is usually done in the communal context of worship with the companionship of fellow believers as an encouraging resource. But the fact is that no matter how many loving sharers are present, no matter how many are avidly participating in the worship, the one preaching to them inevitably stands at some distance from them precisely because he or she has been sent to speak to them rather than for them. So the speaking preacher is initially pressed in ways that the hearers are not pressed, and our very service, if faithful, keeps us open to that pressure, and that pressure is greatly intensified when our concern to share God’s message seems lightly regarded or is so blatantly resisted. To feel put off or rejected as a speaker rather than accepted as one can give one a threatening sense of aloneness and a very heavy feeling of dreadful exposure.

The prophet Elijah experienced this. You will recall his almost absurd cry to God as he felt pressured by the murderous tactics of an unrelenting Jezebel. He lamented, “I alone am left, and they are seeking to take my life.” The prophet Jeremiah openly confessed his felt distress to God and dared to curse the day of his birth because his work for God was being so steadily disregarded by some and openly defied by some others. “Cursed be the day on which I was born, the day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed. Why did I come forth from the womb to see toil and sorrow and spend my days in shame?” Yes, personal exposure is the right expression, because we who preach are always under scrutiny, and sometimes we are under the judgment of those who might dare to differ with what we are saying. It is not unusual to be met with cautious eyes or suspicious eyes

as we look out and see those who are gathered before us. And we can feel very, very exposed when those glares become stares with an attitude of rejection.

Another aspect of feeling exposed, pulpit ministry opens us to the curiosity people have about public figures. More often than not, the preacher is an intense personality, and people hunger to know as much as possible about such persons. Even preachers are curious about each other, always seeking some inside knowledge of each other, interrogating each other about "What are you reading, now?" Someone asked me that in a meeting we had last night. We interrogate our experiences, we interrogate our springs of thought, we interrogate the methods used in preparing sermons and more. Preachers are intense public figures, and we want to know—we who are the public who listen to preachers—want to know what makes them tick. Even now some of you are perhaps asking inwardly what kind of person I am.

Those who preach are like all other humans. We have emotional responses to life and just as we raise questions about others, there are those who raise questions about us. There is no way around being at the center of things when we are in the public view because of public service. And there's no way around feeling at the edge of the crowd, even as we long to be regarded as an accepted part of the crowd. No matter how we work at it, the preacher is a singular individual who feels burdened when doing his or her work. No way around it, not even by comedy or humor, no way around it.

The late Dag Hammarskjöld understood this, although not a preacher. And like the rest of us he struggled long and hard with the heavy weight and sense of exposure. His work as Secretary General of the United Nations was very heavy, very tiring, and usually discouraging. On July 6, 1961, two months before his tragic death in a plane crash in what was then called the Belgian Congo, Dag Hammarskjöld wrote this in his diary: "Tired and lonely, so tired, my heart aches. It is now, now, that I must not give in." He speaks to himself: "On the paths of the others are resting places, places in the sun where they can meet. But this is your path, and it is now, now that you must not fail."

THE CIRCLE OF OUR LIMITATIONS

This exposed inwardness is compounded by something else. A felt limitation in the use of words as we preach. Every earnest preacher knows the suffering that attends the attempt to make what Shirley Hazzard once referred to as "the testimony of the accurate word." Have you ever had the experience of giving a sermon and you felt that your words had been strictly accurate? Then you're one of the first to feel that way. How often it is that we who preach return home sad, lamenting the distance there was between the vision that fired our hearts before preaching and the meager expression we gave of it in the sermon we delivered. The dream we had thrilled us, but the delivery we gave of it shamed us. It's a scene we all know so well. How difficult to testify with an accurate word! We long to preach with adequacy and fullness, but the quest to do so seems unending and we say, "well, maybe I'll get it right next time." Perhaps it is as if God himself has placed before us a line that we humans cannot cross with a rule placed before us that his Word must be known and heard in the circumstantial circle of our limitations, and our agonizing with language is not only a

test to our intent to be faithful, but that the very struggle we have is a part of the process that reveals God's will to those who hear us.

The quest for the accurate word achieves its end not in the speaking, but in the miracle of hearing which lays before us the duty of speaking what we must, what we are sent to share so that the listening ears can be readied by the participant Spirit of God who always does exceeding abundantly above all that we have spoken. This awesome sense of limitation should open us to the help of the Holy Spirit and keep us mindful that apart from him we cannot preach. Only so can we experience that divine breakthrough by which God's rich treasures are ably served from these earthen vessels.

