we read his sermon on the mount there is something about it that penetrates our very souls, but we must remember that at a very early age he sacrificed his time to God, and finally he sacrificed even his life. There are people who expect the best in life without effort. But I tell you this morning whatever your potentialities may be, they will amount to little or nothing unless you subject yourself to hard work and discipline.

Finally we cannot escape Jesus. For 19 centuries we have tried to escape him. But only to find that every time we attempt to escape him he stands right before us. When management would attempt to exploit labor, we hear Jesus saying, “If ye do it unto the least of these my brethern ye do it unto me.” When we would stand on the street corner and lust after women, we hear Jesus saying, “ye have heard it said in old times thou shall not comit adultry, but I say unto you whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her hath already comitted adultry in his heart.” When we would criticise others for their shortcomings and insist that they be turned out of church, We hear Jesus saying, “he who is without sin cast the first stone.” When we would hate members of another race, or of another nationality, or of another religion, we hear Jesus saying, “there went a certain man down the Jerico road who fell among thieves and the man who helped him was the man of another race.”

Everywhere we turn we see that disturbing man Jesus. So I say that the only way to escape Jesus is to accept him.

This is the conclusion of the whole matter: We cant escape ourselves, we cant escape sacrifice and we cant escape Jesus. We had better accept these as the great inevitables of life.

AD. CSKC: Sermon file, folder 75, “Facing Life’s Inescapables.”

6. The Sermon on the Mount is the common designation for Jesus’ teachings found in Matthew 5–7.

"A Way Out"

[22 May 1949]
[Atlanta, Ga.]

This handwritten document, the earliest known text of any sermon King delivered as associate pastor at Ebenezer, illustrates his use of personal experiences and

relationships in his preaching. In the sermons he delivered at his home church during the summer of 1949, King displayed a willingness to address the issue of race relations.

[That is the way out and the only successful way.]

A few days ago I had a very long conversation with one of my very close classmates. In the course of the conversation he related to me some of the tragic experiences that came to him a year before entering the seminary. He said, "you know King, just before a year ago I lost my wife and my mother within three weeks time. My wife died the first week in May and my mother died the last week in May. These were very tragic experience for me mainly because I wasn't prepared for them. At the funeral of both my wife and mother the minister said, 'this is the will of God, therefore it cannot be wrong.' But the great conflict that faced me at this [moment] was that it was not my will that my wife and mother should die. Here my will was in direct conflict with God's will. It was at this point that I almost cracked up. I had almost lost all hope in life. But finally after prayer and hard work I was able to balance myself. I came to see with the poet that into each life some rain must fall. It is my firm belief that if I had not had a deep faith in God and a strong belief in the efficacy of prayer I would have never pulled through this crisis."

These types of experiences are not only peculiar to my friend, but they present themselves in all levels of human nature. Men are forever confronted with crisis situations. Sometime ago Jesus found himself in a similar situation. He found himself confronted with the question of life or death. Of course many of us have set our minds to believe that Jesus was never confronted with this question. Moreover we have come to believe that He wanted to die in the beginning. But a close analysis of the scripture reveals the contrary. In fact it states clearly that Jesus had a deep-seated desire to escape death. In Luke's gospel we find these words, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me." Here we see that Jesus' will is the direct antithesis of God's will. At this moment Jesus didn't want to die, but His father in Heaven saw the necessity of His death. The question immediately arises, how was it that Jesus in the same verse could say, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." In other words, what resource did Jesus have to make his will become God's will? What was his way out in this moment of crisis? This is the question that I will attempt to answer before this sermon is ended.

Before answering this question let us place this familiar picture in a modern frame and show the weakness of many of the resources that men turn to in crisis situation. I need not dwell on the fact that most people are at some time confronted with crisis: both the rich and the poor; the young and the old; the ups and ins; the

2. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "The Rainy Day" (1841): "Thy fate is the common fate of all, / Into each life some rain must fall."
4. King also reflected on these questions in a 1957 Palm Sunday sermon (King, Garden of Gethsemane, Sermon Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, 14 April 1957, p. 275-283 in this volume).
downs and outs. Of course the forms of these crisis may be as diverse as the number of human beings. It may result from the death of a love one; it may result from an unsuccessful love affair; it may result from the lose of some economic security, it may result from the failure to make the anticipated grade in school; or it may result from a childs failure to [come?] up to his parents expectation. Although the form of these situations is different, the result is the same — crisis, crisis, crisis.

