Sermon Conclusions

Facing Life's Inescapables

This is the conclusion of the whole matter. We can't escape ourselves; we can't escape sacrifice; we can't escape Jesus. We had better accept these as the great inevitables of life.

The House We are Building

When the Brooklyn Bridge was in course of construction, Roebling, the architect, was sick in bed. He was unable personally to watch its construction and could only direct the builders from his sick room. Finally the vast structure was finished. But before it was opened the master builder was taken out in a little boat, propped up with pillows, to a position in the East River beneath the great span. There he lay for a long time in silence with the plans of the bridge before him, looking now at the blueprints and now at the bridge, until it was all gone over. Then he sank back among the pillows with a satisfied smile. "It is like the plan."22

God has set us a plan for the building of the soul: the life of Christ as it is revealed in the New Testament.23 No one can fail if he follows that plan. It is your lasting opportunity.

The Misuse of Prayer

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter.24 We should never pray for God to abrogate the natural laws, neither should we make prayer a substitute for work and intelligence. Rather, we should prayer for an understanding mind so that we may know and understand God's expression of Himself in the ways of nature, and for an obedient heart so that as we learn to know and understand God's way and God's will we may dare to act and live in harmony with this understanding. This is true prayer.

Success In Life

There is an old saying, "If wishes were horses beggars would ride."25 Friends, the great highroad of success lies along the old high-way of steadfast well-doing; and they who are the most industrious and the most persistent, and work in the truest spirit, will invariably be the most successful. Success treads on the heels of every right effort.

22. John A. Roebling, the original architect of the Brooklyn Bridge, died in 1869, fourteen years before the bridge opened. His son, Washington A. Roebling, carried on the project and became ill near the end of construction.
23. Keighton crossed out the comma after the word "soul" and inserted a colon.
24. King developed a more complete version of this theme (King, "The Misuse of Prayer," 1948–1954, pp. 590–591 in this volume).
25. King refers to the nursery rhyme "If Wishes Were Horses."
Life Is What You Make It

Modern psychology affirms that vital religious faith is unequaled in its resources to make life worth living. The church holds before us this fact—confirmed in the lives of Paul, Augustine, John Wesley, Tolstoy, Schweitzer in Africa—that you can be more than a conqueror, and that can be what you choose to make it.26

[enclage]

[signed] M. L. King Jr.

AHDS. CSKC: Sermon file, folder 36, "Sermon Notes."

26. Cf. Romans 8:37. King refers to Augustine (354–430 CE), bishop of Hippo and Father of the Church; John Wesley (1703–1791), the founder of the Methodist Church; Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910), the Russian author of War and Peace (1865–1869); and Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), a medical humanitarian and Nobel Peace Prize winner. Keighton underlined the word "that" and inserted "antecedent?"

"Civilization’s Great Need"

This 1949 message, an early example of one of King’s most consistent themes of his lifelong ministry, was probably preached while he was serving during the summer as Ebenezer’s associate pastor.1 “On the whole our material and intellectual advances have outrun our moral progress,” he asserts. In a closing prayer, handwritten at the end of this typed message, King implores God, “Help us to work with renewed vigor for a warless world, a better distribution of wealth, and a brotherhood that transcends race or color."

The greatest need of civilization today is not political security; the greatest need of civilization today is not a well rounded United Nations Organization; the greatest need of civilization today is not a multiplicity of material goods; the greatest need of civilization today is not the superb genius of science as important as it is; the greatest need of civilization today is moral progress. On the whole our material and intellectual advances have outrun our moral progress. Who can argue with any degree of logic that we have not progressed scientifically. Science can point to so many remarkable achievements, such tangible and amazing victories. It has freed

1. King was ordained and appointed associate pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church in February 1948. He functioned in this capacity during summer vacations and school holidays.