Henry Ward Beecher's early ministry was plagued by a sickening inwardness due in very large measure to his concerns over his preaching task. Now, I know those of you who are students of Beecher's life will know that most treatments of him highlight his enthusiasm about everything, and his great pleasure in being a public man. But there was a time during his first pastorate in Lawrenceburg, Indiana, the state in which I live, when heavy feelings of inadequacy plagued him so much so that he often went to bed with a headache after having preached. He almost left the ministry during that time of test. He finally found a release from his problem through deepening his spirituality. What Henry Ward Beecher felt as an agony on Sunday night after having preached. Englishman John Angell James experienced on Saturday night just before having to preach on Sunday. R.W. Dale, the biographer of John Angell James and the successor to him as pastor of Carr's Lane Church in Birmingham, England, explained that for many years John Angell James scarcely ever slept on Saturday night, so uncontrollable were the apprehensions with which he looked forward to the services on Sunday, so depression followed his restlessness and uncertainty was mingled with it because he thus preached without having properly slept. He sometimes canceled preaching appointments because he dreaded the way preparing for them pulled upon him inwardly.

George Redford, a minister friend of John Angell James suggested to his friend, "Your irritability and your nervousness might not be entirely physical, sir. It could stem from your excess anxiety to acquit yourself fully up to your own idea of excellence and the expectations of the public. You need a simple reliance for assistance upon God, who said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'" There are always Job's comforters, always somebody who knows more than we know about why we are in some circumstance. But whatever the underlying cause for it, John Angell James for many years suffered a regular Saturday night headache as the shadow of the pulpit responsibility fell across his mind and spirit. Nor will we avoid that shadow.

The shadow falls across every preacher's path, but we will not all experience it the same way. The effects of that shadow have to do with our felt limitations, our perceived needs, our lingering fears, fear of failure, fear that one is not speaking with sufficient clarity, fear that one is burning out, fear that one's creativity is dwindling, fear that the spring of that creativity has dried up. All of this can cause panic, and we'll always be looking for someone to take our place in the pulpit, even through a mad scramble on the telephone, asking for someone to come and relieve us.

Søren Kierkegaard once commented, "There is nothing more dangerous for a person, nothing more paralyzing than a certain isolating self scrutiny in which world histo-

ry, human life, society, in short, everything disappears and in an egotistical circle one stares only at one's own navel." This inwardness, this pressure, this burden must be released to God if ours is not to be a Sickness unto Death, to use a title of one of Kierkegaard's books. How often I have felt what one of our poignant Negro spirituals voices: "I am troubled, I am troubled, I am troubled in mind. If Jesus don't help me, I surely will die." I must confess that is my feeling every time I ascend the pulpit steps. This sense of inadequacy and discouraging depression that is experienced by some can spell inward death unless these are surrendered to God with concern for ready assistance on the spot, even as Jesus was assisted in the Garden by an angel to give him strength to go through with the ordeal of the next day. How anyone can be proud of a sermon is something I don't understand.

BEARING THE BURDEN

Something that helps in the bearing of the burden—trust, trust in God. This kind of trust makes preaching affirmative rather than rambling. True preaching is an affirmative work. The call to preach is a claim upon us to be believers, eager servants out of which a personal experience with the Lord and deep conviction about his truth grants us something to say at the personal level. Affirmative preaching is a declaration of salvific truth and our inwardness stands utterly exposed in that we affirm it personally as worthy of trust, because we trust it. And whenever the preacher has this there is always contagion and challenge because we honestly and forthrightly share what we believe. Preaching does not involve doubts except to dispel them. Preaching involves truths. When we can unhesitatingly promote scriptural truths as fixed, authoritative, relevant for human need, what a difference it makes in someone's world-view when they trust it.

Take an affirmative announcement like this one. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The Bible begins with an affirmative word. I know some of you want to construe it as an adverbial statement. "When in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, the earth being without form and void..." I know, I know. It is still affirming God as the Creator. Scripture is affirmative! What a ray of hope beams on someone's problematic path when they hear us declare, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." What a ringing call to faith that sounds forth in Paul's soteric sentence, "Christ died for us. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And there is that steady assurance that grabs us when we hear the writer to the Hebrews remind us, "He (meaning Jesus) is able to help those who are being tempted," and to understand this is to look for no excuse for failure. We don't need excuses. We don't need to fail. This is what we do in preaching. He is able to help those who are being tempted not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. Now, the sharing of truths like these is worth all the self exposure that preaching requires. After all, we can truly affirm something only as the self stands trustingly related to it.