When men find themselves in these crisis situations they are forever trying to find a way out. They are forever attempting to rise above the mighty tempestuous seas of confusion to the smooth seas of comfort. What are some of the methods that men have used to come out of these crisis.

First, men have used the method of escapism. This was the method that the disciples used when they were confronted with the crisis of the death of their leader. They saw the solution of their problem in their feet. So they ran back to Galilee. But was this a solution to the problem? Had not the personality of this dynamic leader so intoxicated the minds of these men that a escape to Galilee was only a temporary escape from a problem which could not be so easily solved.

Modern man has attempted to use this method of escapism through such media as drunkeness, sensual indulgence, and even suicide. It seems that the contemporary soul is turning almost haphazardly to these avenues of escape. But do these methods actually solve the gigantic problems that we face in moments of crisis, or do they only push the problems back a step futher. It seems to me that the latter is the more logical. for we never solve problem by attempting to run from them. Our running only gives a tempory allevation not a permanent solution. For an instance, if I owe John Doe $50 and find myself unable to pay him, will getting drunk solve the problen for me. It may help me to forget my debt for a few hours, but when I get sober I still owe John $50.

The psychaitrists tell us that there is also a psychological danger in the use of drugs and alcohol in the moment of crisis. They tell us that the more we use these methods to escape the grim realities of life, the thinner and thinner our personalities become until ultimately they split. This may account for the increasing split personalities that we have today. So let us not turn to the various methods of escapism when we come to the crisis of life.

Men have turned to a second source in moments of crisis, namely to the companionship of friends. It seems that man's social instinct is most conspicuous in moments of crisis. They tell us that the more we use these methods to escape the grim realities of life, the thinner and thinner our personalities become until ultimately they split. This may account for the increasing split personalities that we have today. So let us not turn to the various methods of escapism when we come to the crisis of life.

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5. George W. Truett was the pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, from 1897 until his death in 1944 and served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention from 1927 until 1929. King refers to an illustration from Truett's sermon "What To Do With Life's Burdens" (Truett, A Quest for Souls: Comprising All the Sermons Preached and Prayers Offered in a Series of Gospel Meetings, Held in Fort Worth, Texas [New York: George H. Doran, 1917], p. 22).
the word of our God shall stand forever.” It is because he turned to God in moments of crisis. Why is it that on one occasion we hear Habakkuk crying, “O Lord how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear,” but on another occasion we hear him crying, “The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.” Why is it that on an occasion we hear Job saying, “O that I knew where I could find him that I might come to his dwelling. And I would set my case in order before him,” but on another occasion we hear him saying, “I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the ladder day upon earth.


10. Isaiah 45:15, 40:8.
11. Habakkuk 1:2, 3:19.

“Mastering Our Evil Selves”
“Mastering Ourselves”

As he often did throughout his career, King uses psychology and race relations to illustrate his sermon. Exploring the internal struggle between good and evil, he cites the actions of the typical white southerner: “He goes to church every Sunday. He worships the same God we worship. He will send thousands of dollars to Africa and China for the missionary effort. Yet at the same time He will spend thousands of dollars in an attempt to keep the Negro segregated and discriminated.”

(Why is it that from the same lips that truth falls lies also fall? Why is it that from the same mother’s heart that is overflowing with love is also overflowing with hate?)

A few days ago the New York Times carried the story of a man who under the influence of alcohol had lost control of his automobile and had run on the sidewalk of one of the main streets of New York, killing instantly two little boys coming from school. He was being held in the city jail without a fine until his trial. The article further stated that this man was an outstanding citizen of his community and also a Christian gentleman, in fact he was a deacon in his local church. This arti-

1. King’s announced sermon topic for 5 June 1949 at Ebenezer was “Mastering Our Evil Selves” (“Ebenezer to Hear Father, Son Sunday,” Atlanta Daily World, 4 June 1949). In folder 110 of King’s sermon files (which is titled “Mastering Our Evil Selves”), this document carries two titles: “Mastering Our Evil Selves” and “Mastering Ourselves.”