This trust is also necessary if our preaching is to be more than mere artistry. Now, to be sure, the best preaching always involves art, that is to say, it involves a high level of planning and control in the way the truth is shared. The proper matching of the "what" with the "how," the substance with the style. That's a matter of personally

achieved art, personally expressed, which makes us have to work at preparing the sermon. The sermon idea or sermon insight comes to us as a germ, but we must deal with it in such a way that it can be expressed and understood and applied. That takes work. And it amounts to an art that we are trying to achieve.

Suzanne K. Langer once commented that all art is the creation of expressive forms or apparent forms expressive of human feelings. The best preaching is both a divine word—that germ, that insight—and a personal expression of it. That's our work. It's God's work to grant us the insight. It's our work to shape the insight for public hearing.

It's a shared insight allied with a distinct feeling tone, no way to preach without feeling it. Preaching is never in the abstract, not true preaching. Preaching is very seldom, if ever, purely objective because the self is so utterly involved in it. Justice George Lawler explained it like this: Let me explain before I give this quote, Lawler was writing in the time when they were not using the kind of speech to which we have become accustomed, so he talks about man, so I'm not guilty of chauvinism, I'm quoting somewhat: "When a man speaks an authentic word, he is seeking to speak his very selfness, and since he is attempting to exteriorize his interiority, we refer to that speech as an *uttering* or an *outing*." That's what speech is, the inside being shared outwardly. Planning and handling the form that this utterance takes is what constitutes the art of preaching of which Dr. Demaray is such an adept professor. And so is Dr. Kalas, and so is Dr. Killian, and if I look around I'll see some others, I'll call their names.

Those who do their planning in a spirit of loyalty to God will never be content with mere artistry. They'll keep the self open to God and the sermon surrendered to the function it should rightly serve. Mere artistry in the pulpit is a product of vain self love. I call it a selfish attempt to hide an exposed self behind the fig leaves of rhetoric or vain drama. The honest preacher knows and cannot forget that sermons are only means. They are never ends in themselves. That preacher also chafes under the awareness that rarely, very rarely, if ever, does any sermon, however well planned, do full service to the text that stimulated the thought and stirred the soul. The text is bigger than the sermon. We would do well to be content with the fact that despite any sermonic prowess that we develop, our sermons always end up as weak carriers of the initial vision of the truth. They are something far less than the grand, living insight of the Word. We spend our lives forever working to make our statements better servants of the Truth. In doing so, we will be forever trying to turn our insides out in a way that really matters.

Donald Macleod, emeritus Professor of Preaching at Princeton Theological Seminary, a dear friend of Dr. Demaray and mine, some years ago gathered and published the descriptions thirteen acknowledged pulpit masters had prepared under his direction about how they go about preparing for the pulpit. Each one gave a specimen sermon along with their essay. The book was entitled *Here Is My Method*, and its appearance in print was in response to a request from many, many preachers who had been to the Institute on Theology at Princeton and persons had heard and admired those thirteen spokespersons and they wanted to know the secret of how they work. Now, the preachers who requested that kind of book wanted to learn from those whom they considered masters, anxious to gain greater insight so that they

could develop excellence. Clarence Stonelyn Roddy prepared and published a similar volume highlighting a different group of preachers for study. Now, both sets of preachers shared their testimony and they shared their secret, but only in part. The full secret of effective pulpit work involves more than training and talent. It involves mysterious and individual factors. It involves a personal application of the self. It involves the harnessing of what is inward through consecration and spirituality. The true secret of preaching can never be shared in any book. It is felt, but it cannot be fully talked about.

In his *Confessions*, Aurelius Augustine recalled at one point his young years with the Manicheans and how utterly disappointed he had been with one of the teachers he had had who proved unable to answer some questions that he constantly sought to press. The teacher was fluent, the teacher was eloquent, the teacher was artistic in speech, but Augustine commented, "but of what profit to me was the elegance of my cup bearer since he offered me not the more precious draft for which I was thirsty?"

Develop artistry! Sure, do it! But let it serve the Truth we are called to share. Michael Polanyi wrote something along this line with respect to the effective use of tools. "We gain freedom in using tools only when our attention shifts from their use to the result they can help us to achieve." In Alabama where I am planning to reside after I sell my home in Anderson, there is a library now being prepared out on our family property. This very day the carpenter is there working away. And I watched him the other day before I came up here, I watched him as he was using his tools. His tools were so much a part of his being, the hammer seemed but an extension of his arm. No slipping off the nail. That's artistry. We must learn how to use words in such a way that they do what words are supposed to do—not call attention to themselves but to that which they represent.

I once heard Gardner Taylor say while lecturing to some ministers, "one of our chief problems as preachers is finding enough inner security by God's grace to do our work without being intimidated by the society around us, without trying to court the favor of the people who are in power." He said this while talking about the perils preachers face in doing their work. It is in the strength of a divinely-given call to preach that the preacher will rightly deal with this business of an inner security. It does not come by being affirmed by our congregation, not fully. It comes by being affirmed by God as it did in the life of our Lord. "You are my Son, beloved. In you I find pleasure." There must be on your part and mine that tie with God so that in the midst of the burden we feel, there is that deeper sense of assurance that bids us keep at the task however imperfectly it seems to be managed by us. This genuine experience of divinely given call to preach is one of those factors that assists me to bear the burdens associated with the pulpit experience.

THE CALL TO PREACH

The pulpit task is an immense task, so overwhelming that no human naturally possesses the resources demanded to fulfill it. That's why one must be anointed to preach as was our Lord. In speaking about a call to preach I'm referring to a realized experience of having been chosen by Almighty God for this task. A remembered event of

encounter that marks out the receiving person's identity and involvement as a preacher. Being called to preach involves the understanding that God has addressed us personally about the use of our life. Although the experience of having been addressed does not happen to everyone in just the same way, but however one is initially aware of that call, at least five crucial features can be isolated regarding what the call does and what the call means. Let me cite them very quickly.

First, being called to preach results in a convictional knowledge about an assignment which is ours personally. When God addresses us by whatever means and in whatever context, we experience either a sense of opportunity or demand. In some cases the call might tap a prior interest that we have or it can generate a new interest that surpasses all other interests to which we have been giving our attention. The result is a convictional knowledge about an assignment which must be handled personally.

Second, the call guides us into a challenging direction that becomes central to our new identity. We are thereafter linked more intimately with God, but with the added understanding that we are identified with the divine will in a particularized way at the level of service.

Third, the call is an experience that aids our self development, granting us a point around which the self can be fully integrated. It acquaints us with a sense of responsibility? Yes. With a sense of opportunity? Yes, but also with an arena of giftedness, and when we stay within the arena of giftedness, we do not tend to fail. Never look at someone else and wish that you could preach as they preach. They are the preacher. The preacher that has become what you see through their surrenderedness, their giftedness, and their call. You become the preacher that you can be through your surrender, your giftedness based upon a call. And through the very fact that God deigns to call us or to give us that sense of assurance that it is possible for us to labor in that arena with some sense of meaning because God does not call by whim. He calls on purpose.

Fourth, the experience of receiving a call to preach grants one a new surge of life. It grants a plus to our normal energies and our natural powers. Something more is there than was originally there. Howard Thurman once explained it this way: "When a man is able to bring to bear upon a single purpose all the powers of his being, his whole life is energized and vitalized." I dare you to give yourself fully to the task to which you have been called. Your studies will be easier. Your life will be integrated, and you'll find a sense of assurance that keeps you at the task, handling the burden more meaningfully. At that moment you'll know what in the living of your life you are for and what in the living of your life you must be against. Preachers are not tentative figures. They know who they are, they know why they are when they live by means of the demands and the opportunities in the call.

Fifth, staying surrendered to the demands and the opportunities for which the call is given opens new springs of creativity within us. New springs of creativity? Yes. When God calls someone into service, there is the conditioning process by which they are readied for that service, and in many church bodies a prescribed period of seminary study is required before one can receive a regular pulpit assignment. Time is mandated by the denomination during which one must remain under the tutelage of

approved scholars who have been commissioned by the church to map out and monitor their students' learning process. And by means of a measured set of formal studies together with supervised field work, seminarians are certified as having met the formational and informational standards traditionally required to gain standing as an ordained clergyperson. Honoring benchmarks set long ago for theological education in America and with a continuing close attention to the perceived needs of the church in our time, the fourfold curriculum pattern of an accredited seminary is of such scope that a student needs at least three years to complete it. Don't try to rush the process. Don't try to avoid the process. The wisdom of the church is found in what has been established for the training of the ministers. I know there are those across the states who are just growing up doing things. I know, I know, but without the backing of a call, the time will come when the burden will prove too much for them and they will not know on whose shoulders their work really rests.

Now, I've dealt with the grand experience of the call in a very brief fashion. I gave five things regarding it, but there are some longer and more detailed studies that treat this experience in fuller fashion. Let me cite one or two books. William H. Myers wrote *The Irresistible Call to Preach*. In this volume he presented the call stories of 86 preachers, all of them African Americans, all of them nationally known, some known internationally, based on interviews that he had with them. A companion volume was published not long afterward by Eerdmans entitled *God's "Yes" Was Louder Than My "No,"* echoing Karl Barth. In this book, this companion volume, Myers broke fresh ground by using cross-disciplinary research skills to bring multiple perspectives to bear upon the call stories reported in the earlier book. After treating the call experience from the standpoint of story and narrative, he explored the call experience as a rite of passage, and he examined the hermeneutical and the cultural factors associated with the experience as explained by those whom he had interviewed. I urge a study of these two volumes. It might help you to dig a little deeper in your self understanding. At the same time you're digging a little deeper in the nature of a call from God. Although these two volumes are based upon interviews with African-American preachers, there are some insights in the volumes for anyone seeking a greater understanding of the phenomenon of a call to preach.

MY OWN CALL FROM GOD

I must be personal as I close. I want to report that I did not choose the preaching ministry. It was chosen for me. I was summoned to it through an experience of call that is still as fresh in my memory now at this telling as when it all first happened. It was an experience that has been indispensable for my sense of direction and my inner security as I sought to honor God and maintain my footing in the sometimes turbulent waters of the preaching task. I had planned to be a musician, not a minister. All the signs along the path of my interest pointed to a career as a pianist, not that of a preacher. But it was not to be so, and for reasons which point back strictly to Almighty God.

My experience of call happened on a Sunday morning. I was at church, part of a congregation engaged in worship. The morning service was in progress, but my atten-

tion was divided that morning. I was aware of the progress of the service, but was paying more attention to a music score that I had brought with me to study. I often carried some music score with me when away from home, intent to use any and every available moment to examine the score for its notation. I was studying the structure of what the composer had written. I was studying the phrasing by which the music was being expressed, I was studying any problems in the score in order to ease the memorization process once I got back to the piano. That day in the service I had with me a score of a waltz by Chopin. During a brief let up in the concentration on that waltz I found myself captured by the spirit of the service, and as I honored the meaning of that hour and opened myself to the God who was present before all of us, I felt caught up in an almost transfixed state, and I heard a voice speaking within my consciousness, "I want you to preach." It was a very strange, but a very sure happening. The voice at one and the same time disturbed me and yet settled me. I did not recognize the voice and yet it was not a strange one really. The message the voice gave was so forceful and the meaning was so distinct and clear, I knew I would have to say, "Yes." Still in the grip of that encounter, I turned to the person sitting next to me. In the uprush of my feelings, I interrupted her worship. We were not there together. We just happened to be sitting beside each other that morning. But under felt necessity to announce the news of my new direction, I asked her, "Do you know what I am going to do with my life?" Well, how could she know until I told her? Interestingly, she was an ardent Christian, a young woman, one of the more serious members of our youth fellowship. And the question that I raised interrupting her worship, she accepted it. It was not appropriate for me to ask, disturbing her contact with God, but I had to ask it. And she said, "No, James. What?" I said, "I'm going to be a preacher." Her reply was almost immediate, and she smiled as she gave it. The first word of encouragement I heard. "James, that is wonderful. That is wonderful." It was all so graphic to my inner sight and all so gripping on my mind and spirit. The voice that called me was so clear, and its bidding, though gentle, bore the unmistakable authority of a higher realm. I had a new direction and a duty for which to prepare. But I also had a problem. The new direction I had been given put me into an identity crisis because I had been so deeply involved in preparing to be a concert pianist. So, a prolonged and painful process by which I was inwardly sifted began. And I was learning at a deeper level how to submit my will and my plans to what I now understood as God's sovereign plan for me.

Fifty-one years have transpired since that holy hour of call. They have been years filled with pondering and preaching, searching and finding, gaining and losing, years of mountain top experiences, and journeys through the valleys and jungles of life. But I have been sustained in the midst of all of it by the meaning and momentum gained from listening and yielding during that great moment of grace. If God never says another word to me, I heard enough in the call to take me from here to my grave. Since that time of experienced call, I have known with surety the work to which my head, my heart, and my hands were to be devoted, and knowing that has made all the difference in my life and in my labors, burdensome nevertheless.